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mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and
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Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

    The present report, submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2021/17, assesses progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, and in the achievement of performance requirements set out in accountability frameworks for gender mainstreaming of the United Nations system at the global and country levels.

    It draws on United Nations entities' reports under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group information management system and on secondary sources.

    Recommendations are offered to United Nations entities to accelerate gender mainstreaming in the policies and programmes of the United Nations system, including in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

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I. Introduction

1.   The present report was prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution [2021/17](#) of 8 June 2021, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, at its 2022 session, on the implementation of the resolution, including on accountability of the United Nations system at the global, regional and country levels and on progress made in the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

2.   The year 2022 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Economic and Social Council 1997 Agreed Conclusions on "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes" which, building on the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, established principles for gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming, the process of assessing the differential impact on women and men of any planned action, in all areas and at all levels, continues to be central to the achievement of gender equality and gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It complements women-specific targeted work and in no way precludes it.

3.   Against this backdrop, the present report focuses on gender equality and gender mainstreaming at the highest levels of the United Nations, in operational activities and through the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and its United Nations country team equivalent, including in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The report offers recommendations that are forward-looking, build on progress and capacities, and aim to help the United Nations entities harmonize their approach and accelerate efforts to advance gender equality, within their respective mandates.

II. Advancing the gender equality agenda

A. Gender equality and the coronavirus disease

4.   Since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, it has taken a great toll on the overall population and very particularly on women and girls.[1] The crisis has eroded decades of development gains, further impeding progress towards the sustainable development goals, including on gender equality. While women were just as likely as men to have access to COVID-19 vaccines, violence against women and girls intensified; child marriage increased and women's employment declined (see [E/2021/58](#)). Notably, only 43.2 per cent of the world's working-age women were employed in 2021, compared with 68.6 per cent of working-age men.[2] The World Economic Forum's latest report also found that, given the pandemic, it will now take 135.6 years to close the gender gap worldwide.[3] The United Nations system therefore strongly advocated and promoted gender-responsive policies and programmes in the COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery.

5.   The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) continued to focus on timely and robust data availability to inform a gender-sensitive response to the pandemic and partnered with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, national statistical offices,

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[1] Ginette Azcona and others, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The 2021 Gender Snapshot* (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and United Nations, 2021).

[2] International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2022* (Geneva, 2022).

[3] World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2021* (Geneva, 2021).

governmental entities, and international partners to conduct rapid gender assessment surveys on the gendered impacts of COVID-19 in more than 70 countries. The 2021 report by UN-Women entitled "Women and girls left behind: Glaring gaps in pandemic responses", confirms that women and girls have disproportionately suffered the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 – through lost jobs and reduced work hours, increased intensity of care and domestic work, and strains on their physical and mental health. The report also shows that, relative to men and boys, women and girls receive far less COVID-19 relief or social protection from governments or non-governmental organizations. Regional and country reports are also available for Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern and Southern Africa, and Europe and Central Asia. Countries used the results of rapid gender assessments to develop targeted programmes to counter socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19,[4] strengthen women's well-being and safety,[5] mobilize resources,[6] and guide the production of other gender data[7] (Philippines, Samoa). In Haiti, an rapid gender assessment informed a gender-sensitive humanitarian response and recovery.

6.   Both UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to monitor government responses to the pandemic through the COVID-19 global gender response tracker. The tracker compiles information on pandemic policy measures enacted by governments and highlights good practices in tackling violence against women and girls, supporting unpaid care work and strengthening the economic security of women. Data on representation and leadership by women in 431 COVID-19 task forces across 187 countries show that women are significantly underrepresented in pandemic-related decision-making structures. A 2021 UNDP report found that to be gender-responsive and recognize women's right as decision-makers,[8] women must have a seat at the table when governments craft their policy responses. Where women have been in leadership positions, the pandemic response has often been faster and more attuned to social needs. Across all levels and sectors, however, women do not occupy the same space in decision-making as men. Globally, women comprise over 75 per cent of the health workforce, making them indispensable to the COVID-19 response. However, they comprise only 28 per cent of health executives. While women's organizations are at the forefront of community responses to COVID-19 in many countries, they struggle with diminishing funding and shrinking civic space.[9]

7.   Inter-agency initiatives have also been taken in response to COVID-19. For example, to support the integration of gender perspectives in United Nations country team efforts, a technical note on gender mainstreaming in the United Nations country team COVID-19 response was developed under the auspices of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Gender Equality Task Team.

8.   Also, in 2021, and given that the tourism sector constitutes one of the largest employers of women, particularly in lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs, UN-Women and the World Tourism Organization partnered to focus on women's empowerment during COVID-19 recovery. Gender mainstreaming guidelines developed by both entities for the public and private sectors in the tourism industry are now to be piloted in four countries.[10] The guidelines aim to ensure a more inclusive and resilient post-

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[4] Albania, Chile, Colombia, Maldives and Rwanda.

[5] Chile and Jordan.

[6] Georgia, Indonesia, Senegal and pre-war Ukraine.

[7] Philippines and Samoa.

[8] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and University of Pittsburgh, *Gender Equality in Public Administration* (2021).

[9] Azcona and others, *The Gender Snapshot 2021*.

[10] All four countries are World Tourism Organization members: Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Jordan and Mexico.

pandemic recovery, recognizing that addressing the specific needs of women remains critical.

B. Financing for gender equality

9. The United Nations system strives for harmonized approaches to strengthen the resource base for gender equality. The joint effort of incorporating a strong gender lens in the second call of multi-partner trust fund proposals in the response to COVID-19 (E/2021/52, para. 9), resulted in the adoption of the gender equality marker as a mandatory criteria. This yielded a multi-fold increase in resources allocated to programmes with gender equality as a primary target. The allocations jumped from 5 per cent of total funding ($1.9 million) in the first call to 64 per cent ($11.9 million) in the second. The model is being replicated now by other funds, such as the special trust fund for Afghanistan.

10. In 2021, the Executive Committee of the Secretary-General approved an implementation plan to complement the 2019 recommendations of the High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality. The Plan aims to strengthen gender mainstreaming in pooled funds, accelerate the integration of gender equality in strategic plans and budgetary frameworks, harmonize system-wide reporting on finances for gender equality in the United Nations system and implement the gender equality marker at the entity-level and in country team funding frameworks. The Plan utilizes existing inter-agency spaces already working on system-wide agendas, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Fiduciary Management and Oversight Group and the Finance and Budget Network of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination. Entities may request help-desk support from a technical support team within the United Nations System Coordination Division at UN-Women. The Office of the Controller and the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office overseeing inter-agency pooled funding mechanism also play a central role in the Plan's roll-out.

11. Tracking gender-related allocations and expenditure remains a priority at all levels. To support data comparability, harmonization of practice involving the incorporation and use of a four-point scale gender equality marker has been strengthened across entities and pillars. As reported in the system-wide action plan, by 2021, 28 entities reported using a financial tracking mechanism for gender equality. However, less than half reported annually on it or had embedded it in their enterprise resource planning System, as required by the High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality.

12. Regarding pooled funding mechanisms, according to the Fiduciary Management and Oversight Group survey on inter-agency pooled funds, 34 multi-partner trust funds (69 per cent of all respondents) apply a gender equality marker for quality at entry and access resources according to how significantly a programme contributes to gender equality. However, only 18 (37 per cent) include financial targets related to gender equality as recommended by the High-level Task Force to strengthen the resource base for gender equality. As for financial investments (with or without established targets), 25 Funds (51 per cent), are allocating 15 per cent or more of their resources to programmes with gender equality as their principal objective. Notably, the roll-out of UN INFO[11] 2.0 in 2021 led to an increase in the number of country teams applying the gender equality marker to joint work plans from 47 country teams in 2020 to 80 in 2021.

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[11] UN INFO is an online planning, monitoring and reporting platform that digitizes United Nations country team results frameworks.

C. Our Common Agenda: towards a new social contract for women and girls

13. In commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, Member States recognized that addressing the strongly interconnected global challenges requires stronger international cooperation, with the United Nations and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations remaining central.[12] In response, the Secretary-General put forward Our Common Agenda, a vision for a reinvigorated, inclusive multilateral system. One of its core commitments is to place women and girls at the centre, recognizing Sustainable Development Goal 5 as central to a renewed social contract. It delineates five standalone transformative actions on gender equality, the internal reforms needed to achieve this, and a gender lens on all actions, from tax reform to a New Agenda for Peace. UN-Women organized the Generation Equality Forum, which, co-hosted by the Governments of France and Mexico in partnership with civil society and youth organizations, coalesced governments, corporations and change makers to drive ambitious change through multi-stakeholder action coalitions committed to the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality, including through accountability frameworks.

III. Gender mainstreaming in operational activities

14. The United Nations' attention to gender equality considerations in operational activities, including across the pillars of the United Nations, continued in 2021. Salient developments are included below.

A. Gender mainstreaming in common country planning and programming

15. Based on the United Nations Development Coordination Office information management system data,[13] 19 out of 27 (70 per cent) of country teams that developed a cooperation framework in 2021 included a dedicated gender equality outcome. A total of 113 out of 130 (87 per cent) country teams reported one or more joint programmes that included a focus on Goal 5. Altogether, 356 out of 927 (38 per cent) of all joint programmes incorporated a Goal 5 focus, with the most common themes comprising ending violence against women, ending discrimination against women and girls, and recognizing unpaid care and domestic work. Furthermore, 29 per cent of Goal 3 (Health), 22 per cent of Goal 16 (Peace and Justice) and 21 per cent of Goal 4 (Education) focused joint programmes also reported incorporating a focus on Goal 5. However, only 8 per cent of funding was directed to joint programmes focused on Goal 5 despite these comprising 38 per cent of the total number of joint programmes.

16. In 2021, 120 out of 130 (92.3 per cent) country teams reported having a gender theme group or an equivalent coordination mechanism to support coordination of gender mainstreaming in joint planning and programming. In 2021, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group promulgated the standards and procedures for the gender theme groups. This new guidance aims to catalyse a new generation of gender theme groups with enhanced capacity to provide strategic support and advice to country teams on gender mainstreaming across cooperation framework processes

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[12] See General Assembly resolution 76/6.

[13] Argentina, Armenia, Bahrain, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Georgia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Madagascar, North Macedonia, Panama, Serbia, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Yemen.

and to ensure integrated policy support on gender mainstreaming across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

B. Mainstreaming gender equality in peace and security, humanitarian and human rights pillars

17.   In 2021, attention to gender mainstreaming in peace and security, humanitarian and human rights issues continued. In 2021, 99 countries and territories (50 per cent of Member States) had adopted dedicated action plans on women and peace and security, and 12 regional organizations had promulgated regional strategies or plans. Countries also took steps to improve monitoring, evaluation and reporting of their national action plans and 86 per cent of countries with such plans have monitoring indicators to track progress. Also, the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, launched in July 2021, now boasts more than 150 signatories. As part of a global and intergenerational movement to accelerate progress towards gender equality, the Compact seeks to drive change focusing on five areas of action: (a) Financing the women and peace and security agenda and gender equality in humanitarian programming; (b) Women's meaningful participation in peace processes; (c) Women's economic security, access to resources and other essential services; (d) Women's leadership and agency across peace, security and humanitarian sectors; and (e) Protection of women in conflict and crisis contexts, including women human rights defenders.

18.   In addition, in 2021 an Afghan women's advisory group for the humanitarian Country Team was established with the support of the gender in humanitarian action working groups (co-led by UN-Women) as its secretariat. Established to amplify women's voices, the women's advisory group is formed by nine members representing Afghan women's activists and women led-civil society organizations, which acts as an independent source of Afghan women's expertise to advise the humanitarian country team, in better responding to the needs of women and girls, as well as inform strategic, tactical and operational level engagement of the humanitarian community.

19.   In addition, the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2021/827) updates trends, gaps and challenges and steps taken by the United Nations and its Member States to mainstream a gender equality perspective into efforts to prevent and respond to conflict and crises, build and sustain peace. Mechanisms, such as the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security of the Security Council, for which UN-Women serves as the secretariat, bring stakeholders together to ensure gender analysis informs deliberations on country-specific and thematic issues.

20.   Progress is also evidenced in closing the gender gap at the mission senior leadership level in both special political missions and peacekeeping operations, and in the dedicated efforts and initiatives, such as the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations[14] which are contributing to a steady, albeit slow, increase in the number of women among uniformed personnel.

21.   With regard to gender equality and human rights, in 2021 the inter-agency group on United Nations country team reporting on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, composed of UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNDP, provided support

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[14] The Elsie Initiative, led by Canada, aims to increase the meaningful participation of uniformed women in United Nations peace operations.

for all of United Nations country team reports submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

C. Ending violence against women

22. In 2020 and 2021, the Spotlight Initiative allocated $146 million to civil society organizations and, as a result, 1,111 local grass-roots women's rights organizations reported having greater influence and agency to work on eliminating violence against women and girls. In addition, the Initiative reported a 32 per cent increase in national budgets to prevent violence against women and girls. Also 84 laws and policies were signed or strengthened across 17 countries and for which concrete mechanisms have been put in place to ensure these laws and policies lead to substantial change; for example, efforts from the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme led to the development of the first evidence-based regional action plan for Africa on ending violence against women and girls. With only 26 out of 55 African Member States having national action plans on ending violence against women and girls, the efforts extend a guiding framework to all 55 African Member States.

23. As part of a midterm assessment, more than 700 stakeholders from Spotlight Initiative programmes, including governments, civil society, European Union and United Nations teams overwhelmingly confirmed the gender-transformative, survivor-centred and human-rights based approach of the Spotlight Initiative. Around 90 per cent of the respondents also expressed that the Initiative contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in an integrated way, is in line with the United Nations reform principles, and advances more efficient and better coordinated action on ending violence against women and girls. For example, in Zimbabwe, leveraging the complementary expertise of United Nations organizations under the Initiative contributed to stronger coordination and collaboration which, in turn, has led to the development of powerful coalitions at the country level, national governments who are better equipped to eliminate violence against women and girls, and established a better working relationship among United Nations entities and with government.

24. Furthermore, the Spotlight Initiative has enabled 1 million young people to join in- and out-of-school programmes and reached more than 65 million people through 80 locally tailored behaviour change campaigns. The Initiative also aided a 22 per cent increase in the number of convictions of perpetrators of violence and provided over 650,000 women and girls with gender-based violence services despite COVID-19-related constraints and lockdowns. Hotlines have been made available through digital platforms, mobile clinics and one-stop centres were in operation, safe spaces were repurposed, and services were adapted for marginalized groups. For example, in Timor-Leste, support was given to police and referral networks on the needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons community and reached 500 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons group members with critical essential services.

25. In addition, as noted in his report on Our Common Agenda, the Secretary-General has called for an emergency plan to eradicate violence against women and girls as a priority, which the United Nations will support, backed by a global campaign to eliminate any social norm that tolerates, excuses or overlooks violence against women and girls, in line with target 5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (See A/75/982).

D. Data and research

26. In 2021, UN-Women and the United Nations Statistics Division produced its annual gender snapshot report as a companion to the Sustainable Development Goals

Report. The report comprises the only publication in the United Nations system which examines all of the Sustainable Development Goals from a gender perspective, bringing forth new data, analysis and research conducted through inter-agency collaborations with custodian agencies. The snapshot[15] presents the evidence on gender equality across all 17 Goals, highlighting both the progress made since 2015 and also the continued alarm over the COVID-19 pandemic, its immediate effect on women's well-being, and the threat it poses to future generations. This year's edition (available in French, Spanish and Turkish) highlights that one and a half years since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, the toll on the poorest and most vulnerable groups remains devastating and disproportionate. The combined impact of conflict, extreme weather events and COVID-19 has deprived women and girls of meeting even their basic needs. The 2021 edition, for the first time, also includes an Sustainable Development Goal 5 tracker to highlight both the global and regional progress towards gender equality. This assessment reveals a long road ahead. Globally, only 1 of the 18 indicators for Goal 5 (including subindicators) is assessed as being "close to target": proportion of seats held by women in local government; nine indicators stand at a moderate distance to target and two are far or very far from target. Where data are available over time (child marriage, female genital mutilation and women in national parliaments), they reveal limited or no progress across regions. Moreover, together with United Nations partner agencies, UN-Women supports members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators with Sustainable Development Goals global monitoring, including coordinating inter-agency inputs on Goal 5 for the annual Sustainable Development Goals Report.

E. Gender equality and disability inclusion

27. In 2021, enhanced inter-agency coordination and collaboration more systematically addressed the situation of women and girls with disabilities. To this effect, the inter-agency working group on persons with disabilities generated normative guidance, policy advice, capacity development initiatives and operational support, including a disability inclusion help desk. Specifically, an inter-agency joint programme on intersectionality produced: a Global Toolkit and Resource Guide on Intersectionality to support country teams and diverse stakeholders in implementing an intersectional approach more effectively; a United Nations inter-agency joint programme to support countries to design and implement disability inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery; and a joint UN-Women and UNDP cross-regional programme to address stigma and barriers to full and effective participation of women and girls with disabilities in all aspects of social, political and economic life. UN-Women led and coordinated capacity-building and knowledge generation on disability inclusion in over 65 UN-Women country offices and 45 country teams.

IV. Accountability for gender mainstreaming and gender equality issues at the global and country levels

28. Accountability for gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system at the entity and country team levels remains key to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In 2021, the United Nations system registered progress in expanded coverage and against the performance indicators in the accountability frameworks applicable to both United Nations entities (United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2.0)

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[15] Azcona and others, *The 2021 Gender Snapshot*.

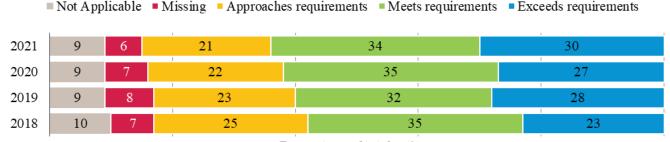and country teams (United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality Scorecard).

29. In 2021, 71 entities, including the Secretariat, its departments and offices, and 61 country teams reported on the System-wide Action Plan, reflecting further validation of the acceptance and usefulness of the standardized system-wide accountability mechanisms.

30. Similar to previous years, in terms of quality assurance for the United Nations System-wide Action Plan ratings, discrepancies between ratings, as submitted by entities versus UN-Women's System-wide Action Plan global help desk, affected 13 per cent of the ratings. Of these, 69 per cent of the changes were accepted by entities. Additional supporting evidence was requested for 31 per cent of all ratings. Further, following the Joint Inspection Unit recommendations on transparency,[16] entity-specific report cards are available on the UN-Women website.[17]

31. In 2021, reporting and quality assurance of both the System-wide Action Plan and country team scorecard took place through the dedicated online reporting platform updated in 2021.

A. Accountability at the entity level: System-wide Action Plan 2.0

32. The System-wide Action Plan 2.0 continued to demonstrate system-wide progress. For 2021 reporting, a total of 64 per cent of all ratings fell into the "meets" or "exceeds requirements" categories (figure I). This section provides an overview of the gender mainstreaming performance of the United Nations system by breaking down the ratings per year for the 2018–2021 period.

Figure I
Overall System-wide Action Plan 2.0 ratings for the United Nations system, 2018–2021

1. Analysis of System-wide Action Plan 2.0 performance indicators on entity gender-related Sustainable Development Goal results

33. **Strategic planning gender-related Sustainable Development Goal results (performance indicator 1)** increased slightly, with 45 entities (78 per cent) reporting having achieved or being on track to achieve their high-level results. Fifteen entities focused on high-level transformative results contributing to changes in social norms, cultural values, power structures and the root causes of gender inequalities and discrimination.
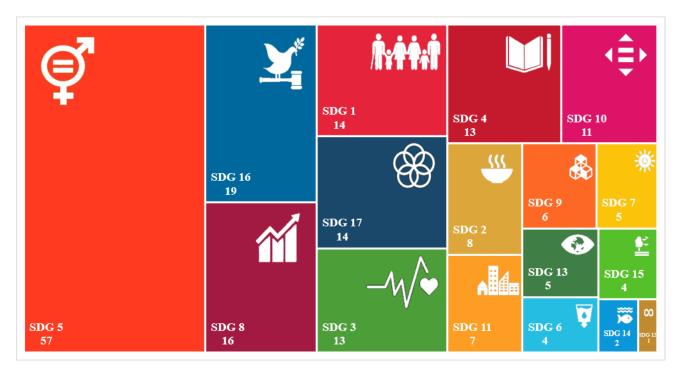
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[16] See JIU/REP/2019/2.
[17] See www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability/un-swap-results.

34. While entities registered most results under Goal 5, many worked at the intersection of gender and other Sustainable Development Goals (figure II). In this regard, entities focused most on gender-based violence, peace and security, economic empowerment and the normative, policy and legislation realms, with activities spanning all Goals. In addition, the urgency of climate change as reflected by 22 entities [18] working on climate, environment and energy also intersected with disaster risk reduction for six of them.

Figure II
Number of entities mainstreaming gender equality perspectives in each Sustainable Development Goal, as per System-wide Action Plan 2.0 reporting

35. With respect to Goal 5 (figure III), entities most focused on women's leadership (target 5.5). Significant inter-agency collaboration was also reported for the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls (target 5.2), an area with a concurrent call-to-action to address the "shadow pandemic", including in the digital sphere.

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[18] Based on the qualitative analysis of the System-wide Action Plan 2.0reports submitted by 71 entities.

Figure III
Number of entities contributing to Goal 5 targets areas,[a] as per System-wide Action Plan 2.0 reporting

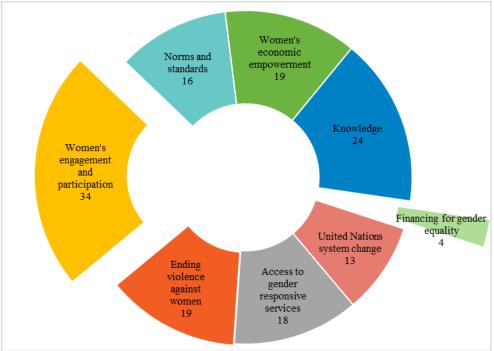| SDG 5.2 26 | SDG 5.C 19 | SDG 5.B 13 | SDG 5.A 12 |
| SDG 5.5 36 | SDG 5.1 24 | SDG 5.4 15 | SDG 5.6 11 | SDG 5.3 9 |

[a] Targets: 5.1. Discrimination; 5. 2. Violence and exploitation; 5.3. Forced marriages and genital mutilation; 5. 4. Unpaid car e; 5.5. Leadership and decision-making; 5.6. Reproductive health and rights; 5.A. Economic resources; 5.B. Technology; and 5.C. Policies and enforceable legislation.

36.   An analysis of thematic areas (figure IV) reveals that those entities engaged most in the area of women's engagement and participation (34 entities), followed by areas of knowledge (24 entities) on gender-based violence, women's economic empowerment, and peace and security. Work on women's economic empowerment was often undertaken in conjunction with other thematic areas, such as financing for gender equality, policy development, technology, ending violence against women and humanitarian work.

Figure IV
Number of entities contributing to each thematic area, as per United Nations System-wide Action Plan 2.0 reporting, 2020

Note: These eight thematic areas developed by the 2018 inter-agency working group on results, chaired by UN-Women, to support reporting on results indicators for the System-wide Action Plan 2.0.

37. **Reporting on gender-related results (performance indicator 2)**. A total of 42 entities (72 per cent), 4 more than in 2020, reported on their high-level results to their governing bodies systematically using sex-disaggregated data. In general, the United Nations system applies sex-disaggregated data more frequently in relation to gender-based violence, peace and security and parity, but less when referring to climate mitigation and adaptation, normative and policy work.

38. **Programmatic gender-related results not directly captured in the entity strategic plans (performance indicator 3)**.[19] Twenty-four entities (83 per cent) met or exceeded this indicator. To enable gender-responsive programming, entities developed tools and templates for programme managers, set mandatory gender targets, and established quality assurance mechanisms and global gender programmes.
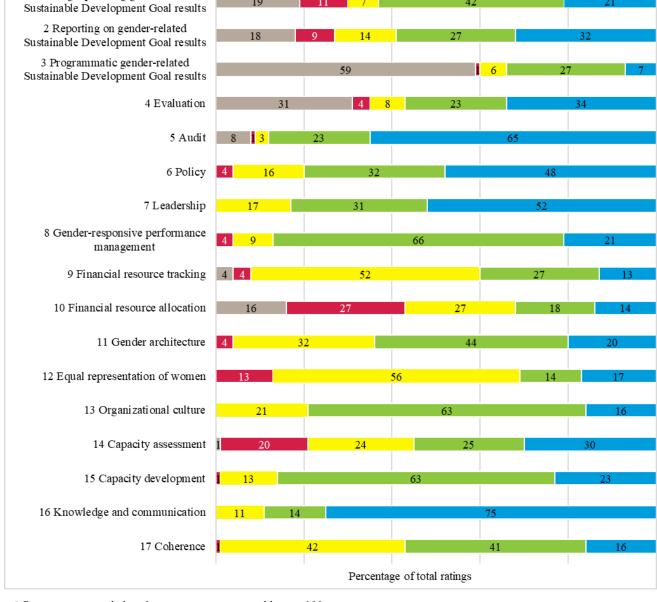
2. **Comparative analysis of overall United Nations system performance (2020-2021)**

39. This section provides an analysis of gender mainstreaming performance in functional areas. Figure V breaks down overall ratings by performance indicator. The table below presents a comparison of "meets" and "exceeds" ratings, by indicator, for the period from 2018 to 2021.

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[19] For entities where all relevant work on gender equality and the empowerment of women is captured in the main strategic planning document this performance indicator should be rated as "not applicable".

Figure V
2021 System-wide Action Plan 2.0 ratings, by performance indicator[a]

Legend: Not applicable | Missing | Approaches requirements | Meets requirements | Exceeds requirements

Performance indicator	Not applicable	Missing	Approaches requirements	Meets requirements	Exceeds requirements
1 Strategic planning gender-related Sustainable Development Goal results	19	11	7	42	21
2 Reporting on gender-related Sustainable Development Goal results	18	9	14	27	32
3 Programmatic gender-related Sustainable Development Goal results	59	1	6	27	7
4 Evaluation	31	4	8	23	34
5 Audit	8	1	3	23	65
6 Policy		4	16	32	48
7 Leadership			17	31	52
8 Gender-responsive performance management		4	9	66	21
9 Financial resource tracking	4	4	52	27	13
10 Financial resource allocation	16	27	27	18	14
11 Gender architecture		4	32	44	20
12 Equal representation of women		13	56	14	17
13 Organizational culture			21	63	16
14 Capacity assessment	1	20	24	25	30
15 Capacity development	1		13	63	23
16 Knowledge and communication			11	14	75
17 Coherence	1		42	41	16

Percentage of total ratings

[a] Percentages rounded to the nearest per cent to add up to 100.

40. Thirteen performance indicators registered notable progress in 2021: coherence, financial allocation, policy, organizational culture, programmatic results, equal representation of women, strategic planning results, knowledge and communication, capacity development and financial tracking.

Table

Comparative analysis of System-wide Action Plan 2.0 "meets" and "exceeds" ratings by indicator, 2018–2021[a]

Performance indicator area, ranked by 2021 performance	Percentage of total ratings meeting or exceeding requirements (N/A omitted)					Percentage point difference	
	2021	2020	2019	2018	2012	2020–2021	2012–2021
5. Audit	95	94	92	89	13	1	82
16. Knowledge and communication	89	86	85	89	34	1	55
8. Gender responsive performance management	87	91	91	88	59	-4	32
15. Capacity development	86	84	87	76	23	2	63
7. Leadership	83	87	82	80	N/A	-3	N/A
3. Programmatic gender-related Sustainable Development Goals results not directly captured in the strategic plan	83	78	69	70	N/A	5	N/A
4. Evaluation	82	81	67	72	36	1	46
6. Policy	80	74	81	82	40	6	40
13. Organizational culture	79	73	75	76	48	6	31
1. Strategic planning gender-related Sustainable Development Goals results	78	75	73	66	N/A	3	N/A
2. Reporting on gender-related Sustainable Development Goals results	72	71	66	67	N/A	1	N/A
11. Gender architecture	63	66	70	60	N/A	-3	N/A
17. Coherence	56	44	34	31	N/A	12	N/A
14. Capacity assessment	56	59	49	45	15	-3	41
9. Financial resource tracking	41	37	47	46	22	4	19
10. Financial resource allocation	38	27	27	31	7	11	31
12. Equal representation of women	31	26	19	17	N/A	5	N/A

[a] Percentages calculated omitting "not applicable" ratings. Percentages slightly differ from those in figure V.

41.   **Coherence (performance indicator 17)** registered significant progress, with a 12-point increase. Virtual arrangements allowed for enhanced participation in inter-agency events, such as the System-wide Action Plan annual conference, with 206 participants from 60 entities.

42.   **Policy (performance indicator 6)** registered a six-point increase in entities that met or exceeded this requirement, on account of both new and newly updated gender policies. This indicator remains critical and catalytic, with twice as many performance indicators being met by entities with a gender equality policy in place.

43.   **Equal representation of women (performance indicator 12)** registered a five-point increase, with 22 entities (31 per cent) meeting standards, five of which in 2021 for the first time.

44.   **Organizational culture (performance indicator 13)** registered five additional entities, bringing the total to 56 entities (79 per cent), meeting requirements in 2021. Flexible work arrangements enhanced online participation and telework. In parallel, the provision of counselling alleviated the mental health and isolation issues created by the pandemic.

Areas of strength

45.   Areas of strength include those performance indicators in which at least 75 per cent of entities met or exceeded requirements.

46.   **Audit (performance indicator 5)** continued as the top performing indicator, with system-wide compliance of 95 per cent.

47.   **Knowledge and communication (performance indicator 16)** improved slightly with 63 entities sharing gender equality knowledge publicly and 53 entities actively involved in inter-agency communities of practice.

48.   **Gender-responsive performance management (performance indicator 8)** registered high compliance with 62 entities meeting requirements and an additional 15 entities implementing a system of recognition for excellent work in this area, four more than in 2020.

49.   **Capacity development (performance indicator 15)** remained strong with the "I Know Gender" course, offered by the UN-Women training centre, mandatory for 50 entities. Sixteen entities also offered tailored training to senior managers during orientation.

50.   **Leadership (performance indicator 7)** slightly declined. Senior leadership's advocacy for funds for gender equality stands out as a determining factor for success.

51.   **Evaluation (performance indicator 4)** performance continues improving with 24 gender mainstreaming evaluations in the last 5 to 8 years, 7 of them in 2021. [20]

Areas for improvement

52.   Areas for improvement include performance indicators for which 50 per cent or fewer of the entities met or exceeded requirements.

53.   **Capacity assessment (performance indicator 14)** registered a minor decline with 39 entities (56 per cent) conducting entity-wide assessments of staff capacity. Capacity deficits comprise one of the chief constraints to stronger performance and leadership.

54.   **Gender architecture (performance indicator 11)** decreased slightly despite 14 entities exceeding requirements by allocating resources to support gender focal point networking. Notably, 49 per cent of Gender Units also reported an expanding of their remit to include disability, inclusion and racism, resulting often in dilution of focus and efforts in support of gender equality.

55.   **Financial resource tracking (performance indicator 9) and allocation (performance indicator 10)** showed an upward trajectory in the implementation of the gender equality marker and financial targets with 23 entities providing guidance and training on the gender equality marker in 2021. Twenty-eight entities reported using the marker and 41 entities reported having established a financial benchmark, 2 and 10 more entities respectively than in 2020. Fifteen entities applied the marker

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[20]   Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, International Atomic Energy Agency, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) and World Health Organization.

to their entire budgets[21] and 13 to specific budget sources. Entities exceeding their financial benchmarks grew from 6 to 10.

B. Accountability at the United Nations country team level: United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard

56. The present section provides an overview of progress in gender mainstreaming as registered by comprehensive and annual progress reports undertaken at the United Nations country team level using the System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard.

57. The number of United Nations country teams undertaking the scorecard increased significantly since the adoption of the updated scorecard in 2018 and the launch of the updated UN-SWAP 2.0 mentioned above. In 2021 alone, 61 country teams submitted a report, compared with 38 in 2020. Of these, 29 prepared a comprehensive report designed to align with the Cooperation Framework planning stage, and 32 prepared an annual progress report.[22]

58. Analysis reveals that action planning combined with annual progress reporting accelerates progress, strengthening compliance with gender mainstreaming performance indicators.

Analysis of 2018–2021 comprehensive reports

59. For the period from 2018 and 2021, 72 country teams completed a comprehensive report. Of these, 25 (34.7 per cent) met or exceeded 9 or more (60 per cent) of the 15 scorecard performance requirements. Across the country teams, three indicators registered the strongest performance: collaboration and engagement with the government on gender equality, collaboration and engagement with civil society organizations dedicated to gender equality and organizational culture supportive of gender equality. Indicators requiring advancing measures to achieve gender parity, ensuring financial resource allocation and tracking, and capacity development for gender mainstreaming registered the weakest performance.

60. With respect to trends among the 29 country teams which developed comprehensive reports in 2021, they remain similar to those of prior years. The three highest performing indicators continue to be those listed in paragraphs 59 to 66 below.

61. **Collaboration with the government (performance indicator 3.1)**. This registered as the top performing indicator, with a total of 89.7 per cent (26 out of 29)
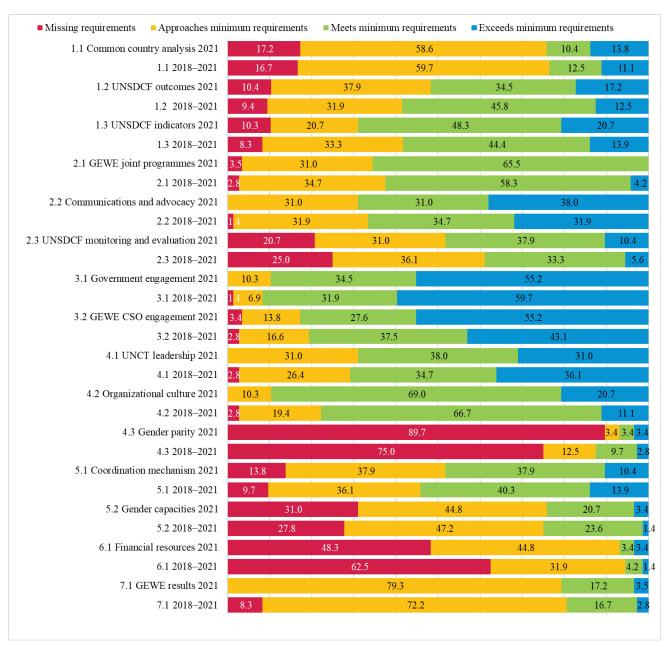
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[21] Economic Commission for Africa, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, International Organization for Migration, International Trade Centre, International Telecommunication Union, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, UN-Women, United Nations Capital Development Fund, UNDP, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and UNV.

[22] Comprehensive United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan assessments are intended to occur at the Cooperation Framework planning stage and entail a joint assessment of all performance indicators and the development of an action plan to improve gender mainstreaming performance. Annual progress reports aim to maintain momentum in making progress towards gender mainstreaming requirements and entail the reassessment of a minimum of five performance indicators and a report back on the implementation of the Action Plan developed as part of the comprehensive assessment.

of country teams submitting comprehensive reports in 2021 meeting or exceeding requirements.

62.   **Organizational culture (performance indicator 4.2)**. A total of 89.7 per cent (26 out of 29) of country teams met or exceeded performance requirements. Heads of agencies commitment to gender equality in the workplace and the adequacy of measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse were most consistently assessed positively in the staff survey, whereas work-life balance tended to be rated least positively, with female personnel up to 23 per cent more likely to rate this question less positively than male personnel.

63.   **Collaboration and engagement with civil society organizations (performance indicator 3.2)**. 82.8 per cent (24 out of 29) of United Nations country teams met or exceeded requirements for this indicator; of these, 55.2 per cent (16 out of 29) exceeded requirements. Country teams were most likely to collaborate with civil society on joint initiatives fostering gender equality and were less likely to engage civil society organizations in the development of the Cooperation Framework.

64.   Conversely, the indicators registering weakest performance, with only 6.8 to 21 per cent of country teams meeting or exceeding requirements, comprised financial resources, gender parity and achievement of gender equality results as planned in the Cooperation Framework.

65.   **Resources (performance indicator 6.1)**. While performance remained weak among country teams which submitted a comprehensive report in 2021, it showed an increase in the proportion of country teams approaching standards, with 13 out of 29 (44.8 per cent) of country teams organizing training on the gender equality marker. For the first time in the period from 2018 to 2021, one country team met and exceeded a financial target for gender equality.

66.   **Gender parity (performance indicator 4.3)**. A total of 89.7 per cent of country teams reporting in 2021 (26 out of 29) missed performance requirements entirely, owing to the lack of country team mechanisms for monitoring gender parity in staffing.

67.   **Contributions to gender equality (performance indicator 7.1)**. Only 21 per cent of country teams (6 out of 29) reported that they had achieved or were on track to achieve all gender equality results planned in their Cooperation Framework, with several country teams citing the COVID-19 pandemic as having hampered the achievement of planned results.

68.   Of concern, less than a fourth of country teams met performance requirements regarding the inclusion of gender analysis in the common country analysis (performance indicator 1.2) and for ensuring adequate capacities for gender mainstreaming (performance indicator 5.2).

Figure VI
United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan comprehensive report ratings in 2021 and 2018-2021, by performance indicator (percentage of total ratings)

Note: Figures have been rounded. All percentages have been calculated using unrounded figures.

Abbreviations: CSO, civil society organization; GEWE, gender equality and women's empowerment; UNCT, United Nations country team; UNSDCF, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.
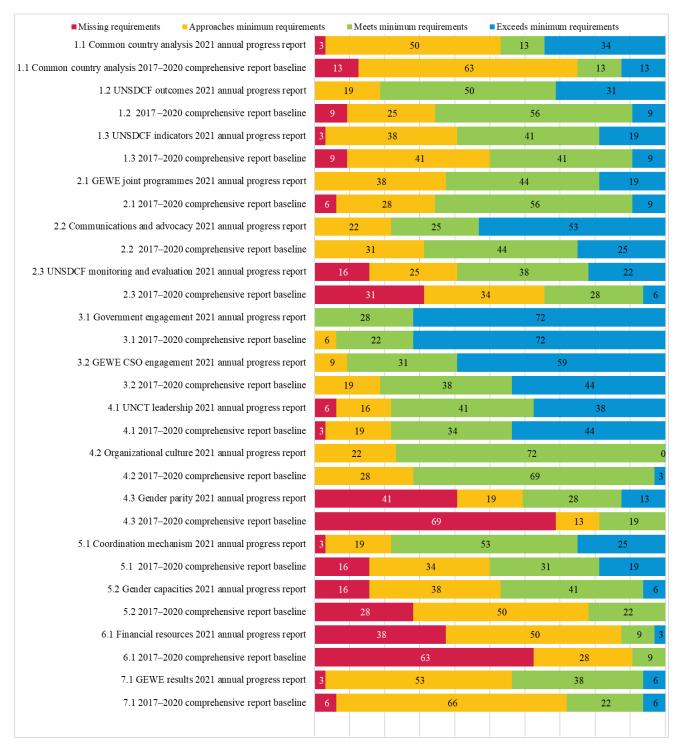
Analysis of annual progress reports 2021

69.   In 2021, 32 country teams submitted an annual progress report to update their performance and report back on the implementation of their Action Plan. Relative to the baselines established by their comprehensive reports, 14 of the 15 indicators registered progress on meeting or exceeding requirements, with gains ranging between 3 and 28 per cent per indicator. A total of 15 of the 32 country teams (46.9 per

cent) that submitted an annual progress report in 2021 met or exceeded 75 per cent or more of performance requirements.

70. In 2021 the strongest and weakest performance mirrored that of prior years (see figure VII below).

71. In 2021, country team reporting shows that actions to ensure minimum standards were met or exceeded were undertaken across all indicators, with the highest number of actions undertaken to ensure gender analysis across the common country analysis (indicator 1.1), followed by actions to improve capacities for gender mainstreaming (indicator 5.2), with performance improving by 21 per cent and 25 per cent respectively for the two indicators.

72. Five performance indicators registered an increase, with an additional 7 country teams (21 per cent) or more meeting or exceeding performance requirements in 2021.

73. **Gender equality coordination mechanism (performance indicator 5.1)** registered the most significant progress, with a 28.1 per cent increase in the proportion of country teams meeting or exceeding requirements through formalizing and strengthening gender theme group leadership and operations, and expanding membership to include focal points from all United Nations entities, including non-resident entities, and additional senior members where possible.

74. **Capacity development (performance indicator 5.2)** registered an increase, with a 25 per cent increase in the proportion of country teams implementing measures to develop the capacities of United Nations personnel for gender mainstreaming.

75. **Monitoring and evaluation (performance indicator 2.3)** registered an increase of 25 per cent through joint efforts to strengthen systems for gender-sensitive monitoring of Cooperation Frameworks and the integration of a stronger gender focus into Cooperation Framework annual reporting and final evaluation of improved country team capacities to track gender equality results.

76. **Common country analysis (performance indicator 1.1)** registered 7 additional country teams (21.9 per cent) meeting requirements.

77. **Gender parity (performance indicator 4.3)**. The introduction of monitoring mechanisms and the establishment of affirmative measures to ensure gender parity contributed to 7 additional country teams meeting or exceeding requirements.

Figure VII
Comparison of 2021 United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan annual report ratings with baselines established by comprehensive reports (percentage)

Abbreviations: CSO, civil society organization; GEWE, gender equality and women's empowerment; UNCT, United Nations country team; UNSDCF, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

V. Gaps and challenges

78. In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to present challenges to the work of the United Nations system, rolling back progress on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Consequently, the significance of and need for gender equality and gender mainstreaming enjoyed renewed attention, yielding increased emphasis on joint programmes and Cooperation Framework outcomes focused on gender equality and accelerated implementation of gender mainstreaming accountability frameworks and tools.

79. Notwithstanding the above, however, the gender snapshot indicates that this enhanced emphasis evident in the United Nations system did not always translate to results on the ground. Women's participation, for instance, remained low in pandemic-related decision-making structures in countries.[23]

80. Interagency coordination in support of gender mainstreaming standards in the United Nations system has demonstrated its significant potential for stronger integration of gender concerns in the work of the United Nations system. An expansion of this systematic approach of common standards and monitoring implementation to programmatic work can further catalyse joint action and enhance the capacity for collective learning, scaling up effective responses and enabling the aggregated assessment of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

81. With regard to joint programmes, while the attention to gender equality is noteworthy, it also seems not to have translated to more resources. Only 8 per cent of funding for joint programmes focused on Sustainable Development Goal 5 despite making up 38 per cent of the total number of joint programmes.

82. In addition, while enhanced efforts have been made by United Nations entities to mainstream a gender equality perspective across the peace and humanitarian pillars, more remains to be done to ensure the needs and priorities of women and girls are met, including through capacity-building on gender analysis.

83. At the level of entities, the review of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women indicates that capacity assessment remains an area for improvement, with half of United Nations entities not having an entity-wide assessment to identify gender-related capacity gaps. A survey on the gender architecture revealed that 49 per cent of responding entities noted an expansion of the remit of gender units in line with broader inclusion agendas, but whether this involved the allocation of proportionately more resources was unclear. In effect, this diluted the resources directed at gender equality and mainstreaming. In parallel, however, this is accompanied with a growing recognition of the centrality of financial targets and tracking, through the systematic application of the gender equality marker. However, the roll-out of the gender equality marker into different enterprise management systems requires significant acceleration.

84. At the level of the countries, collaboration with governments and civil society remain the strongest performance areas. Annual scorecard reporting by country teams demonstrates marked improvements in achieving minimum requirements, especially in relation to gender analysis, gender-mainstreaming capacities and gender-coordination mechanisms. However, while the coverage of country teams reporting on the scorecard increased from 60 country teams in the period from 2017 to 2020 to 72 in the period from 2018 to 2021, 58 country teams have yet to implement the scorecard. Universal coverage across all country teams continues to be an important requirement.

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[23] Azcona and others, *The 2021 Gender Snapshot*.

85. Entities and country teams have achieved good progress in ensuring a gender perspective is mainstreamed into strategic plans and Cooperation Framework outcomes. However, progress still must be accelerated to establish and meet financial targets for allocations and expenditures for gender equality.

86. Less than a fifth of country teams that submitted a comprehensive report in 2021 and two fifths of country teams that submitted an annual progress report noted that they had achieved or were on track to achieve the gender equality results planned in their Cooperation Framework. Further strengthening country-level gender theme groups and capacities for gender-sensitive programming and for the application of the country team gender equality marker is expected to help to remedy the situation.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

87. The United Nations system continues to strengthen its efforts to accelerate gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system at the global and country levels, including through the implementation of the System-wide Action Plan 2.0 and the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard, in support of the gender-responsive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19 recovery.

88. The United Nations System-wide Action Plan and the country team scorecard submissions demonstrate increasing uptake on gender mainstreaming as evidenced, inter alia, by the growing number of gender objectives in strategic plans, Cooperation Frameworks and joint programmes related to gender equality. Much more remains to be done, however, to capture the work of the United Nations in gender equality and its results. The System-wide Action Plan in particular, because of its results indicators and three years of experience, and the scorecard, supported by country-level gender theme groups, are uniquely placed to support the system in this journey. However, significantly enhanced dedicated capacity and resourcing for gender equality work and its coordination constitute prerequisites at both the entity and the country levels.

89. There has been little progress across regions on Sustainable Development Goal 5 for most targets and indicators and a worsening outlook as a result of the pandemic, as shown in the gender snapshot. The United Nations system still remains fragmented and small-scale in its collective efforts to address gender equality gaps, with only partial capacity to translate advocacy efforts into stronger performance for results. As evidence of that, concerted action on the implementation plan emanating from the High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality and its recommendations have revealed an enhanced focus on tracking resources, but slower progress in establishing adequate financial targets and resources for gender mainstreaming. Therefore, to meet the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there continues to be a great need to accelerate the implementation of the plan.

90. The analysis of evidence on system capacity, particularly in emerging areas, shows a concerning lack of comprehensive capacity assessment and development programmes for all staff in most entities and at the system-wide level. Coupled with increasing demands to address multiple vulnerabilities, the disparity between lofty goals and current capacity undermines concurrent efforts to improve the gender architecture of the United Nations system.

91. In sum, strengthening and accelerating gender mainstreaming policies and programmes in the United Nations system warrants strong system-wide support and action to improve performance at all levels, not least because the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have negated prior progress. Accordingly, as a result of the findings presented in the present report, it is recommended that the United Nations

system, including the specialized agencies and funds and programmes, consider the following actions:

(a)   Ensure that all United Nations entities adopt strong system-wide and commonly agreed standards and implement harmonized and coordinated approaches to gender mainstreaming at all levels and in all areas of work;

(b)   Further strengthen support for the acceleration of gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes, including in support of the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global, regional and country levels, taking into consideration the extraordinary negation of prior gender equality gains by the COVID-19 pandemic;

(c)   Continue to enhance gender mainstreaming through the update and implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan, in particular with regard to gender-responsive performance management and strategic planning, and enhance the collection, availability and use of sex-disaggregated data;

(d)   Call on country teams to fully implement the scorecard, while ensuring alignment with key United Nations repositioning frameworks and processes;

(e)   Call on United Nations country teams to make use of system-wide tools to identify and help dismantle gender-discriminatory laws and enhance advocacy efforts on the use of temporary special measures to achieve equal representation in institutions across all spheres, as emphasized in Our Common Agenda;

(f)   Dedicate sustained efforts to assess and monitor the capacity of the United Nations system, its entities and field offices, to address gender mainstreaming for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, including an analysis of its gender architecture in terms of resources and positioning to influence decisions;

(g)   Strengthen the capacity of United Nations entities for results-based management and results-based budgeting to enable a robust system-wide reporting and aggregation of gender-related results in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including financial investments for gender equality and women's rights;

(h)   Ensure United Nations entities retain a strong focus, in terms of resources, on gender equality issues and address other cross-cutting thematic issues with specific and dedicated additional resources and expertise;

(i)   Ensure that all United Nations entities include gender equality as a high-level result in their strategic plans, update and strengthen their gender equality policies and institute financial resource tracking mechanisms and dedicated financial allocations, including at the country team level, to effectively strengthen system-wide commitment to and implementation of gender equality perspectives in all aspects of the work of the Organization;

(j)   Continue to support efforts by the governing bodies of United Nations entities to devote adequate attention and resources to mainstreaming a gender perspective in their plans and activities, including through enhanced reporting on results and measures to be taken to improve compliance with the performance indicators of the System-wide Action Plan 2.0;

(k)   Enhance United Nations sustainable development guidance to strengthen gender mainstreaming in the preparation of Cooperation Frameworks, ensuring that such Frameworks are informed by robust gender analysis and ensuring a dedicated

gender equality outcome and gender mainstreaming across all outcomes, indicators and financial allocations related to the Sustainable Development Goals;

(l)   Strengthen harmonized implementation of the gender equality marker and the establishment of financial targets at the overall entity level, through UN-Info at the country team level and in inter-agency pooled funding mechanisms;

(m)   Increase investment in capacity development for gender equality and gender mainstreaming, with particular attention to strengthening gender analysis and the collection of sex-disaggregated data, to fully integrate gender considerations in key emerging areas and with specific attention to strengthening targeted gender analysis of those furthest behind;

(n)   Strengthen the capacities for the development of strategic plans and Cooperation Frameworks and to support related monitoring and evaluation efforts;

(o)   Continue to strengthen collaboration and coordination across the United Nations system to ensure systematic gender mainstreaming in development, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian action;

(p)   Enhance coordination and accountability for action on gender equality in the humanitarian, peace and security, and development space to operationalize commitments, clarify roles and responsibilities and coordinate work on gender mainstreaming in the triple nexus process at the corporate and country levels;

(q)   Align the metrics of accountability frameworks of the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality and Generation Equality Action Coalitions with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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