



General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 June 2021

Original: English

Seventy-fifth session

Agenda item 25

**Operational activities for development: operational activities
for development of the United Nations system**

Review of the functioning of the resident coordinator system: rising to the challenge and keeping the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit for its consideration, before the end of its seventy-fifth session, a review with recommendations on the functioning of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including its funding arrangements. The report is also submitted pursuant to further specifications of the same request in Assembly resolution [75/233](#).

In the report, the Secretary-General draws on Member State feedback since the establishment of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including most recently from a series of plenary, regional group and bilateral consultations. It also draws extensively from independent surveys of programme country Governments, United Nations entities and resident coordinators administered by the Department of Social and Economic Affairs in late 2019 and late 2020, as well as internal reviews carried out by the Development Coordination Office, surveys and analysis by United Nations development system entities, an advisory body of work by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and other internal and external assessments.



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I. Executive summary

1. In 2015, world leaders set out the most comprehensive framework yet for realizing one of the founding objectives of the United Nations: the economic and social advancement of all peoples. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a uniquely ambitious integrated framework, seeking to eradicate poverty in all its forms and to secure dignity, opportunity and justice for all on a healthy planet. Amid an unprecedented global pandemic, its relevance has been reinforced and its implementation has become even more urgent.

2. As the parameters of this new agenda were emerging, it became clear that the Organization's primary vehicle for supporting countries in its implementation was not fit for this new purpose. Throughout the decades, the United Nations development system made a tremendous contribution to improving human well-being. However, a fragmented network of some 36 entities was ill-prepared to deliver the transformative support that countries were demanding to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Assuming my functions as Secretary-General less than two weeks after the adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution on the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review (resolution [71/243](#)), I expressed my determination to reposition sustainable development at the heart of the United Nations. After all, sustainable and inclusive development – underpinned by respect for human rights – offers our best pathway to a future of peace, dignity and prosperity for all. The resolution on the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review encapsulated – like no resolution before – a unified call by Member States for a deeply transformed United Nations development system, with impact, coherence and accountability at the centre. Over the course of 18 months, I worked with Member States, entities from across the United Nations development system and key stakeholders to develop a series of proposals to reposition the United Nations development system. Learning from what works and understanding that reforms must result in impact on the ground, I focused my proposals not on what United Nations entities do individually, but on how to deploy the very best of a coordinated and coherent system to support country priorities for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. This joint effort culminated in June 2018 in the adoption, by the General Assembly, of the most far-reaching development reforms in the history of the organization. At the core of resolution [72/279](#) was the establishment of a reinvigorated, independent, impartial and empowered resident coordinator system that would help facilitate the emergence of a new generation of United Nations country teams.

5. During the past three years, all hands have been on deck to fully operationalize the new mandates without disrupting activities on the ground. This included the roll-out of the new reinvigorated resident coordinator system at the global, regional and country level – supporting 162 countries and territories. This is a significant achievement in and of itself, and I am grateful to Member States, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations development system entities for their support.

6. As requested by the General Assembly in resolution [72/279](#), I have now undertaken a thorough review of the functioning of this new resident coordinator system, including its funding arrangements. In the present report, I set out my analysis, findings and recommendations, drawing on the best available data from United Nations and external sources as well as feedback from delegations. I draw six overarching conclusions.

7. First, the immense efforts of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group over the past three years are bearing fruit and the resident coordinator system is meeting its immediate objectives.

8. A more diverse pool of resident coordinators with sustainable development in their DNA and strong leadership capacities is taking shape. Their independence and impartiality are opening the door as never before for the engagement of a wider set of United Nations entities in United Nations country teams, making more fully available to countries the capacities of specialized agencies, regional economic and social commissions and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, among others. Greater leadership and authority are facilitating more consistent and coherent United Nations engagement with Governments and a diverse range of partners on the ground, including international financial institutions.

9. The new investments in core capacities to support resident coordinators are also showing clear added value. The five Professional positions in resident coordinator offices are facilitating improved United Nations country team planning, stronger emphasis on Sustainable Development Goal financing and economic policy, better convening and leveraging of dynamic partnerships, a sharper focus on Sustainable Development Goal data and results and more effective communications as a system. This cadre of coordination professionals is supported by the newly established Development Coordination Office, which has moved into high gear. The Development Coordination Office is also ensuring timely and responsive Secretariat support for the work of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group at the global level, and its new regional teams are bringing a new level of coordination engagement at the regional level, helping the system roll out key tools for integrated planning, policy and programming, especially new common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

10. Second, there is strong evidence that the value of the resident coordinator system – in terms of improved leadership, coordination and convening – is translating into a strengthened and more tailored contribution from United Nations country teams.

11. Feedback from Member States and other stakeholders shows that the United Nations development system is now responding better to national needs and priorities and providing a more tailored response to specific country contexts. A significant strengthening of resident coordinator system capacities in multi-country offices is expected to deliver much-needed improvements in our support to small island developing States. The strengthened and equal distribution of coordination capacities in every country, supplemented by the expanded reach of United Nations country teams, is also key. In contexts affected by crisis or fragility, double-hatted and triple-hatted resident coordinators are working to facilitate improved collaboration across the Organization's development, peace and humanitarian operations. Determined actions are under way and, though they are still in the early stages, the present report documents evidence of where the new arrangements have made tangible improvements. There have also been significant improvements in transparency and accountability for results.

12. Crucially, the resident coordinator system has passed its first major test. In helping to facilitate a rapid, coherent and effective response by the United Nations development system to the immediate health, humanitarian and socioeconomic impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, it has shown its considerable value and potential. Committed and better-coordinated efforts by the entire system are seen in concrete, measurable results, a sample of which includes: in 2020, 240 million people received essential health-related services; 1 in 10 children globally received distance-learning support; 73 million children were vaccinated against life-threatening diseases; nearly 120 million people were supported through social protection schemes; and more than 650,000 women and girls were provided with gender-based violence services despite COVID-19-related constraints and lockdowns. The early evaluative evidence points to the critical enabling role played by the resident coordinator system in shaping the response. This was supported by a

clear global policy and monitoring framework, effective communication between global and national levels, a dedicated pooled fund to incentivize joint and integrated action, and clarity as to the respective roles of the resident coordinator, UNDP and United Nations country team members at the country level.

13. The COVID-19 response set the bar and provides a blueprint for how the resident coordinator system can leverage the diversity and immense capacities of the United Nations development system to accelerate Sustainable Development Goal implementation during the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals. Numerous examples show that this is in fact already happening. The present report illustrates how resident coordinator coordination of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework process is leading to more integrated planning and a shift in the nature and quality of support the United Nations development system can provide. It shows how the leadership of resident coordinators is enabling more integrated policy advice and joint programmatic support from the development system on key Sustainable Development Goal transitions. It also shows how the convening role of the resident coordinator can be used effectively to allow the development system to engage in ambitious partnerships at national and local levels and help leverage financing from all sources for countries' sustainable development priorities, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

14. Efficiencies are also being achieved owing to the impetus provided by the wider management reforms, a significant push from individual United Nations entities and a more collaborative way of working embodied in the new resident coordinator system. Efficiency gains will free up much-needed resources for Sustainable Development Goal programming by United Nations country teams.

15. Third, the resident coordinator system is leveraging the wider United Nations reforms.

16. A new management paradigm for the United Nations Secretariat and wider efforts to secure gender parity and regional diversity at all levels of the Organization have all benefited from the roll-out of the new resident coordinator system. This is true also of my Data Strategy for Action by Everyone, Everywhere, the United Nations Youth Strategy, and my call to action on human rights: all can serve to strengthen the capacity and tools of our teams on the ground to advance sustainable development. A recalibration of the Organization's peace and security pillar has taken place alongside efforts to strengthen collaboration across its development, humanitarian and peace operations, with the resident coordinator system having a crucial role to play, including as it relates to the mobilization of surge capacities for United Nations country teams, when required, in transition settings. At the regional level, a more coordinated United Nations development system also holds significant potential. The creation of regional collaborative platforms in each region and the work conducted through issue-based coalitions on subregional and regional development priorities have reinforced the capacities of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams to address country-level and cross-border challenges. Through the Development Coordination Office regional teams, a dedicated capacity is primed to provide focused support for resident coordinators and country teams in their respective regions. This is, however, very much a work in progress and will require determined action from the United Nations development system and oversight from Member States to ensure it bears fruit in every region.

17. Fourth, while important benefits have already accrued and the direction of travel is positive, it is also abundantly clear that a continued push and some recalibrations are still required.

18. With regard to leadership and capacity, feedback and data show that the coordination, leadership and convening capacities of resident coordinators are paramount to effective United Nations country teams but are not universally at the point where they need to be. There is also scope for an improved contribution from resident coordinator offices and the Development Coordination Office, particularly at the regional level, and in information and communications. In this regard, I have outlined a series of measures for the attention of the Development Coordination Office and United Nations entities to help further diversify the resident coordinator pool and create incentives that will improve the career paths of resident coordinators. I have also identified areas for attention by the Development Coordination Office and the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group as it relates to the Office's own performance, and that of resident coordinator offices.

19. For country team configuration, reviewing the physical presence of United Nations entities in a country is a key part of securing a new generation of country teams. It is crucial to ensuring that we see the most efficient deployment of the system's resources to address national priorities and needs through the implementation of agreed Cooperation Frameworks, but we are not yet seeing the progress that is needed for an integrated agenda. I have requested the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to develop a clearer pathway in this regard over the course of 2021 and 2022, including as it relates to securing the most appropriate skill sets and profiles in United Nations country teams.

20. With regard to rising to the challenge of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, the shift towards the substantive contributions from the United Nations development system to support Goal implementation is still a work in progress. The response to the COVID-19 crisis shows what the development system can do when it comes together in a coherent and unified manner, and important lessons have been learned for the future. In addition, there remains a need to further sharpen skill sets and capacities to accelerate progress over the course of the decade of action, particularly in areas such as integrated policy support, financing, data and partnerships. It is also essential that we step up our work on partnerships and our collaboration on the ground with international financial institutions.

21. In terms of accelerating efficiency gains, there is scope for further progress in efficiencies, including as they relate to common premises, global shared service centres, the United Nations development system regional presence and reporting by United Nations entities on efficiency gains. Further action by United Nations entities and governing bodies is now required to maximize the availability of resources for Sustainable Development Goal programming.

22. With regard to improving the quality of funding for the United Nations development system, a strong effort has been made by Member States to meet their commitments under the funding compact. This is visible in the increases in the share of assessed core funding to United Nations entities and in support for some pooled and entity-specific thematic funds. I commend Member States for their commitment. However, little progress is being made on two of the most important incentives and enablers of a coordinated and integrated approach by the United Nations development system: increasing the core share of voluntary funding for United Nations development system entities, and adequate capitalization of critical funds such as the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund. There is also a need to further broaden the donor base. These challenges are not unexpected. Funding practices require a shift in the approach taken by traditional development partners that has been established over many decades, and the support of national-level decision-makers. The broadening of the funding base requires new donors to provide support to core functions in a manner that recognizes both a changing global context and historical responsibilities. If changes are not made, the reforms will simply not reach their full potential. The

capacity of the United Nations development system to support the achievement of an ambitious 2030 Agenda will be limited, affecting confidence in multilateralism itself. With unrivalled reach across the world, a diversity of skill sets, a normative foundation and long-established relationships with numerous development partners, including first and foremost programme country Governments, the United Nations development system continues to provide a unique value proposition for advancing sustainable development progress at scale, including in places that are furthest behind. I urge all Member States to seize this opportunity to maximize returns on their investments and to step up their contributions to the system. To facilitate this, I am proposing that the traditional United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities be reimagined to become a forum for Member States to announce their annual commitment to invest in a repositioned United Nations development system, in particular with regard to unearmarked voluntary funding of United Nations entities and the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund.

23. Fifth, the dual accountability model, which is at the heart of a well-functioning resident coordinator system, is inconsistently applied and needs reinforcing.

24. Resolution [72/279](#) sets out clear parameters for a new set of accountabilities within United Nations country teams, with United Nations entities accountable to their governing bodies regarding their respective mandates and reporting, and periodically to resident coordinators on their contribution to collective results under the Cooperation Framework. However, implementation of this model is, at best, inconsistent. Resident coordinators continue to face challenges to their authority and inadequate levels of cooperation, and the persistence, in some instances, of a “go it alone” culture. Progress has been made in aligning country programme documents with the Cooperation Framework, but work remains to be done. In some instances, programme country Governments themselves, as well as local development partners, do not adequately recognize the leadership role of the resident coordinator, thus contributing to a fragmented response. In addition, there are clearly instances where resident coordinators appear to have gone beyond their defined role, and there is still insufficient clarity regarding some specific functions, such as on resource mobilization or communications. The integrator function of UNDP is another area where the United Nations needs to make further progress. It is critical that all United Nations country team members, UNDP resident representatives and resident coordinators share a common understanding of how the integrator function can be leveraged to support the implementation of the Cooperation Framework. In short, there have been widespread changes in the formal sense – a new management and accountability framework, changes in guidance by the headquarters of entities to their country representatives, action by a number of governing bodies to encourage better coordination and greater coherence in United Nations action – but the deeper shift in behaviour and entity business models is still a work in progress. This needs to change.

25. While entities are still trying to find the right balance between visibility, attribution and collective results, and we still need to strengthen engagement between resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, the letter and the spirit of the dual accountability model must be fully adhered to. Some concrete changes are now needed to further facilitate this. I call on the General Assembly to reinforce the dual accountability model. I am requesting the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to work with the Group to decisively address any issues that remain a source of ambiguity or concern. This includes clarity on the roles of resident coordinators, United Nations country teams and the specific role to be played by UNDP to support integrated policy and programmatic support. Governing boards have taken on their roles in overseeing adherence to the dual accountability model with great determination, and I am requesting that the Chair ensure they are provided with the information and tools needed to further advance this work, ensuring full alignment from the country level right up to the global level.

26. Sixth, the current model for funding the resident coordinator system is not generating adequate or predictable levels of resources. This is not sustainable. It represents a significant risk and places considerable operational constraints on the resident coordinator system. It jeopardizes the success of the work that we have undertaken together these past four years.

27. Over the past three years, a sterling effort by the Development Coordination Office, United Nations entities, the governing bodies of United Nations entities and various Member States has made the very best of the compromise hybrid funding model agreed in 2018. The cost-sharing arrangement put in place by United Nations development system entities is working well and meeting expectations. The 1 per cent levy on tightly earmarked voluntary funding has generated over \$40 million in 2020, but is well short of the \$80 million initially envisaged in 2018 and has not led to a reduction in strictly earmarked voluntary funding as initially intended. Voluntary funding has been crucial to the early transition to a reinvigorated resident coordinator system and has stabilized over the past two years. I commend all who have made contributions, particularly those who did so early, in multi-annual commitments and at a level that is in keeping or indeed beyond the equivalent of the assessed value. However, the expected level has still not been reached, contributing to a budget shortfall of some \$70 million in 2020, or 27 per cent of the total budget.

28. We have now reached a point where the continued underfunding of the resident coordinator system is set to undermine its operations: undermining the coordination required to spend \$18 billion annually on development by the United Nations development system; undermining the Organization's ability to attract the talent that resident coordinator leadership on the Sustainable Development Goals requires; and undermining the resident coordinator system's capacity to maximize the contribution of the development system just as countries face difficult prospects of recovery from a large-scale human crisis and a make-or-break moment on Goal implementation.

29. Some have asked if the budget of the resident coordinator system could be reduced. I believe this cannot be done without diluting Member States' ambition for a transformed United Nations development system that works more effectively together to deliver for their specific sustainable development needs. The resident coordinator system continues to represent an efficient and lean operation, with some 86 per cent of its \$281 million budget focused on field-level coordination for 162 countries and territories. It has already generated savings that have supported the boosting of capacities in support of small island developing States. As the present report shows, with less than 1 per cent of the total budget for operational activities for development, the investment in its core capacities – resident coordinators, resident coordinator offices and the Development Coordination Office – is generating clear returns that are already translating into improved performance and results by the United Nations development system.

30. Over the past two years, prudent financial management, a staggering of recruitment and the redeployment of savings owing to operational restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic have allowed the United Nations to build up the resident coordinator system, while responsibly maintaining spending just ahead of cash flow, despite budget shortfalls. We are fast approaching a moment of truth, however, as the resident coordinator system reaches full strength and our ability to stagger spending patterns is narrowed. Needless to say, this situation creates significant uncertainty for managing the system. It will inevitably lead to posts going unfilled. The realization of the full ambition of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) will require a predictably and fully funded resident coordinator system, sustainable over time.

31. I remain convinced that the logical conclusion is to fund the resident coordinator system – this core development function – through assessed contributions under the

Organization's regular budget. Should this not be agreeable to Member States, I encourage the establishment of a "hybrid 2.0" funding model. This model would maintain the cost-sharing arrangement that is strengthening the collective buy-in of the United Nations development system in the repositioning exercise. It would maintain the levy, with a projected threshold of \$50 million, but administered and paid at the source in line with resolution 72/279. I recommend, however, replacing the voluntary contributions component and addressing the current funding gap with assessed contributions from the regular budget to secure a sustainable and predictable funding base. This would amount to approximately \$154 million, freeing up voluntary resources for much-needed investment in programming through the United Nations development system. This hybrid 2.0 model would, I believe, greatly strengthen the funding foundations of the resident coordinator system.

32. The progress made in the past three years in creating an empowered, independent and impartial resident coordinator system has been rapid, significant and impressive. It is something that we should all be proud of because it has been a joint effort. It has only been possible because we pursued a common vision and because Member States and the United Nations development system all pushed in the same direction.

33. Now, we must take it to the next level. I call upon the United Nations development system to further embrace the resident coordinator system because it is the best vehicle we have for achieving greater impact. I urge individual Member States, whether in programme countries, in donor capitals or in governing bodies, to do all they can to facilitate the leadership of the resident coordinators and a more collaborative United Nations development system. Finally, I urge the General Assembly to take decisive action to secure the sustainability of the resident coordinator system and to continue to support this journey to maximize the contribution of the United Nations to the economic and social advancement of all peoples – ending the injustice of poverty and achieving sustainable development for all.

II. The journey thus far

34. As Member States were gearing up to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a process of deep reflection, review and repositioning of the United Nations development system got under way. It was centred on ensuring the system was fit for purpose and ready to meet the transformation demanded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

35. The present section provides a recap of the process that led to the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 72/279, recalling the level of ambition that was contained in that resolution. It also provides an overview of the steps taken to translate those reforms into practice in the intervening three years, demonstrating that deep changes and significant progress have been made in a short period of time.

A. Repositioning the United Nations development system for the 2030 Agenda

36. The 2030 Agenda presents an entirely different proposition to the United Nations development system, the broader multilateral system and Governments everywhere than did its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals. Its transformative emphasis on inclusive economies and an integrated and balanced approach across the three dimensions of sustainable development calls for a much wider and more sophisticated offer from the United Nations development system, one that leverages the full breadth of the system's capacities. And its ambition and urgency – in keeping with the scale of the challenges posed by continuing poverty and burgeoning inequality,

persistent gender discrimination and a climate emergency – demanded a recalibration of how the system could maximize its contribution.

37. Member States recognized in resolution [71/243](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review that an agenda that sought to transform our world by 2030 required nothing less than a transformation of the United Nations development system. Upon taking office, I immediately established a process to consider options to do just that. Over the course of 2017, based on a deep analysis of the system's functions and capacities and informed by extensive engagement with Member States and the members of the United Nations development system, I put forward a series of repositioning proposals in two foundational reports ([A/72/124-E/2018/3](#) and [A/72/684-E/2018/7](#)).

38. At the core of those proposals lay a recognition that the value proposition of the United Nations development system needed to change significantly. There was a clear need to shift away from the supply-driven, largely project- and sector-based approach by disparate entities. Instead, the system needed to become more than the sum of its parts, providing high-quality, integrated policy advice and programmatic support, and fully leveraging its convening power in support of country priorities to drive national implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

39. The analysis showed that such a shift could only be achieved through a fundamental rethinking of coordination arrangements and accountabilities, especially at the country level. As I stated at the time, business-as-usual approaches would simply not deliver the quality enhancements in United Nations support for much-needed transformation at the country level. The 2030 Agenda demanded a full-time coordination function to lead United Nations country teams with different skill sets, more cohesion and responsiveness, and greater accountability for results. I proposed to enhance leadership on development at all levels. At the global level, I elevated the coordination of sustainable development to the Deputy Secretary-General and delegated to her the chairship of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. At the regional level, new regional collaborative platforms have been established to bring the diverse capacities of United Nations entities together behind a series of issue-based coalitions on subregional and regional development priorities. At the country level, I proposed the creation of an independent, impartial and empowered resident coordinator function, backstopped by a small core of professional staff and a stand-alone Development Coordination Office, located within the United Nations Secretariat.

40. In turn, a new generation of United Nations country teams, under the leadership of resident coordinators and with a responsive UNDP providing a Sustainable Development Goal integrator function, would focus on leveraging the best of the United Nations development system regardless of their geographical location. Achieving such change would not come about easily: it would require a behaviour and mindset change, a fresh commitment to transparency, results and oversight, a strengthening of the sustainable development skill sets across the United Nations development system, a new set of accountability arrangements among United Nations entities and a significant shift in the patterns of United Nations development system funding.

41. These arrangements also called for a new set of tools for joint analysis and action, centred on a United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework that was in keeping with the deep transformation called for by the 2030 Agenda and intentionally aligned to country needs and priorities. To ensure United Nations development system support was tailored to different contexts, I called for a recalibration of United Nations support to countries in special situations – least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and, in particular, small island developing States – and to strengthen collaboration across the Organization's development, peacebuilding and humanitarian operations, underpinned by human rights. There was also a very clear need to revisit arrangements at the regional level with a view to more effectively and

efficiently channelling expertise towards United Nations country teams and taking more targeted action on cross-border challenges. In total, these changes would reposition the United Nations development system, with an effective and enabling resident coordinator system as its backbone, to be truly fit for the 2030 Agenda era.

42. Over the course of 2018, Member States considered these proposals, examined the different options and took a landmark decision in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). Member States decided to create a dedicated, independent, impartial, empowered and sustainable development-focused resident coordinator system and called for a new generation of United Nations country teams. Instead of funding the resident coordinator system through the Organization's regular budget as I had proposed, Member States agreed on a hybrid funding model, composed of a 1 per cent coordination levy on tightly earmarked third-party non-core contributions to United Nations development-related activities, to be applied at the source; a cost-sharing arrangement among United Nations development system entities; and voluntary, predictable multi-year contributions to a dedicated trust fund. Over the course of 2018 and 2019, further changes were agreed, including on a funding compact, proposals for strengthening multi-country offices and revamping arrangements at the United Nations regional level, and establishing an independent system-wide evaluation office to undertake more frequent and consistent system-wide evaluations of United Nations Sustainable Development Group performance and results.

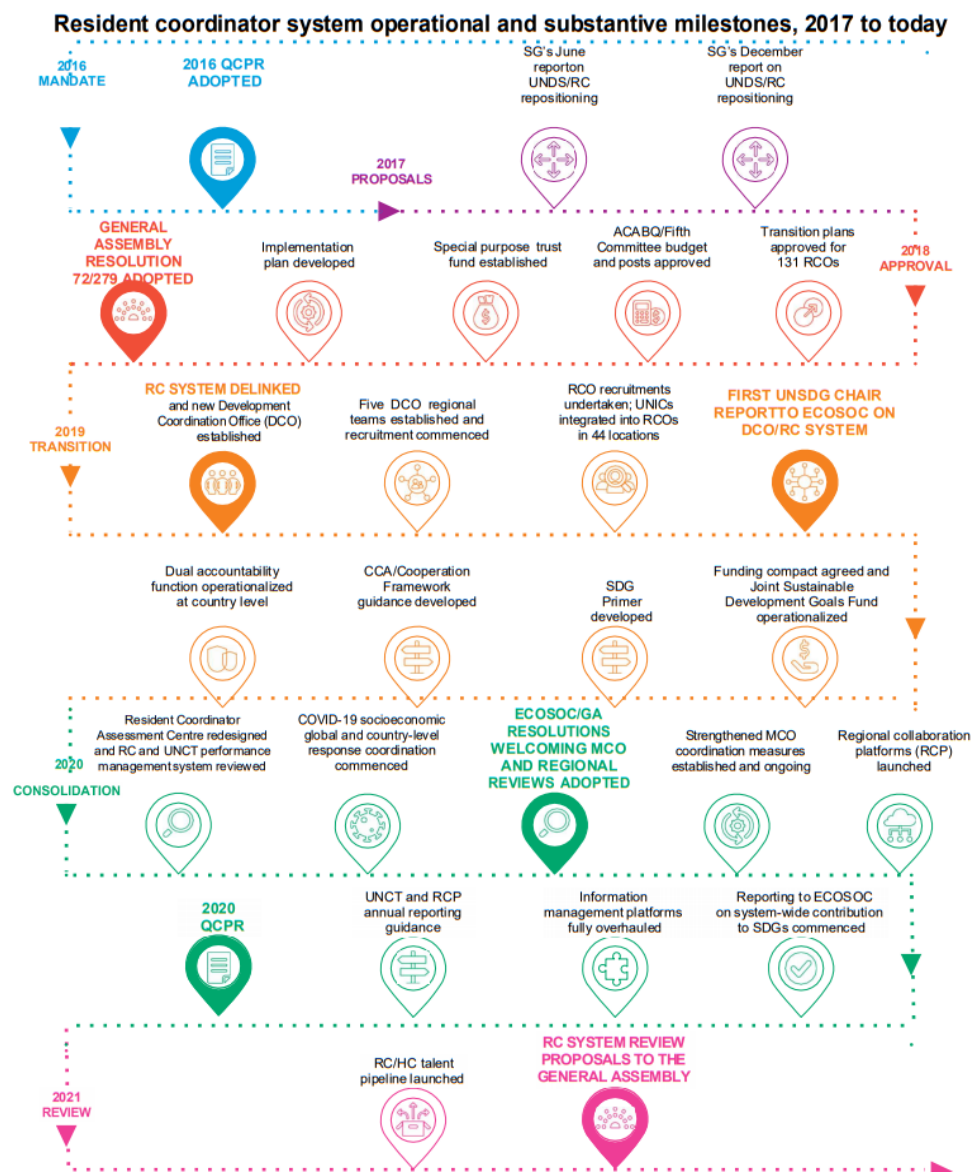
43. Taken together, the agreed reforms represented the most ambitious change in the history of the United Nations development system and a watershed moment for the United Nations. They placed sustainable development more squarely at the centre of the Organization, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and based on the realization that sustainable, inclusive development that is grounded in human rights provides the best vehicle to eradicate poverty in all its forms, achieve peaceful and prosperous societies, and protect the environment and the rights of future generations.

B. From resolution to results

44. With the adoption of resolution [72/279](#), I moved swiftly to ensure full and effective implementation with the establishment of a dedicated transition team and the resident coordinator system implementation plan.¹ By the end of 2018, the key changes required to establish the new resident coordinator system were in place.

45. A special purpose trust fund was created to manage all contributions and financial transactions of the new resident coordinator system. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions approved the creation of applicable posts and the Fifth Committee approved the allocation of the cost-sharing contributions from the United Nations Secretariat members of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, with the governing bodies of almost all other United Nations entities doing likewise. Early contributions were also mobilized to ensure sufficient funding to get the new resident coordinator system off the ground. In addition, the Development Operations Coordination Office was formally separated from UNDP and a stand-alone, renewed Development Coordination Office was established within the Secretariat. Transition plans were approved for 131 resident coordinator offices and a memorandum of understanding was signed by the Secretariat and UNDP to ensure the maintenance of operational services for the resident coordinator system during the transition period.

¹ António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, remarks on implementation plan for the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, 11 September 2018. Available at www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-09-11/secretary-generals-remarks-implementation-plan-reinvigorated.



Abbreviations: ACABQ, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions; CCA, common country analysis; ECOSOC, Economic and Social Council; GA, General Assembly; HC, humanitarian coordinator; MCO, multi-country office; QCPR, quadrennial comprehensive policy review; RC, resident coordinator; RCO, resident coordinator office; SDG, Sustainable Development Goal; SG, Secretary-General; UNCT, United Nations country team; UNDS, United Nations development system; UNIC, United Nations information centre; UNSDG, United Nations Sustainable Development Group.

46. The smooth transition to the reinvigorated resident coordinator system was achieved, with the support of a dedicated task force comprising the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, key Secretariat entities and UNDP. The task force thoroughly and continuously revised all aspects, including the legal foundations of the new resident coordinator system, contractual issues and the transition in the operational systems underpinning the system. During the transition, it was essential to be able to benefit from the close collaboration and important operational support of UNDP, formalized through a service-level agreement between the Secretariat and UNDP. Through the service-level agreement, UNDP continued to provide some services to the resident coordinator system for a fee, while the transition of different

services proceeded in a staggered manner over the course of 2019. Where necessary, the time frames for transition of some services or in specific countries were adjusted to avoid disruption. This achievement should not be underestimated, and I commend the engagement of the Secretariat and all entities, and especially the stalwart support of UNDP, that made it possible.

47. In the two years that followed, all staffing, funding, policy tools and accountability arrangements were put in place with remarkable efficiency to support the full operationalization of the new resident coordinator system, including the core capacities of the resident coordinator offices and the assigned positions in the Development Coordination Office. New arrangements have been put in place to strengthen the multi-country offices, including through additional regional and country coordinators and the establishment of a new multi-country office in the North Pacific. In terms of incentives and accountabilities, a historic funding compact was agreed. New arrangements were operationalized in 2019 through the country-level internal management and accountability framework, which set out the relations between United Nations country team members and the resident coordinator and the reporting requirements, in keeping with resolution 72/279. The global and regional components of the management and accountability framework have also been developed and are expected to be approved by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group by mid-2021.

48. Notwithstanding the scale of the change that was required and the challenge of an unprecedented global pandemic, the necessary steps for establishing the independent, impartial and empowered resident coordinator system as envisaged by resolution 72/279 have been taken. Owing to the considerable efforts of the United Nations system and Governments, the reinvigorated resident coordinator system has moved from concept to reality.

III. Performance of the resident coordinator system: meeting the immediate objectives

49. In its resolution 72/279, the General Assembly stressed several areas where the new resident coordinator system was to excel as an enabler of a repositioned United Nations development system. The resident coordinator system would require new levels of leadership, authority and impartiality to deliver its mandate. It would also require a strong support infrastructure in the Development Coordination Office and through resident coordinator offices. Below, I set out the current status of each and identify ongoing challenges and areas where refinement or deeper changes are needed.

A. Strengthened resident coordinator leadership, authority and impartiality

50. Enhanced leadership, authority and impartiality of the resident coordinator system is at the core of the new arrangements established as part of the reforms. The knowledge, skills and capacities of resident coordinators are crucial to that end. Numerous steps have been taken to ensure progress on both fronts.

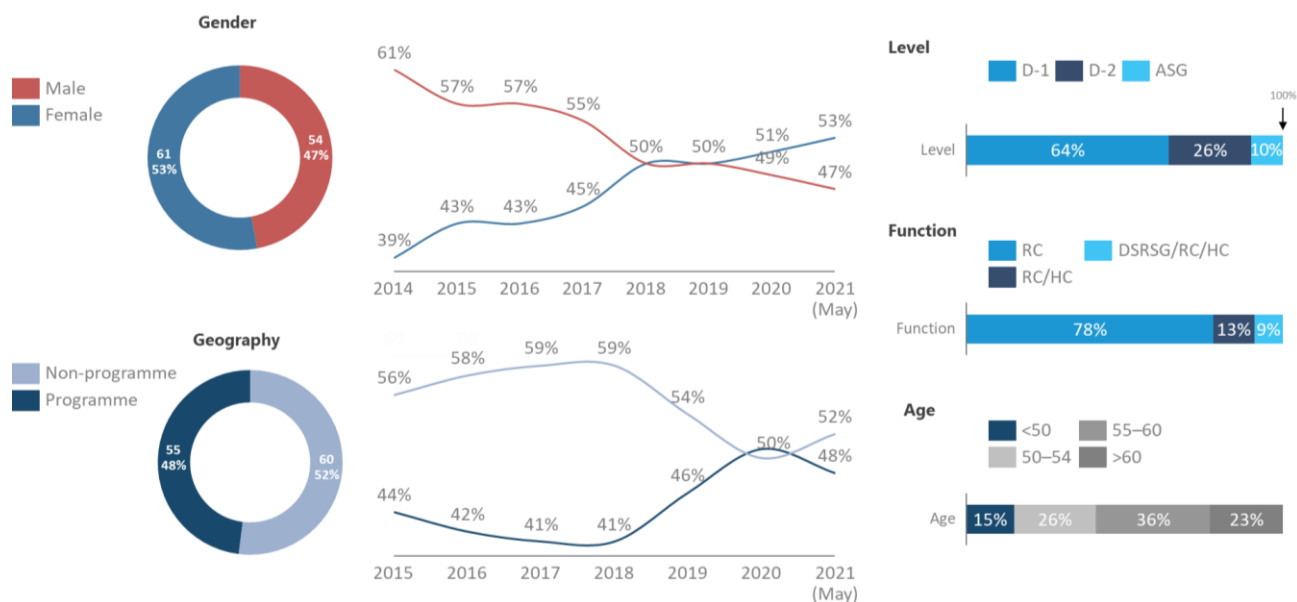
51. Since 1 January 2019, resident coordinators have been fully delinked from the UNDP resident representative function and now report directly to the Secretary-General in a system managed by the Development Coordination Office. Resident coordinators benefit from the new delegation of authority rules that I established as part of the management reform. This delegation of authority provides them with crucial flexibility and ensures the system remains field-focused and able to adapt to quickly changing country needs.

52. The location of the resident coordinator system within the Secretariat has institutionalized the Organization's coordination function for development at its core. Resident coordinators are connected more directly to the Secretary-General, finally giving real effect to the long-standing practice that resident coordinators are my senior-most representatives for sustainable development at the country level. It brings the resident coordinators closer to the priorities identified in intergovernmental frameworks such as the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action) and the Buenos Aires outcome document of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. It also facilitates stronger connections to the humanitarian, political and peacebuilding work of the Organization, with a strong focus on prevention. It also helps ensure that resident coordinators benefit from the wider Secretariat policy ecosystem. Based on the management reform, the Secretariat has moved towards more decentralized, nimble and effective operations. Delegation of authority has empowered heads of entities, including the resident coordinators, to make operational decisions more flexibly and closer to the point of mandate delivery. Bringing resident coordinators into the Secretariat further enabled the Organization to build on its operational economies of scale and provide reliable, consolidated and efficient administrative services to resident coordinators. It also supported action on system-wide efforts to uphold United Nations values in its operations, including as they relate to countering racial discrimination, tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and advancing disability inclusion, gender parity and environmental sustainability.

53. A new generation of resident coordinators is emerging: professionals with proven sustainable development expertise and the full set of skills and experience required to help countries achieve the 2030 Agenda. The redrafted resident coordinator job description clearly redefines what resident coordinators are expected to do, and the new resident coordinator leadership profile articulates who resident coordinators should be and how they should behave and do their job, building on the United Nations system leadership framework. The new resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator talent pipeline launched in 2021 aims to build a diverse pool of high calibre candidates who have the potential to fulfil resident coordinator and/or resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator functions. The Resident Coordinator Assessment Centre was fully redesigned to recruit the best talent, with strong development credentials. The resident coordinator system selection process is being fully overhauled to focus exclusively on the imperative of deploying staff with the best profiles to the right places. The resident coordinator deployment process has also been systematized, including through early consultation by the Development Coordination Office with the concerned missions in New York.

54. Ensuring diversity within the resident coordinator cohort has been a top priority. As of May 2021, more than one third of resident coordinators had been appointed following the shift of the resident coordinator system to the Secretariat in 2019, providing a first opportunity to diversify and bring new talent to the resident coordinator ranks. Considerable focus was placed on consolidating gender equality among resident coordinators, improving geographic balance and diversifying the nationalities represented. As a result, the Organization has shifted from a reality in which resident coordinators were primarily male and from non-programme countries to one with much greater geographic diversity, where gender parity has been achieved and even surpassed. As of May 2021, 53 per cent of resident coordinators were female (compared with 50 per cent in 2019) and 48 per cent were from programme countries (46 per cent in 2019), and 58 nationalities (54 in 2019) were represented (see figure I).

Figure I
Resident coordinators by gender, geography, function, level and age

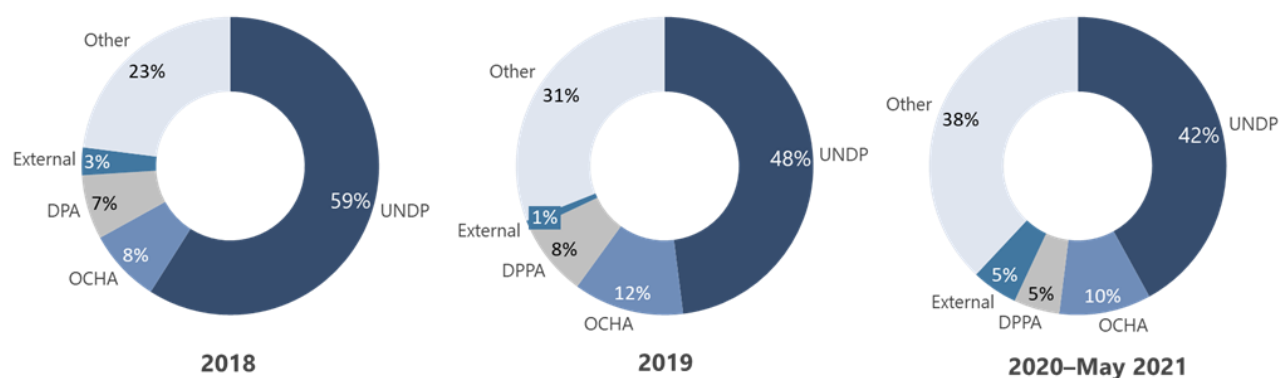


Source: Development Coordination Office.

Abbreviations: ASG, Assistant Secretary-General; DSRSG, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General; HC, Humanitarian Coordinator; RC, Resident Coordinator.

55. In addition, we have diversified the experience and background of resident coordinators in terms of entity of origin, and it is essential that we continue to progress towards a resident coordinator system that is increasingly attracting and deploying the very best talent from a variety of United Nations entities and from outside the system (see figure II).

Figure II
Resident coordinators by entity of origin



Source: Development Coordination Office.

Abbreviations: DPA, Department of Political Affairs; DPPA, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

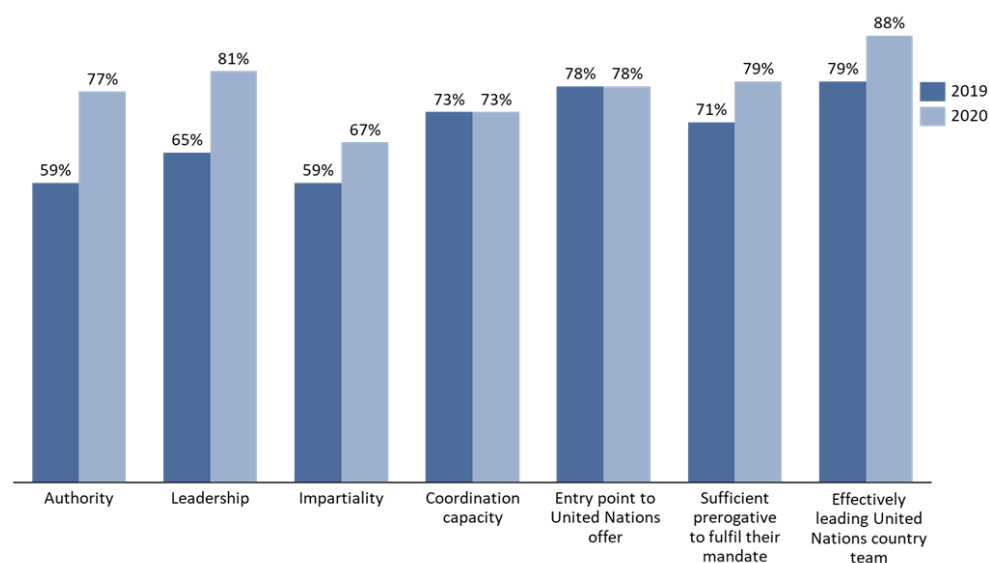
56. Resident coordinators are given the full suite of support they need to succeed. First-time and rotating resident coordinators are offered comprehensive country-specific briefings with senior colleagues across the Development Coordination Office, the United Nations Secretariat (including the Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs) and United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities. Resident coordinators receive tailored support from mentors and coaches to help accelerate the learning curve of first-time resident coordinators and help sitting resident coordinators handle the challenges they are facing in real time. Some 47 resident coordinators, including 30 first-time resident coordinators, have benefited from this support so far. A new learning package, the Sustainable Development Goals Primer, was developed with UNDP and made mandatory for resident coordinators to ensure a stronger and shared knowledge base on the 2030 Agenda and clarity of understanding on the paradigm shift they are expected to facilitate. This is complemented by leadership dialogues for resident coordinators on systems thinking, collaborative leadership and the application of foresight in the new Cooperation Framework process. The Development Coordination Office has also launched Sustainable Development Goal “Leadership Labs” to strengthen the capabilities of resident coordinators, United Nations country teams and resident coordinator office staff to innovate and lead transformational change. The Development Coordination Office is also supporting a resident coordinator-led process to understand the experience of women serving in a resident coordinator role and identify areas where tailored support is required.

57. Governments have reinforced the new role of the resident coordinators. Governments have provided a legal basis for the new resident coordinator system on the ground with minimal transaction costs by replicating, *mutatis mutandis* and wherever possible, an existing United Nations agreement – most frequently the previous UNDP standard basic agreement. Today, agreements are in place in a vast majority of countries, though in 76 countries the longer-term legal basis is still under discussion. I count on all concerned Governments to help close this gap. In addition, in a number of countries national authorities have upgraded the resident coordinators’ diplomatic rank, for example, formally recognizing them as the highest-ranking United Nations development system representatives in the country, and allowing increased access to top Government officials, including Heads of State and Government.

58. We have ample evidence that, in part due to the above changes, we are already seeing improved resident coordinator leadership, authority and impartiality. As highlighted in my report of 2021 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review ([A/76/75-E/2021/57](#), para. 14) and in figure III below, programme country Governments have indicated that since 1 January 2019 when the new resident coordinator system was put in place, resident coordinators have displayed strengthened leadership (81 per cent), impartiality (67 per cent) and coordination capacity (73 per cent). Furthermore, 78 per cent of respondents see the resident coordinator as an effective entry point to access the United Nations system at the country level, 88 per cent of programme country Governments consider the resident coordinator to be effective in leading the United Nations country team and 79 per cent consider resident coordinators to have sufficient prerogatives to effectively fulfil their mandate. This reflects a substantial increase since 2019. The performance of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams during the COVID-19 pandemic, detailed in section IV, has reinforced these impressions, with 92 per cent of Governments indicating that resident coordinators ensured a coherent United Nations response.

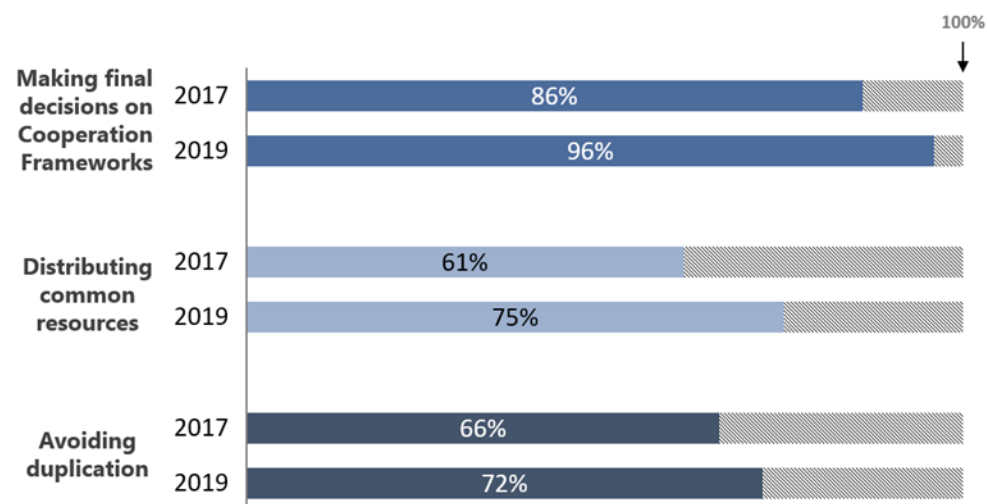
Figure III
Government feedback on resident coordinators' skills and capacities



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of programme country Governments, 2020.

59. As seen in figure IV below, resident coordinators' own perceptions follow similar lines. More resident coordinators report that they can make final decisions on the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework/United Nations Development Assistance Framework and distribute common resources. An increase is also registered with regard to their influence in decision-making and avoiding duplication (from 66 per cent in 2017 to 72 per cent in 2019). A large majority of resident coordinators report a clearer understanding of their new leadership role and responsibilities, based on the revised resident coordinator job description and leadership profile.

Figure IV
Resident coordinators' perception of progress on leadership and prerogatives



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of resident coordinators, 2019.

60. Importantly, these trends also appear in surveys of and by United Nations entities on resident coordinator leadership, authority and impartiality. About three quarters of United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities recognize reporting obligations to the resident coordinator for planning and programme implementation.² Almost half of the respondents to a 2021 survey conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) of its country representatives reported an improvement in their strategic engagement with the resident coordinators and an increase in resident coordinator ability to facilitate dialogue between the United Nations country team and the national Government.³ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) country offices have reported that their ability to mobilize resources, partner with stakeholders, implement programmes and engage on normative issues have all improved since 2019, in line with increases in the ability of resident coordinators and resident coordinator offices to facilitate inter-agency work.⁴ A similar survey by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN-Women) in 2020 revealed that a significant majority of its country offices noted an increased ability by resident coordinators and resident coordinator offices to facilitate inter-agency work (67 per cent) and increased support to their entity's work and mandate (62 per cent).⁵ UNDP and UNICEF have also affirmed that they see the value and need for resident coordinators to have a stronger coordination and convening role in the work of the United Nations on leaving no one behind, gender equality and human rights.⁶ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) country representatives consider the neutral broker role of the resident coordinator essential to overcoming inter-agency competition and overlap with regard to joint resource mobilization.⁷

61. Finally, external studies validate these trends. Findings from a 2021 study by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network,⁸ for example, note that the transition to a reinvigorated resident coordinator system is one of the transformation areas of United Nations development system reform that has seen most progress to date and has led to transformative changes, with demonstrated benefits to the COVID-19 response. It also found that the position of resident coordinators vis-à-vis national Governments is increasingly recognized and is a valuable and appreciated tool by government stakeholders for simplifying engagement with the United Nations. It also noted that development partners broadly recognize the increasingly independent and empowered role of the resident coordinator and see it as bringing positive outcomes in terms of greater inclusion of United Nations entities (in particular those that have no physical presence in a country), more effective collaboration and advocacy, a coherent United Nations voice, and promoting strategic partnerships.

62. The new leadership and impartiality of resident coordinators is reflected in their ability to secure greater engagement of United Nations entities that lack physical presence in a country. This goes to the very core of the United Nations development system reforms and to the Organization's ability to provide the transformative policy

² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, survey of headquarters of agencies, funds and programmes, 2020.

³ Preliminary findings from a 2021 UNICEF survey of country representative is forthcoming. For the 2020 results, see UNICEF, Executive Board, "Implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on 'repositioning of the UN development system'", information note for its annual session, 2020.

⁴ UNFPA, Executive Board, Information note on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279, 2021.

⁵ UN-Women, Information note on the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 72/279, May 2021.

⁶ Joint written answers by UNDP and UNICEF to the operational activities for development segment of the Economic and Social Council.

⁷ Informal internal survey on the United Nations development system reforms, 2021.

⁸ Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, *Is This Time Different? UNDS Reform: Progress, Challenges and Opportunities, Lessons in Multilateral Effectiveness* (Paris, 2021).

support demanded by the external and internal reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals, such as the study by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network and the advisory work by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) that document the ability of resident coordinators to create an important pathway for the inclusion of smaller and specialized United Nations entities into United Nations country teams, and recognize that resident coordinators are better advocating for and enabling mandates across the system. Examples of such actions are set out in box 1. These are among the most promising signs that the new resident coordinator system is delivering. The resident coordinator system is not just supporting better coordination but facilitating higher-quality contributions from the full diversity of United Nations entities in the United Nations development system, towards the advancement of the 2030 Agenda.

Box 1

Resident coordinator system in action: facilitating the engagement and mandates of United Nations entities

Regional economic and social commissions are now members of 49 United Nations country teams, up from 40 in 2019 and 32 in 2017. In addition, 35 are signatory to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework or the United Nations Development Assistance Framework of 33 countries. The **Department of Economic and Social Affairs**, historically less connected to United Nations support at the country level, has engaged in a total of nine common country analyses and 13 COVID-19 socioeconomic impact assessments, including multi-country assessments covering 48 countries and territories, and is now engaged in networks of global experts such as those for economists and data professionals.

In Tunisia, the joint work of UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) with the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility benefited from resident coordinator leadership to prepare and implement a COVID-19 response plan and a national vaccination strategy. Resident coordinators facilitated agencies' and development partners' engagement, fundraising and advocacy as "one voice" for the United Nations. Some 760,000 vaccines were provided in the first semester of 2021 alone. Overall, the United Nations country team was able to scale up its work, including in the areas of health, immunization, education and social protection, to strengthen resilience and national systems.

In the case of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), resident coordinators have played a vital role in strengthening the system-wide response of the United Nations to migration. More than 50 networks at the country level have been established and launched under the United Nations Network on Migration and embedded within the United Nations country teams, with resident coordinators taking on both chair and co-chair roles alongside IOM and using their leadership to mobilize the respective parts of the United Nations system.

In the area of gender equality, 60 per cent of UN-Women country representatives report increased ability to engage on normative issues and women's rights agendas with resident coordinators. In turn, UNFPA reports significant increases in resident coordinators' support for normative issues and for its mandate since 2019. Recently, resident coordinators played a key role in supporting UNFPA engagement within United Nations country teams and with Governments to advance the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, ahead of the Nairobi Summit to commemorate the 25-year anniversary of the Conference.

The unique role of UNDP within the United Nations country team has been evident in its contribution as technical lead of the socioeconomic pillar of the United Nations response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Uzbekistan, in close coordination

with the Resident Coordinator, UNDP steered the preparation of a consolidated COVID-19 socioeconomic response and recovery plan together with a range of partners, including UNFPA, WHO, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. The plan is specifically tailored to complement the country's national strategic preparedness and response plan and is based on a common understanding of the priority issues and a costed recovery response plan widely supported by United Nations entities and international financial institutions in the country.

The reinvigorated resident coordinator system has helped United Nations country teams to better assist Governments in their efforts to respect and fulfil their human rights obligations and commitments. In Mongolia, the Resident Coordinator obtained technical support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in drafting a law to protect human rights defenders in the country, a key recommendation Mongolia had received in its most recent universal periodic review. In countries such as Albania, Bangladesh and Sierra Leone, United Nations country teams have worked hand-in-hand with Governments to review the status of implementation of their universal periodic review recommendations and develop national processes to follow up on these, often as part of countries' new Cooperation Frameworks.

The resident coordinator system has also worked closely with the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth on a United Nations country team information and policy support package to advance the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy. United Nations country teams in Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Morocco, the Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Uzbekistan, under the leadership of resident coordinators, are piloting the roll-out of the strategy and will field-test and fine-tune its implementation.

Resident coordinators have facilitated the engagement of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) with countries to roll out a service offering digital transformation across all regions, from Latin America and the Caribbean, where ITU is also working with the multi-country office based in Trinidad and Tobago, to Asia and the Pacific. In Europe and Central Asia and Africa, and with the guidance of the Development Coordination Office Regional Director for Africa, ITU is now the co-convenor of an opportunity/issue-based coalition to leverage emerging technologies and drive digital transitions for inclusive growth in Africa. Entities such as UNEP have reported that the resident coordinator system is leading to better connection between their research and normative work on critical cross-cutting issues and work by operational entities at the country level.

Through the support of resident coordinators for the Programme for Country Partnership of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Cambodia, Egypt and Zambia, United Nations entities, Governments, international financial institutions and donors are now working together to increase industrialization and socioeconomic interventions and opportunities, including in support of the efforts of Cambodia and Zambia to graduate from least developed country status.

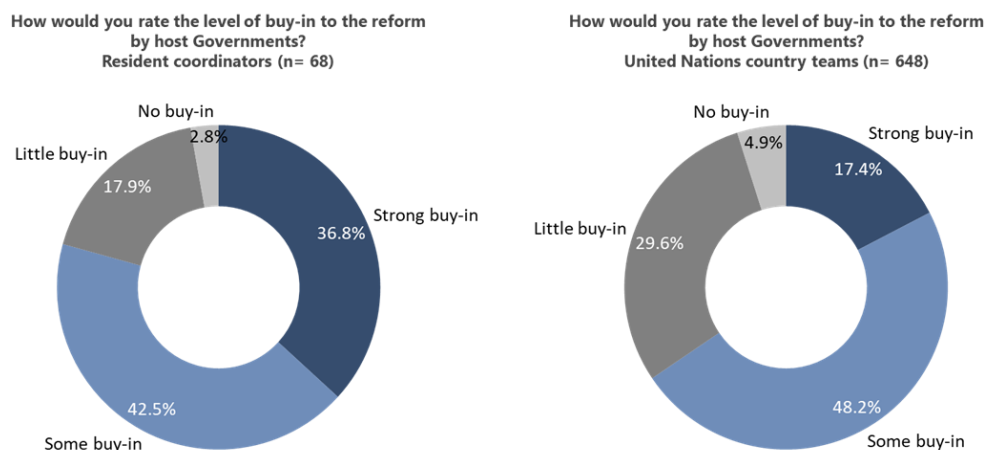
Closing the gaps

63. The new resident coordinator role has been established successfully and is widely seen as legitimate and adding value. At the same time, the leadership, authority and impartiality of resident coordinators can be further enhanced.

64. The fact that close to a quarter of programme country Governments that responded to the survey conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs believe it is too soon to make a definitive determination of strengthened resident

coordinator leadership, impartiality and independence is a reminder that the process is still unfolding. A survey by OIOS of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams confirmed that there is still some way to go in securing the buy-in of Governments (see figure V). Continued attention by Member States is required to ensure success is consolidated and consistent across all countries and areas.

Figure V
Host Government buy-in to the reform



Source: OIOS.

65. It is also concerning that in 2019 some 43 per cent of resident coordinators indicated that they did not have sufficient prerogative to avoid duplication⁹ and that in 2020 many continued to report that resident coordinator-empowered leadership is not valued across the board and even seen by some as a threat.¹⁰ In addition, resident coordinators continue to report challenges in all areas related to ensuring their ability to steer processes in line with the spirit of the reform.¹¹ More than 50 per cent of UNICEF country representatives reported that they did not see the reinvigorated resident coordinator function improving collective United Nations support to national Governments. Some of these shortcomings speak to the ongoing challenges related to the dual accountability function and to the management of resident coordinator performance, which is addressed in detail in section V.

66. The United Nations also needs to further strengthen and diversify the resident coordinator pool. Underrepresentation remains within the resident coordinator pool with regard to programme countries, in particular the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and small island developing States. I urge suitable candidates from these regions to apply to the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator talent pipeline and United Nations entities to encourage staff with the requisite profiles to do the same. I am also requesting the Development Coordination Office to expand its new pilot outreach programme to identify suitable candidates from programme countries.

67. New uncertainties regarding job security following the delinking from UNDP reduces the appeal of the resident coordinator track and poses a considerable risk to its longer-term success. Addressing this issue is all the more important, as the United Nations is in the process of rejuvenating the resident coordinator cadre: younger

⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, survey for resident coordinators, 2019.

¹⁰ Third global meeting of the Secretary-General with resident coordinators, 2020 (virtual).

¹¹ Ibid.

resident coordinators will have many years ahead of them after they finish a resident coordinator posting, and will need some job security for themselves and, as may be the case, their families if they are to enter this track.

68. Since the resident coordinator system was transferred to the Secretariat on 1 January 2019, 45 per cent of the 71 resident coordinators who completed their posting were appointed to another resident coordinator post, and 55 per cent left the resident coordinator track. Of the latter, 16 retired (representing 23 per cent of the total); 10 returned to their entity of origin (14 per cent); and 4 were appointed to the Development Coordination Office (6 per cent). Resident coordinators should be able to move seamlessly in and out of the resident coordinator track and in and out of United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities, including the Secretariat. This will ensure that they have challenging and varied careers beyond the resident coordinator track should they so wish; that the resident coordinator track benefits from leaders with intimate knowledge and understanding of United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities; and that United Nations system leaders increasingly have a common, system-wide outlook.

69. Steps are being taken in this direction. The Development Coordination Office is engaging with United Nations entities to make sure that resident coordinators originating from these entities are still considered internal candidates, are included in the entity's talent pools, have access to internal job openings and have access to internal learning and development resources. In addition, I have requested the Development Coordination Office to dedicate more resources to individual career counselling and support for resident coordinators and to examine how best to support resident coordinators who are between assignments or those nearing retirement. In parallel, there is a need to advance towards the more ambitious objective of building an integrated career management system in the Secretariat and, ideally, the United Nations system at large. This will require exploring with United Nations system entities the mutual recognition of senior leadership rosters and the establishment of United Nations system-wide talent pools for senior leaders. I intend to take this forward, in close collaboration with the Development Coordination Office, United Nations entities and the High-Level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, in the coming period. I also encourage the Development Coordination Office to facilitate periodic engagement between resident coordinators and the principals of United Nations entities to ensure a fuller sensitization of resident coordinators to the mandates and diverse needs of different United Nations entities and any challenges they may face at the country level.

70. It is also important to look beyond leaders to leadership teams. Significant work is required to enable resident coordinators and United Nations country teams to work effectively together. This could include harmonizing agencies' efforts to identify, select and train their country representatives so as to ensure more uniform leadership capabilities within the United Nations country team; and using the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator talent pipeline as a source of talent for field leaders for the entire United Nations Sustainable Development Group and not only for the resident coordinator track. Relevant provisions of the management and accountability framework, which allow resident coordinators to provide input to regional directors of United Nations entities on the skill sets and profiles of leadership needed in a given country context ahead of selection, should be implemented more widely. Entities could also pool the various career development resources allocated to their country representatives to ensure that all relevant United Nations country team members are trained at the same time on the same issues.

B. Enhanced backstopping capacities

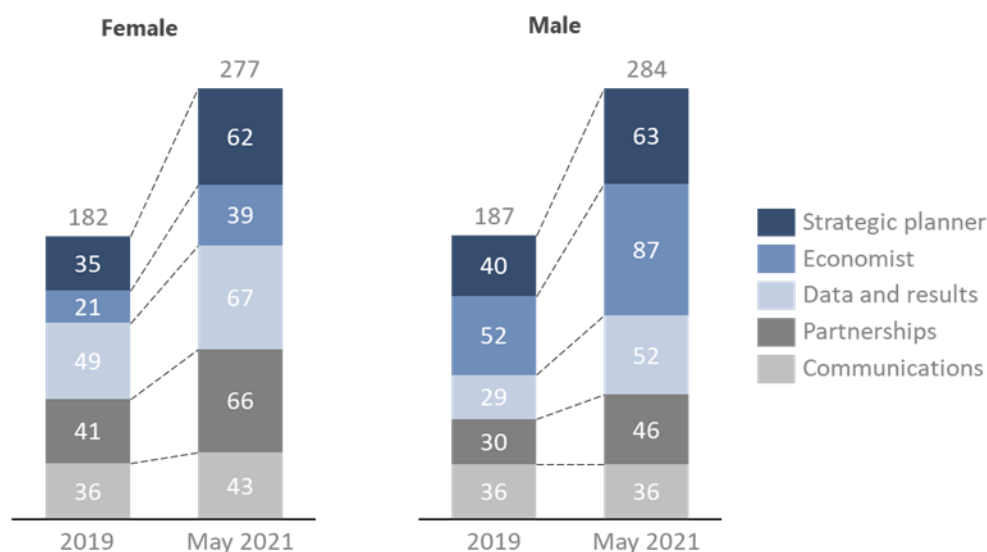
71. To enable independent, empowered and impartial resident coordinators to operate most effectively and fully leverage a new generation of United Nations country teams and the wider partnership ecosystem, the reforms established standard core capacities for coordination in all resident coordinator offices, with backstopping support through the Development Coordination Office.

Resident coordinator office support

72. Dedicated support for resident coordinators before the reforms was highly susceptible to the fluctuating interests of local development partners and dependent on the resource mobilizing talents of the individual resident coordinators. This led to ad hoc and uneven resident coordinator support across countries. To address this, Member States supported the proposal for the deployment of five core Professional positions to each resident coordinator office, as well as two administrative assistants, as the basic level of coordination support for all countries serviced by a resident coordinator, based on mapping and analysis of key functions. Each of these roles delivers specific expertise to support resident coordinators in effectively leading and coordinating with United Nations country teams and credibly engaging with Governments and other partners, and includes strategic planning, economic transformation, partnerships and Sustainable Development Goal financing, Sustainable Development Goal data and monitoring and evaluation, and communications.

73. As of May 2021, 571 recruitments had been completed in 132 resident coordinator offices, including 10 new coordination specialist positions in multi-country offices, as well as 196 international officers and 375 national officers, in line with the projected breakdown provided in 2018. Eighty-seven nationalities are represented across the international officers, and 43 per cent are from programme countries. A total of 109 resident coordinator offices are now staffed with at least four of the five core positions. Gender parity has been reached among the Professional staff of the 571 resident coordinator office, and gender representation increased across resident coordinator office core functions. Those figures exclude the two General Service positions in each resident coordinator office, which are currently at 90 per cent occupancy. Steps are also being taken to facilitate the employment of suitably qualified persons with disabilities in resident coordinator offices, in line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

Figure VI
**Growth in staffing and gender balance across resident coordinator office
 core functions**



Source: Development Coordination Office.

74. Select additional capacities continue to be deployed by the United Nations development system into resident coordinator offices in specific country contexts, in response to clear demands under the Cooperation Framework, with the approval of the host Government. These additional capacities are not funded from the special purpose trust fund for the resident coordinator system. For instance, a joint programme of UNDP and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs deployed Peace and Development Advisers to more than 80 countries in 2020; OHCHR-managed Human Rights Advisers were deployed to 43 countries; and a collaboration with UN-Women has seen Gender Advisers deployed to 13 resident coordinator offices. To enhance the provision of support by United Nations entities that do not have a physical presence in a country, a further seven United Nations entities have deployed a dedicated advisory capacity in at least 19 resident coordinator offices.¹² Not only is this an efficient way to deploy capacities without establishing a separate entity country presence, but it enables additional relevant policy advisory capacity to be made available to support the work of the wider United Nations country team in areas that are not already covered by other members. These additional capacities now work as an integral part of a suite of coordination capacities, further facilitating the multidimensional approach critical to advancing the 2030 Agenda in these contexts.

75. The available data shows that the capacities deployed as part of the resident coordinator system, in both resident coordinator offices and the Development Coordination Office, are performing to a high level. Some 73 per cent of programme country Governments have noted that resident coordinators now have the capacity to coordinate United Nations activities in support of country development priorities. Over 90 per cent of resident coordinators agree that United Nations country teams view the resident coordinator office as a common resource for supportive analysis, policy and programming.

¹² The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Department of Safety and Security, UNEP, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and United Nations Volunteers.

76. Independent analysis, internal Development Coordination Office reviews and feedback from agencies and other actors provide some additional insights. Stakeholders interviewed as part of an early evaluative study of the COVID-19 response and recovery multi-partner trust fund reported all five resident coordinator office positions as being important.¹³ The OIOS advisory work notes that both resident coordinators and United Nations country team members deemed the addition of an economist post to the resident coordinator office particularly important for enhancing overall United Nations analytical capabilities.¹⁴ An internal Development Coordination Office study of resident coordinator office functions found that resident coordinators and staff perceive United Nations country teams as able to increasingly leverage the new capacities for better coordination on macroeconomic analysis, partnerships and Sustainable Development Goal data and statistics.¹⁵ Overall, the respondents highlighted how increased capacities enabled more joint resource mobilization, joint communication and advocacy.

77. Examples of some of the contributions of each function are included in box 2.

Box 2

Resident coordinator system in action: resident coordinator offices supporting more integrated United Nations country team action

Strategic Planning Officers/team leaders support resident coordinators and enhance the work of resident coordinator offices by coordinating and connecting teams across key priorities areas. Strategic Planning Officers/team leaders have served as critical reference points for the roll-out of common country analysis, Cooperation Framework and United Nations socioeconomic response plan processes. In several countries, Strategic Planning Officers/team leaders, in close collaboration with the Partnerships and Development Finance Officers, have also positively contributed to the expansion of partnerships, including with the private sector, and to the joint resource mobilization efforts of the United Nations country team.

Economists in resident coordinator offices are showing considerable potential not just as coordinators but also as strategic facilitators, thought leaders and brokers of expertise within the United Nations system. In some United Nations country teams, resident coordinator office economists have been instrumental in ensuring coordinated United Nations support to the Government with regard to the preparation of national development strategies (as in North Macedonia, Nigeria and Cabo Verde); on macroeconomic modelling (as in Mongolia and Jordan); and on responding to the economic dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic (as in Malaysia, Egypt and Mongolia, to name but a few). Other economists indicate that they are increasingly recognized as a key country-level contact on economic matters within the United Nations Economists' Network, while others play a central role in building networks in-country: in Egypt, the resident coordinator office economist led the establishment of the United Nations-IFI Development Partners Economists' Network and coordinates the regular meetings of the Network to exchange views on the economy and share new analyses. Started as an initiative of the United Nations and an international financial institution, the Network now includes economic officers from development partners and has resulted in tangible collaborations between the United Nations and international financial institutions, including on inputs to loan negotiations with the International Monetary Fund during the COVID-19 response.

¹³ *Early Lessons and Evaluability of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF* (United Nations publication, 2021).

¹⁴ OIOS, "Early assessment of resident coordinator system reform", November 2020.

¹⁵ Development Coordination Office, "Internal functional review of resident coordinator offices", March 2021.

Partnerships and Development Finance Officers are deemed to have positively contributed to the expansion of partnerships (including the private sector), consolidating the efforts of United Nations entities and joint resource mobilization efforts of the United Nations country team. In many countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Paraguay, Partnerships and Development Finance Officers have helped enhance country team cooperation with the Global Compact Network. In Colombia, Partnerships and Development Finance Officer engagement with the private sector facilitated the emergence of the “share the meal” initiative of the World Food Programme (WFP) to address the food shortage among disadvantaged families. Partnerships and Development Finance Officers also play an important role in creating and managing various country-level pooled funds and in facilitating access to United Nations trust funds such as the Peacebuilding Fund and the fund for the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Data Management and Results Monitoring and Reporting Officers are helping to strengthen a culture of results, learning and accountability. Such Officers are critical to collecting, analysing and presenting data on several results reporting tools at both local and global levels, including United Nations country team annual reports and resident coordinator system data portals such as the COVID-19 Data Platform. In Moldova, the Data Management and Results Monitoring and Reporting Officer was instrumental in bringing the COVID-19 assessment and plan together on an interactive online dashboard displaying the latest data on the local response from the United Nations. The Officers also provide a crucial new entry point for leveraging country team support for national statistical offices and the broader set of Sustainable Development Goal data partners. In Costa Rica, for example, through coordinated support for data by the resident coordinator office, the country team supported the Government in establishing a national statistical Sustainable Development Goal commission. In Trinidad and Tobago, the Data Management and Results Monitoring and Reporting Officer supported the country team in forging partnerships for big data.

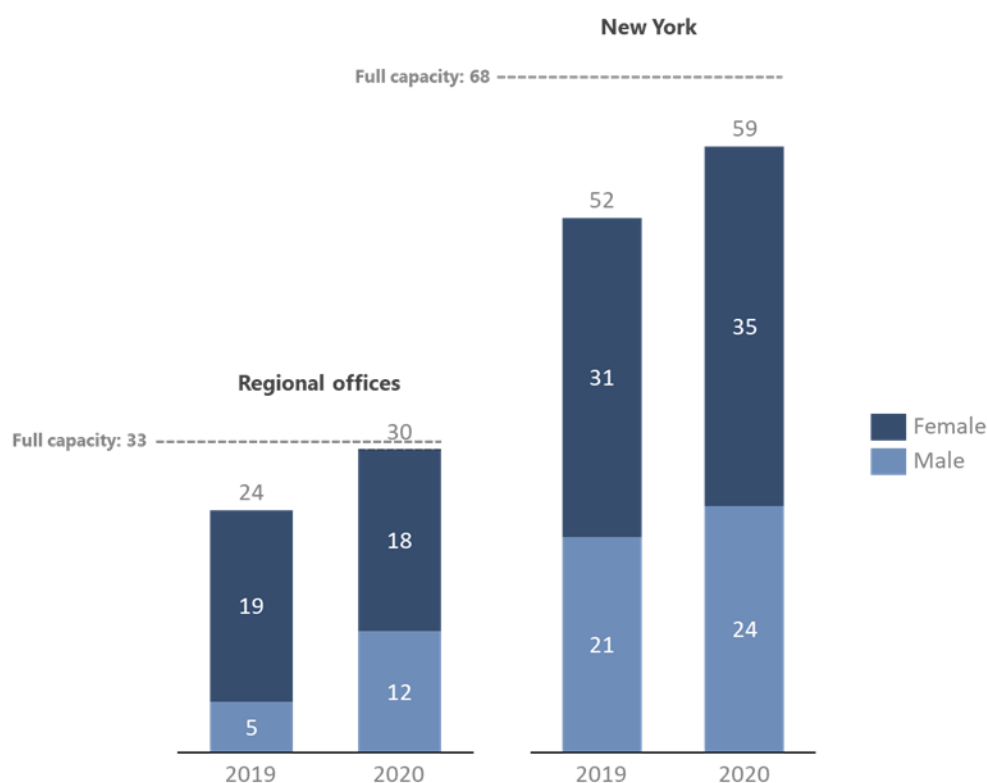
Resident coordinator office Communications Officers are facilitating higher visibility of United Nations sustainable development work on the ground by developing joint communications strategies, supporting resident coordinators in speaking with one voice for the entire United Nations country team, producing advocacy and communications material and reaching out to the public in support of global initiatives, such as the public mobilization effort on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. In Sri Lanka, Communications Officers brought greater coherence to communications across United Nations agencies, including from entities that had no physical presence in the country. The incorporation of United Nations information centres into resident coordinator offices has helped leverage existing resources, though experiences are mixed and require greater effort to ensure they are successful across the board.

Development Coordination Office support

78. Resident coordinators, resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams operating in 162 countries and territories rely heavily on a Development Coordination Office that has been transformed to match the demands of the new system.

79. As of May 2021, the Development Coordination Office, which is located at Headquarters but also has a presence at the regional level, was almost fully staffed, with a total of 89 staff on board (60 per cent female and 49 per cent of the total from programme countries); a slight decrease in numbers from March 2021 as a result of staff turnover.

Figure VII
Staffing of the Development Coordination Office teams in New York and in the regions



Source: Development Coordination Office.

80. The Development Coordination Office, which is located in New York but also has regional outposts, serves as the engine room of the resident coordinator system. Its teams in New York are responsible for the professional effectiveness and personal well-being of resident coordinators and resident coordinator office staff, as well as the administrative needs of its five regional offices and 131 resident coordinator offices, including with regard to the provision of surge capacity needs where they arise. Its policy and programme staff help advance United Nations leadership and system-wide contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals through corporate policies and strategic guidance, common standards and quality control, communication, and information platforms. Of critical importance is the engagement at all levels, and with all parts of the United Nations system, to support countries at every step of delivering the next generation of transformative United Nations country team planning and programming instruments. A dedicated team also supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Group in advancing innovations in common business operations. The staff of the Development Coordination Office also enables improved system-wide data collection, information and knowledge management, as well transparent and high-quality progress reporting on behalf of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. The Office is also responsible for resource mobilization for the resident coordinator system, engaging Member States and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and for ensuring full transparency of United Nations Sustainable Development Group results to the Economic and Social Council and partners as part of reporting and accountability requirements.

81. At the global level, the Development Coordination Office supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Group in ensuring improved policy and planning by facilitating the development of guidance and tools to guide resident coordinators and their teams in developing common country analyses and Cooperation Frameworks and other similar collective planning documents, while also performing quality control throughout the planning processes for 131 resident coordinator offices covering 162 countries and territories. Its leveraging of digital platforms to support resident coordinators in tracking results and enhance engagement with United Nations principal actors has brought new levels of transparency and collaboration. Its support role has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic response. During the early onset of the pandemic, the Development Coordination Office co-led with UNDP an inter-agency process to develop a United Nations framework for immediate response to the pandemic and an accompanying indicator framework, supporting the United Nations country teams in developing United Nations socioeconomic response plans to COVID-19 at the country level. It has been facilitating frequent information-sharing to support the work of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, including through peer exchange; co-chairing a global task force to ensure strengthened medical and isolation capacity to country teams; and ensuring the activation of business continuity plans across resident coordinator offices. The Development Coordination Office is now coordinating the implementation of inter-agency efficiency measures to advance new business operations strategies, common back-office services and common premises, and has played a key role in facilitating inter-agency collaboration and strengthening the collective engagement of United Nations principal actors with the resident coordinator system through its role as the secretariat of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. The Office has also been central to the push to ensure the centrality of the development perspective in the work of a number of United Nations Secretariat committees, and to translating system-wide strategies and intergovernmental outcomes, such as those on youth, disability, data, climate change, development financing and food systems, among many others, into action on the ground.

82. Regional Development Coordination Office teams, which essentially perform these Headquarters functions from within the time zones of programme countries, have served as the first port of call for resident coordinators in the region, contributing to increased analysis, assessment, programming and partnership efforts at the regional and subregional levels. Despite the varying experiences and maturities of regional Office teams, for the most part they are recognized as having built close working relationships with the resident coordinators/resident coordinator offices and with their regional partners within the United Nations regional architecture. They are seen to have provided high-quality advice and/or support in their chairing of the Peer Support Group, in assisting in the roll-out of the common country assessments and Cooperation Frameworks and, recently, in providing guidance on socioeconomic response plans to COVID-19 in numerous countries. They have been connecting resident coordinators with United Nations agency expertise, supporting professional networks and facilitating and convening discussions on a regional and subregional basis on issues of common concern. In addition, together with regional economic and social commissions and UNDP, they now provide secretariat support to the new regional collaborative platforms, supporting the Vice-Chairs of the platforms in dealing with the new architecture, including with regard to the new issue-based coalitions that tackle priority regional concerns of countries in the region.

83. The evidence shows that the Development Coordination Office has done well in delivering these services. Some 90 per cent of resident coordinators/resident coordinator offices considered the support received from the Development Coordination Office in New York in 2020 to be “very appropriate” or “appropriate”. The most positive ratings were for change management and information on the

repositioning of the United Nations development system, common country analyses and Cooperation Framework processes, as well as communications and advocacy. In addition, 94 per cent of resident coordinator offices rated the Development Coordination Office regional support in 2020 as “appropriate” or “very appropriate”, particularly in terms of facilitating knowledge-sharing, building capacity, providing quality assurance and guiding the implementation of the reforms.¹⁶ Feedback from a survey also commended the role of the Development Coordination Office as an effective secretariat of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, with a 96 per cent satisfaction rate.¹⁷ These findings were also validated by external studies: nearly all resident coordinators surveyed by OIOS agreed that guidance from the Development Coordination Office throughout the repositioning had been useful (97 per cent), timely (90 per cent) and comprehensive (89 per cent).¹⁸ The forthcoming Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network study has defined the Development Coordination Office support as “instrumental” in both operational and strategic guidance and the day-to-day management of resident coordinators, with the majority of resident coordinators reporting they had received adequate support on the management and accountability framework, the Cooperation Framework and common country analyses, and the business operations strategy.¹⁹

Closing the gaps

84. Though the early performance of the dedicated resident coordinator office and the Development Coordination Office capacities is impressive, internal and external feedback shows that there is still room for improvement.

85. At the country level, a review of the Development Coordination Office brought to light several areas in need of refinement within resident coordinator offices. First, there is need for further clarity between the roles of Partnerships and Development Finance Officers and economists in the resident coordinator offices. The OIOS advisory work also found that the Partnerships and Development Finance Officer position was often perceived to be at too low a grade to be able to deliver. As part of a broader review of the alignment of the titles of resident coordinator office positions with their core functions, the Development Coordination Office will adjust the terms of reference so that Partnerships and Development Finance Officers maintain a focus that is more squarely on the convening and leveraging dimension of the role, while the economists have a role that more naturally encompasses Sustainable Development Goal financing.

86. Second, resident coordinators and resident coordinator offices almost universally report that the administrative support for each resident coordinator office is not adequate to deal with the expanded convening role, the execution of administrative tasks previously performed by UNDP or with the increasing demand for support functions. In addition, they indicate a lack of dedicated capacity to effectively support the coordination of the business operations strategy and efficiencies, including common back-office development, common premises and other operational issues. In the proposed programme budget for 2022 submitted to the General Assembly, it is proposed that one Local level post be added to the resident coordinator offices. This addition reflects a substantial reduction in the scope of operational support services provided by UNDP personnel at the country level, and greater reliance on United Nations Secretariat systems for resident coordinator system operations. It will enable better achievement of the mandate while also contributing

¹⁶ United Nations Sustainable Development Group information management system, 2020.

¹⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, survey of headquarters of agencies, funds and programmes, 2020.

¹⁸ OIOS, “Early assessment of resident coordinator system reform”.

¹⁹ Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, *Is This Time Different?*

to management reform goals. It will also be important to identify ways to pre-position surge capacities for rapid deployment to resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams in the event of a significant development in a given country, as was the case during the recent transition in the Sudan and with regard to the challenges being faced in Burkina Faso.

87. Third, a joint review by the Development Coordination Office and the Department of Global Communications of the integration of United Nations information centres into resident coordinator offices in 44 locations revealed that, while nearly three quarters of resident coordinators and a similar proportion of information centre staff have expressed at least moderate satisfaction with the integration, especially where the information centres and resident coordinator office were housed in the same physical location, the merger did not produce a significant change in communications. Several resident coordinators noted that the profile of some information centres did not match the strategic communications needs of a modern United Nations country team. In addition, many information centre staff lacked the requisite seniority to lead effective inter-agency communications coordination. The Secretariat hiring freeze has also been detrimental to sourcing the needed talent. Dual reporting lines to resident coordinators and the Department of Global Communications also seemed to pose constraints, amid a significant increase in workload that included competing Department and resident coordinator requests. The Department and the Development Coordination Office will update job descriptions to clearly include the required strategic communications skills. Reporting lines will also be streamlined and clarified. Training is being offered, recruitment will begin in line with Member States' approval and a new strategic communications template aligned to the global communications strategy of the United Nations and to country Cooperation Frameworks will be realized to establish agreed communications objectives and strategic planning.

88. At the regional level, resident coordinators and resident coordinator offices report variances in the quality of the management and support that they receive from regional Development Coordination Office teams. United Nations entities also report the need to continue to elaborate the role of regional Development Coordination Office teams with regard to regional economic and social commissions, UNDP and United Nations agencies. While much progress has been made in recalibrating the architecture as part of the regional review, I encourage the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to closely monitor implementation and make any necessary adjustments, in line with Economic and Social Council resolution [2020/23](#). I will also consider whether the current country coverage of the regional offices of the Development Coordination Office adequately serves all regions. I have requested the Office to consider all options in this regard, while noting the need to leverage other United Nations capacities at the subregional level wherever possible, and that any proposed changes must remain within existing resources.

89. At the global level, on the occasion of a stocktaking exercise completed by the resident coordinators on the reform at the end of 2020, resident coordinators reported insufficient cross-fertilization and support from Headquarters with regard to partnerships, especially partnerships with the private sector and international financial institutions. They also called for concrete guidance that Data Management and Results Monitoring and Reporting Officers can use to support countries in addressing gaps in data on the Sustainable Development Goals in order to inform the monitoring of progress on the Goals and their follow-up processes, and improve policymaking, building on efforts to enhance data interoperability under the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General. In addition, resident coordinators reported that requests from Headquarters in support of reporting requirements and United Nations processes continued to outstrip the capacities of their offices, limiting the time

available to deliver on their country-level support functions. I expect the Development Coordination Office to continue to ensure opportunities for training, learning and growth to align performance levels across resident coordinator offices, including by ensuring that resident coordinator office skill sets are calibrated according to country needs and priorities. Reporting demands on resident coordinator offices should also be streamlined.

90. As with strengthening the leadership of resident coordinators, it is also important to consider the career paths of resident coordinator office professionals and their connections with the rest of the United Nations development system. To ensure the resident coordinator office workforce remains agile and engaged, the Development Coordination Office and the United Nations System Staff College are partnering on a “Resident Coordinator Office Learning Path”, an intensive training course to help resident coordinator office staff develop a common understanding of effective coordination engagement in support of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Development Coordination Office is also examining avenues for resident coordinator office workforce mobility across the common United Nations system, including United Nations Secretariat entities.

IV. Towards a strengthened United Nations country team contribution on the ground

91. It is clear that the fundamentals of the resident coordinator system are now in place and are largely functioning well. The ultimate test of the resident coordinator system, however, is whether it is facilitating an improved contribution from the United Nations development system on the ground – one that translates into better support for Governments to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

92. The present section considers the responsiveness of United Nations support to a country’s context, needs and priorities. It provides an analysis of the performance of the United Nations development system in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which dominated its first full year of operations. In addition, it examines the degree to which resident coordinators are facilitating a strengthened contribution by the United Nations development system in areas that are at the core of a paradigm shift in support of the Sustainable Development Goals: integrated policy and programming and Sustainable Development Goal financing and partnerships.

93. Overall, I am pleased with the direction of travel. The COVID-19 response from the resident coordinator system and the United Nations development system at large showed what can be done and that the system is capable of accomplishing development during an emergency response. It has set the bar, but a great deal remains to be done to meet the expectations and needs of the 2030 Agenda.

A. Better alignment to national needs, priorities and contexts

94. A key driver behind my initial proposals to reform the United Nations development system was the need for the system to better tailor its response to the diverse needs, priorities and circumstances of programme countries. This came from a recognition that for too long, international development assistance, including from the United Nations, had advanced a “one size fits all” approach and failed to appreciate the diversity of programme countries in terms of income levels, vulnerability, history, culture and more. It was also clear that United Nations presence in a given country had too often been determined more by patterns of donor funding than by development needs and that, in applicable countries, there was a need to

ensure more effective collaboration on Sustainable Development Goals across United Nations operations, whether for development, humanitarian assistance or peace.

95. In my report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review to the operational activities for development segment of the Economic and Social Council ([A/76/75-E/2021/57](#) and [A/76/75/Add.1-E/2021/57/Add.1](#)), I outlined the extensive steps that have been taken to ensure the new resident coordinator system delivers better in these areas.

96. First, to improve alignment with national needs, priorities and contexts, the Development Coordination Office has supported the overhaul of the tools and processes for conducting common country analyses and developing Cooperation Frameworks. The new guidance emphasizes the shift to a new generation of United Nations support that is based on data-driven analyses of country needs, improved agility to adapt to changing needs, integrated and tailored support to country priorities, ensuring the configuration of relevant United Nations country team capacities to deliver results and a funding framework aimed at leveraging all funding sources and financing channels. All United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks are developed in consultation with national partners and are approved by national Governments.

97. Second, we have undertaken extensive efforts to tailor the resident coordinator system and the United Nations development system offers to the specific needs of countries in special situations. The new arrangements emerging from the regional review seek to ensure that United Nations country teams can more readily draw on United Nations development system capacities at the regional level in response to specific country needs. This is particularly the case for the regional collaborative platforms and the related issue-based coalitions. Rapid progress is being made in boosting the United Nations offer to small island developing States through strengthened multi-country offices, including a new North Pacific multi-country office, the recruitment of coordination specialists in countries serviced by multi-country offices and stepped-up contributions from individual United Nations entities. Issue-based coalitions of the regional collaborative platforms are especially useful to boost analytical and policy development capability on priority challenges at the regional and subregional level to complement the efforts of United Nations country teams. Specific steps have also been taken to better connect the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States with resident coordinators and to ensure coherence between global, regional and country-level action in follow-up to the Samoa Pathway and the Istanbul and Vienna Programmes of Action. Similarly, we have taken steps to boost the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda to maximize all opportunities for collaboration across the continent, supported by a joint monitoring framework.

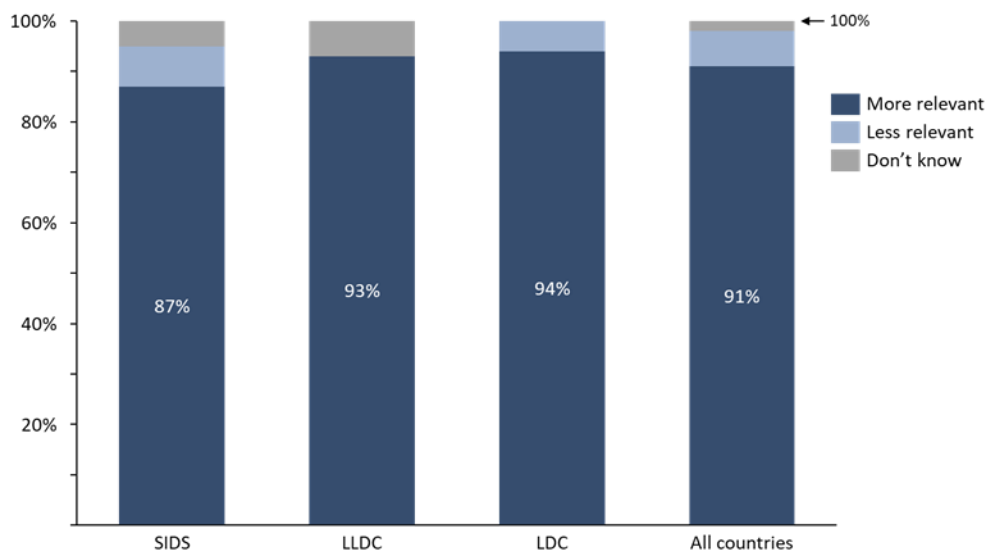
98. Third, to strengthen collaboration across our development, peace and humanitarian operations, the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration was established in 2018. With a joint secretariat made up of representatives from the Development Coordination Office, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP and the Peacebuilding Support Office, the Joint Steering Committee is engaging both United Nations and external partners and is placing a particular focus on eight priority countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. A considerable effort is also under way to ensure that guidance from Headquarters helps to translate cross-pillar mandates into practice. Dedicated support is also being provided for resident coordinators who are double- or triple-hatted as Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and/or humanitarian coordinators, to enable them to facilitate better coordination within the United Nations country team and strengthen the

approach to holistic and resilient programming. The new talent pipeline for resident coordinators/humanitarian coordinators will also strengthen the Organization's capacities to deliver in this area.

99. Available data shows that these steps are beginning to have effect on improving the tailoring of United Nations development system support to country context, needs and priorities, as elaborated below in the context of diverse situations including the Sahel and Central America. A total of 91 per cent of programme country Governments report improved alignment to their national needs over the past three years. This is particularly the case for 94 per cent of least developed countries and landlocked developing countries and 72 per cent of small island developing States (see figure VIII). External studies confirm that joint work has grown over the past two-and-a-half years, enabled by the reforms,²⁰ and that the reform of the resident coordinator system has reportedly reinforced or introduced effective planning processes with host Governments that have resulted in closer alignment with government priorities.²¹ In addition, 87 per cent of programme county Governments agree that the United Nations presence is adequately tailored to meet the specific challenges of their country (up from 76 per cent in 2019).

Figure VIII

Change in the alignment of the United Nations with national needs over the past three years



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of programme country Governments.

Abbreviations: LDC, least developed countries; LLDC, landlocked developing countries;

SIDS, small island developing States.

100. In terms of improving coherence across United Nations pillars, according to the survey conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 76 per cent of programme country Governments agreed that, in 2020, resident coordinators contributed to building stronger improved synergies across development, humanitarian and/or peacebuilding interventions. Furthermore, 77 per cent of Governments responded that the United Nations system currently works more collaboratively than before the repositioning exercise began, compared with 70 per cent in 2019. United Nations entities indicate some similarly positive trends, with 81 per cent of United

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ OIOS, "Early assessment of resident coordinator system reform".

Nations entities reporting that they were involved in identifying collective outcomes across development, humanitarian and peacebuilding interventions in 2020, compared with 75 per cent in 2019. Box 3 provides some specific examples that highlight the variety of ways in which we are seeing improved collaboration across United Nations operations, with a view to advancing the 2030 Agenda.

Box 3

Resident coordinator system in action: addressing fragility and strengthening collaboration for sustainable development

Unifying all actors to bring hope in a time of crisis. The catastrophic port of Beirut explosions of August 2020 compounded long-standing and deep structural development challenges in Lebanon. Immediately thereafter, under the convening power of the Resident Coordinator, the United Nations development system conducted a rapid damage and needs assessment together with the World Bank and the European Union. This informed the development of a reform, recovery and reconstruction framework through an inclusive and participatory process that brought together the priorities of the Government and line ministries, civil society, the private sector and academia, as well as the development and diplomatic community. This whole-of-system approach under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator set the tone for addressing the humanitarian-development nexus as the next hurdle.

Facilitating transitions and more effective collaboration between United Nations operations. In the Sudan, while still a work in progress, robust collaboration has been established between the United Nations country team and the new United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan under the renewed resident coordinator system leadership in support of the political transition, the implementation of peace processes, the path on peace- and governance-building and the mobilization of economic and development assistance. Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the United Nations in the Sudan will also develop a common country analysis in 2021. In Haiti, the Development Coordination Office, as a dedicated coordination function for development, has worked closely with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Department of Peace Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and OHCHR to improve joint planning and programming at all phases of the One United Nations initiative, particularly with regard to social protection, food systems and disaster risk reduction, as the country transitions towards a path to sustainable development. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Resident Coordinator is anticipating the future downsizing of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a shift towards a more development-oriented transition process. In all these instances, the Resident Coordinator also serves as the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Humanitarian Coordinator.

Supporting the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees. In Peru, the Resident Coordinator has played a key leading role, together with IOM, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and WFP, in advocating for adjustments to national public policies regarding over 1 million refugees and migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Among the recent policy changes to which the United Nations system contributed are: a migrant regularization programme that was approved in October 2020; the simplification of documentation requirements for asylum seekers to obtain humanitarian residence status; the inclusion of refugees and migrants in the national comprehensive health insurance programme; and helping to establish key policy instruments such as a migratory governance platform and the specialized survey on the living conditions of the Venezuelan population residing in Peru.

Leveraging the 2030 Agenda and a coherent United Nations response to prevent violence. In advance of the 2020 elections, the risk of a major escalation of violence was extremely high in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. To prevent this from occurring, the Resident Coordinator engaged closely with the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General and the entire United Nations country team, including the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, UNDP, OHCHR and UN-Women, to facilitate coordinated outreach to all sections of society as well as the international community. In addition, the Peacebuilding Fund quickly invested in a programme for dialogue and mediation across the country. Here, the 2030 Agenda provided an acceptable platform for all stakeholders to engage in a dialogue and the United Nations country team was able to organize local dialogues quickly, building on the contacts and trust built over the years with subnational partners. Thanks to these and other efforts, the election occurred peacefully, and power was handed over almost instantly after the results were published.

Identifying opportunities for subregional development. In response to a request from the Governments concerned, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean led a process with resident coordinators and United Nations entities at the regional level to develop a comprehensive development plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and south-south-eastern Mexico. The plan was finalized in March 2021 and seeks to mobilize investment for large-scale programmes that will spur sustainable development across the region, thereby tackling six structural causes of migration (unemployment, poverty and inequality, violence, natural disasters, food insecurity, and family reunification and displacement) and supporting safe, regular and orderly migration. In the Sahel, the Secretary-General appointed the first-ever Special Coordinator for Development in 2021 to lead the collective efforts of the Resident Coordinators and United Nations country teams and the United Nations system to implement the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and its support plan for a scaled up United Nations development response for the Sahel, drawing on all the United Nations assets in the region and engaging and supporting the efforts of the Group of Five for the Sahel, the Sahel Alliance, the Ministerial Coordination Platform for the Sahel, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the European Union, the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

Closing the gaps

101. Overall, I am greatly encouraged by the contribution the new resident coordinator system has made to aligning United Nations development system support to national priorities, needs and contexts and to supporting better transparency and accountability for results. But more can be done.

102. First, we must continue to sharpen the United Nations development system offer in least developed countries. Resident coordinator engagement in support of the upcoming Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, scheduled for January 2022, will be key. The resident coordinators and United Nations country teams in the five least developed countries that were recommended for graduation by the Committee for Development Policy in February 2021²² will need to engage proactively with the inter-agency task force on least developed country graduation to support the transition. In relation to landlocked developing countries, I have urged the United Nations system to ensure a dedicated focus on landlocked developing countries at the second Global Conference on Sustainable Transport, particularly as countries seek to stimulate an employment-intensive, inclusive and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. In small island developing States, we

²² Bangladesh, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal and Tuvalu.

must continue to push forward with the changes being advanced through the multi-country office review. Together with our efforts to develop a vulnerability index and address debt and liquidity concerns in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, we must ensure that these changes translate into tangible improvements on the ground.

103. Second, in terms of improving collaboration across development, peace and humanitarian operations, United Nations development system entities report challenges regarding the definition of “collective outcomes” and how they should be featured in current planning tools, such as Cooperation Frameworks, humanitarian response plans and integrated strategic frameworks. This will need to be addressed going forward. It is also essential to ensure adequate financing and address the “silo approach” of donors to funding channels for humanitarian, development and peace actions. There is also the need to improve common understanding and acceptance of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus within the United Nations and among development partners and address behavioural barriers and non-complementary budgetary and staffing practices within the Organization. Recent examples in Myanmar and Ethiopia also demonstrate the challenges of operating in some of the most politically complex environments. Such concerns have also been highlighted by Member States over the course of the consultations for the present report.

104. As we advance work in response to the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, I will continue to encourage United Nations entities to work collectively to strengthen cross-pillar integration and broaden our partnerships in fragile settings, which are critical to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. This will require careful analysis, planning and prioritization, complemented by resources for a strategic division of labour that leverages different entry points towards a common approach not just within the United Nations, but also through partnerships with external actors, including civil society, cities, international financial institutions, technical experts and the private sector. Efforts to address issues on collective outcomes and joint programming, and increase understanding of the different principles, tools and approaches will continue, and will include talent management policies and behavioural solutions. While double-hatted resident coordinators represent just 13 per cent of resident coordinators and triple hatted resident coordinators less than 9 per cent, it is absolutely critical that these resident coordinators have the appropriate profile, skill sets and experience to fulfil their duties and support the Organization in delivering for the people it serves, in line with international law. The new resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator talent pipeline will strengthen our capacities to deliver in this area, taking into particular consideration the critical role of the Deputy Special Representative/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator in integrated mission contexts. I also urge Member States to facilitate progress in this area by exercising greater flexibility in funding channels. The integration efforts of the Organization, complemented by support from Member States, will enhance the ability of United Nations actors system-wide to strategically align mandates, tools and instruments towards more effective action. This will include cross-cutting considerations, such as human rights and protection and the use of an age- and gender-diversity lens to ensure that no one is left behind.

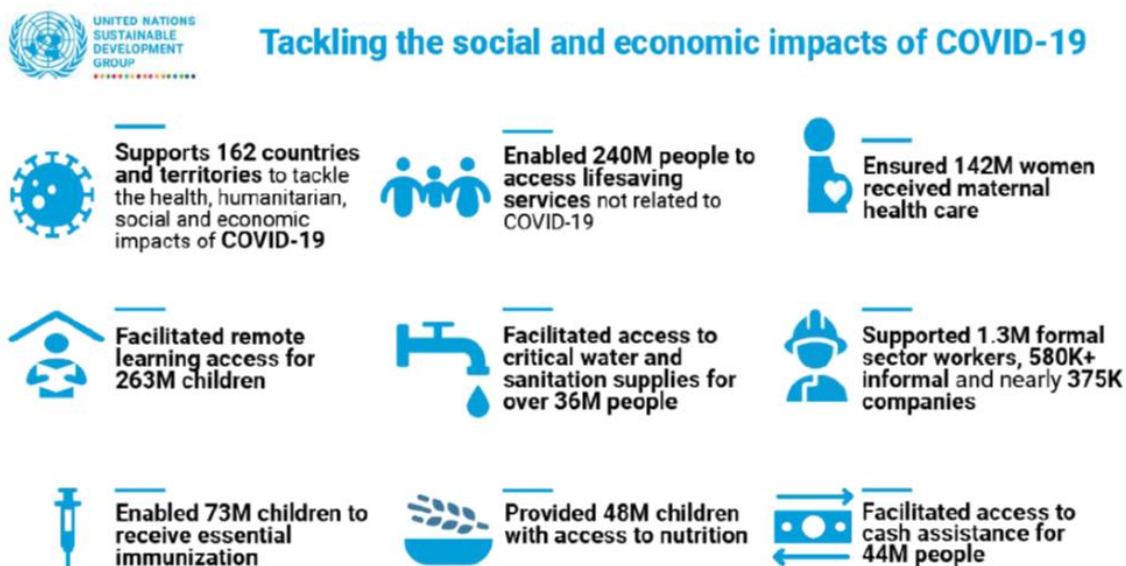
B. An effective response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

105. The COVID-19 pandemic is causing immense hardship and disruption across the world. It is also providing an early test of the capacity of the new resident coordinator system to effectively coordinate United Nations country teams and to mobilize an effective response by the United Nations development system to large-scale socioeconomic needs, in line with country priorities.

106. After I issued my call for shared responsibility and global solidarity in the face of the pandemic in March 2020, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group

quickly developed a global framework for immediate socioeconomic response to guide the development of United Nations socioeconomic response plans to COVID-19 in countries. Resident coordinators coordinated the development of 121 such plans, with UNDP as technical lead, covering 139 countries and territories. The plans support the provision of essential services, strengthen social protection services, protect jobs and vulnerable workers and maintain social cohesion while setting the foundations for a better recovery. Over the course of 2020, \$3 billion was repurposed by 126 United Nations country teams and an additional \$2 billion in new resources was mobilized.

107. As set out in greater detail in the report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group ([E/2021/55](#)), these efforts have translated into concrete measurable results that have a direct impact on people's lives:



108. These results speak to the enormous efforts of United Nations entities across the development system and a unity of spirit and purpose that speaks to the core values of the United Nations. Feedback from programme country Governments and findings from independent studies also point to the pivotal role played by the resident coordinator system in bringing about those results, with some 91 per cent of the Governments agreeing that resident coordinators have ensured that there has been a coherent United Nations response to the pandemic. Similarly, the OIOS advisory work noted that reforms had facilitated the speed of the response and that the clear coordination and leadership of the Resident Coordinator vis-à-vis the host Governments had been appreciated by national officials. In all countries where OIOS undertook case studies, United Nations country team members noted that resident coordinators had continued to engage them on all aspects of the response, and as a result each felt they understood what the other was doing. In addition, in some instances, working through the resident coordinator office, agencies were able to launch more coordinated funding appeals, while resident coordinators supported a coordinated approach with the immediate health response led by WHO and the humanitarian response led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

109. The early evaluability assessment of the COVID-19 response pointed to some specific factors that enabled this effective and coherent response. First, it noted the existence of the global framework that brought together United Nations entities at the national, regional and global level – providing “light touch” parameters to guide United Nations country teams while preserving the space for each country team to respond directly to country priorities and context. The development of an

accompanying monitoring framework, with a set of 18 indicators, disaggregated by type of programme, territory (rural/urban), sex, age group and at-risk populations, and complemented by health, humanitarian and human rights indicators, facilitated the tracking of system-wide results through the Development Coordination Office-managed UN Info platform. It also spurred the development of a public-facing online portal that provided unprecedented transparency and real-time information on the United Nations development system response. Second, a shared understanding among the United Nations Sustainable Development Group as to the lead role of UNDP on the socioeconomic pillar of the response has allowed the Organization's largest development agency to make a significant contribution alongside the coordination role of resident coordinators, and in a manner that also leveraged the capacities of other United Nations entities. Third, the COVID-19 response and recovery multi-partner trust fund has been an important driver of an integrated, coherent United Nations country team response.

110. The contribution of the United Nations development system to the pandemic response, leveraging the coordination, convening and leadership value of resident coordinators, is hugely encouraging. It shows what can be done and has served to accelerate certain components of the reforms, including in terms of joint planning, resource mobilization, monitoring and accountability. It has set the bar high for the future for an improved contribution from United Nations country teams to recovery efforts and during the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals.

111. At the same time, the pandemic still rages in many parts of the world, particularly in the light of unacceptable levels of vaccine inequity. It is essential that resident coordinators continue, under the technical lead of UNICEF and WHO, to do everything possible to ensure effective vaccine planning and roll-out. They must also provide the necessary coordination to ensure care and support for United Nations staff and ensure business continuity, as has been achieved recently through UNDP support for the participation of developing country representatives in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations platform. It is also crucial to continue to support resident coordinator efforts to mobilize resources for pooled funds to enable an effective Sustainable Development Goal response from United Nations country teams.

C. A shift in the nature and quality of Sustainable Development Goal support

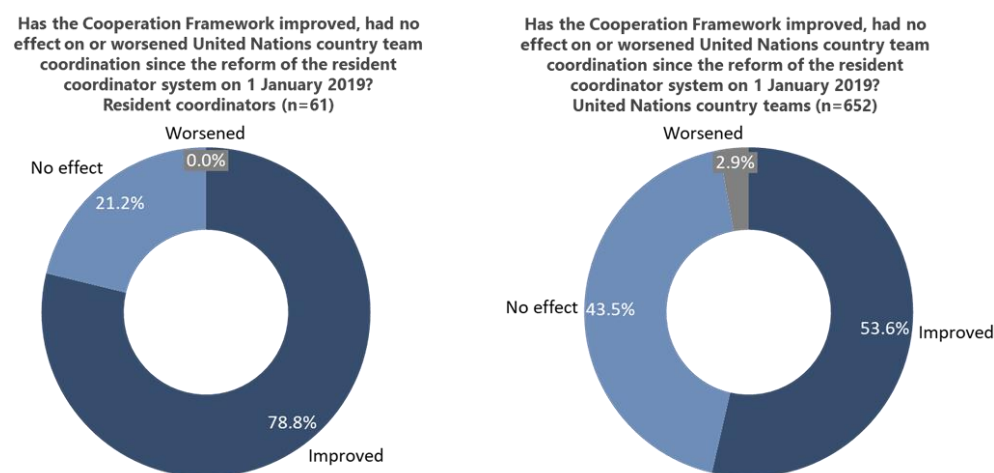
112. The initial review that I commissioned at the outset of the reforms pinpointed how the United Nations development system needed to change to maximize its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. Central to this was a shift from a heavily project-based, fragmented approach that focused largely on the areas covered by the Millennium Development Goals to an approach that facilitated the provision of integrated support, spanning policies, programming, partnerships, financing and data, in response to country priorities for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

113. The primary vehicle for operationalizing this change is the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. It represents the single most important instrument for the United Nations country team's offer of Sustainable Development Goal support to countries, against which configuration is to be refined; entity country programme documents are to be developed; joint resource mobilization is to be advanced; and country team performance and results are to be measured. By the end of 2021, more than half of country teams will have replaced previous United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks with next-generation Cooperation Frameworks and almost all United Nations socioeconomic response plans will also have been subsumed under the Cooperation Framework.

114. Initial feedback from programme country Governments suggest that this focus on transformative, joint programming is beginning to have the desired effect. For instance, 92 per cent of programme country Governments agreed that the Cooperation Frameworks have enabled them to ensure that United Nations operational activities effectively address and respond to national priorities, up from 89 per cent in 2019, and 78 per cent of Governments see improved focus on common results, compared with 74 per cent in 2019. This has been validated by external studies as well. The Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network underscores the progress made with regard to developing the new common country analyses and Cooperation Frameworks under the leadership of resident coordinators as the main area of progress for United Nations country teams, in addition to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. OIOS also noted that most resident coordinators and a majority of United Nations country team members reported improved coordination resulting from the introduction of the Cooperation Frameworks and common country analyses (see figure IX).

Figure IX

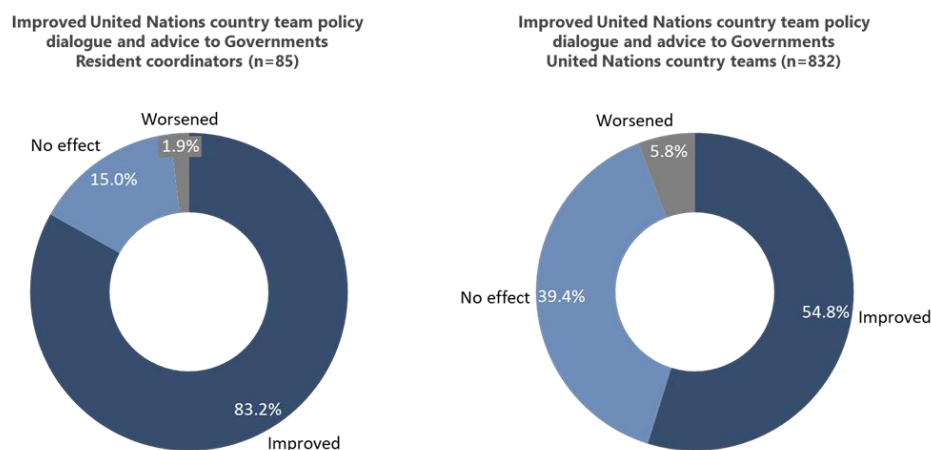
Impact of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework on United Nations country team coordination



Source: OIOS.

115. Resident coordinators and United Nations country team entity heads report that the common country analysis and the Cooperation Framework process had significantly improved their ability to work together on policy advice. While there are differences in opinion between resident coordinators and country teams (see figure X), 89 per cent of programme Governments reported in 2020 that the United Nations adequately provided evidence-based policy support and 88 per cent indicated the United Nations adequately provided integrated policy advice (up from 77 per cent). This was also confirmed by the OIOS advisory work, which noted that the most significant contributing factors underpinning progress on policy support included impartial and skilful resident coordinator leadership on policy and host Government receptivity and capacity.

Figure X
Improving policy support to Governments



Source: OIOS.

116. The reform of the resident coordinator system has had more mixed results with regard to the implementation of joint programmes. Again, resident coordinators are more likely than United Nations country team members to give a positive assessment of the impact of reform on delivering more coordinated and integrated support implementation. Nevertheless, studies carried out by OIOS, United Nations country teams and resident coordinator offices reported that the new rules for working together have created a space for joint programming that did not exist previously.

117. Some may ask whether the new generation of United Nations country teams that is clearly emerging is a result of the new leadership, convening and coordinating role of the resident coordinator or of improvements in the approach taken by United Nations country team members. In my view, this is a distraction, creating division within the United Nations country teams when we know that we will only maximize impact through a joint and integrated approach. It also reflects an old way of doing business that fails to recognize the symbiotic relationship between United Nations country team members and resident coordinators. Strong coordination and policy and programming functions are both needed. Ultimately, effective resident coordinators will enable a more joined-up, coherent and impactful contribution by the United Nations country team. And as country team entities bring greater expertise, capacities and tools, their collective contribution to national needs and priorities will increase under resident coordinator leadership of the entire system.

118. Box 4 presents examples that illustrate this contribution in practice and point to the kind of transformative action that is possible in United Nations country teams across all 162 countries and territories over the course of the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Box 4

Resident coordinator system in action: resident coordinators and United Nations country teams driving Sustainable Development Goal transformation

Tackling poverty and leaving no one behind. The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the massive gaps in social protection coverage worldwide. In Timor-Leste, however, the United Nations leveraged its full capacities to facilitate the introduction by the Government of the first-ever nationwide cash transfer of \$200 per household, which reached 98 per cent of all eligible households in the country – 20 per cent of which were headed by women. The leadership, coordination and convening role of the Resident

Coordinator, the technical capacities of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and support from United Nations entities, including UN-Women, and the availability of resources through the COVID-19 response and recovery multi-partner trust fund combined to make this programme possible. In particular, the Resident Coordinator engaged directly with the Office of the Prime Minister and government ministers to channel the \$1 million in support from the United Nations through the Government's COVID-19 fund. As a result of the United Nations committing this support (to add to the Government's almost \$80 million in committed funding), other donors came on board and the programme was implemented in record time.

Supporting a green transition. The resident coordinator system is also demonstrating value in innovative climate finance, with resident coordinators bringing together United Nations country teams with domestic financial institutions, development banks and the private sector. For example, in Uruguay, the Resident Coordinator led United Nations entities (UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UN-Women and IOM) in their collaboration with the Government and the private sector to develop the needed capacities, legal and regulatory frameworks and new financial instruments to decarbonize the economy. In Serbia, the Resident Coordinator seized the opportunity offered by a public push for environmental action, identified a number of areas for joint or coordinated United Nations country team actions and led advocacy and partnership efforts that resulted in a close working relationship with the Government to fast-track decarbonization while strengthening the economy through new skills, new jobs and new market opportunities. The Resident Coordinator and the Resident Coordinator Office are also engaging extensively with international financial institutions and the private sector through the local chapter of the United Nations Global Compact, and with chambers of commerce and selected donors, to support small and medium-sized enterprises with the green transition.

Mobilizing partners to connect with, increase the skills of and empower youth. In line with the United Nations Youth Strategy, Generation Unlimited – a public-private partnership that includes youth, involving a range of United Nations entities and initiated by UNICEF – is currently active in more than 47 countries, bringing together the public and private sectors with youth to scale up impactful initiatives, with the aim of reaching young people in more than 100 countries by 2025. Resident coordinators are uniquely positioned to drive impact through Generation Unlimited. In Kenya, for example, where the Generation Unlimited steering committee is now housed in the Office of the President, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the entire United Nations system is providing technical support to the Government to operationalize “GenU Kenya”. Connectivity is one of GenU Kenya's priorities, and partners are working with ITU to mobilize private and public funding to connect schools to the Internet under the Giga initiative. Other key programmes include offering mentorship and community service-learning through the new digitized secondary-level competency-based curriculum and the Youth Agency Marketplace (YOMA) digital platform, which is currently linked to the Sustainable Development Goals Partnerships Platform, the Sustainable Development Goal Accelerator Labs and the Ajira Centers (housed at the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology, Innovation and Youth Affairs).

Tackling violence against women and girls amid a global pandemic. The past year has seen an alarming increase in the levels of violence against women and girls in every region, regressing on a key target of the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite the challenges, however, United Nations country teams have supported national Governments and worked with civil society, as a central partner, to deliver significant results across 23 country programmes. They did so by drawing on the Spotlight Initiative, a €500 million partnership of the United Nations and the European Union and a flagship programme of the United Nations development system reforms that engages 11 United

Nations entities. Under the leadership of resident coordinators and drawing on the comparative advantages and functional leadership of entities in an integrated manner, United Nations country teams leveraged resources which resulted in the strengthening of 84 laws and policies, access for more than 650,000 women and girls to gender-based violence services, and a 22 per cent increase in the prosecution of perpetrators of violence.

Mobilizing and leveraging finance to support national priorities on the Sustainable Development Goals. The catalytic investment component (SDG Invest) of the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund has already generated 28 climate-related proposals featuring both adaptation and mitigation measures, with an estimated leverage potential of \$6 billion. The role of the resident coordinators was critical in bringing together the United Nations country teams with domestic financial institutions, development banks and the private sector. In Gabon, the Resident Coordinator has been supporting the country's sustainability plan "Green Gabon" by bringing together United Nations entities, public and private financial institutions and investors to contribute, under the leadership of UNDP, to a "deeply green" integrated national financing framework that aligns public and private financing towards the green transition with a gender-sensitive budget. Overall, convening to support Governments in financing their own Sustainable Development Goal plans and strategies is an area where resident coordinators can play a much more proactive role and add considerable value going forward.

Rethinking vulnerability and improving aid eligibility for small island developing States. For the first time, a multidimensional vulnerability index for small island developing States is being developed and will be presented to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. Initiated and enabled through the leadership of the Resident Coordinators in Barbados and Samoa, it has drawn on the engagement of 13 resident coordinators/resident coordinator offices in small island developing States and on the expertise of the system. UNDP, FAO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization are also shaping the work on the multidimensional vulnerability index. The Sustainable Development Solutions Network is supporting this effort to ensure an independent output that meets the quality standard required for a composite index to be accepted by international financial institutions, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the broader development cooperation community. The initiative is a model of engagement both across and beyond the United Nations both internally and with external partners.

Closing the gaps

119. Notwithstanding such progress, we know that we still have a considerable way to travel before we see the full shift in the nature and quality of our support in all countries.

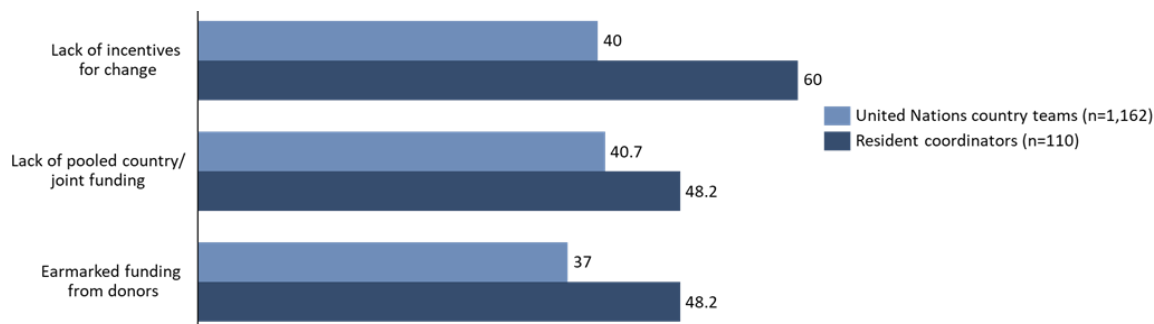
120. First, while the new programming instruments have enabled United Nations country teams to deliver joint planning and programming support, key elements facilitating joint work are still lacking. Entities point to persisting inter-agency competition and overlap of mandates.²³ This was confirmed by OIOS, which found mixed progress on addressing gaps and overlaps, with only a small majority of resident coordinators (54 per cent) and a minority of United Nations country team members (27 per cent) surveyed reporting improvement. According to external studies (see figure XI), the keys to progress in this domain are incentives to change and the availability of joint or pooled funding,²⁴ which is addressed in the next

²³ FAO, global survey of country representatives on the United Nations development system repositioning country-level implementation, 2019; UNFPA, survey of country representatives on United Nations reform comparative analysis, 2019–2021.

²⁴ Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, *Is This Time Different?*

section. A lack of streamlined administrative procedures among agencies also continues to slow down the pace for change.²⁵

Figure XI
Greatest barriers to effective reform



Source: OIOS.

121. Second, progress relating to optimizing the configuration of country-team capacities is mixed. I highlighted in section III how resident coordinators have facilitated expanded access by Governments to the capacities of entities that do not have a physical presence in the country. In addition, programme Governments themselves report satisfaction with the current composition of the United Nations country team in their countries,²⁶ and several United Nations country teams report that structured country team configuration dialogues have helped tap into a broader range of relevant capacities to deliver the Cooperation Framework.²⁷ Internal data, however, shows that there is still considerable room for progress, particularly with 31 United Nations country teams expected to initiate and complete configuration exercises over the course of 2021. As indicated in my 2021 report on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (A/76/75-E/2021/57, para. 35), I have requested the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to develop a clearer, more transparent pathway in this respect over the course of 2021 and 2022, including with host Governments. Only then will United Nations country teams be fit for purpose to deliver results in the context of the Cooperation Framework. In tandem, the Development Coordination Office will monitor supply and demand from United Nations development system entities that have a light footprint at the country level to inform the individual and collective actions of the members of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Host Governments can also play an important role in this priority.

122. Resident coordinators and United Nations country teams will benefit from appropriate capacities and skill sets to deliver results tailored to different country settings as additional improvements are implemented in line with the results of the multi-country office review and the review at the regional level. Many United Nations entities, including UNDP, UNHCR, UNFPA and UN-Women, have undertaken their own internal repositioning, taking into consideration the United Nations development system reforms and other drivers. Further work may be required, however, within all United Nations entities and across the United Nations development system to refresh and reorient skill sets across the system, with a focus on shifting from project management and programme specialists to policy capacities that can support inclusive economic growth and the green,

²⁵ OIOS, "Early assessment of resident coordinator system reform".

²⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, survey of programme country Governments, 2020.

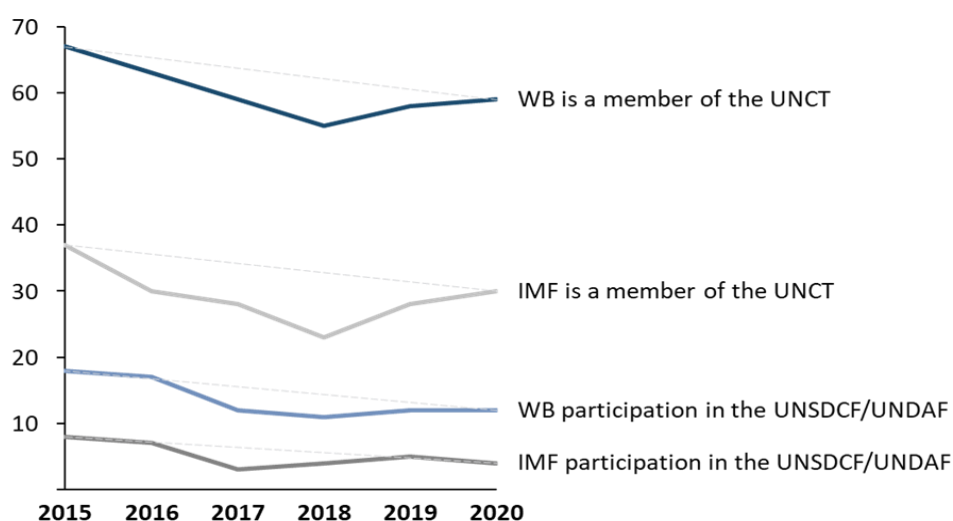
²⁷ Development Coordination Office internal monitoring of United Nations country teams that have conducted configuration exercises.

social or digital transitions highlighted in the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review. I believe there is a particular need to strengthen United Nations development system capacities with regard to Sustainable Development Goal integration, financing, data, technology and partnerships, and I encourage the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to prioritize collective actions on these fronts. I also encourage United Nations entities to consider additional internal incentives to facilitate collaborative actions in these areas, including by supporting staff mobility across agencies to strengthen a system-wide outlook and spirit.

123. Third, I am pleased that 85 per cent of programme countries agree that resident coordinators have advanced partnerships in support of national efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda and that the reform has clearly improved the participation of international financial institutions in United Nations country teams and United Nations collective programming. A majority (58 per cent) agree that collaboration between international financial institutions and the United Nations in their country has improved over the past four years.²⁸ At present, 44 of 130 United Nations country teams report having joint initiatives with international financial institutions to promote sustainable financial systems at the country level, mostly with the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank (see figure XII). Strengthening these partnerships is central to supporting countries in setting out integrated national financing frameworks and to mobilizing the resources countries require to drive energy, transport, agriculture, digital and other transitions. At the same time, there is considerable scope for progress. Unchanged from 2019, a little over half of programme country Governments agree that the collaboration between the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations in their countries has improved over past four years.

Figure XII

World Bank and International Monetary Fund participation in United Nations country teams and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks/United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks



Source: United Nations Sustainable Development Group information management system, 2020.

Abbreviations: IMF, International Monetary Fund; UNCT, United Nations country team; UNDAF, United Nations Development Assistance Framework; UNSDCF, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework; WB, World Bank.

²⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, survey of programme country Governments, 2020.

124. This is an area of critical importance for maximizing the contribution of the United Nations country team to national priorities. I encourage the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to identify ways to significantly boost our collaboration in countries with international financial institutions and other critical partners, such as the leading development agencies. In tandem, I will address this as a matter of priority in my ongoing dialogues with the leadership of international financial institutions.

125. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic response has demonstrated the value of a global framework that guides resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, ensures alignment of purpose between United Nations entities at the national, regional and global levels and monitors the results for collective impact. As countries emerge from this crisis, it is essential that the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and resident coordinators adjust all relevant instruments to support recovery efforts that can accelerate Sustainable Development Goal implementation.

D. More efficient operations

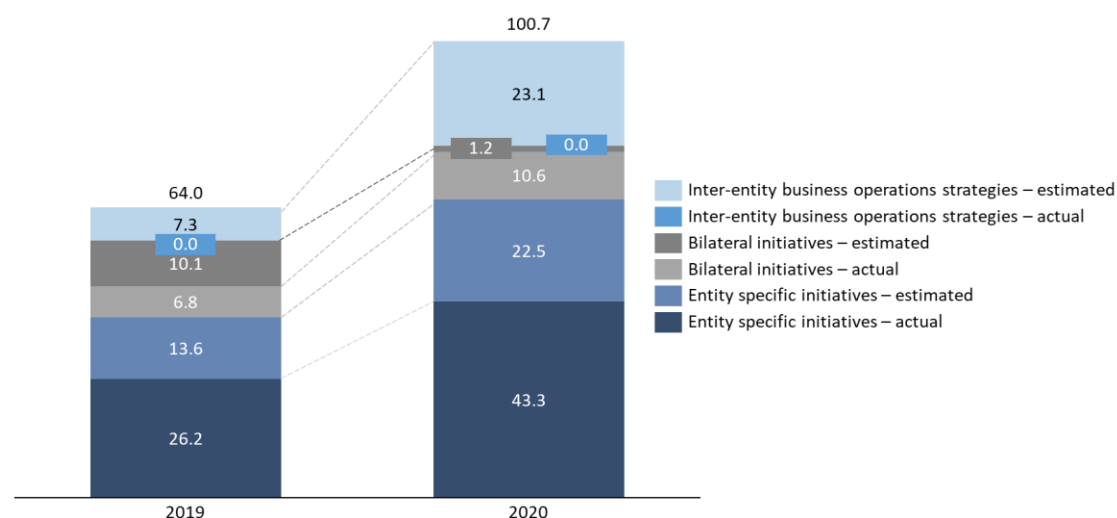
126. It is encouraging to see that new levels of collaboration across the system are also generating efficiency gains. This is in large part due to the impetus provided by the reforms and the extensive efforts by individual United Nations entities and United Nations country teams, bolstered by the coordination provided by the resident coordinator system.

127. In my report on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review ([A/76/75-E/2021/57](#), para. 41), I detailed those efforts as they related to rolling out business operations strategies, providing services through common back offices and global and regional shared service centres, establishing common premises and ensuring enhanced reporting on results and efficiency gains. Efficiency gains are estimated at over \$64 million for 2019, the first year of repositioning, and \$100 million for 2020 (including both quantified time savings and cost-avoidance estimates): a 57 per cent increase between 2019 and 2020 and an encouraging sign when considered against the originally estimated \$310 million in potential gains by 2022 (see figure XIII). The actual figure may be significantly higher, as only one third of entities currently have policies or mechanisms for measuring efficiency gains.

Figure XIII

Efficiencies achieved: cost avoidance and time savings

(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: Development Coordination Office.

128. These gains are an aggregation of efficiencies across different United Nations entities, countries and processes and translate into much-needed resources for programming, faster responses and more effective delivery of support to countries for achieving the 2030 Agenda. The largest share of efficiency gains has come from United Nations entity-specific actions (66 per cent). With the new resident coordinator system in place, gains from United Nations country team business operations strategies increased by 300 per cent (from \$7.3 million to \$23.1 million) between 2018 and 2020. Bilateral initiatives and global shared service centres produced further gains. I commend the United Nations development system for this unprecedented collective effort, and outline below some of the future steps that can be taken for further progress.

Closing the gaps

129. I am encouraged by the considerable progress over the past three years and see four areas for attention moving forward. First, it is essential to accelerate the development of global shared service centres, an area with significant potential for impact, using the existing infrastructures system-wide as the base to do so. Second, I urge programme countries, United Nations country teams and United Nations entities to make the necessary changes to allow for a shift to common premises and common back offices, as well as to ensure the implementation and realization of the initiatives outlined in the business operations strategies. Third, as several Member States noted in our consultations, the changes emerging from the implementation of the regional review may present opportunities for more efficient operations at the regional level. I urge the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and governing bodies of United Nations entities to continue to place attention on this issue. Fourth, acknowledging another set of concerns, it is essential that we see a significant increase in reporting by United Nations entities to their governing bodies on efficiency gains, from the current low rate of 40 per cent.

V. Moving to the next level: accountabilities and incentives

130. I have outlined the progress the resident coordinator system has made and the work that remains to be done to ensure an effective and coherent United Nations development system contribution in every country in which it operates. I have already set out some of the steps that can be taken to make this happen, ranging from improving the resident coordinator pool to improving the support provided by resident coordinator offices and the Development Coordination Office, from strengthening the substantive offer of the United Nations development system to sharpening skill sets, planning tools and partnerships.

131. In the present section, I focus on two additional areas that I cannot emphasize enough as being critical determinants of whether we can take the functioning of the resident coordinator system and the repositioning of the United Nations development system to the next level: the incentive for change provided by improved funding practices and the implementation of the accountabilities set out in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). Some progress has been made but, in both cases, the big shift in behaviour has yet to occur. Decisive action is now needed.

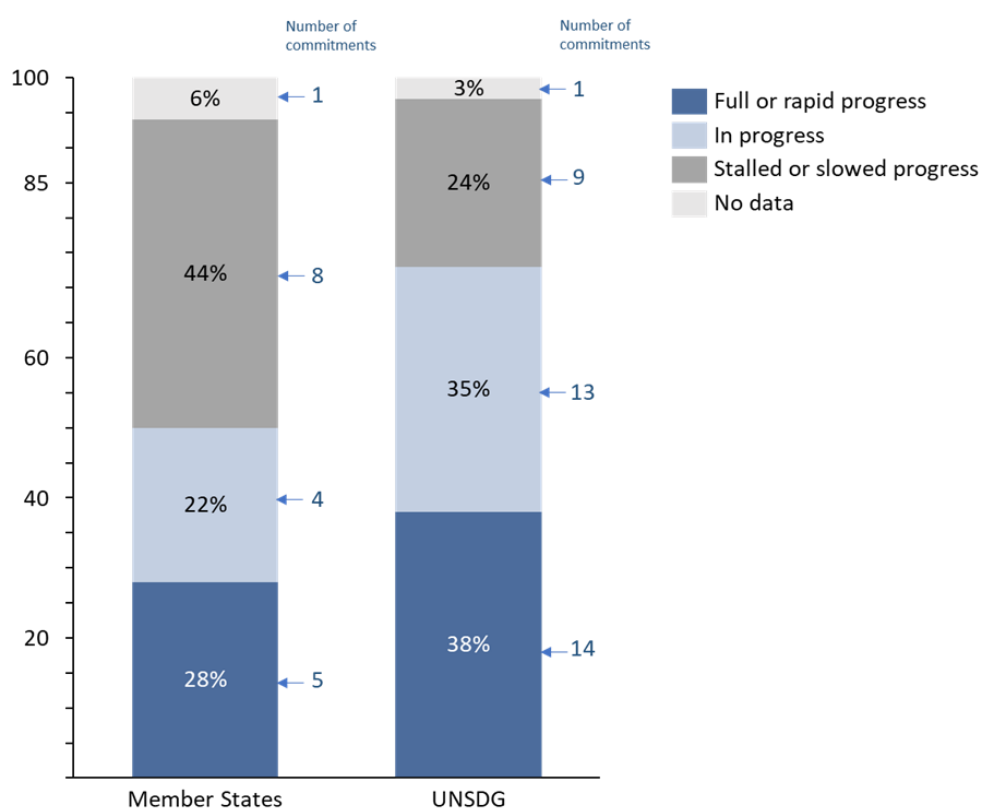
A. Incentivizing change through improved funding practices

132. In its resolution [72/279](#), the General Assembly enshrined the importance of a shift in funding practices to incentivize the repositioning of the United Nations development system, under a reinvigorated resident coordinator system. The funding

compact set concrete targets in this regard and provided a significant boost in confidence for United Nations agencies wishing to make the leap from single-entity action to a more collaborative and transformative support in response to country needs and priorities.

133. As documented in greater detail in the addendum to my 2021 report on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review ([A/76/75/Add.1-E/2021/57/Add.1](#)), important progress is being made in some areas of the funding compact by both Member States and the United Nations development system. In total, Member States have met or are making progress across 50 per cent of the 18 commitments in the funding compact (see figure XIV).

Figure XIV
Progress on funding compact commitments



Source: Development Coordination Office.

Abbreviation: UNSDG, United Nations Sustainable Development Group.

134. It is encouraging to see that progress is being made, for instance, towards increasing the core share of assessed funding for development-related activities and that contributions to key pooled funds and single-agency thematic funding has almost doubled in three years. I also commend those Member States who have facilitated the operationalization of the 1 per cent levy and made contributions to the special purpose trust fund for the resident coordinator system, addressed in the next section. It is, however, disappointing to see that the core share of voluntary funding to United Nations entities remains almost unchanged in three years and is some 11 per cent short of the funding compact target. It is equally concerning that capitalization targets for the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund are very far from being met. Similarly, there has been little or no progress on securing

multi-year commitments to United Nations development system entities and we have seen only marginal improvements in broadening the United Nations development system funding base.

135. I am keenly aware that the progress made so far by Member States has not come about easily and I also appreciate that the required changes in funding patterns challenge an approach that is deeply rooted in some institutions. For others, the required changes raise concerns relating to visibility, influence or oversight – concerns that can make it challenging to secure executive, parliamentary or even public support, especially at a time when pressures are growing on domestic budgets. At the same time, if these changes are not made, we cannot expect the agreed reforms to deliver to the maximum effect.

136. The case for predictable funding of the core activities of the United Nations development system and for investment in joint funds, such as the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, is a strong and convincing one. The scale of the sustainable development challenges that programme countries are facing is unparalleled and the risks associated with inaction are well established. And today, more than ever before, the value proposition of a better coordinated, more coherent, more transparent and accountable United Nations development system is clear. The multifaceted challenges the world faces today and the requirements of meeting the Sustainable Development Goals makes the system's offer unique, with its ever-improving diversity of skill sets, normative foundation, convening power and long-established relationships in countries across the world.

137. The next steps that Member States take vis-à-vis their commitments under the funding compact are of enormous import. Without significant progress, we risk having the United Nations development system reforms we have nurtured together over the past three years run out of momentum. In this regard, I strongly encourage a doubling down on funding compact commitments. As an additional measure, and building on the consultations recently launched by the President of the General Assembly, I encourage Member States to reimagine the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities to serve as a platform for announcing pledges for core and unearmarked voluntary funding and the capitalization of joint funds such as the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund. Held back-to-back with the operational activities for development segment of the Economic and Social Council, it would provide a platform to showcase the best of joint United Nations development system action on the ground under the coordination of resident coordinators and to publicly recognize those partners that are stepping up to help the system deliver on its promise.

B. Strengthened oversight and accountability

138. While funding patterns can provide an important incentive for a repositioned United Nations development system, strengthened oversight and accountability of results and compliance with General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) and the quadrennial comprehensive policy review is another important driver of change and is key to ensuring the proper functioning of the resident coordinator system.

139. A series of measures were agreed as part of the reforms to strengthen oversight and accountability, including on transparency, reporting, evaluation, the dual accountability function and oversight by governing bodies and the operational activities for development segment of the Economic and Social Council. As outlined in more detail in my 2021 report on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, we have seen some very significant advances over the past three years.

140. First, in the area of transparency and reporting, by the end of May 2021, resident coordinators had coordinated the development of over 100 annual United Nations

country team reports to Governments on 2020 system-wide results. Encouragingly, the quality of reporting has also improved.²⁹ At the same time, it is concerning that some 25 per cent of programme country Governments indicated in 2021 that they did not receive an annual United Nations country team results report in the previous annual cycle, and a further 30 per cent of respondents were unaware whether they had or not. This is not good enough. New guidelines have now been issued for United Nations country teams requesting that reports be produced within the first quarter of the year that follows the annual reporting cycle. Moving forward, it is essential that all resident coordinators and country teams produce, submit and discuss their annual reports with programme countries. At the regional level, it is encouraging to see the first annual regional United Nations development system results reports by the regional collaborative platforms in each of the five regions. At the global level, the 2021 report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the Development Coordination Office (E/2021/55) provided, for the first time, an overview of the contribution of the United Nations development system to Sustainable Development Goal progress, based on the COVID-19 socioeconomic response indicator framework. This is proof of the possible. If we are to be able to report on the full breadth of the United Nations development system contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals, it is also critical that United Nations entities invest in and fully utilize the common UN Info reporting platform to support analysis of system-wide results.

141. Second, we have also seen important progress in securing more joint and system-wide evaluation. More than 70 joint evaluations were conducted by United Nations development system entities in 2020. New guidance has been issued on Cooperation Framework evaluation, and an early evaluability study of the COVID-19 response has been undertaken. I have also moved forward plans to establish the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-wide Evaluation Office. The Office will provide a clear institutional function and leadership for evaluations of the Cooperation Frameworks. I will ensure that Member States are kept fully informed as we move to ensure the Office is fully operational by the end of the year.

142. Third, we have seen significant efforts by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to operationalize the dual accountability function set out in resolution 72/279, which ensures that United Nations development system country representatives remain fully accountable to their respective entities on individual mandates, while periodically reporting to the resident coordinator on their individual activities and respective contributions to the system-wide efforts of United Nations country teams towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This has been done through the agreement of the country-level component of the management and accountability framework, subsequent changes by United Nations entities to job descriptions and the sequencing of country programme documents. In keeping with General Assembly resolution 72/279 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/23, the chapters on regional and global functions are currently being finalized, setting out accountabilities and working relationships at the regional and global level in line with the principle of dual accountability across the three levels. The full management and accountability framework when finalized will provide, for the first time, a comprehensive accountability framework for the United Nations development system.

143. Fourth, as outlined in greater detail in my 2021 report on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, we have seen significant improvements in Member State oversight of the United Nations development system. Member States have rejuvenated the operational activities for development segment of the Economic and

²⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, survey of programme country Governments, 2020.

Social Council as the premier forum for United Nations development system accountability to Member States for their collective results. Changes have been made to its programme, and the two primary reports to inform deliberations have been strengthened. There is now also a much greater level of engagement between Member States and the principals of the system and resident coordinators. The governing bodies of United Nations entities have also stepped up their roles in ensuring implementation of the approved reforms by individual entities, ranging from action to support the cost-sharing mechanism for the resident coordinator system funding to annual strategic funding dialogues; from aligning planning cycles with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycle to ensuring that country programme documents are derived from Cooperation Frameworks.

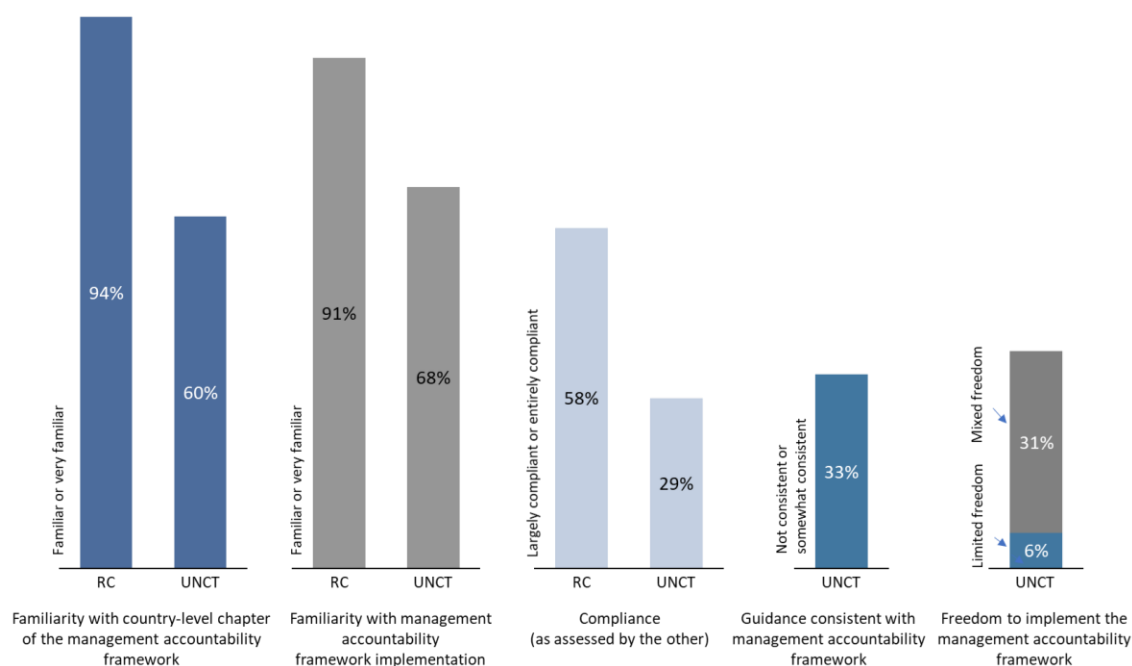
Closing the gaps

144. These are all important and significant steps forward that demonstrate the commitment of all parties to advancing the reforms. However, there remain several areas where further change is urgently needed, particularly as they relate to the dual accountability function.

145. Data available from the surveys conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and a survey led by the Development Coordination Office paint a mixed picture two years after the agreement of the new arrangements to operationalize the dual accountability function. Perhaps unsurprisingly, feedback from the country level shows a significant gap between the approach taken by resident coordinators and members of United Nations country teams, particularly members of entities that do not have a physical presence in a country. According to respondents to a survey on the implementation of the management and accountability framework at the country level, resident coordinators are 34 per cent more familiar with the management and accountability framework and 23 per cent more familiar with its implementation than United Nations country team members. Resident coordinators are deemed largely or entirely compliant with the new arrangements at twice the rate by United Nations country teams than country teams are by resident coordinators. Furthermore, 33 per cent of country team members indicated that the guidance from Headquarters was either inconsistent or not entirely consistent with the management and accountability framework. In addition, some 6 per cent of country team members reported having limited freedom to implement the management and accountability framework; a further 31 per cent reported mixed freedoms to implement (see figure XV).

Figure XV

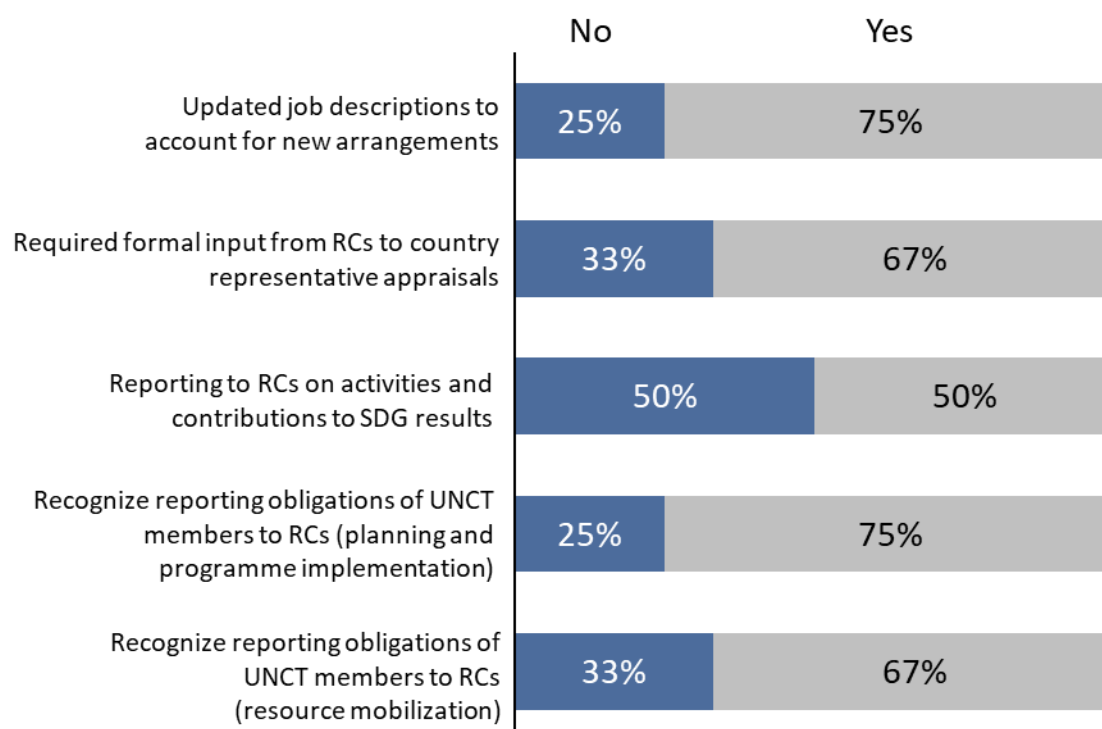
Resident coordinator and United Nations country team implementation of the management and accountability framework



Source: Development Coordination Office, management and accountability framework implementation survey, 2021.

146. Feedback from United Nations development system entities' headquarters is consistent with the feedback from the country level, with one in four United Nations entities reporting not having updated job descriptions of their representatives in countries to account for the new accountabilities arrangements; one in three not requiring formal input from resident coordinators to country representative appraisals; and one in two not reporting to resident coordinators on their individual activities and contributions to collective Sustainable Development Goal results. Similar trends are evident with regard to recognizing reporting obligations of United Nations country team members to resident coordinators, with one in four failing to do so on planning and programme implementation and one in three failing to do so on resource mobilization (see figure XVI).

Figure XVI
United Nations entities' compliance with key elements of the management and accountability framework



Source: Development Coordination Office, management and accountability framework implementation survey, 2021.
 Abbreviations: RCs, resident coordinators; SDG, Sustainable Development Goal; UNCT, United Nations country team.

147. The general sentiment of these findings – that management and accountability framework implementation is mixed – is reinforced by findings from external reviews.³⁰ The management and accountability framework survey provides insights as to some of the reasons behind the mixed progress. First, a lack of incentives or “enforcement” mechanisms. Second, with regard to performance appraisal, many resident coordinators felt that their input on United Nations country team member performance needed to be strengthened, while United Nations country team members pointed to a lack of systematic opportunity for them to provide feedback on resident coordinator performance. Third, ambiguities relating to the “integrator” role of UNDP were flagged, with many noting the need for a shared understanding among resident coordinators and country team members, and to clearly distinguish the programmatic role of UNDP from the coordination role of the resident coordinator. Fourth, the area deemed least clear related to responsibilities and accountabilities with regard to resource mobilization. There were requests for more clarity on mobilizing Cooperation Framework resources and inter-agency pooled funds, on resident coordinator roles in joint programmes and on the consistent sharing of results and budgetary information. Fifth, the issue of sequencing and aligning Cooperation Framework and country programme document processes, including in executive boards, to ensure such documents are derived from the Cooperation Framework, was highlighted frequently.

³⁰ OIOS, “Early assessment of resident coordinator system reform”; *Early Lessons and Evaluability of the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery MPTF*; and Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, *Is This Time Different?*

148. It is important to consider this data and the feedback from resident coordinators and United Nations country teams in its proper context. It is reasonable that changes of this nature will take time to fully mature and it is possible that the COVID-19 crisis may have slowed progress temporarily. In addition, I have also witnessed first-hand the commitment of United Nations Sustainable Development Group principals to operationalizing the reforms and believe, in most instances, staff and leaders are doing their utmost to make the new arrangements work.

149. At the same time, the challenges set out above are of significant concern. They go to the core of the leadership, impartiality and independence of the resident coordinator function and the functioning of a new generation of United Nations country teams. They highlight ongoing tensions at the core of the new accountability arrangements. They point to the fact that many resident coordinators still struggle to secure the necessary engagement by representatives of some entities on the ground and that some United Nations entities feel that the space they need to conduct their work on the ground is not always available.

150. While formally changing processes and terms of references is important, the reforms also require a change of mindsets and behaviours, from United Nations country teams, United Nations entities and resident coordinators alike. Since the outset of this reform process, I have also addressed the fact that these reforms are not merely about coordination, they are about leveraging coordination to maximize the contribution of the United Nations development system to respond to the challenge of the 2030 Agenda. This in turn demands a shift in the business models of United Nations entities, and here too, change has been too slow.

151. Having considered all the data and feedback from Member States during consultations on the present report, I believe decisive action is now needed. We cannot afford to allow ambiguity or perceived ambiguity to slow down the pace of reform implementation.

152. First, I believe there is a need for the General Assembly to reinforce the critical importance of adherence to the dual reporting function – both the letter and the spirit. This would send an important signal that the new arrangements are here to stay and must be fully implemented.

153. Second, to facilitate the important oversight role of governing boards, I am requesting the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to prepare a United Nations development system reform checklist, building on the results matrices prepared for boards by some entities. I also encourage the Group to develop a self-reporting scorecard on the implementation of the dual accountability function, the annual findings of which should be shared with all boards in advance of their annual sessions.

154. Third, I call on the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to ensure that the challenges outlined above regarding the role of the resident coordinator vis-à-vis United Nations entities are decisively addressed through regular reviews of the management and accountability framework.

155. The contribution of the largest development agency of the United Nations as technical lead of the socioeconomic pillar of the COVID-19 response demonstrates the potential of its integrator function. Now, that function must be taken to the next level as United Nations country teams transition over the coming 12 months from socioeconomic response plans to Cooperation Frameworks aimed at supporting national recovery efforts that also accelerate Sustainable Development Goal implementation. This is the collective responsibility of the entire United Nations development system – UNDP, resident coordinators and all United Nations country team members.

156. Fourth, the effective functioning of United Nations country teams places a premium on the performance of both resident coordinators and country team members. It is critical that the current system for managing the performance of resident coordinators be both fully implemented and reinforced, including through continuous guidance and feedback by the Development Coordination Office and yearly appraisals of resident coordinators informed by the inputs of United Nations entities at the regional level. In tandem, the collective accountability of country teams must also be strengthened. I therefore request each resident coordinator to lead an inclusive review of the collective contribution of the United Nations country team to annual results achieved under the Cooperation Framework.

157. With these changes, I believe we will remove ambiguities that are currently undermining implementation of the dual accountability function and we will further strengthen the ability of the resident coordinator system to leverage the maximum contribution by United Nations country teams to support national priorities for Sustainable Development Goal acceleration.

VI. Sustainability by predictably funding the resident coordinator system

158. The present report has shown that the resident coordinator system is functioning well, is already facilitating an improved contribution from the United Nations development system and is poised to move to an altogether higher level of performance if a number of important changes are made, including in relation to funding and accountability. However, even the most basic functions of the resident coordinator system cannot be guaranteed unless the system is funded adequately, predictably and sustainably.

A. The funding trajectory of the resident coordinator system

159. The importance of a well-resourced coordination function for sustainable development cannot be overstated. It was clear from the outset of these reforms that our common drive to empower and strengthen the resident coordinator system could not rely exclusively on its delinking from UNDP or its reinforced authority. An effective coordination function requires dedicated and consistent capacity and predictable resources to ensure resident coordinators are equipped with the appropriate skill sets to support the 2030 Agenda and serve as a centre of gravity for convening the partnerships required for success. Step by step, through the work of the five core Professional staff in resident coordinator offices, we are making strides in this direction, as outlined in sections III and IV.

160. In proposing the staffing structure and budget to reinvigorate the resident coordinator system, I exercised caution by optimizing current arrangements to the extent possible and minimizing additional costs. The system we have put in place is strongly anchored in the assets and resources of the entire United Nations development system, including the extensive operational and policy expertise of the Secretariat and the operational contributions and global reach of UNDP and other United Nations entities. In doing so, we managed to significantly scale up the capacities of the resident coordinator system without a major increase to the system's actual costs.

161. Before the reforms, the basic cost of the resident coordinator system was calculated at \$175 million per annum. This amount included funding for: (a) resident coordinators for 129 countries at the time; (b) a driver and an assistant to the resident coordinator in those countries; (c) highly variable resident coordinator office sizes, ranging from 1 or 2 staff to large offices of 50 or more staff when local resource

mobilization was successful (there was no consistency in coordination support to national Governments, United Nations country teams and development partners); (d) 12 Coordination Officers to support United Nations Sustainable Development Group regional teams; (e) 50 per cent time for 6 UNDP Assistant Secretaries-General, in their role as regional Chairs of the United Nations Development Group; (f) the former Development Operations Coordination Office; (g) services and facilities; and (h) travel for the resident coordinators. Historically, this cost had been carried predominantly by the UNDP budget. It also included contributions from United Nations Sustainable Development Group members, amounting to approximately \$37 million, or half of the current cost-sharing levels, as well as ad hoc contributions from Member States, which were not captured in a clear or systematic way.

162. Today, a fully staffed and capacitated reinvigorated resident coordinator system costs \$281 million per annum. This represents an increase of \$106 million over the previous underfunded and inconsistently capacitated resident coordinator system. This increase reflects a minimum carrying capacity of five staff members, with reprofiled competencies to cover key functions required to drive more effective United Nations country team responses across any setting. Effectively, the reform also significantly improved the post to non-post budget ratio. The increased weight of staff costs in post-reform resident coordinator offices brings more accountability to the results the United Nations development system is delivering with its dedicated expertise and skills. This strengthened role and enhanced coordination offer also called for a corresponding increase in the support capacities of the Development Coordination Office, including through new regional teams. The budget also includes \$35 million in flexible funding to catalyse in-country United Nations country team planning, programming and monitoring, including through the development of Cooperation Frameworks and related evaluations. As in the pre-reform case, such small discretionary funds are critical to enable the resident coordinator to facilitate collaboration among United Nations entities and convene partners on issues of key importance.

163. In my proposals to the General Assembly in 2017, I had strongly recommended funding the resident coordinator system, as a core function of the development arm of the United Nations, through the regular budget of the United Nations. At the time, my belief, after reviewing different funding options, was that only assessed contributions could help ensure our core capacities for coordination were not dependent on the vicissitudes of voluntary funding or inter-agency cost-sharing arrangements that require support from a multiplicity of governing bodies and which, up until the reforms, were not working in an optimal manner. Assessed contributions would also provide, we posited at the time, a greater level of ownership by Member States and credibility for our coordination function.

164. Even though the majority of the membership voiced support for a resident coordinator system funded by assessments, no consensus could be found. Member States, in turn, engaged in deep reflection and extensive negotiations on possible alternatives to fund the resident coordinator system, under the lead of the co-facilitators appointed by the President of the General Assembly to coordinate negotiations on the United Nations development system repositioning. I remain deeply grateful to Member States for showing leadership and commitment to finding a solution. This has shown immense ownership of these reforms and has helped garner support across the membership for the hybrid model, which is described in detail in the technical note circulated by the co-facilitators to the membership in mid-2018.³¹

³¹ United Nations, “Technical note: funding the reinvigorated resident coordinator system”, April 2018.

B. The hybrid model and its performance

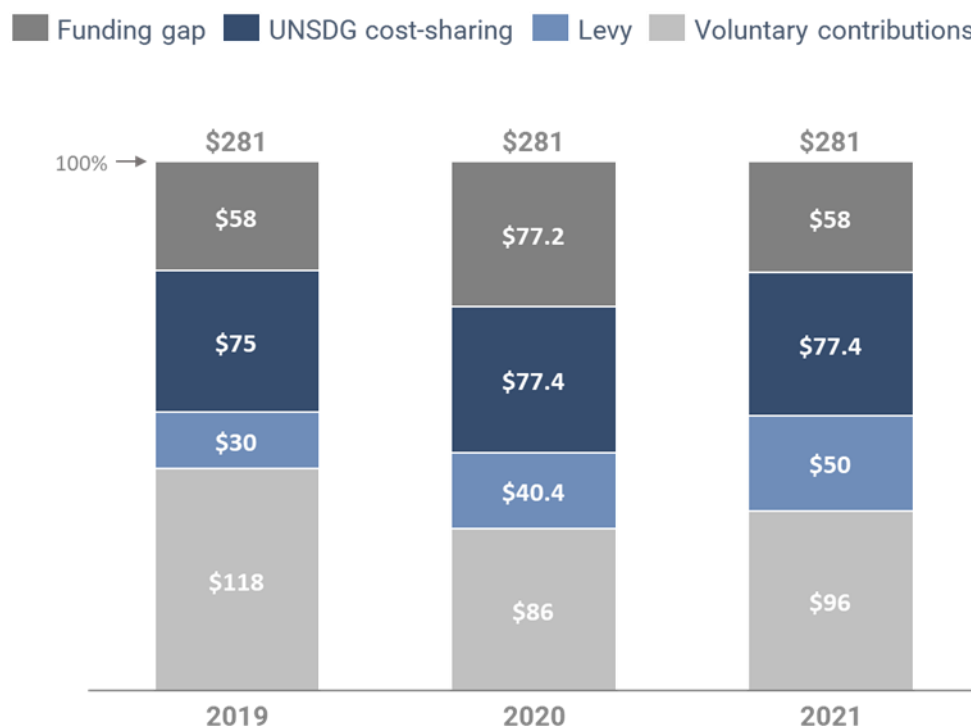
165. From the time the General Assembly agreed on the compromise model, I have spared no effort to ensure that we mobilize sufficient funding, leveraging the three related funding streams that flow into a single special purpose trust fund: voluntary contributions by Member States, the United Nations entity cost-sharing contributions and the 1 per cent coordination levy on tightly earmarked donor contributions to the projects of the entities of the United Nations development system. We have made strides and the hybrid model has allowed us to transition to a new resident coordinator system in record time, progressively reaching the required capacities.

166. The total income of the resident coordinator system has remained consistently above \$200 million, with \$223 million in 2019, \$204 million in 2020 and a projected income of \$223 million in 2021. However, the total required budget of \$281 million has not been reached to date, with funding gaps remaining at \$58 million in 2019, \$77 million in 2020 and a projected gap of \$58 million in 2021. Over the past three years, we have learned valuable lessons on the hybrid model and each of its components.

Figure XVII

Resident coordinator system funding received and funding gap, 2019–2021

(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: Development Coordination Office.

Abbreviation: UNSDG, United Nations Sustainable Development Group.

167. First, the United Nations entity cost-sharing arrangement has been implemented swiftly and across all United Nations entities, and had mobilized \$77 million, or 27 per cent, of the resident coordinator budget in 2021, exactly in line with initial projections and accounting for 34 per cent of the total income received in 2019 and 38 per cent of the total income received in 2020.

168. I was greatly encouraged to see Member States acting cohesively across all boards to endorse the doubling of the cost-sharing as requested by the General Assembly in 2018. Even in the unique governing model of ILO, tripartite actors rallied around the reforms to support the cost-sharing contribution. For the first time in history, the Fifth Committee approved a regular budget appropriation request in the amount of \$13,571,800 in 2019, representing the United Nations Secretariat share of the United Nations entity cost-sharing arrangement for 2019. It has been disbursing the same amount annually since. These actions give me confidence that we can count on sustained contributions over time from this funding stream. We have also gained an appreciation for the ownership the cost-sharing arrangement helps generate across the system. Finally, as we anticipated, while in some cases the doubling of the cost-sharing contribution has required an effort in some entities – typically smaller agencies already facing an adverse funding situation – in most cases the amount was accommodated without affecting programmatic resources in any notable way.

169. In 2020, all contributing United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities paid their share of the cost-sharing arrangement, with the World Meteorological Association and the International Trade Centre providing their contributions for the first time, and UNIDO fulfilling its promise to contribute its full share in 2020. As of March 2021, almost every United Nations Sustainable Development Group entity had also already provided its 2021 contribution – the remaining contributions were expected by June. In preparing for the review, the Group has also proceeded to revise the formula underpinning the current arrangements (see annex I). While some updates to data were made to reflect changes in variables (staffing, activities in countries, overall budget of each entity), the formula remains largely unaltered and the bottom-line contribution to the resident coordinator system remains consistent.

170. Second, the new 1 per cent coordination levy on tightly earmarked non-core contributions to United Nations development-related activities has generated a greater contribution year on year. The level of revenue for 2021 is projected to amount to \$50 million, or 22 per cent of the total projected 2021 income.

171. Initially, the annual levy revenue was projected at approximately \$80 million. The projection was based on data from 2016 which showed total tightly earmarked amounts of approximately \$8 billion. In late 2018, however, the projection was adjusted to a threshold of \$50 million for 2021, given the process of establishing levy-collection practices across donors and entities, the existence of legacy agreements for which the levy did not apply and the time-delay between revenue reported and cash contributions arriving in the special purpose trust fund.

172. Following open and intensive consultations with Member States and the United Nations development system, a guidance note was shared in March 2019 with methodological clarifications on the levy's operationalization.³² Member States and other funding partners have to a large part confirmed their preferred modalities for the collection and transfer of the corresponding amounts into the special purpose trust fund for the resident coordinator system (see annex II). A few key Member State contributors to the United Nations development system, as well as a number of private sector partners, are not systematically implementing the levy on eligible contributions.

173. While the General Assembly, in its resolution [72/279](#), indicated that the levy was to be paid at the source, only 2 of 30 Member States (Iceland and Sweden) and the European Union currently administer the levy directly. The remainder of the levy collection is administered by United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities

³² United Nations Sustainable Development Group, "Coordination levy; operational guidance", March 2019.

on behalf of donors. The agency-administered option of the levy has resulted in heavy administrative costs during the past two years, ranging from between 5 and 27 per cent of funding mobilized and transferred to the Development Coordination Office, depending on the entity.³³ By contrast, the donor-administered option has generated approximately \$36 million since 2019 with no transaction costs for United Nations entities and significantly less for donors. Use of the donor-administered option is therefore greatly preferred to the agency-administered option, as it significantly streamlines the process, leading to efficiencies and decreased transaction costs for both United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities and donors.

174. Furthermore, while the levy was conceived as an add-on to donors' contributions, donors have, in most cases, applied the levy from within their contributions instead, in practice making fewer resources available for programmatic activities. In such cases, these levy payments can be considered "foregone contributions", reducing the budgets which would otherwise be available to entities. This is avoided when using the donor-administered option, where payments come separate from, and in addition to, contributions to entities.

175. It is also important to recall that the levy was envisaged as a means to discourage tightly earmarked voluntary contributions to the United Nations development system. As outlined in the previous section, it appears that this has not occurred, given that tightly earmarked voluntary contributions to the United Nations development system have not decreased since 2018. It is, however, still seen as a tool, in the spirit of the funding compact, to discourage tight earmarking.

176. Third, voluntary contributions from Member States have amounted to \$86 million in 2020 and are projected to reach \$96 million in 2021. In 2019, a total of \$118 million in voluntary contributions were made, allowing for a smooth transition to the new system. At that point, four donors generously decided to front-load contributions for multiple years: Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg and Switzerland. Ten donors have signed multi-annual agreements: Ireland and Qatar (came to an end in 2020), Canada, Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand and Switzerland (coming to an end in 2021), Timor-Leste (ending in 2023) and the United Arab Emirates (ending in 2030). I am also heartened to see a continuous increase in the number of developing countries contributing to the resident coordinator system budget. As of the time of reporting, 44 Member States have made voluntary contributions, including 15 from the Group of 77 and China. I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to all Member States that have found ways to contribute to the special purpose trust fund within very tight timelines.³⁴

177. At the same time, the current voluntary funding levels are falling some \$28 million short of the \$124 million portion that was envisaged to come from voluntary contributions in the original 2018 hybrid funding scenario. Voluntary contributions are, needless to say, not bridging the gap in the levy shortfall, leaving the resident coordinator system highly vulnerable. In addition, while the donor base has grown, only 16 countries have made contributions in line with or above what would have been their equivalent assessed contributions, and some 97 per cent of 2020 voluntary contributions came from members of OECD.

178. While the current funding model has served the resident coordinator system well in its inception phase, I do not believe that its continued underfunding and the associated uncertainty is sustainable.

³³ United Nations Sustainable Development Group, Fiduciary Management Oversight Group data.

³⁴ Please see the United Nations Sustainable Development Group website for the list of countries that have made voluntary contributions since 2019.

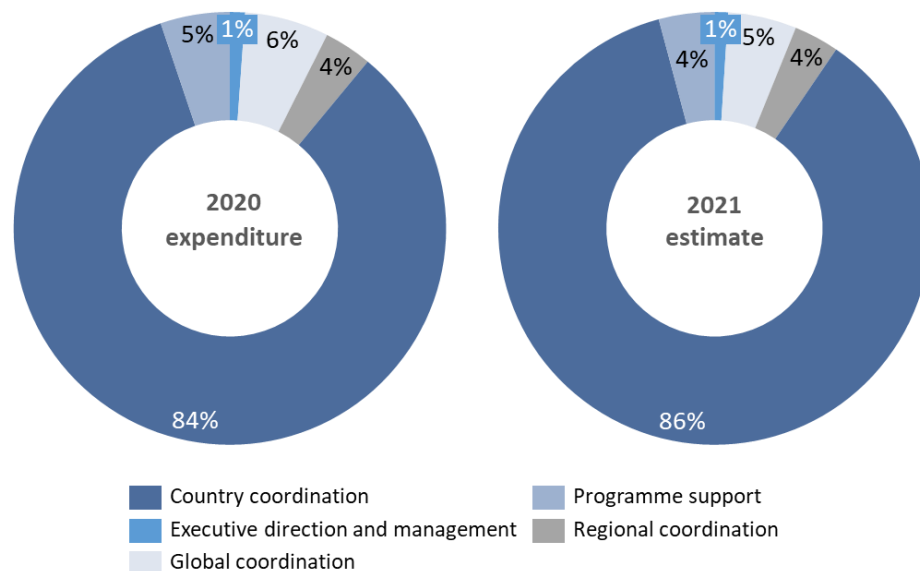
C. The right size of the resident coordinator system: overview of the Development Coordination Office and resident coordinator office capacities

179. The story of the resident coordinator system funding so far is one of relative success. Together, we have proved that the cost-sharing contribution, at current levels, is both viable and predictable. We gave life to an ambitious, yet uncharted, idea by Member States to introduce a 1 per cent coordination levy on strictly earmarked resources. And sufficient Member States came together with voluntary contributions to provide the resources needed for a successful start-up and proof of concept.

180. However, this success story is rapidly approaching an impasse. Despite significant efforts over recent years, 2020 saw a gap in funding of approximately \$77 million and a gap of \$58 million is projected for 2021, a gap in funding of 27 and 20 per cent, respectively. So far, this gap has not triggered an alarm, as the build-up of staff in the resident coordinator system has been staggered and initially the Development Coordination Office was able to maintain some legacy-funded staff from the previous Development Operations Coordination Office. In addition, savings accruing from reduced travel and other operational expenses owing to the COVID-19 pandemic helped to defray the yawning gap in funding. The current situation, however, creates a significant cash flow dilemma and causes uncertainty that will ultimately affect United Nations operations on the ground. Given current trends, when entering 2022 there will be insufficient resources available to maintain current capacities. In time, this will inevitably mean cuts to the core staffing capacity of the resident coordinator system and other critical tools that provide a foundation to the new system. It could also send waves of uncertainty across the United Nations development system, precisely at a time where behavioural change is in motion and confidence in the reforms is high.

181. There is no way around this. The resident coordinator system budget is essentially composed of a lean Headquarters capacity to provide backstopping to country operations. In 2020, 84 per cent of resident coordinator system expenditures were dedicated to country-level coordination, approximately 5 per cent supported programmatic support for resident coordinator offices and the remaining 11 per cent supported Development Coordination Office global and regional coordination. Under a fully funded budget in 2021, the share of spending at the country level would increase by a further 2 per cent. While evidently performing at high levels, the capacities of the Development Coordination Office at Headquarters and regional teams are strikingly lower than typical Headquarters to field ratios in other operational entities across the system.

Figure XVIII
Resident coordinator system, 2020 expenditure and 2021 budget estimate



Source: Report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the Development Coordination Office/resident coordinator system, 2021.

182. Reducing these capacities would have an immediate impact on the Organization's ability to support United Nations country teams, respond to Member States at the global and regional levels, including with regard to enhancing transparency and reporting, and ensure robust oversight of country and regional operations.

183. At the country level, given the impressive performance of the resident coordinator system to date, I am convinced that the five core capacities of resident coordinator offices have been well calibrated and remain essential within any country context. In the scenarios we have designed, removing any of these five critical capacities – coordination and strategic planning officers, economists, monitoring and evaluation specialists, communications officers, and strategic partnership advisers – would have serious consequences for our capacity to deliver. In fact, I do not believe we would have passed the litmus test of our response to the huge socioeconomic challenges brought on by the pandemic without these capacities, particularly those of resident coordinator office economists. I believe these five capacities are essential to enabling a more effective and transparent United Nations development system on the ground, in any country context. We need to level the playing field and ensure every country, large or small, has a right to this minimum coordination infrastructure.

184. In fact, several resident coordinators (36 per cent, according to the OIOS advisory work) and other partners have noted the need for additional capacities in certain cases, but I remain of the view that such capacities need to be identified and resourced separately, preferably drawing on existing capacities in the system that can be channelled in support of United Nations country teams, building on the model of Peace and Development Advisers, Human Rights Advisers and, more recently, Gender Advisers provided by UN-Women. Where we have triple-hatted resident coordinators, for example, additional capacities linked to the mission mandate are covered through the mission budget, with clear complementarity and without duplication in the functions. Since the advent of the new resident coordinator system, we have also seen the emergence of some short-term secondments of specialized staff to resident

coordinator offices, for example by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, that help deliver specific, time-bound support to the United Nations country team in an impactful and cost-effective manner. This is a path we should continue to encourage, while preserving the lean, five-core capacity resident coordinator office structure, together with Coordination Officers to support multi-country offices, that is starting to yield clear benefits. Advisory capacity to United Nations country teams, hosted in resident coordinator offices, should in no circumstances encourage resident coordinator offices to take on an operational or implementation role; we are monitoring this principle very closely indeed.

185. Over time, as we adjust to the new support ecosystem offered by the Secretariat, some efficiencies could be made, as outlined in my previous reports to the Economic and Social Council and to the Fifth Committee. This includes, for example, efficiencies generated by the merging of resident coordinator offices and United Nations information centres in countries. This merging allowed the Development Coordination Office to reprogramme funds initially allocated for communications to help fund the new coordination capacities mandated by Member States as part of the multi-country office review. Costs were also reduced by transitioning select administrative and payroll functions for resident coordinator offices to the Secretariat, through services managed by the United Nations Office at Nairobi and other Secretariat entities.

186. At this stage, I do not see any further scope for efficiencies or space for reductions to the overall budget of the resident coordinator system without undermining its performance and the broader reforms of the United Nations development system. Full information on the Development Coordination Office and all resident coordinator office posts and budgets are available in my annual report to the Fifth Committee, and I encourage Member States to review this information as well. I therefore propose that the overall capacity and budget levels of the resident coordinator system be maintained as initially envisioned and approved by Member States (see annex 3).

D. The way forward

187. I remain convinced that fully funding the resident coordinator system through the regular budget would be the ideal way forward, precisely because this is a core development function that needs certainty and predictability and belongs to the entire United Nations membership. If the General Assembly is unable to reach consensus on this, then I believe it is essential that the current funding model be significantly improved.

188. I have been heartened by the consistent disbursement of cost-sharing contributions by all entities of the United Nations development system, and the performance of the 1 per cent coordination levy, which has exceeded expectations. In terms of voluntary funding, it is abundantly clear that, three years into the new system, voluntary contributions are not generating the amount expected, nor are they capable of filling the likely gap created by reliance on the 1 per cent coordination levy on tightly earmarked funding to the United Nations development system. Voluntary funding is also not delivering sufficient predictability, considering the shortfall of \$58 million expected in 2021 and given that multi-year commitments remain the exception. After a promising start, the amount of voluntary contributions has largely stagnated and, based on engagement with current and prospective donors, I do not see this gap being bridged in the near future, which could potentially undermine existing capacities and derail overall efforts to transform the United Nations development system.

189. Should fully funding the resident coordinator system through the regular budget prove impossible, I propose that Member States consider a new hybrid model – a “hybrid 2.0” model – that retains the best components of the current model, while addressing its shortcomings:

(a) This new model would, firstly, maintain the cost-sharing contributions by entities of the United Nations development system in the region of \$77 million;

(b) It would retain the 1 per cent coordination levy on tightly earmarked contributions, but would also reinforce the need for those contributions to be paid at the source, using the donor-administered option, as initially envisaged in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). It would also recognize that the levy is unlikely to generate funding in excess of \$50 million per annum, not least because the amount generated through the levy is intended to actually decrease over time if we are to see a shift towards unearmarked voluntary contributions to the United Nations development system;

(c) To provide a much more solid footing for the resident coordinator system’s finances, the new model would replace the voluntary component of the hybrid model with assessed contributions through the regular budget.

190. We would be seeking approximately an additional \$154 million from the regular budget of the United Nations annually, combined with the current cost-sharing arrangement (\$77 million) and the projected amount to be collected from the levy (\$50 million).

191. This would offer a pragmatic way forward and resolve, once and for all, concerns and doubts over the long-term viability of the coordination function. It would put the funding model for the resident coordinator system in a place of predictability and sustainability, in the spirit of resolution [72/279](#). It would also send a definitive signal to the world at large that development coordination is a core function of the Organization and is, now more than ever, critical to a future of peace, dignity and prosperity. An added advantage of moving to a hybrid 2.0 model is that it would allow current donors to the special purpose trust fund for the resident coordinator system to redeploy, should they wish to do so, voluntary contributions currently provided to the resident coordinator system to other key programmatic pooled funds that give the “muscle” for joint support by United Nations country teams to the 2030 Agenda.

192. I count on Member States to consider my recommendation with the same sense of ambition that has marked these reforms so far. There is no mystery: if we are making progress in transforming the United Nations development system, it is precisely because we have invested in robust capacities. If we want to see this process through and witness first-hand what a deeply transformed United Nations development system can achieve, then it is only logical that we continue to invest in our engine for change: the resident coordinator system.

193. We have a unique opportunity to define a model that can finally provide adequate, sustainable, predictable and long-term funding to this critical function at a relatively small cost. To give a sense of perspective: the full budget for the resident coordinator system amounts to less than 1.5 per cent of overall development-related resources entrusted to the United Nations development system every year, yet it has a decisive impact on the remaining 98.5 per cent, including by enhancing its effectiveness, transparency and accountability for results. The amount being requested in the form of assessed funding specifically would amount to about 1.5 per cent of the total budget of the United Nations, including peacekeeping operations; however, we all agree that sustainable and inclusive development is the long-term solution to most of the acute challenges facing the world. I have stated time and time

again that this is good value for money for all stakeholders and, by all standards, a good investment for the United Nations and for humanity.

194. Over the years, the funding and value for money of the resident coordinator system has been debated at length. With only 10 years to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, I believe the time has come to put that issue to rest, with pragmatism and ambition. I am requesting your support for a redesigned hybrid funding model for the resident coordinator system, including cost-sharing and the 1 per cent levy within current parameters, and an additional contribution from the regular budget of the United Nations of approximately \$154 million annually.

195. Should the General Assembly agree with full regular budget funding or this proposed redesign of the hybrid model, we will proceed with the submission of a revised estimates report for 2022 to the main part of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, in accordance with the established budgetary procedure. I very much count on Member States' support and leadership.

VII. Looking ahead: towards a multilateral response through the United Nations development system that delivers for people and planet

196. The world has changed dramatically in the seventy-six years since the United Nations came into being. However, the values of the Charter of the United Nations, based on the three pillars of peace and security, human rights, and the economic and social advancement of all people, remain not just central but essential. The COVID-19 pandemic, and its devastating social and economic impacts, are a tragic demonstration of the enduring need for multilateral solutions.

197. None of today's challenges – the climate crisis; biodiversity loss; pollution; unsustainable levels of inequality; crippling debt burdens – can be solved by any one country acting alone. All require global unity and solidarity. However, in an era of growing nationalism and division, multilateral institutions are under greater pressure than ever to deliver for those we serve.

198. The United Nations development system represents multilateralism on the ground, tackling the roots of poverty, hunger and conflict and their impact on people's daily lives. Reforming this system is therefore about much more than improving its effectiveness and efficiency. It is about the relevance, value and purpose of multilateralism itself, centred on our support to national Governments to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These reforms are aimed at bringing the immense capacities of the United Nations development system to bear on the challenges faced by Governments and people across the world, so that we can implement the Sustainable Development Goals and create more sustainable, peaceful and resilient communities and societies.

199. Today's multilateralism must be networked, based on collaboration across the United Nations system and with other key organizations and institutions. One role of the reformed United Nations development system is therefore to mobilize all parts of the United Nations family, and other stakeholders, towards common goals. And today's multilateralism must be inclusive, valuing new perspectives and welcoming new voices. The reformed United Nations development system must be ready to listen, particularly to the marginalized and those left behind. The reformed United Nations development system must demonstrate that uniting behind a common purpose, and investing in the changes needed to achieve it, delivers concrete results that improve people's lives while tackling our shared challenges.

200. The review of the resident coordinator system shows that over the past three years, we have made significant progress towards these goals in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. In a considered and consultative manner, we have moved from analysis to solutions and from agreement to implementation. The present report sets out the results of those efforts. This is an immensely positive story that demonstrates the capacity of the entire United Nations family, both Member States and the United Nations development system, to recalibrate itself in response to the changing world around us. We should be proud of the results we have achieved, and resolve to build on them for the future, including through ongoing efforts to realize our common agenda.

201. The present report also shows that we have more to do to if we are to improve the United Nations development system's support of national priorities to deliver the 2030 Agenda. This is essential as countries work to end the pandemic and launch a recovery that will accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

202. The United Nations development system is ready to take further steps. We need to make sure we have the right skill sets and profiles within all our United Nations entities, including resident coordinators, resident coordinator offices, United Nations country teams and the Development Coordination Office. We are determined to improve our response to national needs, priorities and contexts. We must also revisit and revitalize the incentives and accountabilities put in place as part of the reforms, including adherence to both the letter and spirit of the dual accountability function. And while the funding model of the resident coordinator system has served us well during the inception period, it is no longer fit for purpose.

203. I extend my sincere gratitude to all who have made this journey possible. I thank Member States for co-creating and driving the changes that are now coming to fruition, through their efforts in the General Assembly, in the Economic and Social Council, in governing bodies and in capitals. I thank the principals and staff of United Nations entities who have embraced the change that is under way.

204. We have made a great deal of progress. Now we must stay the course and move to the next level. This is our collective responsibility.

205. As outlined in the present report, the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group as a whole, will take action on several fronts. Outstanding challenges and concerns regarding the dual accountability function call for regular reviews of the implementation of the internal management and accountability framework. Further enhancements are also needed to better monitor and manage resident coordinator and United Nations country team performance. It will also be important to facilitate the oversight role of governing boards by ensuring that they are provided with the necessary information and tools to monitor United Nations development system alignment, from the country to the global level, with the reforms. The integrator function of UNDP will also need clarification and must now manifest itself more clearly as United Nations country teams integrate COVID-19 socioeconomic response plans into Cooperation Frameworks to drive an inclusive and sustainable recovery. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group will also need to strengthen reporting on United Nations commitments to gender equality, youth action and disability inclusion and to live up to United Nations values, including through a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse. In terms of leveraging the most relevant capacities at the country level, attention must be maintained on the contributions of new capacities in multi-country offices and a clearer and more transparent pathway will be developed to ensure that United Nations country teams are appropriately configured in response to country needs and priorities defined in the

Cooperation Framework. In turn, the implementation of the new regional arrangements over the course of 2021 and 2022 requires close attention and support to maximize the impact of the Regional Directors of the Development Coordination Office. In addition, continued efforts are needed to further strengthen partnerships between United Nations country teams, international financial institutions and other key development partners on the ground.

206. The principals and staff of individual United Nations development system entities also have an important role to play in ensuring the resident coordinator system – a shared United Nations Sustainable Development Group resource – operates at the highest possible level. United Nations principals can lead by example, working collaboratively across the system, ensuring a supportive outlook vis-à-vis the resident coordinator system and embracing the culture change that the reforms demand. To further strengthen a system-wide outlook among United Nations staff, United Nations entities can facilitate greater staff mobility across agencies and duty stations, including resident coordinator offices, and offer the best candidates for resident coordinator positions. Through joint initiatives, staff capacities can be strengthened in priority areas such as Sustainable Development Goal policy integration, gender equality and women's empowerment, youth action, financing, data, technology and partnerships. The full implementation of relevant funding compact commitments is another area for action that can also build confidence in the United Nations development system as a whole. Lastly, United Nations entities can work collectively and through the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration to strengthen cross-pillar collaboration and broaden our partnerships in fragile settings, which are critical to reaching those furthest behind and achieving the 2030 Agenda.

207. As the engine room of the resident coordinator system, the Development Coordination Office can take a number of steps to continue to improve its own performance. Concrete action, supported by United Nations entities, is now needed to build an integrated resident coordinator career management system and to strengthen the resident coordinator career path, including by dedicating more resources to individual career counselling and by examining how best to support resident coordinators in between assignments or those nearing retirement. There is also a need to ensure that resident coordinators have the most suitable profiles and skill sets for the different contexts in which they operate, including by strengthening the resident coordinator pool overall with a younger cohort and providing dedicated training and mentoring, and by leveraging the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator talent pipeline. This can also be supported by facilitating regular engagements between resident coordinators and principals of United Nations entities to help build a common understanding of the challenges that different entities or resident coordinators face under the new arrangements, and what is needed to deliver both as a collective and individually. Action is also needed to ensure the alignment of the five resident coordinator office capacities with their core functions, to clarify the reporting lines of Communications Officers, to ensure adequate administrative support for resident coordinator offices and to examine opportunities for resident coordinator office staff mobility.

208. Governing bodies have played a crucial role in making the reforms a reality. Their continued engagement is now needed to take the resident coordinator system and the United Nations development system to the next level. Critical in this regard is continued oversight of entity adherence to the dual accountability model and the evolution of business models, mindsets and skill sets to ensure United Nations entities are fit for purpose with regard to helping countries achieve the 2030 Agenda. Governing bodies can also ensure that United Nations entities invest in and fully utilize the common UN Info reporting platform to facilitate the analysis of system-

wide results in supporting national efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. They can also ensure United Nations entities make the necessary changes to allow for a shift to common premises and common back offices, implement and realize the initiatives outlined in the business operations strategies and secure more efficient operations at all levels.

209. In their individual capacities, Member States can take a range of measures to further support the reforms. This includes ensuring clear programme country arrangements, both legal and procedural, to take full account of the leadership role of resident coordinators, giving due regard to the pre-eminent position of the Cooperation Framework and facilitating more efficient business operations and supporting the emergence of a new generation of United Nations country teams through country team configuration exercises. Development partners can also ensure that their representatives on the ground reinforce the new arrangements as agreed by the General Assembly. Delivering on commitments under the funding compact and supporting better quality funding of the United Nations development system will also be critical.

210. Finally, as the Organization's most inclusive and deliberative decision-making body, the General Assembly has provided both the impetus for the United Nations development system reforms and has accompanied them on the path from resolution to repositioning for results. As we take the reforms to the next level, action from our global town hall is required again.

211. In this regard, in the forthcoming intergovernmental consultations, I call on the General Assembly to:

(a) Decide to fund the resident coordinator system through the regular budget or, as an alternative, to update the current hybrid funding model to ensure it generates predictable, sustainable and adequate funding by:

(i) Maintaining the present cost-sharing arrangements;

(ii) Maintaining the 1 per cent levy on tightly earmarked voluntary funding, to be paid at the source;

(iii) Ensuring that the remainder of the resident coordinator system budget is allocated from the regular budget of the United Nations;

(b) Reinforce the arrangements set out in resolution [72/279](#), particularly as they relate to the dual accountability model to strengthen the contribution of the United Nations development system for the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and encourage all United Nations entities and their governing bodies to take further action to ensure greater adherence moving forward;

(c) Urge full implementation by Member States and United Nations entities of commitments made in the funding compact, including the reduction of highly earmarked voluntary funding contributions to United Nations entities, and increasing the level of contributions to joint funds, including the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund;

(d) Consider repurposing and recalibrating the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, which will take place alongside the operational activities for development segment of the Economic and Social Council, to serve as a platform for mobilizing higher quality funding of the United Nations development system in line with the funding compact;

(e) Encourage the United Nations development system to gradually transition its response to the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis to advance sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery efforts that accelerate national priorities

for Sustainable Development Goal implementation, in line with Assembly resolution [75/233](#), leveraging in particular the integrator function of UNDP for the provision by United Nations country teams of integrated policy and programming support to implement the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

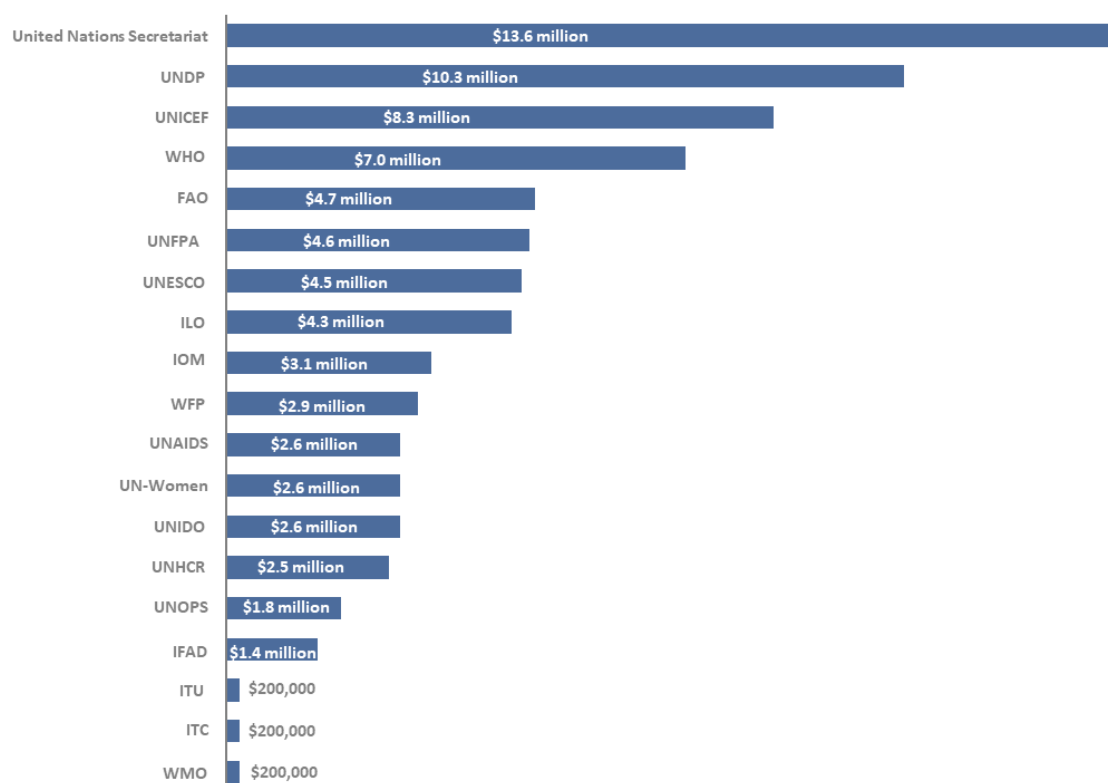
212. I have always believed that sustainable development belongs at the core of the United Nations, for it remains the best tool we have for ending poverty, preventing crises, realizing human rights and delivering peace for all. I stand ready to support Member States to make this a reality.

213. Let us move forward together towards a multilateral response through the United Nations development system that delivers people and planet.

Annex I

United Nations Sustainable Development Group cost-sharing arrangement

Annual amounts per entity, 2019–2021 (allocations for 2022 and 2023 will change)¹



Source: Development Coordination Office.

Abbreviations: FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; IFAD, International Fund for Agricultural Development; ILO, International Labour Organization; IOM, International Organization for Migration; ITC, International Trade Centre; ITU, International Telecommunication Union; UN, United Nations; UNAIDS, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; UNDP, United Nations Development Programme; UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund; UNHCR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund; UNIDO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization; UNOPS, United Nations Office for Project Services; UN-Women, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; WFP, World Food Programme; WHO, World Health Organization; WMO, World Meteorological Organization.

¹ The \$13.5 million share of the United Nations Secretariat includes 15 members of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Peacebuilding Support Office, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Annex II

Countries contributing to the 1 per cent levy since 2019

(United States dollars)

European Union	31 361 782.42
Germany	13 451 933.36
Non-member State contributors	9 982 311.00
Netherlands	4 917 130.48
Sweden	4 433 739.90
Japan	3 469 730.40
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	3 093 243.63
Republic of Korea	2 947 259.75
Norway	2 320 832.47
Switzerland	1 868 146.13
Canada	1 603 988.48
United States of America	1 081 662.58
Denmark	714 514.91
Italy	667 616.29
Australia	572 757.37
France	569 392.87
New Zealand	331 304.12
Russian Federation	276 272.28
Finland	229 589.61
Luxembourg	223 387.25
Austria	181 439.71
Spain	169 622.84
Ireland	159 139.01
Iceland	99 682.28
Belgium	93 288.29
Monaco	15 708.44
Poland	14 577.78
Turkey	9 900.99
Czechia	7 981.69
Estonia	4 251.58
Slovakia	3 200.00
Mexico	2 475.00
Croatia	2 000.00
Romania	1 075.27

Source: Development Coordination Office.

Annex III

Overview of resources of the special purpose trust fund of the resident coordinator system

Financial resources by component

(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Component</i>	<i>2020 expenditure</i>	<i>2021 estimate</i>	<i>Changes</i>		<i>2022 estimate</i>
			<i>Variance amount</i>	<i>Variance percentage</i>	
A. Executive direction and management	2 169.8	2 844.3	823.6	29.0	3 667.9
B. Programme of work					
1. Global coordination	11 915.5	14 453.8	2 252.7	15.6	16 706.5
2. Regional coordination	6 623.2	9 504.1	857.8	9.0	10 361.9
3. Country coordination	161 223.4	243 318.0	(4 732.4)	(1.9)	238 585.6
Subtotal, B	179 762.1	267 275.9	(1 621.9)	(0.6)	265 654.0
C. Programme support	9 952.4	11 706.2	798.3	6.8	12 504.5
Total	191 884.3	281 826.4	–	–	281 826.4