



United Nations

Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services

**Report of the Executive Board on its work
during 2023***

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Note

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
Part one. First regular session 2023	
I. Organizational matters.	6
<i>Joint segment</i>	
II. Update on UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS engagement with the international financial institutions	6
III. Recommendations of the Board of Auditors	7
IV. Follow-up to UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board meeting	10
V. Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment	12
<i>UNDP segment</i>	
Statement by the Administrator and interactive dialogue	13
VI. Human Development Report.	16
VII. Country programmes and related matters	17
VIII. Evaluation.	17
<i>UNFPA segment</i>	
Statement by the Executive Director	18
IX. Evaluation.	21
X. Country programmes and related matters	22
<i>UNOPS segment</i>	
XI. United Nations Office for Project Services	22
Statement by the Executive Director	22
XII. Other matters	25
Part two. Annual session 2023	
I. Organizational matters.	28
<i>Joint segment</i>	
II. Update on the implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system.	28
III. Internal audit and investigation.	29
IV. Ethics	31
V. Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment	33

<i>UNDP segment</i>	
VI. Annual report of the Administrator	33
VII. Interactive dialogue on development pathways out of crisis	35
VIII. Gender equality at UNDP	37
IX. Country programmes and related matters	38
X. Evaluation.	38
XI. United Nations Capital Development Fund	39
XII. United Nations Volunteers.	41
<i>UNFPA segment</i>	
XIII. Statement by the Executive Director and annual report	42
XIV. Interactive dialogue on achieving demographic resilience in a world of 8 billion	45
XV. Evaluation.	46
XVI. Country programmes and related matters	47
<i>UNOPS segment</i>	
XVII. Statement by the Executive Director and annual report	47
Part three. Second regular session 2023	
I. Organizational matters.	51
<i>UNDP segment</i>	
Interactive dialogue with the Administrator.	51
II. Structured funding dialogue	55
III. Country programmes and related matters	57
<i>UNFPA segment</i>	
Statement by the Executive Director and interactive dialogue.	57
IV. Structured funding dialogue	61
V. Country programmes and related matters	61
<i>UNOPS segment</i>	
VI. United Nations Office for Project Services	62
Statement by the Executive Director and interactive dialogue.	62
Annexes	
I. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board during 2023	66
II. Membership of the Executive Board in 2023	95
III. Report of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP held on 2 June 2023	96

Part one
First regular session 2023

**Held at United Nations Headquarters in New York
from 30 January to 3 February 2023**

I. Organizational matters

1. The first regular session 2023 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS was held in person at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 30 January to 3 February 2023. The newly elected President of the Board welcomed delegations and thanked the outgoing President and Vice-Presidents for their leadership and commitment to the work of the Board in 2022. He congratulated the new members of the Bureau on their election.

2. In accordance with rule 7 of the rules of procedure of the Executive Board, the Board elected the following members of the Bureau for 2023:

President:	H.E. Mr. Martin Kimani	(Kenya)
Vice-President	H.E. Mr. Muhammad Muhith	(Bangladesh)
Vice-President:	H.E. Ms. Maritza Chan	(Costa Rica)
Vice-President:	H.E. Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya	(Ukraine)
Vice-President:	H.E. Mr. Feridun Sinirlioğlu	(Türkiye)

3. The Executive Board approved the agenda and workplan for its first regular session 2023 (DP/2023/L.1) and approved the report of the second regular session 2022 (DP/2023/1) and the report of the special session 2022 (DP/2023/2). The Board adopted the annual workplan for 2023 (DP/2023/CRP.1) and approved the tentative workplan for the annual session 2023.

4. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board in 2022 appeared in document DP/2023/4, which was available on the Executive Board website.¹

5. The Executive Board agreed in decision 2023/5 to the following schedule for future sessions of the Executive Board in 2023:

Annual session 2023	5 to 9 June 2023 (New York)
Second regular session 2023:	28 August to 1 September 2023

Statement by the President of the Board

6. The President said Member States had to commit to the United Nations three main pillars – human rights, peace and security, and development – as complimentary aspects of United Nations policy. Board deliberations and decisions directly impacted UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS development mandates; the Board’s duty was to support them in responding to Member States’ needs. The Board’s quality of governance and support enabled the organizations to be effective in working to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (the Goals). While reviewing their strategic plans, programmes and approaches, the organizations had to contend with regular (core) budget cuts. He urged delegations to re-energize their commitments through increased regular funding. Board work was critical to ensuring accountability, transparency and effectiveness; available resources had to be used effectively to achieve measurable development impact. Board deliberations contributed to the ambition of the second SDG Summit in September 2023 and built momentum for the future.

Joint segment

II. Update on UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS engagement with the international financial institutions

7. The Director, Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy, UNDP, the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme), and the Special Advisor to the Executive

¹ See <https://www.undp.org/executive-board/decisions-of-the-board>.

Director, UNOPS, provided updates on their organizations' engagement with the international financial institutions (IFIs), in line with Executive Board decision 2022/14.

8. Delegations welcomed cooperation between the United Nations organizations and the IFIs for a more effective, efficient global development system and sharing of lessons, and encouraged deepened collaboration, including through innovative financial instruments such as the Sustainable Development Goals, blue and green bonds. The organizations were urged to address gaps and obstacles to joint efforts. One delegation called on Member States to advocate for enhanced partnerships between United Nations organizations and IFIs through their IFI board governing bodies and ongoing IFI partnerships, and urged donors to continue financial support, particularly through regular and other funding.

9. A group of delegations stressed the importance of tangible results on the ground, particularly for the most vulnerable. Collaboration was supplementary and synergistic rather than substitutive for traditional donor funding. The organizations were urged to keep diversifying their funding base and build financial resilience – a full range of financial instruments between the United Nations and multilateral development banks was needed to scale up investments and achieve the Goals. Protecting development gains against increasing fragility and conflict was key, and increasing IFI involvement in the common country programming process offered an opportunity to deepen relationships and capitalize on comparative advantages. They welcomed the organizations' clear outline of support needed from Member States and indicated Member States would support better collaboration between the organizations and IFIs in the governing boards and leverage their own partnerships with IFIs to strengthen collaboration.

10. In response, the Director, Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy, UNDP, said examples of catalytic work with innovative instruments were available on the UNDP website. Despite the United Nations and UNDP having delivered on Global Compact commitments, donors had reduced funding and its quality; flexible, quality funding enabled strategic partnerships to act quickly, particularly in crisis settings, and do more strategic policy work with IFIs. Reducing regular resources made United Nations organizations project implementors for IFIs, detaching them from their mandates and Board guidance on their strategic plans.

11. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme), providing examples of how the most vulnerable groups were reached through its programmes, said that UNFPA would continue to identify and address bottlenecks in joint efforts, while recognizing national rules. At the country level, she highlighted the role of United Nations country teams and the resident coordinator in working together and triangular cooperation and government participation to balance risks.

12. The Special Advisor to the Executive Director, UNOPS, said that while UNOPS was not consistently engaged in country programming processes. It could share lessons in infrastructure and procurement.

13. The Board took note of the update on UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS engagement with the international financial institutions.

III. Recommendations of the Board of Auditors

14. The Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, presented the UNDP report on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Board of Auditors (BOA), 2021 (DP/2023/5). The Officer-in-Charge of UNCDF presented the UNCDF report on the implementation of the recommendations of the

United Nations Board of Auditors (DP/2023/6). The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) presented the UNFPA report on the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Board of Auditors, 2021 (DP/FPA/2023/1). The Special Adviser to the Acting Executive Director of UNOPS presented the UNOPS report on the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Board of Auditors, 2021 (DP/OPS/2023/1).

15. Delegations welcomed the unqualified audit opinions for all four entities for 2021, acknowledged their progress addressing the findings and implementing BOA recommendations, and encouraged their efforts to implement recommendations. Some delegations highlighted the independent BOA role ensuring transparency and trust between the organizations and their boards. They encouraged BOA to include, as in pre-2018 reports, key findings and recommendations related to specific units and country offices audited, to enhance transparency and assurance, as Member States had agreed not to conduct or commission their own independent audits of the respective contributions to United Nations organizations. They emphasized the importance of strengthening risk management and internal controls.

UNDP

16. A group of delegations welcomed UNDP progress implementing BOA recommendations in integrating sustainability in procurement and establishing pricing levels for cost recovery in service-level agreements. They welcomed UNDP integrating BOA recommendations in its new procurement strategy, which should be publicly available. They expressed concern, however, that internal financial controls had been a recurring issue, underscoring the 2018 recommendation for better internal financial control and greater emphasis on long-standing recommendations on fraud prevention. They welcomed additional data on reported fraud or presumptive fraud cases, including year-by-year comparative data, noting the management accountability framework did not include country offices. UNDP was encouraged to develop a more harmonized oversight system with guidelines on roles and responsibilities. UNDP was further encouraged to update its accountability system and corporate accountability framework, taking a risk-based approach to ensure internal controls and assurance systems. They welcomed more detailed information on steps and timely completion of performance reviews. On implementing the recommendation on controls for Global Environmental Facility (GEF) projects, UNDP should address shortcomings, as related issues would be covered in the GEF action plan and status report on audit findings.

UNCDF

17. Delegations welcomed the UNCDF unqualified audit report and closing of audit recommendations for 2021 and previous periods. A group of least developed countries (LDCs) commended UNCDF for improving financial management, transparency and accountability. They expressed concern, however, over declining regular resources. They stressed the importance of building resilience in LDCs through stepped-up capacity-building and finance for adaptation to climate change, including through comprehensive multi-stakeholder, resilience-building measures, leveraging the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Sufficient, predictable, regular, unearmarked resources were critical for UNCDF to bring its unique investment expertise to LDCs, create synergies with country teams to mobilize resources, and exercise flexibility supporting national development priorities. Oversight and financial management were essential. Due to conflict, COVID-19, and climate change on achieving the Goals in LDCs, they urged Member States to renew support so UNCDF could play its unique role as catalytic financier for LDCs.

UNFPA

18. Delegations appreciated the high rate of UNFPA implementation of BOA recommendations in the three preceding years, noting that progress in addressing 2020 recommendations on implementing supply-chain management would involve operationalization of the enterprise resource planning system and establishment of a new supply chain management unit. They welcomed activities to address recommendations from the 2021 BOA report, including in strategic planning. While acknowledging efforts to strengthen oversight and control of agreements that country offices had with implementing partners, they expressed concern that lack of approved agreements and amendments posed a greater problem than captured in the report, citing the cases of country offices in Lebanon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They emphasized the importance of proper staffing and filling vacancies in a timely manner.

UNOPS

19. A group of delegations recognized the unqualified opinion on UNOPS activities for 2021, with “emphasis of matter” related to its sustainable investments in infrastructure and innovation (S3i) initiative. They appreciated the revision of the cost recovery model for management fees and assurances it would be updated at least biannually. However, concern was expressed with findings regarding weaknesses in decision-making, management and internal controls for the projects We are the Oceans and Ocean Generation. They also noted the findings regarding human resources, that 87 per cent of UNOPS personnel were individual contractor agreement holders, and 40 per cent of “business-critical roles” were performed by individual contractor holders. UNOPS was strongly encouraged to ensure all positions that entailed “inherently United Nations activities” were filled by staff members.

20. One delegation said in UNOPS previous pricing model the historical increase in delivery of its operations far exceeded management expenses. The updated cost recovery policy, expected to significantly narrow the gaps, should be reflected in future reports. UNOPS was asked for an assessment of the viability status of the \$63 million total investment, potential development results and impact, and possibilities of recovering the funds should they prove a poor investment.

21. In response, the Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, said roll-out of the new enterprise resources planning system – Quantum – would play a critical role improving internal control implementation and compliance, strengthen preventative control, and enable better transaction-level controls. UNDP would continue engaging the auditors as Quantum stabilized and refer year-by-year comparisons and data on fraud, and presumptive fraud, to the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI), presenting its findings at the annual session 2023. UNDP management was finalizing approval for a technical update of the management accountability framework. Following a Joint Inspection Unit study on accountability systems, management would revert with an update. UNDP management had developed a new performance management development compliance dashboard allowing personnel and managers to monitor performance and goal-planning status.

22. The Officer-in-Charge, UNCDF, reiterated the importance of core funding for UNCDF as a normative organization that sought to work with financing for development and de-risking of development. Core funding was needed to support its three core functions: innovation, oversight, and support to the resident coordinator and United Nations country teams.

23. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) said the recent introduction of Quantum was expected to address delegations’ concerns. Not all

positions in the Supply Chain Management Unit had been filled because job descriptions were being reviewed and updated as the unit's work was observed for possible adjustment. UNFPA had introduced a risk management framework in 2016 and an enterprise risk management policy in 2022, further strengthening its risk management. A chief risk officer position was created to advise the Executive Director on managing risks. On the issue of implementing partner cases in Lebanon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, recommendations had been implemented, and UNFPA was strengthening country offices' engagement with implementing partners. The number of vacancies fell from 17.8 per cent in 2021 to 12.9 per cent in 2022.

24. The Special Adviser to the Acting Executive Director, UNOPS, said UNOPS had taken the first steps to address its cost recovery policy, setting its net revenue base to zero (ideally on an annual basis) as a mechanism to avoid undue accumulation of reserves. UNOPS would present its plan to improve its financial regulations and rules at the second regular session 2023. On the We Are The Oceans challenge, UNOPS was awaiting finalization of a forthcoming report, whose recommendations would be taken into consideration and, as appropriate, incorporated in its response. The issue of UNOPS personnel not under staff contract was under review and the Board would receive a progress report in 2024. As part of the comprehensive response plan, UNOPS was setting measures to improve risk management. On debt allowance and impairments, an assessment study had been commissioned that would provide better understanding. He explained that the \$8.0 million for work on recovery of funds undertaken through the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) was not a fee.

25. The Director of External Audit of China, United Nations Board of Auditors, and lead auditor for UNOPS, said BOA had conducted two audits every year – interim and final. BOA observed that UNOPS implementation rate of audit recommendations had increased from 33 per cent in 2020 to 53 per cent in 2021. As for the remaining 45 recommendations to the end of 2021, progress was noted in the internal audit of October 2022. These implementation rate figures would be updated on completion of the BOA audit, to be submitted to the General Assembly in July 2023.

26. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/1 on the recommendations of the Board of Auditors.

IV. Follow-up to UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board meeting

27. The Director, Bureau of Policy and Programme Support, UNDP and the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) presented the joint report on the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (DP-FPA/2023/1), followed by introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Programme Branch, UNAIDS.

28. Delegations commended UNDP and UNFPA as critical partners and co-sponsors of the Joint Programme. Concerns were raised, however, over the significant shortfall in funding of UNAIDS. It was imperative UNAIDS be fully funded at a level that allowed the Joint Programme to support countries and communities to meet the targets set in its global AIDS strategy, 2021–2026.

29. A delegation highlighted UNDP and UNFPA work on livelihoods and well-being of persons living with HIV; HIV prevention; human rights, stigma and discrimination. Concern was raised that UNAIDS funding situation would jeopardize UNDP and UNFPA work on HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights. UNDP and UNFPA should continue prioritizing the HIV response within the global strategy,

maintain specialized staff, and continue their division of labour. They should also continue pursuing sustainable financing of the Joint Programme with the UNAIDS secretariat; illuminate the financial relationship between UNAIDS and co-sponsors; and indicate how funding declines affect UNDP and UNFPA HIV initiatives and how to prevent or mitigate consequences. Another delegation asked whether gender-transforming technologies were used in the global fight against HIV, especially for key populations in LDCs, and what lessons learned could be shared.

30. Another delegation, disagreeing with UNAIDS-promoted approach, which implied a fixation on “key populations”, recalled its earlier reservations at the 2021 regular session of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, saying the global strategy and Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS contained unacceptable language on decriminalization and legalization of prostitution and drug use and promoted what it considered objectionable comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programmes for children. It urged the organizations to focus on strengthening capacities of medical systems in developing countries and prevention of HIV among youth. It sought clarification on whether UNDP, in its “transforming masculinities” programmes, conducted campaigns to prevent risky behaviours vis-à-vis the spread of HIV. Noting a reference in the report providing social protection and financial assistance to sex workers, it asked whether the Fund was conducting or planning such programmes, and how they tallied with its zero tolerance policy for sexual exploitation.

31. Delegations noted the need for the global strategy and UNAIDS to consider cultural specificities, diversity of populations and their unique needs, as well as national laws. One delegation emphasized an effective HIV response needed to acknowledge the centrality of CSE and recognize sexual orientation and gender identity in provision of services to end transmission.

32. In response, the Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP, said HIV prevention was a priority in all UNAIDS and UNDP work and the HIV/AIDS response was multidimensional; the co-sponsors viewed this as a health and development issue, with underlying structural issues, such as inequality. He affirmed the Joint Programme worked with sensitivity, in national laws and processes, in close cooperation with Governments, civil society and partners.

33. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) said UNFPA was making concrete progress through technology-facilitated programmes addressing gender-based violence and CSE. She welcomed the encouragement to prioritize HIV work and address the social challenges of CSE while respecting cultural sensitivities and national laws. She expressed appreciation for donor support critical for women and girls alongside the difficulties from funding shortfalls.

34. The Director HIV/AIDS, Health and Development Group, UNDP, explained – regarding the financial relationship between UNAIDS and its co-sponsors – that the unified budget, results and accountability framework was the vehicle to respond to HIV/AIDS in a coherent, coordinated manner across the United Nations system, and that a fully funded framework for 2023 and the next biennium would enable the organizations to keep UNAIDS on track for the 2025 targets.

35. The Global Coordinator on HIV/AIDS, UNFPA, reiterated the importance of funding to ensure the organizations could catalyse work on HIV and sustainably reach those furthest left behind.

36. The Deputy Executive Director, Programme Branch, UNAIDS, stressed the urgency for Member States to double down on investment to UNAIDS.

37. The Executive Board took note of the joint UNDP and UNFPA report on the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Programme Coordinating Board of UNAIDS (DP-FPA/2023/1).

V. Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

38. The Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) and the Special Adviser to the Acting Executive Director, UNOPS, presented the update on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, in accordance with Board decision 2022/2.

39. A group of delegations underlined the responsibility of Member States and United Nations organizations to create a safe, respectful, trustworthy workplace culture. One, they stressed the need to surpass quantitative data and focus on results measured qualitatively – measuring accountability and culture change, operationalizing a victim-survivor-centred approach, and implementing systems to prevent and respond. Two, they stressed the importance of a well-coordinated United Nations system sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment response, working with the United Nations Special Coordinator and Victims' Rights Advocate, and aligning sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment metrics, indicators and reporting with existing data. Three, learning/feedback loops were key to ensuring data/lessons fed into decision-making and strategies. They asked how survivors' experiences were considered when measuring sufficiency and purposefulness of support; progress was tracked in strengthening mechanisms that held perpetrators to account; and investigative capacities were assessed in providing follow-up of victim-survivor-centred support in substantiated cases. They noted there was little indication of how UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS sought to establish a “speak-up culture” and no clear inter-agency cooperation to strengthen implementing partners' sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment capacities.

40. Other delegations welcomed the two new UNDP indicators to measure the presence of country office action plans and prevention and response systems and urged UNDP to develop additional indicators to measure implementation and gauge quality and effectiveness. Commending UNFPA for the internal review of its implementation of the United Nations Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse involving Implementing Partners, they sought clarity on barriers UNFPA faced assessing implementing partners and risk mitigation measures, especially for partners who did not meet minimum standards. It was expected that in hiring a full-time sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment coordinator and additional staff, UNOPS would re-examine its strategic framework and internal systems to determine where additional progress metrics were needed. Delegations sought clarity on measures to ensure perpetrators were not hired or rehired in the United Nations system; implementing partners took appropriate action when sexual misconduct was reported; and what metrics were used to track implementing partners' progress.

41. In response, the Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, cited different ways UNDP assessed the impact of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment activities. One was tracking reporting, showing if the system was trusted and working, and tracking how many people were reporting through staff surveys. Mechanisms were used to collect data that guided the UNDP strategy and action plan and highlighted activities in which to invest. An inter-bureaux task force led the development and steered implementation of the strategy and action plan, and a new guidance note was being developed for country offices. Likewise, a sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment risk framework was being finalized to assess and mitigate risks. Mechanisms were in place to collect victims' feedback through staff counsellors, OAI, and office workplace facilitators in country offices. UNDP held perpetrators to account, terminating employment in substantiated cases, sometimes passing cases to national authorities. Perpetrators were put in ClearChecks to avoid rehiring. The iReport tracker was used for credible allegations, updated

weekly, and checked for accuracy. Inter-agency collaboration was a priority. Corporately, UNDP was active at the High-Level Committee on Management working group/Chief Executives Board taskforce, and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

42. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) said UNFPA used surveys on the impact of working with implementing partners, and training focused on prevention, response and assistance in operationalizing its survivor-centred approach. UNFPA engaged in inter-agency collaboration, including through the IASC, where it coordinated a review on investigation standards to inform work on the survivor-centred approach and investigation standards. UNFPA led the inter-agency work in nine IASC priority countries, working on strengthening assistance to victims and survivors and providing holistic support. UNFPA participated in the inter-agency working group to rationalize and coordinate operationalization of the implementing partners protocol in a harmonized manner, and develop a sexual exploitation and abuse module and the United Nations Partner Portal. Responding to concerns about staff distrust of reporting mechanisms, UNFPA had formed an integrity group to enhance transparent communication and established the post of victims-support focal point. UNFPA had achieved a high rate of coverage (81 per cent) in assessing implementing partners.

43. The Special Adviser to the UNOPS Acting Executive Director affirmed UNOPS commitment to zero tolerance on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and highlighted key measures taken, including monitoring implementation of its action plan, sharing experiences with other organizations, placing new staff dedicated to supporting victims, following up on and guiding support services, and training personnel towards a culture shift that would make them comfortable with reporting on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The need for improved metrics was acknowledged; the presentation of the restated Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, at the annual session 2023 would provide an opportunity to present improvements.

44. The Executive Board took note of the update on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

UNDP segment

Statement by the Administrator and interactive dialogue

Statement by the Administrator

45. In his opening remarks (available on the UNDP website),² the Administrator highlighted “disruption” as the backdrop of global development which in 2022 took the form of “poly-crisis” and uncertainty, creating a deep sense of insecurity globally. Despite this, UNDP posted the highest performance delivery of the previous 10 years and invested \$4.8 billion. Amid the lingering challenges and socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, UNDP mobilized \$2.6 billion in reprogrammed, repurposed, additional funding for COVID-19 response and recovery. He highlighted the UNDP role in assisting developing countries in development financing, investing in the 2030 Agenda and achieving the Goals, including through UNDP accelerator labs and development solutions and alternatives based on global good practices.

46. As the development programme of the United Nations, UNDP in 2022 remained a trusted, accountable, transparent institution – rated among the top in transparency surveys, with a record 17 years of unqualified opinions of its financial statements by the United Nations Board of Auditors. Highlighting the UNDP crisis offer, and

² See <https://www.undp.org/speeches/first-regular-session-executive-board-2023>.

reflecting on the international community's shortfalls in responding to emergencies and causes of conflict, the Administrator stressed the need for a paradigm shift and emergency responses linking the humanitarian, political and development dimensions. He cited UNDP efforts, with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and others, to find better ways to protect and support people, such as in Haiti, Pakistan, Ukraine and Yemen.

47. The Administrator warned of an unfolding economic, financial and debt crisis as the greatest development risk of 2023, pointing to 51 countries in debt distress. Working with partners, including the G-20, the UNDP Sustainable Development Finance Hub established in 2019 provided support in four flagships: (a) integrated financing frameworks, which supported 86 countries reviewing finance situations and developing financial strategies; (b) insurance and risk financing, where UNDP established its Insurance and Risk Finance Facility and was working with partners in the Insurance Development Forum in 40 countries, exploring the potential of insurance in responding to climate risks; (c) Tax for SDGs, working to add revenue to Governments, including its partnership on Tax Inspectors without Borders; and (d) technology and digitalization, where UNDP was a key partner on future development with digitalization. UNDP was a co-host of the Digital Public Goods Alliance which led mobilization of \$295 million pledged to support implementation of inclusive digital public infrastructure. He assured the Board that leaving no one behind was central to UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

48. UNDP was focused on being a responsive, agile, modern public institution. Its new enterprise resources planning system – Quantum – would make UNDP more transparent and accountable, able to report on results and resources at the highest standards of reporting for audit and oversight. Its People for 2030 strategy, initiatives and pioneering approach to human resources management, established UNDP as an employer of choice. UNDP continued to be a preferred partner of multilateral development facilities, such as GCF and GEF. He expressed disappointment, however, at the 2022 decline in regular resources and anticipated further drop. Continued decline jeopardized UNDP ability to uphold its promise to deliver and was symptomatic of a deeper challenge facing development cooperation/financing: whether the international community fully understood the centrality of development cooperation to humanity's future in light of the Goals. The development financing crisis was also symptomatic of eroded understanding and confidence in the United Nations development promise.

49. Members of the Bureau of the Board emphasized the need for the highest levels of cooperation and solidarity among Member States and United Nations organizations to break paralysis and set a new course for rebuilding. They appreciated the UNDP strategic focus on advocating for equitable, green, digital, resilient recovery and affirmed that issues should be tackled holistically, grounded in leaving no one behind. UNDP should continue to find new tools and instruments to focus on the root causes of marginalization.

50. Across the board, delegations commended UNDP for its strong performance and delivery supporting programme countries while facing difficult conditions due to "poly-crises". They recognized the interconnectedness of crises, how countries were affected differently, and the importance of international solidarity, partnership and multilateralism. All expressed concern with the two-year decline in the global human development index as a setback to achieving the Goals, and the decline in regular resources, despite programme countries' expressed needs for UNDP continued support. Predictable, regular resources were crucial to enable UNDP to respond effectively. UNDP was encouraged to strengthen cooperation with IFIs and private sector to expand its donor base.

51. Delegations expressed support for the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, its principle of leaving no one behind; innovative, catalytic, integrated, impact cascading approaches; and integrator role. On the UNDP crisis offer, the humanitarian response should go hand-in-hand with investments in development, and UNDP should remain operationally agile and equipped with modern implementation mechanisms to support recovery, especially in special situations. Delegations appreciated UNDP focus on digitalization and technology for inclusive development and leaving no one behind, and its role developing new technologies for inclusive, resilient business models. Concerned with debt and financing of the Goals, they welcomed UNDP support developing innovative funding and financing tools.

52. A group of middle-income countries (MICs) proposed the use of multidimensional indices instead of gross domestic product per capita to categorize countries' economic status, better reflect reality and complex vulnerabilities, and allow access to concessional financing. They looked forward to the Secretary-General's mapping exercise for a detailed overview of support available to MICs.

53. Another group encouraged UNDP to prioritize support to developing countries to accelerate implementation of the Goals by helping to: (a) ensure access to COVID-19 vaccines and make vaccinations and treatments universal; (b) bridge the financial gap to boost economic recovery, including increased official development assistance, concessional finance, and a comprehensive, inclusive debt solution framework; (c) work to reform international financial architecture to ensure participation of developing countries in international economic decision-making; (d) support full implementation of the climate agenda; and (e) mobilize investment in sustainable, resilient infrastructure, promote technology transfer and capacity-building, build sustainable, diversified global supply chains, and link developing countries to value chains.

54. Delegations commended UNDP for its partnership in national development programming. National capacities needed strengthening to implement and monitor innovative instruments, particularly for integrated financing frameworks. They stressed the principles of respecting national development priorities and ownership. They urged UNDP to support and participate in South-South and triangular cooperation, including through the Global Development South-South Cooperation Fund. UNDP was also encouraged to mainstream human security.

55. Delegations asked how UNDP would address the regular resources decline on its oversight and accountability systems and support to implementing partners; assist countries in vulnerable contexts to alleviate the impact of refugees on sustainable development and advance the humanitarian-development-peace continuum; and develop its business model and balance its services while maintaining a qualified, motivated workforce. Delegations sought an update on the joint timeline for review of the cost recovery policy and monitoring framework to determine the impact of country teams. They asked how leaving no one behind applied to UNDP collaboration with IFIs and if UNDP would conduct an evidence-based analysis of leaving no one behind, building on the recent evaluation.

56. On the principle of leaving no one behind, one delegation encouraged UNDP, in working with NGOs, to adhere to national development priorities in expanding access to basic services for those left behind. The delegation noted that the intersectionality approach prioritized support to marginalized populations, and expressed concern that UNDP may be exclusively serving the interest of minorities, instead of working for common, shared development goals. The delegation queried whether UNDP would conduct an evidence-based analysis of the approach compared to others. It expressed objection to classifying countries according to "degree of repressiveness".

57. In response, the Administrator stressed the importance of linking UNDP work to the development mandate of the United Nations system and critical global events. Beyond reporting on aggregate figures, targets and indicators, the SDG summit needed a strong narrative with a meaningful picture of countries' experiences, successes and failures with the impact of multiple crises on the Goals. The summit should reaffirm the continued relevance and validity of the Goals and 2030 Agenda, despite setbacks in recent years. UNDP would continue putting forward tools and analysis in collaboration with the United Nations system to better inform SDG summit deliberations.

58. On funding, the real discussion was about development finance. In 86 countries, UNDP and 17 partners in the United Nations system, IMF and World Bank were helping countries develop financing strategies for their Goals and nationally determined contributions, exploring all sources of finance. Improving taxation and enlarging fiscal space were not alternatives to the international community investing in development transformation, which enabled countries to pull out of debt. The integrated national financing framework was a tool to help countries identify priorities for fiscal reform and finance mobilization. On stimulus for the Goals, the aim was to link discussions on the economic, financial and debt crises to those in the SDG summit. Regarding the G-20, the Secretary-General and UNDP would contribute to the agenda and process.

59. UNDP was working on a multidimensional vulnerability index that went beyond gross domestic product. In complex crises where insecurity, risks of alienation, and radicalization prevailed, and authorities could not deliver basic social services, UNDP was committed to delivering through risk-informed, scaled-up stabilization and recovery programming. UNDP worked with humanitarian-development-peace actors and local partners to preserve development gains, restore hope, and offer development pathways out of fragility. Investing in development offered the most effective approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, especially where securitized responses to crises were costly, less effective, or counterproductive. On countries hosting refugees, UNDP, in partnership with UNHCR, was working with local authorities and host communities to provide basic services and livelihood opportunities.

60. Given the evolving UNDP business model, he would revert to the Board with proposals and new initiatives in 2023. However, with a 4 per cent cut of its institutional budget, UNDP could do little more. Funding was not the issue. Billions had been spent on domestic energy crises, COVID-19 stimulus packages, and conflict. A political and strategic choice was needed on financing for development; the more fundamental issue was the United Nations funding compact was broken. The UNDP situation was only symptomatic; if continued, it would have adverse implications for the UNDP workforce, offices and projects. He urged Member States to stay focused on the bigger picture.

VI. Human Development Report

61. The Director, Human Development Report Office, UNDP, presented the oral report on consultations that informed the *Human Development Report 2021/2022*.

62. Member States were encouraged to support the office in enhancing UNDP thought leadership and strengthening its multi-stakeholder engagements for knowledge products. Interest was expressed in the assessment of the impact of digital transformation and best practices on how the office's knowledge products fed into policy documents.

63. In response, the Director, Human Development Report Office, said the office would continue its multi-stakeholder consultations and was assessing the impact of

digital transformation. Countries had used the office's work in framing approaches of their national programmes and policies with support from UNDP country offices.

64. The Executive Board took note of an update by the secretariat on consultations on the *Human Development Report*.

VII. Country programmes and related matters

65. The Associate Administrator, UNDP, introduced the item and provided an overview of 16 country programme documents, 1 common country programme document, and 1 multi-country programme document, of which 6 country programmes were for extensions. In turn, the regional directors for Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean provided details from the regional perspectives.

66. Following adoption of the CPD for the Islamic Republic of Iran, concerns were raised over the country's judicial process, democratic space, and human rights situation. United Nations organizations were encouraged to articulate their contribution to gender equality and respect and promotion of human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights. Other delegations stressed the principle of national ownership and leadership, highlighting the broad consultative process in developing the country programme, and discouraged politicization of the programme and the Board's work.

67. Following adoption of the CPD extension for Afghanistan, a group of delegations condemned recent decisions made by the Taliban to ban girls and women from education and restrict their employment and movement; the group supported the inclusion of female staff in aid delivery.

68. The Executive Board, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, reviewed and approved the common country programme document for Cabo Verde ([DP/FPA-ICEF/CCPD/2023/CPV/1](#)), the country programme documents for the Central African Republic ([DP/DCP/CAF/5](#)), Gabon ([DP/DCP/GAB/4](#)), Nigeria ([DP/DCP/NGA/4](#)), São Tomé and Príncipe ([DP/DCP/STP/4](#)); Algeria ([DP/DCP/DZA/4](#)), Lebanon ([DP/DCP/LBN/3](#)), Morocco ([DP/DCP/MAR/4](#)); Islamic Republic of Iran ([DP/DCP/IRN/4](#)), Nepal ([DP/DCP/NPL/4](#)), the Pacific islands countries (multi-country programme document) ([DP/DSP/PIC/3](#)); the Plurinational State of Bolivia ([DP/DCP/BOL/4](#)), Costa Rica ([DP/DCP/CRI/4](#)), the Dominican Republic ([DP/DCP/DOM/4](#)), Ecuador ([DP/DCP/ECU/4](#) and [Corr.1](#)), Haiti ([DP/DCP/HTI/4](#)), and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela ([DP/DCP/VEN/3](#)).

69. The Executive Board took note of the first one-year extension of the country programme for Mauritania ([DP/2023/7](#)) and the first six-month extension of the country programme for Chile ([DP/2023/7/Add.1](#)).

70. The Executive Board approved the one-year extensions of the country programmes for Afghanistan, Brazil and Gambia from 1 January to 31 December 2023; the two-year extension of the country programme for Bahrain from 1 January to 31 December 2024; and the second six-months extension of the country programme for Papua New Guinea from 1 January to 31 December 2023, as presented in document [DP/2023/7](#).

VIII. Evaluation

71. The Director, Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), UNDP, presented the results of the formative evaluation of the integration by UNDP of the principles of leaving no one behind ([DP/2023/8](#)). The Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP, provided the management response to the evaluation ([DP/2023/9](#)).

72. Delegations welcomed the report and UNDP steps to address its recommendations. A group urged UNDP to do more to reach those furthest behind, fully integrate non-discrimination in policy and programmes, and focus on the intersectionality of drivers of inequality. More information was requested on workstreams to improve the results and impact of leaving no one behind. Several concerns were raised, including limited focus in programme implementation on reaching the furthest behind first; unclear criteria for prioritizing specific groups; and limited guidance and data applied to intersectionality. It was observed the five-factor framework tool had not trickled down to the field and was seldom used. UNDP was urged to clarify strategies and share and adapt them to country and regional challenges. UNDP was encouraged to accelerate portfolio approaches to ensure coherence and mainstreaming of leaving no one behind.

73. UNDP was also encouraged to demonstrate its commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion corporately, and asked if a results framework for People for 2030 would help address them in staff and if a framework could be developed within the existing cycle. UNDP was urged to close the gap between groups of people, and among countries; explore systemic solutions to strengthen integration; and rationalize resource allocation. An update to the UNDP metrics and learning agenda was welcomed to better consider leaving no one behind and target populations for programming. UNDP was asked to elaborate on its capacity and plans to address recommendations on integrating leaving no one behind in its work on equity, multidimensional poverty and sustainable integrated finance, and with the private sector.

74. In response, the Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, said targets and indicators in a results framework would help to address diversity, equality and inclusion in staff, and enhance People for 2030. The link could be made with the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

75. The Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP, said a portfolio approach offered a more strategic systems angle, allowing UNDP to address complex issues across portfolios, which the UNDP Innovation Facility supported. On intersectionality and identifying those left behind, the multidimensional poverty index was used in more than 100 countries in COVID-19-response socioeconomic assessments. The portfolio approach called for multi-stakeholder engagement, civil society participation, and partnership with Governments. Given budget constraints, UNDP had to allocate resources strategically. UNDP had developed a tool to map staff expertise and knowledge globally for effective capacity deployment.

76. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/2 on the formative evaluation of the integration by UNDP of the principles of leaving no one behind and the management response thereto.

UNFPA segment

Statement by the Executive Director

77. In her address (available on the UNFPA website),³ the Executive Director noted that lasting peace required addressing the root causes of conflict and fragility. Often facing discrimination and deprived of their rights, women and girls bore the brunt of the impacts of conflict, climate change, food insecurity, economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. The UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, aimed to accelerate

³ See <https://www.unfpa.org/press/statement-executive-director-first-regular-session-executive-board-2023>.

gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, and realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. The UNFPA People 2030 strategy aimed to strengthen its capacity to deliver the three transformative results. Efficiency and accountability would be bolstered through the roll-out of the new enterprise resources planning system – Quantum. UNFPA has received an unqualified audit opinion on its financial statements from the Board of Auditors for 12 consecutive years. The new enterprise risk management policy and first-ever risk appetite statement would ensure proper safeguards while innovation continued. It continued to prioritize prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and established metrics to track progress. The evaluation of UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system provided evidence that would advance its work further.

78. UNFPA was strengthening its humanitarian response. Over the previous five years, UNFPA humanitarian revenue had grown by 150 per cent and now accounted for more than 40 per cent of its co-financing revenue. In 2022, UNFPA life-saving assistance reached over 30 million women, girls and young people in more than 60 countries facing humanitarian crises. The newly renamed Humanitarian Response Division was leading those efforts. On preparedness, UNFPA was increasing the budget to preposition and stockpile humanitarian supplies and equipment by an additional \$10 million, allocated from regular resources and the Humanitarian Thematic Trust Fund. Its leadership in advocacy to protect and promote the bodily autonomy of women continued; it developed the “bodyright” campaign and tackled technology-facilitated gender-based violence. UNFPA urged Member States to recognize the importance of CSE. UNFPA looked forward to engaging with the Executive Board during the upcoming 30-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 2024.

79. On shifting from funding to a funding and financing model, UNFPA would tap into a range of sustainable development financing instruments, leveraging its funding and expertise to mobilize domestic and international, public and private finance, working closely with international financial institutions. In 2022, UNFPA had mobilized nearly \$1.5 billion in support from various donors and partners. UNFPA urged Member States to continue their support to regular resources funding, and was concerned how global economic stressors could impact 2023 funding.

80. On leaving no one behind, the Executive Director cited examples of UNFPA work and innovations in a number of countries. UNFPA had launched the Equity 2030 Alliance to close gender gaps and integrate the needs of women and girls in designing science, technology and finance solutions, and was building the Coalition for Reproductive Justice in Business to encourage companies to support women through sexual and reproductive health-responsive initiatives in the workplace.

81. The Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia briefly provided an update of UNFPA activities in her region, highlighting the response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and the demographic challenges the region was facing.

82. Delegations thanked the Executive Director for her leadership in the face of global health and funding challenges. Delegations from programme countries expressed appreciation for the organization’s work in their countries, while others commended UNFPA for its continued emphasis on preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment; development of its humanitarian response strategy; attention to investing in youth; and its context-tailored approach in countries, technical support to censuses, and supporting women-led organizations.

83. Members of the Bureau stressed the importance of sustainable investment, predictable regular resources funding, and targeted official development assistance to recover from recent economic setbacks and achieve the three transformative results. They emphasized the need to secure equal rights for women and girls, including

through legal and operational frameworks, and encouraged UNFPA to focus its programmes on reaching the most vulnerable girls and adolescents suffering from harmful practices, whose root causes were gender inequality, discrimination, poverty and lack of opportunity. Noting the opportunity offered through the youth bulge in many developing countries, they stressed substantial investment in human resource development was required to realize the demographic dividend.

84. A group of delegations welcomed the evaluation of UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system, and the UNFPA management response, articulating a United Nations development system reform engagement strategy and action plan. They highlighted the potential value of the United Nations reform checklist as a tool for UNFPA and Executive Board members. They looked forward to a new generation of integrated partnership and resource mobilization plans and encouraged UNFPA to explore other funds and programmes that had managed to significantly scale up revenue mobilized through the IFIs.

85. Other delegations expressed concern over continuing gender-based violence and the increasing need for prevention and urged urgent and coordinated action. UNFPA was encouraged to continue engaging men and boys and supporting CSE. Delegations reiterated the importance of sustainable and predictable funding, particularly regular resources funding, calling on Member States to maintain their commitments to financing so UNFPA could carry out its mandate. Several delegations encouraged UNFPA to strengthen its collaboration with IFIs to diversify its funding sources. Delegations also sought details on a number of UNFPA activities, including responding to challenges to achieving gender equality and equal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for all; supporting local civil society partners and delivering a scaled-up, sustained humanitarian response; and working on the demographic transition so the needs of older people were reflected in national plans, its programming, and in strengthening statistical systems.

86. In response, the Executive Director welcomed the comments, especially on funding. She stressed the importance of communicating positive messaging on gender-based violence and teen pregnancy, demonstrating the situation could be changed, including by investing in youth and through CSE, which could make a major difference as young people transition to adulthood. UNFPA worked with local partners in humanitarian situations where women-led organizations were actively engaged in their communities. Prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment was a priority. Likewise, UNFPA continued to engage with United Nations organizations to accelerate achievement of the Goals. UNFPA was collaborating with the IFIs, strengthening and broadening its approaches, instruments, mechanisms and objectives to make UNFPA a preferred partner. On youth and ageing, demographic resilience was a priority; the use of statistics was instrumental, including for providing online platforms for demographic information utilized in planning. UNFPA worked with United Nations entities in the context of the United Nations Decade for Healthy Ageing to provide guidance to countries where ageing populations were significant; assist with censuses and other assessments; and provide toolkits for policies.

87. The Deputy Executive Director (Management) provided information on prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment mechanisms and the work of the UNFPA integrity group. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) provided information on the ICPD+30 review process and urged Member States to support national and regional initiatives.

IX. Evaluation

88. The UNFPA Director, Evaluation Office, presented the formative evaluation of UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system (DP/FPA/2023/CRP.1), to which the Deputy Executive Director (Management) provided the management response.

89. Delegations welcomed the evaluation and its usefulness to other entities involved in United Nations reform; UNFPA was encouraged to share the evaluation. Some delegations viewed the evaluation as a demonstration of UNFPA commitment to reform; they encouraged other United Nations entities to conduct such an evaluation. Commending UNFPA for its engagement in the reform process and its response to the evaluation recommendations, UNFPA was encouraged to develop an overall engagement strategy on United Nations reform. They considered particularly important the recommendations on institutionalizing and internalizing reform and on human resource challenges, including those related to greater inter-agency collaboration and joint results. They encouraged continued training of personnel, clear communication from leadership and staff contributions to reform implementation in performance metrics. They reiterated the importance of reform in humanitarian contexts, especially in collaborating with partners across sectors.

90. One delegation welcomed the report's findings, including potential risks to fully harnessing the benefits of reform, and asked UNFPA to elaborate on potential catalytic enablers on programmatic activities. Another delegation asked to what extent the evaluation drew on exchanges with other organizations, and how the UNFPA Evaluation Office cooperated with other evaluation offices to optimize mutual benefits from its evaluation and the system-wide evaluation of the United Nations development response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It commended UNFPA for organizing a peer review on the evaluation function ahead of the revised evaluation policy. Another delegation, while encouraged that UNFPA staff understood the importance of reform, expressed concern by gaps in implementation.

91. In response, the Director, Evaluation Office, affirmed his commitment to share experiences with other United Nations evaluation offices and the United Nations Evaluation Group. The evaluation was publicly available on the UNFPA website, and UNFPA was committed to system-wide evaluation coherence. The office had cooperated with the System-wide Evaluation Office while participating in the system-wide evaluation of the United Nations development system response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding the peer review of the UNFPA evaluation function, he highlighted its innovative and inclusive approach. Preliminary findings from the revision of the evaluation policy would be shared with the Board by June 2023. The Evaluation Office would lead the policy revision and a draft would be presented in an informal briefing in November 2023, and the final version presented to the Board at its first regular session 2024.

92. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) said reform aimed to enhance the effectiveness of assistance to partners at the country level. UNFPA planned to share the evaluation results with United Nations organizations and remained firmly committed to implementing the reforms.

93. The UNFPA Director, Policy and Strategy Division, added that UNFPA was leveraging reform at the country level through joint programming, active engagement in the country cooperation framework, and supporting an empowered resident coordinator.

94. The Executive Board took note of the formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system (DP/FPA/2023/CRP.1) and the management response.

X. Country programmes and related matters

95. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) provided an overview of 16 country programme documents, one multi-country programme document, one common country programme document and seven country programme extensions. In turn, the UNFPA regional directors for the Arab States; Asia and the Pacific; Latin America and the Caribbean; and West and Central Africa provided their respective regional perspectives.

96. Several delegations expressed appreciation for UNFPA support to their countries.

97. Following adoption of the country programme document for the Islamic Republic of Iran, concerns were raised over the country's judicial process, democratic space and human rights situation. United Nations organizations were encouraged to articulate their contribution to gender equality and the respect and promotion of human rights, including reproductive rights. Other delegations stressed the principle of national ownership and leadership, highlighting the broad consultative process in the development of the country programme and discouraged politicization of the programme and the work of the Board.

98. Following adoption of the country programme document extension for Afghanistan, a group of delegations condemned recent decisions made by the Taliban to ban girls and women from education and restrict their employment and movement; the group supported the inclusion of female staff in aid delivery.

99. The Executive Board approved, in accordance with decision 2014/7, the country programme documents for Algeria (DP/FPA/CPD/DZA/7), Egypt (DP/FPA/CPD/EGY/11); Lebanon (DP/FPA/CPD/LBN/5), State of Palestine (DP/FPA/CPD/PSE/7); the Islamic Republic of Iran (DP/FPA/CPD/IRN/7), Nepal (DP/FPA/CPD/NPL/9), Pacific island countries and territories (multi-country programme) (DP.FPA.CPD.PIC.7); the Plurinational State of Bolivia (DP/FPA/CPD/BOL/7); Costa Rica (DP/FPA/CPD/CRI/6); Dominican Republic (DP/FPA/CPD/DOM/7); Ecuador (DP/FPA/CPD/ECU/8); Haiti (DP/FPA/CPD/HTI/7); the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (DP/FPA/CPD/VEN/4 and DP/FPA/CPD/VEN/4/Corr.1); Cabo Verde (common country programme) (DP/FPA-ICEF/CCPD/2023/CPV/1), Central African Republic (DP/FPA/CPD/CAF.9), Gabon (DP/FPA/CPD/GAB/8), Nigeria (DP/FPA/CPD/NGA/9), and Sao Tome and Principe (DP/FPA/CPD/STP/8).

100. The Executive Board took note of the one-year extensions of the country programmes for Mauritania and Rwanda, approved the second extensions of the country programmes for Brazil, the Gambia and Papua New Guinea, and the third extensions for the country programmes for Afghanistan and Libya, as contained in document [DP/FPA/2023/2](#).

UNOPS segment

XI. United Nations Office for Project Services

Statement by the Executive Director

101. In his address (available on the UNOPS website),⁴ the UNOPS Acting Executive Director thanked the Board for its support and guidance in addressing the failures

⁴ See <https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/speeches/statement-to-the-first-regular-session-of-the-executive-board-2023>.

associated with the sustainable infrastructure investments and innovation (S3i) initiative. He highlighted UNOPS dual approach – responding to the S3i crisis and reorienting the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. UNOPS comprehensive response plan had charted actions in response to the two KPMG third-party reviews presented to the Board in November 2022. Six themes in the response plan were outlined.

102. Mandate and strategy involved developing the restated Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. Governance and management focused on digitalization of processes to improve effectiveness and transparency and enhance ways of working. Risk management and control environment overhaul included the implementation of oversight recommendations. Ethics, compliance and organizational culture sought to reconstitute the management team, set up a new whistle-blower policy, and review the independence of the Ethics Office. Financial and performance management addressed the KPMG recommendation for a reformed approach to pricing and better output reporting, aligning cost-recovery with the High-level Committee on Management standards, implementing the Board of Auditors' recommendations for transparency of recovered costs, setting net revenue targets to zero annually, shifting from the concept of pricing and profit to cost-recovery, and redesigning the due diligence function and related processes. Under the future of S3i, UNOPS would work with OLA on the recovery of funds from S3i investments and would cover \$8 million for the cost of activities, and provide \$1.7 million in support to affected countries in transitioning out of failed activities.

103. UNOPS developed a live dashboard to illustrate progress on the comprehensive response plan. To implement all actions, the Board's approval was sought for the transfer of \$35.4 million from UNOPS operational reserve to the 2023 budget, including \$8 million for S3i legal fees, \$1.7 million to work with affected countries, and a one-time investment of \$21.1 million for digital overhaul. He stressed that the restated Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, would emphasize UNOPS support to accelerating countries' achievement of the Goals by: expanding partners' implementation capacity; focusing on where UNOPS had significant experience; responding to demands where it had matching functional capacity; and building on partners' programmatic capacity. UNOPS would not engage in impact investment with seed capital from its reserves. UNOPS would present the early midterm review and the restated Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, at the annual session 2023; and the proposed biennial budget estimates for 2024–2025, which would consider lessons from the independent third-party reviews, at the second regular session 2023.

104. The President, on behalf of the Bureau, acknowledged UNOPS corrective work on the S3i initiative and encouraged closure of issues while highlighting critical outstanding issues. The completion of those actions and the comprehensive response plan would provide the Board with answers regarding allocation of S3i reserves and the future of the S3i initiative, and the working group set up by the Board. Accountability for perpetrators remained a priority He highlighted the critical challenge facing UNOPS in completing 53 of 84 actions in the comprehensive response plan in 2023 and the commitment of the Bureau to ensure appropriate actions were taken.

105. Across the board, delegations welcomed UNOPS management corrective actions to rebuild trust and commended its work on the comprehensive response plan and transparency with stakeholders in implementing it. While expressing support, delegations pressed UNOPS to ensure full accountability for misuse of funds and recovery of missing funds with some requesting a forensic audit. Several delegations expressed concern over the short period of implementation and the absorptive capacity of UNOPS and its staff to implement the plan alongside regular operations. Delegations agreed that UNOPS should refocus on its original mandate and competencies. Several delegations expressed reservations about UNOPS ill-defined

roles and potential role in blended and impact financing. UNOPS was asked to present its request for budgetary resources more clearly in relation to specific reform measures. Delegations expected to be engaged in the review process and acknowledged the recommendations directed at the Board to strengthen its oversight function.

106. A group of delegations from the Africa region affirmed UNOPS role supporting countries to accelerate achievement of the Goals and noted the increase in capacity of their partners given UNOPS advisory efforts, citing country-specific project examples of collaboration between the United Nations and Governments. They called for a UNOPS that was fit-for-purpose considering the broader context of development and means of implementation, including the need for regular funding of development organizations.

107. A group of delegations from the Nordic region raised the importance of an efficient and protective whistle-blower mechanism and measures to ensure positions that entail “inherently United Nations activities” were filled by staff members. It was for the Board to determine the use of UNOPS excess reserves and set up stricter controls, including monitoring reserve accumulation.

108. Another group confirmed its commitment to consider and act on the recommendations directed at the work of the Board. They requested information on the sequencing and resource implications of actions in the comprehensive response plan. On options regarding use of excess reserves, they expressed their commitment to a drastic reduction of the level of reserves. While supportive of UNOPS decision not to engage in any form of direct impact investment, the group expressed reservation on the inclusion of advisory functions in innovative, blended and impact finance investment as part of its core competency and mandate.

109. One delegation commended UNOPS management for articulating what UNOPS would not be doing in its strategic plan. It expected the return of accumulated and interest gained from reserves to partners from where they came. It urged UNOPS to return to a non-profit business model, with fees applied to essential investments in staff and organizational effectiveness.

110. Other delegations asked UNOPS to submit a clear vision of its role in blended finance and impact investment and information on a number of items: the overhaul of UNOPS office in Helsinki; and the establishment of debt allowance for S3i of \$20.53 million.

111. The Acting Executive Director highlighted UNOPS intention to help affected countries to transition out of the S3i failure and work on meaningful ways of collaboration. He gave assurances that full implementation of the comprehensive response plan would prevent the recurrence of the same malfunction and that UNOPS would hold accountable those responsible with all means available. Given the downturn in official development assistance flows, UNOPS intended to develop a smarter portfolio and maximize programme countries’ ability to attract development funding beyond traditional ODA. Regarding blended and impact financing, he elaborated on the opportunity of the large portfolio of infrastructure projects, which needed to build in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Those areas required more financing where UNOPS had a foreseeable role. UNOPS would focus on where it could create meaningful value added. Regarding prioritization of activities in the comprehensive response plan, UNOPS management would await Board guidance on the level of investment it would grant to UNOPS. Should there be Board agreement, UNOPS would programmatically close the S3i initiative; remaining assets would be focused on blended financing and recovery of funds. Recovery of funds would continue to be pursued to discourage “enabling” behaviours. On the status of a forensic audit, the Director of UNOPS Internal Audit and Investigation Group had

held meetings with KPMG. On staff composition, UNOPS would follow the recommendations of the United Nations BOA. In closing, the Acting Executive Director assured the Board of UNOPS commitment to become more fit-for-purpose in the service of the Goals and Our Common Agenda.

112. Regarding the Joint Inspection Unit follow up, the Director, Ethics Office, said that a designated panel was undertaking the review of the office's independence; he understood the panel was in touch with the Acting Executive Director and the President of the Board and was taking into account applicable JIU reports. Outcomes were expected by end of March 2023.

Report of the working group on UNOPS

113. The Chair of the Working Group on UNOPS presented the summary report and findings of the group ([DP/OPS/2023/2](#)).

114. Delegations requested elaboration on the sequencing of actions and reporting on implementation of the comprehensive response plan; UNOPS capacity to implement the plan without extra budgetary allocation in 2023; information on use of reserves and clarity on recipients for the option of crediting excess reserves to paying entities and partners and communications; and details on the nature and spread of costs for digitalization.

115. In response, the Acting Executive Director, UNOPS, said the \$8 million estimate for legal services was provided by OLA and external counsel and ring-fenced for that purpose. The \$21.1 million for digitalization should be seen as a capital investment. UNOPS cost of investment in enterprise resource planning was comparably lower than others and included the cost of roll-out and change management. The added costs would be provided in the 2024–2025 budget to sustain the investment. He shared his understanding it was the United Nations Controller's view the funds should be returned to Member States, as the United Nations was the biggest fee contributing entity to UNOPS; therefore, the United Nations should be considered a legitimate recipient of the rebate. The rebate model of proportionality would be the simplest way to work, given UNOPS 200 partners, though it entailed legal complexities.

116. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/3 on report of the working group on UNOPS and decision 2023/4 on the UNOPS update on the implementation of the comprehensive response plan, use of reserve and impact investments in UNOPS.

XII. Other matters

Address by the Chairperson of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN-Women Staff Council

117. The Chairperson of the Staff Council highlighted its programme of work, 2023–2024, and four strategic outcomes: (a) revitalizing staff associations globally through participatory mechanisms; (b) strengthening and harmonizing staff representation at all levels of decision-making; (c) enhancing engagement with the United Nations system through staff unions and associations on harmonizing practices and regulations; and (d) improving the workplace. He stressed the importance of gender-balance, wider geographical diversity, equity and inclusion, zero tolerance against sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment, and a culture of trust.

118. A group of delegations encouraged strong internal systems and culture of cooperation and learning. Staff were invited to share reflections on accessibility and availability of systems to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment to guide the Board. They highlighted the importance of a confidential, accessible whistle-blower system, reliable whistle-blower protection, and legal

protection for speak-up culture, and stressed the need to address discrimination and racism.

119. The Director, Office of Human Resources, UNDP, said UNDP had a new diversity, equity and inclusion strategy and speak-up tool, while People for 2030 ensured UNDP was an employer of choice. The Director, Division of Human Resources, UNFPA said UNFPA would engage with staff associations globally and work with the council on flexible working arrangements. In promoting speak-up culture, UNFPA mandated conflict management training for managers, instituted the Integrity Group, and would establish an online portal. The Special Adviser to the Executive Director, UNOPS, reiterated UNOPS prioritization of staff health and safety, support for revitalization of the Global Staff Association, and commitment to strengthening speak-up culture.

120. The Executive Board heard the address by the Chairperson of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN-Women Staff Council.

Part two
Annual session 2023

**Held at United Nations Headquarters in New York
from 5 to 9 June 2023**

I. Organizational matters

1. The annual session 2023 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS was held from 5 to 9 June 2023.
2. The Executive Board approved the agenda and workplan for its annual session 2023 (DP/2023/L.2) and approved the report of the first regular session 2023 (DP/2023/10).
3. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at the annual session 2023 appeared in document DP/2023/25, which was available on the Executive Board website.¹
4. The Executive Board agreed in decision 2023/19 to the following schedule for future sessions of the Executive Board in 2023:

Second regular session 2023: 28 to 31 August 2023.

Statement by the President of the Board

5. The President of the Board highlighted how UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS were navigating and responding to overlapping crises and improving millions of lives, exemplifying commitment and coordination with one another and other agencies. One example was the urgent mission to salvage the FSO Safer oil tanker off the coast of Yemen. The mission was the United Nations at its best, taking local action with global impacts. The Executive Board should enable agencies to do more of the same; delivering development amid recurring crises was the new norm. Further enhancing results required the convergence of operational procedures and even a joint board model beyond the three organizations. The Executive Board could also consider further engaging with the resident coordinators. Rethinking the reduction in core resources would be essential to deliver at a strategic level. New practices in reporting could include using artificial intelligence to enable rapid reviews of multiple reports.

Joint segment

II. Update on the implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system

6. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management), the UNDP Director, Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy, and the UNOPS Executive Director updated the Board on collective efforts to implement General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system.
7. A group of delegations emphasized that the full commitment of all development system entities and Member States to continuing reform was critical to accelerated delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The group welcomed great strides made in coherence, cooperation and collective action at the country level. The group flagged the pivotal role of the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator in advancing shared values and consolidating efforts across the humanitarian-development-peace continuum and urged UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to support the leadership of the resident coordinators to bring the system together to do even more. Since collaboration on peacebuilding had been challenging, the group welcomed ways to strengthen it. There was also a need to see substantive results in the fifth year of reform, though evidence of impact was not always available.
8. The group congratulated the United Nations development system on efficiency gains of \$405 million in 2022. It expressed concern about ongoing competition for

¹ See <https://www.undp.org/executive-board/documents-for-sessions>.

resources, calling on all three organizations to deliver based on comparative advantages, and for Member States to perform their role as well. United Nations coordination should be integrated into standard procedures. The group noted progress on the renewed management and accountability framework and stressed full implementation for efficiency and mutual accountability. The group called for fully aligning country documents with the cooperation frameworks, and for reinforcing the use of inputs from resident coordinators in performance appraisals. It emphasized consulting resident coordinators in selecting country team members so that different skills would complement each other. The reform checklist to facilitate Executive Board oversight was a welcome tool to enable easy comparison across entities and over time.

9. In response to delegations, the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) stated that UNFPA remained fully committed to advancing United Nations reform. He described UNFPA as moving from processes to results in programmes and efficiencies in operations. All country programme documents were derived from and in line with the cooperation frameworks, which UNFPA had found were helping to advance the normative part of its mandate. Regional directors routinely informed resident coordinators ahead of the appointments of UNFPA representatives. All resident coordinators could appraise UNFPA representatives; this was nearly universally done in 2022. UNFPA continued to remain active in joint programmes.

10. The UNDP Director, Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy, provided examples of collaboration with other United Nations organizations, including UN-Women on the COVID-19 pandemic socioeconomic assessments. She highlighted the new Nexus Academy, offering worldwide learning for country teams. UNDP remained the main agency contributing to the resident coordinator system, at \$10.6 million in 2022, but was concerned with lagging funding. Increased understanding of how United Nations organizations can move forward on reform could come through better guidance on the United Nations country team configuration exercise. All UNDP resident representatives were assessed against mandatory performance goals for country team results; regional directors sought feedback on resident representative performance from resident coordinators.

11. The UNOPS Executive Director underlined the specific context for the organization since its presence in countries and regions was determined by demand. UNOPS welcomed the convening power of the resident coordinators while acknowledging practical issues in having one multi-country office director who may coordinate with resident coordinators in several countries. He stressed that UNOPS remained eager to make accountability and coordination more agile and effective. While it did not have country programme documents, it was fully aligned with cooperation frameworks. Performance appraisals included the resident coordinators in compliance with the management and accountability framework.

12. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/6 on the update of the implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

III. Internal audit and investigation

13. The UNDP Officer in Charge, Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI), presented the annual report of OAI on internal audit and investigations activities in 2022 ([DP/2023/12](#)); the UNDP Director, Bureau of Management, the management response. The UNFPA Director ad interim, Office of Audit and Investigation Services (OAIS), presented the report of OAIS on internal audit and investigation activities in

2022 (DP/FPA/2023/6), the annual report of the Oversight Advisory Committee (DP/FPA/2023/6/Add.1) and the terms of reference of the Oversight Advisory Committee. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) presented the management response. The UNOPS Director, Internal Audit and Investigations Group (IAIG), presented the annual report on internal audit and investigations activities in 2022 (DP/OPS/2023/3); the UNOPS Special Adviser to the Executive Director on Programme and Policy, the management response.

14. A group of delegations thanked the OAI, OAI and IAIG for work critical to strengthening trust. It expressed concern that conditions to guarantee the independence and effectiveness of the internal audit function, as defined by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA), were not met; underlined regular and unrestricted engagement of audit offices with the Executive Board; and suggested additional informal sessions. It proposed that OAI and OAI should have language in their charters on free, unrestricted, confidential access to the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and any other entity with an oversight or governing function related to the organization, and for audit and advisory committees to report to the Executive Board. It emphasized improving the quality of reports to be more analytical, address structural issues, cover proactive investigations in high-risk areas, and include trends and follow-up.

15. Delegations noted that United Nations organizations should be examples for others in strengthening their oversight and independence in line with the International Professional Practices Framework of the IIA.

UNDP

16. A group of delegations acknowledged that the allocation of resources to the OAI amid decreasing core demonstrated the commitment of UNDP to a functioning audit office. It asked about responding to the 2022 IIA external quality assessment and further improving independence and oversight.

UNFPA

17. A group of delegations expressed concern about the 2023 JIU finding that the UNFPA Oversight Advisory Committee was not fully independent. Delegations commended UNFPA for good practices in inter-agency coordination, resource mobilization and critical process workflows, as well as significant progress in implementing audit recommendations compared to previous years.

UNOPS

18. A group of delegations expressed deep concern about the IAIC opinion that major improvements were needed in governance, risk management and control processes at UNOPS. Despite significant progress in 2022, more work could be done. A delegation noted the significant imbalance between contract and regular staff.

Responses

19. In response to delegations, the UNDP Officer in Charge, OAI, noted that a 2022 external quality assessment confirmed the office's independence in line with IIA standards. Elements to uphold independence are built into financial rules and regulations and the charter. The assessment made 10 recommendations; OAI was taking 27 corrective actions.

20. The UNDP Director, Bureau of Management, affirmed commitment to the continued independence of the OAI. She noted that the role of the Executive Board determined the role of the Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee and would

decide on any changes in its terms of reference. The inter-agency implementing partner management, coordination and focal point system allowed the United Nations Children's Fund, UNDP, UNFPA and the World Food Programme to share information and learning. A UNDP team focused on the effectiveness of implementing partner management.

21. The UNFPA Director ad interim, OAIS, described the restructuring of OAIS as a further step towards improving its effectiveness and ensuring it was fit for purpose. OAIS reaffirmed its independence and, with reference to the follow-up to the assessment it had produced on its independence, noted that it now managed its budget independently, based on a total amount approved by the Executive Director. It was independent in its reporting and determined the scope of its work based on its own risk assessments. OAIS passed an IIA external assessment, affirming its independence and compliance with the applicable standards for the public sector, including as these pertained to its reporting line to the executive head of the organization.

22. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) underlined that the regular and unrestricted access of OAIS to the Executive Board was clearly stated in the policies approved by the Board; likewise, OAIS already had unrestricted access to the JIU. He stressed that the Oversight Advisory Committee was an independent body that advised the Executive Director, in line with the UNFPA oversight policy approved by the Executive Board; this was consistent with the approach in other agencies. It provided independent reports and had unrestricted access to the Board.

23. The UNOPS Director, IAIG, described improvement in annual reporting and learning from the Executive Board about what may be missing. On independence, the IAIG had come far but organizational culture needed time to improve. UNOPS was working on this to achieve full transparency and guarantees that necessary sanctions would be applied.

24. The UNOPS Special Adviser to the Executive Director on Programme and Policy described including the independent audit and advisory function in the charter as a major improvement that would be tested in practice. The IAIG budget was now ringfenced. UNOPS remained fully aware of the need to establish trust and improve but had made a good start. Its comprehensive response plan included dedicated workstreams on compliance, controls, culture and ethics.

25. A member of the UNDP Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee said its terms did not include hiring OAI directors or follow-up on JIU recommendations and suggested having robust discussions with management on both issues. The chair of the UNFPA Oversight Advisory Committee noted that the OAC had been involved in the appointment of the OAIS director; he noted that the OAC did indeed review and discuss UNFPA implementation of JIU recommendations; and stressed that the OAC was independent and that numerous safeguards are in place to ensure independence. He added that the OAC report made available to the Board was completely independent and not subject to management review or clearance. A member of the UNOPS Advisory and Audit Committee noted that the committee's remit included advising on the hiring of the IAIG director and reviewing JIU audit issues and stressed its independence.

26. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/7 on the reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on internal audit and investigation, and management responses.

IV. Ethics

27. The UNDP Director, Ethics Office, presented a report on the activities of the UNDP Ethics Office in 2022 ([DP/2023/13](#)); the UNDP Director, Bureau for

Management Services, presented the management response. The UNFPA Ethics Adviser presented a report on the activities of the UNFPA Ethics Office in 2022 (DP/FPA/2023/3); the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) presented the management response. The UNOPS Director, Ethics Office, presented the report on the activities of the UNOPS Ethics Office in 2022 (DP/OPS/2023/4); and the UNOPS Special Adviser to the Executive Director on Programme and Policy presented the management response.

28. A group of delegations emphasized that a strong organizational culture, based on ethics and integrity, provided a robust foundation for improving operational effectiveness. It noted JIU standards for analysing and assessing the independence of ethics functions and stressed closely following JIU recommendations on ethics functions and the review of whistle-blower policies and practices (JIU/REP/2018/49). It spotlighted ethics training for a strong culture of ethics; applauded the joint UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS ethics awareness month; and appreciated strengthened resources for each ethics office. It welcomed the awareness and communication strategy of the UNDP Ethics Office, the inclusive ethics framework of the UNFPA Ethics Office and the establishment of the Integrity Group at UNFPA. Noting that 2022 was a volatile year for the UNOPS Ethics Office, it appreciated efforts to update the policy on protection against retaliation, develop an awareness-raising campaign and conduct an external review of its independence.

29. A delegation commended the code of ethics at UNDP as a model and asked about the frequency of project bidders including former UNDP contract holders. Other questions related to updates on the UNOPS “Protection against Retaliation” policy and how the office had begun addressing a “culture of fear”.

30. In response to delegations, the UNDP Director, Ethics Office described continuous work and improvement and a strong emphasis on the prevention of retaliation in following up on Executive Board decision 2022/16. The Office was increasing transparency and maintaining confidentiality. Resource management presented the greatest risk of conflicts of interest; processes were geared towards identifying issues there.

31. The UNFPA Ethics Adviser described identifying barriers and needs for different personnel to speak up as the most important thing the Ethics Office could do. UNFPA had embarked on extensive efforts to build a culture of integrity and safety for all. UNFPA was building an inclusive approach to ethics by identifying and responding to the cultural and intersectional barriers to speaking up faced by personnel.

32. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) underscored the need to create trust among staff that reports would be taken seriously and followed by action. This included improved communication encouraging staff to come forward.

33. The UNOPS Director, Ethics Office, described engaging human resources, audit and legal to holistically work on the overhaul of the speak-up, whistleblowing process in line with Executive Board decision 2022/24. On the “Protection against Retaliation” policy, improvements included introducing preliminary measures, a strengthened duty of care in cases of immediate risk to safety and security, and a victim-centred approach. Addressing the culture of fear entailed ongoing engagement with personnel on speaking up and upholding core values as well as strengthening the office’s independence.

34. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/8 on the reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, and management responses.

V. Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

35. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management), the UNDP Director, Bureau for Management Services, and the UNOPS Director, People and Culture Group, provided updates on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, in line with Executive Board decision 2020/11.

36. A group of delegations recognized the continued efforts and achievements in updating policies and procedures, providing training, establishing focal points, building capacity and fostering inter-agency cooperation. It appreciated efforts to standardize and share assessments of implementing partners. The group noted the use of Clear-Check and the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme and the potential for exploring how the two systems could reinforce each other. Acknowledging greater awareness among staff and more country offices equipped to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, it stressed continuing results-based reporting on impact and culture change under a simplified, clearer reporting framework.

37. The UNDP Director, Bureau for Management Services, took note of more systematically evaluating all initiatives to ensure they lead to desired impacts. UNDP was tracking how many people were reporting and those not reporting and why; 96 per cent of UNDP staff believed they should report acts committed by a colleague. A standardized reporting format would help collectively determine areas of further investment.

38. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) agreed that collective learning was the way forward, along with uniform reporting. The organization's new monitoring framework collected more granular information from country and regional business units to identify good practices and enhance understanding of challenges. The UNFPA Integrity Group ensured comprehensive, coherent, integrated responses across different units

39. The UNOPS Director, People and Culture Group, considered a victim-centred approach fundamental. A pending cultural assessment would explore reporting barriers and help build trust.

40. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/9 on the joint update on the protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

UNDP segment

VI. Annual report of the Administrator

41. In his statement (available on the UNDP website),² the UNDP Administrator presented his annual report for 2022 (DP/2023/14 and DP/2023/14/Corr.1). He described extreme challenges for millions of people trying to survive and facing deep insecurity. Amid disruption, what metrics would speak to a well-performing institution? He referred to diverse expectations as part of multilateralism – and a reason not to walk away but to lean forward. UNDP was central to the United Nations; its scale was measured by 21,000 staff in 170 countries, 3,500 to 4,000 projects at any given moment, hundreds of formalized partnerships and a record \$4.8 billion in delivery in 2022. But what did that mean against the debt crisis and climate costs measured in trillions? The current moment was one where means do not align with the size of the challenges. This was not an excuse for an institution in terms of

² See <https://www.undp.org/speeches/undp-administrators-speech-june-2023-annual-executive-board-meeting>.

performance. But it was a call to consider how to judge performance and to examine new metrics. UNDP would welcome working with the Board on these issues.

42. He asked delegations to consider measurements such as the amount of money spent or the number of people reached. With 8 billion people, what did it mean to reach 21 million people in 12 months? Further, how could investment be correlated with return? UNDP did extensive policy work that was complex to measure; impact often emerged over a decade through a multiplier effect of capacity, policy reform and institution-building. Integrated national financing frameworks could unlock hundreds of billions if not trillions in SDG investments, but it would be difficult to document the exact return from UNDP policy advice. On efficiency, 91 cents of every UNDP dollar went to programmes. Capitals could compare that figure with those of their own bilateral and other multilateral agencies; MOPAN could look at this more closely. UNDP achieved this ratio while meeting high standards for transparency, accountability and other criteria. Other metrics included UNDP being among the most broadly financed international organizations, with 100 donors.

43. The Administrator asked if trust could indicate performance. Programme countries invested \$1.2 billion through UNDP to advance national development objectives, a remarkable expression of trust. Donors entrusted UNDP with billions and rightly asked hard questions. UNDP remained the number one partner for countries working with the international vertical funds yet calls to reduce its role would diminish the right of countries to decide whom they trust. The Administrator also asked how to judge learning. Did many evaluations and audits capture that? At UNDP, the policy hubs, accelerator labs, portfolio approach, crisis offer, gender equality strategy and efforts to address racism and a lack of inclusion all indicated an institution that had learned how to evolve. He described the moonshots as a chance to judge UNDP for what it had delivered and what it aspired to be. If UNDP – given its size and role in the United Nations system – did not aspire at scale, then the Board should ask if UNDP was performing as it should. The Strategic Plan should raise ambition and stretch UNDP to aim for the impossible because current circumstances required that.

44. Members of the Bureau of the Board thanked the Administrator for his comprehensive overview of a year of record delivery. They appreciated achievements in mobilizing \$4.8 billion and delivering 95 per cent of planned programmatic targets. They commended impactful partnerships with the United Nations development system and expanded collaboration with international financial institutions. Amid multiple challenges, they stressed that UNDP was now more important than ever, including arresting the digital divide, developing capacities and ensuring the equitable spread of innovation. UNDP backed new development finance options and could elaborate specific strategies moving forward. Board members highlighted de-risking measures to attract the private sector and the immediate reform of international financial institutions.

45. A group of delegations expressed gratitude for the efforts of UNDP at the heart of the United Nations development system. It stressed that: eradicating poverty in all forms and dimensions should remain the organization's fundamental goal; sufficient funding would be essential in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and UNDP should maintain its role in a strengthened development system. It reiterated the importance of development aid commitments and described insufficient resources as a source of concern when challenges were more complex with potentially irreversible effects on developing countries.

46. A group of delegations noted that climate, fiscal and monetary, energy and geopolitical crises were altering lives. Developing countries were constantly making choices between firefighting and development. Development organizations should

help countries respond to these dilemmas in line with national priorities, which required agility and rapid responses, inter-agency cooperation and leveraging expertise to unlock new streams of finance. Necessary tools and guidance should be in place along with an optimal level of core resources for operational capacity. Despite funding shortfalls, UNDP had delivered, including through its crisis offer, climate promise, financing frameworks and digital solutions.

47. Delegations described UNDP as offering coherent, strategic, substantive support in line with national priorities. It remained important in helping countries adapt and respond to opportunities and challenges and was pivoting and performing in a demanding global environment. Delegations appreciated efforts to rebalance development systems and address structural issues and commended specific UNDP initiatives, including the FSO Safer project, and work more broadly on sustainable finance, digitalization, climate change, biodiversity and crisis. They welcomed the People 2030 initiative, Quantum and the portfolio approach to trigger transformative, scaled-up results. They lauded the Gender Equality Strategy, stressing intersectionality and rigorous monitoring. A number of delegations expressed concern about declining core resources.

48. Delegations described development as a dynamic process requiring joint responsibility. It should be at the centre of the international agenda; and it required new thinking and partnerships, aimed at inclusion and sustainability. Delegations from middle-income countries urged attention to innovative solutions to structural inequalities. There were calls for mainstreaming human security and taking a global South-sensitive approach to development. One delegate noted that UNDP offered hope in showing how the SDGs can still be achieved.

49. In response to delegations, the UNDP Administrator noted that many developing countries were struggling with financing; UNDP remained deeply committed to this issue. It was among the first organizations to raise alarms about the debt crisis. The Sustainable Finance Hub backed efforts in 140 countries to develop project pipelines to access financing, including from capital markets. It assisted countries to develop insurance markets; lower risk premiums on borrowing; and improve taxation, including through digitalization. The expansion of BioFin, the biodiversity finance initiative, from 40 to 138 countries was an example of going to scale.

50. The Administrator said UNDP had come far on gender equality, including with UN-Women, but needed to do more in making gender integral to what the organization did everywhere all the time. Every activity should ask about the relevance or risks to gender equality. UNDP continuously monitored performance through its gender equality seal.

51. The Administrator emphasized heavy investment in risk management and regular assessments. In 2022, efficiency gains related to the United Nations development system were \$24.4 million. The organization was intensifying work with international financial institutions. While UNDP was continuously diversifying its funding, the core resources equation was reaching its limits; without investment, something would give way.

52. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/10 on the report of the UNDP Administrator on results for 2022 and progress on the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

VII. Interactive dialogue on development pathways out of crisis

53. An integrated dialogue on “development pathways out of crisis” was led by the President of the Executive Board, the UNDP Administrator, the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Permanent

Representative of Viet Nam, the UNDP Director, Regional Bureau for Africa, and the UNDP Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific.

54. The President highlighted the complexity of responding to a crisis when development needs are urgent. The UNDP Administrator stressed that despite some extraordinary breakthroughs, development was retreating. The great partnership that led to the SDGs was being lost without the mindset to make interdependence succeed. He called for thinking forward and imagining the United Nations as a way to engage differently.

55. The Permanent Representative of Viet Nam described a 45-year partnership with UNDP that backed people-centred development. This helped move his country out of conflict and deep poverty. Viet Nam invested quickly and comprehensively in the response to COVID-19, including through digital health care and inclusive social protection; its economy in 2022 recovered to its highest growth rate in a decade. Multiple challenges remained but it was embarking on a new inclusive, green development phase. The UNDP Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, offered follow-up remarks.

56. The Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo described putting people first through a comprehensive national investment in community development. Based on aspirations expressed by citizens, the programme sought to close multiple development deficits in 145 territories, including 54 supported by UNDP. It had begun to provide power, water, schools, roads and other essentials, financed by a \$1.6 billion package that combined domestic and international resources, including through the Special Drawing Rights of the International Monetary Fund. The UNDP Director, Regional Bureau for Africa, offered follow-up remarks.

57. Delegations welcomed the dialogue to learn from each other. With many populations still completely untouched by development, they stressed much work ahead. Partnerships were needed more than ever but should be adjusted and built on trust and respect. They called for boosting the scale and quality of development; taking more regional and local measures, not just national ones; grappling with the classic development model, which was flawed and resulted in high costs borne by all societies; kindling a mindset of the undeniability of interdependence; pursuing digitalization and innovation for everyone; and bringing the private sector to the table.

58. Delegations underlined improving the response to crisis through development and queried whether the international community was fit for purpose and if donors were providing the right support. Development and security policies should build on participation and inclusiveness, and seek lasting conditions for peace and security, well-being and care for entire societies. One delegation noted the mobilization around COVID-19 and suggested a similar drive for the SDGs. Delegations called for reorienting development programmes to move towards productive economies, respect for nature and a green transition as imperatives, not options; consider multiplier effects that come, for example, from green industry and financial inclusion; and foster social equity, gender equality and inclusive decision-making. Facing structural and emerging challenges would require State institutional strengthening, including robust monitoring and statistical systems; global solidarity was key.

59. In response to delegations, the President urged them to bring ideas and challenges to the SDG Summit and the Summit of the Future, including countries considered “developed” that face major development challenges in moving towards sustainable lifestyles. If they do not take this path, it would be equivalent to saying that everyone could keep pumping fossil fuels; the whole world would fall over the edge. Discussion of shared dilemmas could help find strong systemic solutions at

scale. He called for looking at how UNDP and the United Nations system can do even more, and what countries need to do with and for them.

60. The UNDP Administrator appreciated many positive remarks about UNDP. He stressed it was time to reset the logic of the debate. The world still invested billions in defending national security, for instance, even as diverging development pathways posed the greatest threat. More complex, systemic solutions could be designed; development models were flawed but could evolve; many people were doing many things right. The issue was not a lack of ideas but a lack of confidence in one another. In talking about the future, the SDGs should be at the core. Leading by example would create confidence in cooperation and investment in one another to move to a different trajectory.

VIII. Gender equality at UNDP

61. The UNDP Associate Administrator introduced the item, and the UNDP Director, Bureau for Programme and Policy Support, presented the annual report on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy, 2022–2025 ([DP/2023/15](#)).

62. A group of delegations noted that gender equality was under threat from multiple crises and rollbacks on women's and girls' rights. UNDP had a critical role in driving momentum to achieve gender equality. It welcomed the successful implementation of the cross-cutting, innovative approach in the gender equality strategy, including efforts to leverage artificial intelligence; appreciated support for women leaders, including peacebuilders and parliamentarians; and stressed the empowerment and meaningful inclusion of marginalized women, including women marginalized based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It welcomed catalytic work on financing for gender equality and encouraged collaboration on gender equality and gender mainstreaming across the United Nations.

63. Delegations emphasized that changing gender stereotypes would be essential in achieving the SDGs. They welcomed inclusive processes, such as quotas, and highlighted sharing mediation and conflict expertise with women mediator networks. They underscored social protection and care systems for economic justice and asked if the multidimensional poverty index would capture specific vulnerable groups. They recognized work on preventing gender-based violence under the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative, appreciated UNDP interactions with civil society, and endorsed investment in preparing UNDP officials to drive deep changes and apply gender policy across the board.

64. In response to delegations, the UNDP Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, said it planned to expand an artificial intelligence-based pilot on misinformation and backlash to additional countries and develop a better early warning system to understand trends and bolster prevention and response measures. These efforts were funded by core resources that allowed UNDP to keep abreast of rapid changes. UNDP was finalizing guidance on support for LGBTQI+ persons in political and electoral processes. It intended to scale up work on financing for gender equality through the integrated national financing frameworks, the SDG standards and investor maps, and the use of the gender seal certification with ministries of finance and central banks. UNDP was committed to working with UN-Women. With many actors on gender equality, UNDP had a comparative advantage in focusing on systems, institutions and finance.

65. The UNDP Director, Gender Team, said the guidance on LGBTQI+ would draw on practical examples of what works in diverse countries; the next stage would be developing a global project to address data gaps and other barriers in reaching

excluded women. UNDP was part of an inter-agency task force developing guidance on intersectionality so that United Nations organizations apply a common lens. The multidimensional poverty index would capture vulnerable groups of women with indicators on time poverty, education, housing, sexual and reproductive health, access to finance, violence and political participation.

66. The Executive Board took note of the annual report on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy, 2022–2025 ([DP/2023/15](#)).

IX. Country programmes and related matters

67. The UNDP Associate Administrator presented the country programme document for Chile. The UNDP Regional Director, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, provided details from a regional perspective.

68. A delegation described the country programme document as resulting from a joint reflection aimed at addressing national and international challenges in sustainable development. The process crystallized the valuable contribution of UNDP and offered a model of collaboration that could be replicated.

69. In response to the delegation, the UNDP Regional Director, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, thanked the Government of Chile for its trust and collaboration.

70. The Executive Board approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the country programme document for Chile ([DP/DCP/CHL/6](#)).

X. Evaluation

71. The Director, ad interim, Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) introduced the annual report on evaluation for 2022 ([DP/2023/16](#)), the evaluation of support to social protection ([DP/2023/17](#)) and the evaluation of support to access to justice ([DP/2023/19](#)). The UNDP Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, provided the management commentaries to the annual report on evaluation for 2022 and the management response to the evaluation of support to social protection ([DP/2023/18](#)). The UNDP Director, Crisis Bureau, provided the management response to the evaluation of support to access to justice ([DP/2023/20](#)).

Annual report on evaluation, 2022

72. Delegations commended the IEO for improving the quality of decentralized evaluations and being innovative in its publications. They encouraged the annual report to better explain how the IEO was performing according to plan, good evaluation practices, and evaluation coverage geographically and thematically compared to the budget. They noted that financial resources aligned with evaluation policy targets.

73. In response to delegations, the IEO Director ad interim agreed to provide more details on geographical coverage in the annual report, noting that reporting reflected the country programme document cycle. The Evaluation Resource Centre provided mapping based on geography. He recognized UNDP management's commitment to funding the IEO, which received a significant increase in 2022 despite constrained core resources. Fielding senior regional advisers had begun as part of creating a global evaluation platform.

74. The UNDP Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, appreciated support for decentralized evaluation. The UNDP Chief, Effectiveness Group, indicated a 33 per cent increase in investment in decentralized evaluation over 2021.

Evaluation of support to social protection

75. A group of delegations underlined how a multisectoral approach, large field presence and links to six signature solutions gave UNDP a comparative advantage in social protection. This should complement the specific mandates and technical capabilities of specialized agencies. The group expressed concern about some shortcomings. UNDP should: avoid fragmented, small-scale projects; strengthen support to low-income and least-developed countries; strengthen gender-responsive social protection; and further strengthen and fine-tune partnerships, based on comparative advantages. The group endorsed the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions and welcomed more details on progress and added value.

76. In response to delegations, the UNDP Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, agreed that avoiding fragmentation was critical. Coverage of 4 billion people without social protection would require all stakeholders. Social protection had multiple components; UNDP could position itself to help these work together, in coordination with other partners. Even the Global Accelerator could not address the scale of the problem alone; solutions would have to emerge at the national level, backed by international partnerships. With constraints on fiscal space in most developing countries, the integrated national financing frameworks could help develop a multistakeholder approach to social protection.

77. A UNDP Policy Specialist said that countries had struggled to link integrated policies with financing. UNDP had developed guidance on employment and social protection in integrated national financing frameworks.

Evaluation of support to access to justice

78. A delegation stressed that the rule of law was critical to sustainable development, yet its importance had been underestimated. He urged UNDP to improve political economy analysis, increase focus on traditional mechanisms of justice, and better integrate the justice sector and other programmes to ensure a holistic approach.

79. In response to the delegation, the IEO Director ad interim affirmed that recognizing the widening gap in access to justice was important.

80. The UNDP Director, Crisis Bureau, noted that the United Nations had approved a new vision for the rule of law. Revamping coordination would enhance impacts on the ground. While continuous support was central to progress, resources had declined.

81. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/11 on UNDP evaluation.

XI. United Nations Capital Development Fund

82. The UNDP Associate Administrator introduced the item and the Officer in Charge, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), and UNCDF Deputy Executive Secretary presented the report on results achieved by UNCDF in 2022 ([DP/2023/22](#)).

83. Members of the Bureau of the Board commended UNCDF for its role in innovative financial solutions, digital and financial inclusion, policies and regulations, and support for local finance mechanisms. They recognized persistent

challenges in attracting private sector investment for the SDGs, especially in the least developed countries, and encouraged UNCDF to continue supporting project pipelines, enabling environments and financial instruments. They highlighted several considerations: address the lack of information on internal review processes by providing the Board with an update in the form of a briefing at the earliest opportunity; act urgently to close the serious gender parity gap in senior management; and expand cooperation with other United Nations entities and external stakeholders to amplify catalytic impacts. They expressed concern about declining core resources, to only 8 per cent of total revenue, noting this jeopardized effective implementation of the Strategic Framework, the presence of UNCDF in all 46 least developed countries, innovative financial solutions and required oversight. They urged Member States to address the decline in core resources.

84. A group of delegations highlighted the contributions of UNCDF to inclusive and sustainable economic transformation in the least developed countries, in line with the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2022–2031. UNCDF played a critical role in digitalization, local infrastructure investment and financing of small and medium-size enterprises. It had an expanding role in catalytic financing, leveraging \$600 million for sustainable development investment in 2022. The group appealed to the international community to fulfil its commitments to core resources.

85. A group of delegations affirmed the unique value of UNCDF in scaling up digital and financial products and services, investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, generating jobs and de-risking investments, among other contributions. It requested UNCDF to address its concern that almost 70 per cent of senior leadership positions were outside the least developed countries. It urged UNCDF to leverage its role as a catalytic financing entity to unlock financing for the Doha Programme of Action.

86. A group of countries requested an earlier submission of the integrated results and resources matrix and encouraged analysis of milestones in the 2023 report. It congratulated UNCDF on its high-quality evaluations, reminding Member States that such tasks depend on core funding. While recognizing that the organization's portfolio of projects inherently implied a higher risk, it highlighted concern with a non-performing loan ratio of 26 per cent and endorsed the development of an investment strategy to specify the UNCDF risk appetite. The group noted some impatience in waiting for the results of the investigation of the Executive Secretary's administrative leave in 2022 and the OAI performance audit of UNCDF. It noted that any discussion on keeping UNCDF fit for purpose depended on stability in the senior management team. It concluded that it was more than ever convinced of the organization's mandate in mobilizing finance and supporting local financial markets and systems in the least developed countries.

87. Delegations stressed that UNCDF was well placed to provide concrete solutions to mobilize private SDG finance, suggesting that the United Nations provide more of this kind of assistance. They highlighted the activities of the Last Mile Finance Trust Fund and welcomed increased engagement in biodiversity finance and sustainable food systems.

88. In response to delegations, the UNCDF Officer in Charge stated that the organization was committed to continually earning the trust of partner countries and donors. UNCDF was finalizing a gender strategy to close the institutional gender parity gap and improve gender equality outcomes in investments and programming. Declining core resources limited the capacity for necessary oversight; evaluations had very small budgets. He confirmed continued cooperation with United Nations and external shareholders; pledged to increase efforts in line with the Doha Programme of Action;

agreed that staff should be closer to least-developed countries; and affirmed the value of an investment strategy. On non-performing loans, he clarified that the 26 per cent reflected loan impairment, which was a precautionary measure to keep funds in reserve if loans do not perform. He highlighted that loans that had been impaired were not necessarily written off; no loans had been written off to date. He noted the potential to further develop innovative guarantee instruments under the Last Mile Trust Fund.

89. The UNDP Associate Administrator said that the investigation process of the Executive Secretary was ongoing. To protect the integrity of the process, the Board would be informed upon completion. She shared the concern of many delegations about the decline in core resources since UNCDF had been very innovative and deserved broad support.

90. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/12 on the report on results achieved by UNCDF in 2021.

XII. United Nations Volunteers

91. The UNDP Associate Administrator introduced the item and the Executive Coordinator, United Nations Volunteers (UNV), presented UNV: annual report of the Administrator ([DP/2023/23](#)).

92. Members of the Bureau of the Board acknowledged the unique role of UNV as a system-wide service provider. The growing number of increasingly diverse volunteers testified to its resonance with people. They noted a redoubled focus on emergency action in 2022; the strategic use of the Special Voluntary Fund allowing swift, targeted deployments; and effective adaptation to an evolving global context. Board members commended commitment to gender parity; encouraged UNV to achieve gender parity across all regions, volunteer categories and deployments with United Nations partners; and urged continued support for UNV, including through the Special Voluntary Fund.

93. A group of delegations commended UNV for its demonstrated ability to respond to crises and build resilient communities. From a duty of care perspective, it looked forward to UNV continuing to review which locations are suitable for young volunteers and other volunteer groups with distinct needs. It referred to UNV as a role model for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. By streamlining processes and developing advanced digital solutions, UNV had made important progress in increasing its organizational efficiency, results that could be further enhanced. The group strongly encouraged UNV to partner with UN country teams to increase its capacity to integrate volunteerism into national strategies and development plans.

94. Delegations commended UNV as an increasingly relevant partner for United Nations country and humanitarian teams. They spotlighted that 84 per cent of volunteers now come from the global South; welcomed the marked increase of women volunteers in Africa, which until 2022 was the only remaining region not to have reached gender parity; and commended initiatives led by and empowering youth volunteers. They endorsed integrating volunteerism within the United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks.

95. The UNV Executive Coordinator highlighted the importance of achieving gender parity in all regions and United Nations entities and described a drive to achieve gender balance in peacekeeping and special political missions, where the ratio of female volunteers in larger operations increased from 13 per cent in 2018 to 40 per cent in 2022. He thanked countries for enabling opportunities for volunteers with disabilities and stressed a rise in United Nations entities funding them. UNV would focus on efficiency and effectiveness measures and on upholding the duty of care for young volunteers in close collaboration with hosting United Nations entities. He

underlined continued commitment to promoting volunteerism as a life cycle phenomenon and powerful means of implementing of the 2030 Agenda per the strategic guidance of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (A/RES/75/233).

96. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/13 on United Nations Volunteers: annual report of the Administrator.

UNFPA segment

XIII. Statement by the Executive Director and annual report

97. In her opening remarks (available on the UNFPA website),³ the UNFPA Executive Director described how COVID-19 halted decades of progress in preventing maternal deaths. However, the UNFPA drive to address the global shortage of almost a million midwives could help prevent two-thirds of maternal and newborn deaths, an investment the world cannot afford to miss. With sexual and reproductive health and rights facing intense political pushback, she urged Member States and all partners to seize opportunities for dialogue and consensus, including during the 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD30). She pointed to many achievements while stressing that in too many places, sustainable development was endangered, and rights were in retreat. UNFPA remained focused on its normative work and targeting multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination. It was scaling up innovations and investing in women innovators. It continued to endeavour to meet the highest standards of transparency, accountability and oversight. She acknowledged that UNFPA needed to remain adaptive and remain open, as always, to improvement. In this regard, UNFPA welcomed the Joint Inspection Unit review of management and administration in UNFPA.

98. Leading up to ICPD30, the Executive Director said that UNFPA was brokering diverse partnerships and encouraged Member States to support the review through national consultations, regional population conferences and three global dialogues on youth, demographic diversity and the impact of technology. In humanitarian action, in many cases, without UNFPA, no one would spotlight the dire plight of women and girls or focus on their rights and choices. Needs were far outstripping resources, requiring everyone to work differently and focus on prevention and resilience. She welcomed increased humanitarian funding and appealed for continued core and more flexible other resources underlining that investments in sexual and reproductive health and rights offer huge benefits for people, economies and societies. UNFPA had made efforts to leverage significantly broader financing across other actors and financing instruments.

99. The UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa noted that the top priorities in the region were harnessing the demographic dividend and delivering on the commitments of the ICPD. A focus on adolescents and youth was imperative to ensure they become healthy, empowered and productive. UNFPA was also strengthening its institutional capacity to ensure health and social workers are able to plan, deliver and monitor quality SRHR services in emergencies.

100. Members of the Bureau commended UNFPA for the achievements on most strategic plan outcomes and urged that the organization focus on the outcomes with slower progress. Continued efforts to accelerate programmes tailored to local circumstances were especially important in helping countries reduce maternal mortality. Board members expressed concern about the growing humanitarian caseload and urged further support for UNFPA since it was often the only agency

³ See <https://www.unfpa.org/press/statement-executive-director-annual-session-executive-board-2023>.

tackling gender-based violence and ensuring women can give birth safely. UNFPA continued to take a leading role in population and sustainable development by harnessing the power of data and by investing in adolescents and youth, efforts key to the SDGs. Board members commended the organization's highest income on record and encouraged Member States to meet core resource commitments. They appreciated UNFPA management's dedication to strengthening oversight and to United Nations reform.

101. A group of delegations acknowledged the commendable efforts in ending preventable maternal deaths, unmet need for family planning, and ending violence against women and girls and all harmful practices, thus accelerating progress towards the SDGs. They urged UNFPA to continue supporting developing countries according to their national needs, context and priorities. They welcomed regional dialogues to promote cooperation among governments; acknowledged the importance of developing strategic partnerships with international financial institutions; and stressed leveraging data, technology and digitalization in providing services to local communities. Ongoing efforts on population dynamics, gender equality and youth empowerment played vital roles in expediting the SDGs.

102. A group of delegations highlighted how UNFPA work was more needed than ever, with women and girls hit hardest by multiple crises, and sexual and reproductive health and rights challenged globally. Women should be empowered and seated at the table to find sustainable solutions to conflicts, poverty and health coverage. UNFPA needed to continue to be agile, fully funded and in a position to substantially accelerate work to achieve its transformative results. The group drew attention to strengthening UNFPA in addressing harmful gender and social norms, scaling up its humanitarian response capacity, and, through ICPD30, intensifying collective efforts to make sexual and reproductive health and rights a reality for every girl and woman.

103. Delegations appreciated the clear focus on human rights and development; noted that population and gender equality are priorities in national socioeconomic development; and expressed concern about regression in maternal health. While humanitarian assistance had expanded, funding for population and development should be maintained towards universal access to services and implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Further technical assistance and capacity-building could support more resilient national health systems; the integration of sexual and reproductive health in universal health coverage was essential. Delegations highlighted the continued response to HIV; strengthened supply chain management and "last mile" assurance; and comprehensive sexuality education, as well as efforts to end child and early marriage,

104. Delegations welcomed the growing work on population data and dynamics, in line with demographic shifts, and how UNFPA was shaping a perspective on demographic change, not as a threat, but as an opportunity for a better future. They encouraged UNFPA to bring megatrends, such as demographic transformation and climate change, into ICPD30 discussions. They appreciated the determination to advance the dialogue on sexual and reproductive rights, human rights and gender equality, and noted that improved collection of population data can help oppose politicization and mitigate the negative impacts of disparate population trends. Delegations expressed concern about dependency on a few donors and suggested that UNFPA strengthen partnerships with multilateral financial institutions and the private sector.

105. In response, the UNFPA Executive Director noted that despite the high ambitions, the past year posed challenges. UNFPA stressed priorities such as improving systems, partnering better with the World Health Organization and working with communities to reduce maternal mortality. It remained focused on a

rights-based approach and worked with governments, based on national ownership, local laws and culture, in looking at how to achieve scale. The Executive Director underscored UNFPA efforts to adapt to a fast-changing world; develop new tools and guidance to monitor improved humanitarian responses; work to plan ahead to meet human needs; and increase efforts to ensure better vulnerability assessments, logistics and engagement with a range of humanitarian and development players.

106. She noted that ICPD30 would offer a chance to refocus, build consensus and accelerate longstanding commitments to an agenda endorsed by Member States. It was important to build new alliances and leverage the convening power of UNFPA. She stressed three objectives for ICPD30: claim and celebrate victories; reduce polarization and misinformation; and support health and gender equality as paramount to all SDGs. UNFPA was focused on leaving no one behind, including through using data, with technology improving capacities to locate and reach people even in crises. She stressed the importance of ongoing work to inform young people about human sexuality given that information was so protective. She underlined the relevance of UNFPA in diverse contexts, demonstrated in part by work on ageing, low fertility and demographic resilience. UNFPA was diversifying funding with attention to diverse streams of development finance, including domestic resources.

107. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) noted the Humanitarian Response Division had been reorganized as part of the implementation of all 12 recommendations from a 2020 evaluation, and UNFPA had created a global emergency response team to provide immediate support in emergencies.

108. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) highlighted the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend initiative, a partnership with the World Bank to provide health services and economic empowerment.

109. The UNFPA Director, Policy and Strategy Division, indicated that two outputs were partially achieved: (a) gender and social norms, and (b) population change and data. UNFPA country offices and partners faced several challenges in addressing harmful gender and social norms due to such factors as increased humanitarian and fragile situations; the pushback from some stakeholders; inadequate resources; and the COVID-19 pandemic.

110. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/14 on UNFPA: Annual report of the Executive Director.

Joint Inspection Unit report

111. The Vice Chair, JIU, presented the review of management and administration in the United Nations Population Fund ([JIU/REP/2023/1](#)). The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director presented the management response to the report ([DP/FPA/2023/CRP.4](#)).

112. A group of delegations noted the review's focus was useful for the pending cross-agency JIU review. They reemphasized that a separate Board for UNFPA might prove inefficient and duplicative and that Executive Board must ensure sufficient time to provide substantive guidance. They acknowledged the explanation of rules binding the Oversight Advisory Committee, welcomed the new human resources management strategy and the timely recruitment and deployment, noted that regional office locations and responsibilities could more closely align with those of other United Nations entities, and supported reporting on risks, costs and functionality issues in the information and communications technology transformation project.

113. In response, the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Management) noted that UNFPA was reviewing the 21 informal recommendations and would report on how it

was responding to them in the context of the next Executive Director's annual report to the Board.

114. The Vice Chair, JIU, stressed the role of the Executive Board in determining the way forward on those recommendations addressed to the Board.

XIV. Interactive dialogue on achieving demographic resilience in a world of 8 billion

115. An interactive dialogue on “achieving demographic resilience in a world of 8 billion” involved the President of the Executive Board; the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the United Nations; the UNFPA Executive Director; the UNFPA Regional Director for West and Central Africa, and a demographic expert and professor from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

116. The President of the Executive Board stated that a population of 8 billion should be celebrated as evidence of advances in health, peace and economy around the world. Demography was an opportunity, not a threat to culture, power or economic prospects. It could help drive SDG achievement.

117. The UNFPA Regional Director for West and Central Africa spoke about the region's potential demographic dividend and accelerated policies for youth. While crises complicated these efforts; some glimmers of hope came from putting women and girls at the centre of development, such as through the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend programme, built on a novel combination of World Bank loans and grants with social objectives. She noted the work with young people to mitigate crises and foster productive activities. She contested the notion that women in the region had too many children and were contributing to climate change, stressing they used minimal resources compared to people in wealthier countries.

118. The Permanent Representative of Bulgaria described the population decline in her country, which had led to a national strategy for demographic development, aimed at economic and social incentives to increase birth rates, better reproductive health and improved general health for active longer lives. Bulgaria had among the most generous maternity leaves. More could be done to ensure every person can develop their potential and in exploring internal and external migration policies, including through collaboration with other regions. She stressed that in all countries, people are the greatest source of capital.

119. The expert from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine described demography as a globally important issue, with links to many other concerns. A moment of remarkable transition offered opportunities to maximize human capital. As populations aged, older people could make productive contributions, for instance. High-quality demographic data were important to understand changing trends, including in fertility intentions, since fertility levels do not reflect individual goals. She stressed focusing on individuals because they drive macro-trends, with ample room to improve reproductive health and address workforce practices hindering childbearing. Where policy stressed health and well-being, not targets, countries could adapt successfully to future trends.

120. The UNFPA Executive Director noted that population was among the top trends shaping the world. Many fears and misconceptions persisted; however, UNFPA insisted on rejecting these and looking at the facts and demographic trends in light of the need to promote rights and choices. The world had never had 8 billion people and with it such widely diverging patterns of high and low fertility. A spirit of cooperation could bring new ideas to the table; there were many common solutions.

121. Delegations noted that every country will experience demographic change; understanding the trends and adopting policies grounded in human rights and gender equality would bring countries closer to sustainable development. In pursuing demographic resilience, they underlined diversity and tailored approaches; the quality of lives and well-being; the role of education; and more population data collection and analysis. High-quality disaggregated population data should capture diverse experiences and drive more inclusive solutions.

122. Delegations noted that reproductive health and rights helped people to make decisions that benefit themselves and their families, and broader economies. Inflexible working hours, limited childcare services, and inadequate sexual and reproductive health care limit choices for work and family. They stressed investing in young people and improving the participation of elderly people, who were often ignored. Appreciating a positive emphasis on ageing, they asked about the scope for intergenerational solidarity.

123. Delegations stated that demographic challenges and opportunities called for strengthened multilateralism and ICPD implementation, recognizing the central role of the SDGs. ICPD30 could spotlight the continued relevance of the ICPD vision through the lens of youth, gender equality and leaving no one behind, anchoring demographic resilience in the needs, rights and aspirations of individuals.

124. A representative of the International Organization for Migration said that migration formed part of demographic resilience and more work was needed to understand its complexity. He highlighted the international remittances that migrants send home, contributing to development in many countries.

XV. Evaluation

125. The UNFPA Director, Evaluation Office, introduced, in separate presentations, the annual report on the UNFPA evaluation function, 2022 ([DP/FPA/2023/5](#)), the formative evaluation of UNFPA support to population dynamics and data ([DP/FPA/2023/CRP.1](#)) and the formative evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth ([DP/FPA/2023/CRP.2](#)). Similarly, the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) presented the management commentaries to the annual report on the UNFPA evaluation function ([DP/FPA/2023/CRP.5](#)), as well as the management response to the evaluation on population dynamics and data ([DP/FPA/2023/CRP.7](#)) and the management response to the evaluation on adolescents and youth ([DP/FPA/2023/CRP.8](#)).

126. On the annual report on the session on the evaluation function, a group of delegations welcomed UNFPA management's continued commitment to a strong evaluation function and lauded the excellent 2022 performance. The delegations appreciated the active support of the reform agenda and the involvement of youth in evaluations. While the decentralized evaluation system had been strengthened, further improvements were needed. It requested an assessment of the division of labour and staffing, noted the overall evaluation budget remains below guidelines and suggested adapting the funding target. It appreciated UNFPA management's continued commitment to providing the financial and human resources needed to support the evaluation function and commended the appropriate timing of the Independent Peer Review of the UNFPA Evaluation Function.

127. In response, the UNFPA Director, Evaluation Office, noted that different roles in the evaluation function were defined in the evaluation policy but that there was room to further define these. About half of the country offices had dedicated monitoring and evaluation specialists; the rest had monitoring and evaluation focal

points. The peer review report had been submitted for a management response, which would be followed by a consultative process to revise the policy.

128. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) said that the funding target could be adapted and considered in the policy revision. She noted that expenditure on evaluation tripled from 2014 to 2022 to its highest level ever. While the ratio to total expenditure was below the agreed level, in terms of economies of scale, as the income of the organization grows, the proportion of spending on evaluation will conversely decrease, even with nominal growth and additional investments. In addition, core resources expenditure on evaluation was at the upper bounds of the standard, however. She took note of the suggestion of a future evaluation of the data portal and stated that the integration of strategies in engaging with youth should also include the strategy on disabilities.

129. On the population data evaluation, one delegation highlighted the continued efforts of UNFPA to improve the evaluation capacity in humanitarian settings. It welcomed the clear messaging on the role of population data and the creation of the population data thematic fund and suggested an evaluation of the population data portal. It also encouraged UNFPA to examine the feminization of aging.

130. On the adolescents and youth evaluation, a delegation underscored that considering youth in the ICPD30 process, seeking high-impact practices for girls and young women, ensuring youth programming was gender transformative and rights-based, and as was taking an intersectional lens to youth engagement, linking strategies on gender, youth, leaving no one behind and the UNFPA strategic plan. It expressed the need to address social and cultural norms that continued to block access to vital services.

131. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/15 on UNFPA evaluation.

XVI. Country programmes and related matters

132. After the UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) introduced the UNFPA country programme extensions, the Executive Board took note, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, of the first one-year extension of the country programme for Namibia ([DP/FPA/2023/7](#)) and approved the fourth extension of the country programme for Libya ([DP/FPA/2023/7](#)).

UNOPS segment

XVII. Statement by the Executive Director and annual report

133. In his opening address (available on the UNOPS website),⁴ the UNOPS Executive Director said that, in 2022, UNOPS responded to significant management failures and delivered meaningful results. Wide-ranging reforms included a strategic reset at the highest level, guided by a comprehensive response plan. UNOPS delivered over 900 projects worth \$3.5 billion in more than 80 countries, including supporting crisis and conflict response, climate action, good health and well-being, and efforts to fight inequalities.

134. He stressed that the focus on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs was in line with the restated Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. He described an implementation gap that UNOPS can help to bridge, with financing for development a key part of the challenge. While this was a sensitive subject, UNOPS could support partners on the demand side of financing through technical assistance and capacity-building on

⁴ See <https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/speeches/statement-to-the-annual-session-of-the-executive-board-2023>.

project preparation, tenders, awards and project management, and in bridging gaps between governments and infrastructure financiers to accelerate the implementation of infrastructure projects for sustainable, resilient, inclusive development. UNOPS would not engage in impact investments using its reserves.

135. He indicated that a key lesson from the reform journey had been the urgent need to rebuild trust. Elements included: reviewing the contractual model, strengthening the culture of ethics and the independence of the ethics function, and ensuring the independence and sufficient capacity of oversight functions. UNOPS was fully committed to refunding the \$124 million in excess reserves as of 31 December 2021; it continued engaging with many partners on this issue. By 26 June 2023, UNOPS was on track to have transferred \$27.4 million to 43 partners and to contact 185 partners representing 97 per cent of total funds. It was committed to transparent cost recovery and net-zero revenue.

136. Members of the Bureau of the Board reaffirmed the commitment of UNOPS to its crucial mandate of infrastructure, procurement and project management, and its critical role in crisis response. Neither the United Nations nor UNOPS could afford more failures like the sustainable investments in infrastructure and innovation (S3I) initiative. They highlighted the prompt implementation of the comprehensive response plan, including the online monitoring tool. They appreciated the emphasis on expanded implementation capacity in areas of expertise to accelerate the SDGs, and support for the ethics office and internal audit to foster integrity, transparency and accountability. Critical priorities were updating the cost recovery model towards net-zero revenue, distributing excess reserves, and reporting on the ongoing process of recovering S3I funds and accountability for perpetrators. Monthly updates on the implementation of the comprehensive response plan and the distribution of excess reserves should continue.

137. A group of delegations appreciated crucial UNOPS projects in many nations and welcomed a renewed focus on the implementation capacity of partners to achieve the SDGs. It commended UNOPS for addressing specific needs in the least developed and landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and countries in fragile situations. A decline in procurement from local suppliers was a concern; UNOPS should prioritize including smaller enterprises and activities enhancing local capacity. It requested attention to the specific needs of middle-income countries, and supported efforts to bridge the implementation gap in financing for development, including through technical assistance and capacity-building related to project management services. The group emphasized geographic diversity in senior management and a plan for the transition from contractor to staff positions.

138. A group of delegations described reform as a collective effort and requested the continuation of monthly update briefings. It appreciated the restated Strategic Plan with its focus on the original mandate of providing infrastructure, procurement and project management services. It requested more clarity on programmes and projects that UNOPS would not accept and on how UNOPS would sustain its focus on a non-programmatic, demand-driven mandate. The return to net-zero revenue was a shared goal; the cost recovery model must enable this; excess reserves need to be redistributed until the net-zero system was fully effective; and redistribution should be based on the principle of proportionality.

139. Delegates called for developing a sustainable, concrete plan to tackle low personnel engagement and internal trust; urged a cautionary approach in expanding humanitarian and peacebuilding-related activities; and noted the new strategy for gender equality and social inclusion mainstreaming.

140. In response to delegations, the UNOPS Executive Director clarified that UNOPS would follow its Strategic Plan and remain accountable to the Board. UNOPS would

not become a programmatic agency but would strive to meet real demands from Member States to fill implementation gaps. It had technical expertise and skills very relevant to project design, project management and portfolio management. Being demand-driven was the core mandate. He was not proposing a new mandate but rather to position and channel technical capacity and expertise to meet the demands of Member States and UNOPS clients and beneficiaries in relation to financing for sustainable development. This could involve acting on Member State requests to assist them in creating an enabling environment for projects; providing technical assistance and capacity-building; and supporting project selection, efficient and sustainable procurement, infrastructure planning and project management. A process of balancing staff contracts had started along with reviews of human resources processes and organizational culture. Refocusing UNOPS on the SDGs in parallel with a new results framework would provide the Board with more details on impact. The Strategic Plan addressed humanitarian support in a balanced manner and reflected the extensive work of UNOPS in fragile and conflict-affected States.

Independent review of the UNOPS ethics function to ensure the independence and impartiality of its work

141. The Head of the Ethics Office of the International Monetary Fund and the Head of the Ethics Office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization presented findings from an independent review of the UNOPS ethics function to ensure the independence and impartiality of its work. Their intervention was followed by a response from the UNOPS Director, Ethics Office, and a management response from the UNOPS Executive Director.

142. Delegations expressed concern based on the independent review and requested more details on attempts to rectify the independence of the office.

143. In response, the UNOPS Director, Ethics Office, stated that many recommendations had already been implemented but some are more complex and ongoing. The UNOPS Executive Director stated that all needed support was being provided to the Ethics Office to ensure it implemented the report.

144. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/16 on the early midterm review of the UNOPS strategic plan, 2022–2025, including the annual report of the Executive Director for 2022; UNOPS strategic plan, 2022–2025, restated; decision 2023/17 on the comprehensive response plan in response to the recommendations of the two independent third-party reviews of UNOPS; and decision 2023/18 on UNOPS distribution to paying entities, including those of the United Nations system, of excess reserves accumulated after 31 December 2021.

Part three
Second regular session 2023

**Held at United Nations Headquarters in New York
from 28 to 31 August 2023**

I. Organizational matters

1. The second regular session 2023 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS was held in person at United Nations Headquarters from 28 to 31 August 2023.
2. The Executive Board adopted the agenda and workplan for the session (DP/2023/L.3), as orally amended, and approved the report of the annual session 2023 (DP/2023/24). The Board took note of the draft annual workplan for 2024 (DP/2023/CRP.2) and approved the tentative workplan for the first regular session 2024.
3. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at the second regular session 2023 appeared in document DP/2023/25, available on the Executive Board website.¹
4. The Executive Board agreed in decision 2023/25 to the following schedule for sessions of the Executive Board in 2024:

First regular session:	29 January to 2 February 2024
Annual session:	3 to 7 June 2024
Second regular session:	26 to 30 August 2024

Statement by the President of the Executive Board

5. The President expressed the deepest gratitude to the men and women who had averted a pending calamity by commencing the salvage of the FSO Safer (a deteriorating floating oil storage and offloading unit moored off the coast of Yemen). He called on delegates to imagine a Red Sea awash in oil with a 25-year recovery period costing \$20 billion for a clean-up. The United Nations, specifically UNDP, had stopped a catastrophe in its tracks. This success captured the United Nations at its best in being preventive, proactive and bold. As for UNFPA, in 2022 it had contributed to averting 13.3 million unintended pregnancies and 3.7 unsafe abortions. UNOPS for its part continued to help deliver clean energy and an equitable energy transition. Impediments, such as conflicts and economic instability, however, thwarted progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The upcoming SDG Summit was a chance for States to redouble their commitments. He called for assessing priorities and for donor and programme countries to support United Nations organizations in concrete ways.

UNDP segment

Interactive dialogue with the Administrator

6. The President introduced an interactive dialogue on working together to finance sustainable development, describing it as a timely conversation given the trillions of dollars required to achieve the Goals. He called for putting the United Nations at the heart of the thinking, synthesis, collaboration and accelerated action needed to achieve the global Goals. He pointed to decades of innovations in private sector finance and said that UNDP was now innovating boldly for the public sector. UNDP needed to be further equipped to bring the private sector into sustainable finance and required regular (core) resources financing to undertake continued innovation.

7. The Administrator stated that overcoming financing challenges was fundamental for the world to move forward together. This was not just a matter of equity and fairness – it went to the core of risks to global and national security. Many developing countries were now spending more money on interest payments than education or health, even as the financial system had all the finance needed for a

¹ See <https://www.undp.org/executive-board/decisions-of-the-board>.

moment of transformation. Finance was not a panacea but without it, everything else would remain theoretical.

8. The Minister of Information and Communications Technology and Innovation of the Government of Rwanda said that progress in addressing complex financing challenges in her country had built on visionary leadership, coordinated planning and execution, strong partnerships and homegrown innovations. When the Government needed to raise \$400 million for health care, information and communication technology and renewable energy, it created an award-winning bond. Careful use of the proceeds and regular reporting to investors had led to a second bond. Good preparation, planning and execution could lead to better pricing, increase capacity for investment in strategic projects and attract much-needed capital. Other successes comprised issuing East Africa's first sustainability linked bond, and blending finance from bonds and World Bank resources for affordable housing and public transport. While finance remained insufficient, such examples had galvanized commitment to new solutions. Machine learning and artificial intelligence offered new options for efficiency in allocating capital by modelling scenarios and impacts. The Government looked to UNDP as a steadfast ally in obtaining a sustainable future for all.

9. The Managing Director of the Monetary Authority of Singapore described the importance of uplifting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. They faced constraints from limited scale, connectivity and finance even as new opportunities were emerging in the green and digital economies. Public and private partners in Singapore were developing a digital infrastructure to establish new capabilities and overcome limitations due to location and size. Collaboration with UNDP was building digital trust, expanding access to financial, trade and green resources and providing training. Achievements included: developing a unique legal entity identifier to expand capacities to verify and conduct financial transactions; creating a holistic digital platform to access trade opportunities, financial services and suppliers; and launching an open learning hub drawing over 7,000 smaller businesses from 61 countries. He concluded that a promising start towards realizing global public goods would not be possible without UNDP support. It would result in unlocking business opportunities and access to finance while enriching lives.

10. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa said the resolve to help countries get back on track was never stronger, particularly amid struggles to secure adequate and affordable financing. She stressed the urgent need for "patient" capital, and called for paying more global attention to staunching illicit financial flows, using national resources to mobilize global capital, ensuring objective credit ratings and securing finance from the diaspora.

11. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific said that UNDP had supported 21 countries in the region on integrated national financing frameworks. Fiji had developed its first blue bond. Indonesia had moved into blended finance and better private capital alignment. The biggest demand was to close loopholes to retain funds for development, such as through tax audits and improved domestic market regulations.

12. In additional remarks (available on the UNDP website),² the Administrator called for moving past frustration in finance discussions. The world needed to embrace financing as the key variable not only in terms of money but also its capacity as a family of nations to pivot forward and manage imperative transitions. UNDP, with its universal presence, saw finance as a serious but solvable problem. With \$463 trillion circulating in the global economy, it was inexplicable that a few trillion could not be found to invest in existential transitions. While current systemic challenges required systemic responses, the global financial system was anachronistic. National economic ecosystems, regulations, policies and investment contexts defined the pathway of each

² See <https://www.undp.org/speeches/second-regular-session-executive-board-2023>.

individual nation. These were not separate spheres; global and national policies incentivized and supported transitions or held back nations or sectors of society.

13. In a few years, he continued, UNDP had moved from mainly supporting countries to access finance for projects to the growing recognition of its value in having its feet on the ground and connections to expertise and institutions around the world. It had provided extensive engagement, partnership and support to the Group of 20 and its presidency, including as the secretariat of the Sustainable Finance Working Group. UNDP was one of three core United Nations entities leading the SDG Stimulus process, which called for the United Nations and international financial institutions to work closely together on country priorities to advance the Goals, including through the integrated national financing frameworks. European investors in the Goals had made the UNDP-devised impact standards their most common reference framework for private equity investments in sustainability. UNDP had leveraged hundreds of billions of dollars through supporting countries in aligning national budgets to the Goals and developing financing frameworks.

14. The Administrator stressed that UNDP did not have all the answers to current challenges, nor would it singularly shift global development finance. It had called attention to a staggering debt burden earlier than most and to the flow of money out of the poorest developing countries, but since this was not yet threatening the global financial system, it was being overlooked. In 2024, 45 per cent of debt would mature in low-income countries; 60 countries were one step away from potentially defaulting. While richer economies had begun to see the end of current crises, a chronic structural divergence meant that poor countries could not mobilize needed finance.

15. UNDP had collaborated with international financial institutions and other partners in seeking to change how markets looked at developing countries, such as through Sustainable Development Goal bonds and new insurance products. It was partnering with governments on policies and frameworks to create markets and services to meet development objectives. In 86 countries, the integrated financing frameworks helped governments to set priorities. If finance was handled proactively, intelligently and with greater wisdom, it would bring people together. Otherwise, it could paralyse the world. For example, a green transition was not possible with \$7 trillion invested in fossil fuel subsidies each year, effectively trapping the world in the fossil fuel economy.

16. UNDP did not have a singular or unique role, he said, but was an extraordinary network to connect innovations from North to South, from small to large economies, in a partnership for development that empowers countries to take sovereign, informed decisions. UNDP built the capacities of institutions, communities and smaller businesses and enabled financial markets to serve citizens. Every day, 22,000 UNDP staff members worked with national institutions, including to address finance from the vantage point of those for whom it was an existential concern. UNDP brought collective insights based on these experiences to forums such as the Executive Board, and to dialogues with international financial institutions and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Governments should not underestimate the relevance and momentum of coming together, or the potential to generate innovations, partnerships and financing shifts at the richest moment in human history. Thousands of answers were out there but in a difficult climate, UNDP and its many partners could catalyse understanding that the financing problem was solvable.

17. Delegations commended UNDP for being at the forefront of efforts to help countries navigate financing for sustainable development. UNDP had played an impressive role in establishing priorities, pursuing policy de-risking, accessing climate and biodiversity finance and developing new and innovative financial instruments. Challenges persisted, particularly for the most vulnerable countries;

adequate resources, capacity-building and policy coherence demanded collective action. While digital technology showed remarkable potential to catalyse sustainable finance, technologies should be harnessed responsibly and inclusively, and aligned with achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Member States should address the decline in regular (core) resources and recommit to supporting UNDP through additional core, flexible and multi-year funding so it could continue to provide finance solutions in line with the scale and needs in programme countries.

18. A delegation urged support for countries in debt distress as this was linked to the Sustainable Development Goal financing gap. Countries needed assistance to manage debt and improve investment scenarios, and UNDP, with its technical expertise and long-term capacity-building for developing bonds for the Goals, had the potential to increase financial flows for the Goals and climate objectives.

19. A group of delegations appreciated the emphasis on diagnosing constraints and necessary global reforms to help development advance in the global South. There were serious shortcomings in realizing commitments to official development assistance that had first been made 53 years ago, and achieving the Goals would require changes in the global financial architecture. The international community should reform the multilateral development banks to catalyse next-generation public and private investments in global public goods, and strengthen the global financial safety net to offer greater and more equitable access to international funding in crises. Major governance changes at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund should improve the representation of developing countries. The group stressed a platform for debt treatment, improved debt transparency, better safeguards on credit ratings agencies and a strengthened regulatory framework for financial flows and global tax reforms. The group encouraged UNDP through the integrated national financing frameworks to further assist governments in financing the Goals and nationally determined contributions, and to mobilize innovative finance, capitalizing on digital innovations.

20. A group of delegations said that UNDP remained a steadfast partner while expressing concern about reduced regular resources funding. For eradicating poverty, such funding was not a choice. Improving the material conditions of humanity depended on Member States leveraging the expertise of developmental organizations such as UNDP; these entities must be fit-for-purpose. The group urged Member States to realize funding compact commitments and suggested a funding compact 2.0 to take account of current realities and embody collective ambition.

21. Delegations said it would take more than official development assistance to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, pointing to increased trade, private investment and innovative finance, and intensified action on finance alignment, mobilization, blending and scaling up. Budgeting for the Goals would increase transparency and efficiency, while stepping up national efforts to facilitate financing and investment and looking at total fiscal systems would increase revenue and support better spending. UNDP played a key role in financing for the Goals while also helping to confront social inequality and strengthen institutions. Some asked about tackling corruption and encouraged UNDP to advance Goal 16 to improve conditions for investment.

22. Multiple interventions stressed the debt problem as one of the most glaring impediments to development, requiring radical, immediate reforms, without which the Goals would be an illusion. For the least developed countries, borrowing rates were high and risk premiums excessive, suggesting that the financial system prioritized risks for creditors over risks for populations. Tangible progress required debt cancellation for the most vulnerable, correcting rating systems and responding to national needs for finance. Delegations referred to a lack of sufficient solidarity,

describing the international environment as too restrictive and unfriendly for developing countries. One delegation indicated a pandemic-related loss of 15 per cent of gross domestic product followed by an expected 3 per cent loss from the El Niño effect in 2023, challenges rendered more difficult by the lack of finance for adaptation in middle-income countries.

23. Delegations welcomed the portfolio approach as important for more effective development support and a chance to fit pieces together into consolidated solutions. UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) could complement the international financial institutions based on comparative advantages.

24. The Administrator expressed appreciation for the many comments on strategic, relevant and responsive partnerships with UNDP. It would present its “SDG insights” on 95 countries to better understand how the alignment of national development planning and financing was unfolding. He referred to political dilemmas and a feeling of retrogression, and agreed the financial system was not effective in responding to short-term shocks, which was why the debt issue continued to come up. The global community needed to come together to relieve pressures so financing discussions could evolve. Even with innovations, the fundamentals of economic policy remained orthodox and financial regulatory systems entrenched in paradigms favouring creditors and marginalizing the poor.

25. The repeated call for increased regular resources funding was a preoccupation. Such funding gave UNDP a multiplier function, enabling it to interact with governments and to provide analytics and a range of options for national policy choices, including those that have already aligned billions in investment in the Goals. UNDP acted on its commitment to focus on countries under the greatest stress, with the integrated national financing frameworks supporting 31 of the least developed countries. He appealed to donors to take the call for regular resources seriously. While some had maintained or expanded regular resources funding, others had cut back or stopped these contributions. This could lead to a model where UNDP simply implemented projects, but it had to be more than the sum of its parts, especially amid many exciting opportunities to learn and work with countries. He suggested reminding the public of how little taxpayer revenue was invested in international development cooperation and how much could be accomplished with sustained investment. Regular resources funding was almost the smallest issue embedded in a broader debate about climate finance and finance for the Goals.

26. He said that anti-corruption work in particular was in high demand, with UNDP working with 115 countries on related issues. Digitalization offered enormous opportunities in reaching people traditionally outside the modern financial system.

27. He concluded that in solving tough issues in financing for development, UNDP was systemically relevant, positioned to scale up successes and reach many countries otherwise not on the global radar. He stressed hope despite enormous challenges, speed in tackling them and the integral contributions that UNDP would continue to make.

II. Structured funding dialogue

28. The Director, Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, presented the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 ([DP/2023/2026](#) and its annexes), in response to General Assembly resolution [75/233](#). The Officer-in-Charge, UNCDF presented the annual review of the financial situation of UNCDF ([DP/2023/2027](#)).

29. A group of delegations expressed deep concern regarding the continued decline in regular resources contributions in a time of record-breaking needs. They did not want UNDP to become a project organization and welcomed the shift to portfolios. UNDP should be able to design and implement integrated, innovative and transformative solutions, reach all who are vulnerable, uphold normative mandates and have sound fiduciary, oversight and management functions in support of Member States' development objectives. While underlining continued commitment to the funding compact and noting pressures on official development assistance, the group urged UNDP to deepen reporting on the results of unearmarked resources and to enhance the visibility of donors to regular resources at the country level. UNDP was asked for an explanation of a \$11.4 billion dollar surplus in 2022.

30. In other interventions, delegations appreciated harmonized reporting, sound financial management, increased programme delivery and efficiency gains. They said that a few countries cannot continue taking a disproportionately large responsibility for regular resources, which should reflect the multilateral character of the United Nations and economic realities. They asked how UNDP could maintain robust accountability structures in light of resource imbalances, and welcomed analysis conducted by UNDP on factors contributing to declining regular resources funding. One delegation encouraged UNDP and UNCDF to broaden the donor base through strategic approaches with the international financial institutions and private sector in addition to stronger engagement with traditional supporters. The delegation would continue to look towards UNDP to address Member State concerns about management oversight weaknesses and reaffirm its commitment to reform and organizational effectiveness.

31. In response, the Director, Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, stressed the importance of moving from projects to portfolios, which regular resources made possible. She pointed to recent and notable improvements in attracting flexible funding. Regular resources remained key for upholding normative standards, strengthening transparency and accountability, leveraging other resources and supporting innovations, such as digital public infrastructure. UNDP sustained strong and high-quality oversight. While programme countries funded 25 per cent of the UNDP budget, there were increasing efforts to work with new strategic partners on regular and other resources as part of the diversification agenda. The UNDP #PartnersAtCore campaign was in its third round with an emphasis on partnership on the ground and a broad range of country-level partners.

32. The Chief Financial Officer reported that of the accumulated surplus of \$11.4 billion, \$329 million was regular resources. UNDP was obliged to maintain three to six months of regular resources as a reserve. Another \$5.1 billion had not yet been received and was mostly earmarked for programmes; \$5.3 billion was earmarked for programmes and included cost sharing, trust funds, reserves in line with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, reimbursable support and other activities. Another \$1 billion was ringfenced to cover after-service health insurance, end-of-service and other employee benefits liabilities.

33. The Officer-in-Charge, UNCDF, said the fund was the only United Nations organization mandated to provide loans and issue 100 per cent funded guarantees. In moving from funding to financing, it offered important models. The organization was proud of its results and hoped donors, programme countries and partners would fund and sustain them.

34. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/20 on the structured funding dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

III. Country programmes and related matters

35. Following an overview by the Associate Administrator and an introduction by the regional directors for Africa and Asia and the Pacific, the Executive Board approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the country programme documents for Angola (DP/DCP/AGO/5), Benin (DP/DCP/BEN/4), Burundi (DP/DCP/BDI/5), Chad (DP/DCP/TCD/4), Equatorial Guinea (DP/DCP/GNQ/4), Lesotho (DP/DCP/LSO/4), Malawi (DP/DCP/MWI/4), Mauritania (DP/DCP/MRT/4), Papua New Guinea (DP/DCP/PNG/3), Senegal (DP/DCP/SEN/4) and Togo (DP/DCP/TGO/4).

36. The Board also approved the fifth two-year extension of the country programme for Afghanistan; the third two-year extension of the country programme for Burkina Faso; and the second one-year extension of the country programme for Myanmar (DP/2023/28).

UNFPA segment

Statement by the Executive Director

37. In her opening remarks (available on the UNFPA website),³ the Executive Director stressed partnerships as crucial to achieving global goals for women and girls. Investments that made the greatest, most lasting contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals included the three transformative results of UNFPA: zero unmet need for family planning; zero preventable maternal deaths; and zero violence and harmful practices against women and girls. These were fundamental to sexual and reproductive health and human rights and well-being – and were at the heart of the work of UNFPA. Investment in sexual and reproductive health and rights had multiplier effects across all aspects of sustainable development. Family planning, for example, had long been considered a “best buy” for global development. UNFPA estimated that spending an additional \$79 billion on ending the unmet need for family planning and preventable maternal deaths in low- and middle-income countries between 2022 and 2030 would avert 400 million unplanned pregnancies, save the lives of 1 million women and generate \$660 billion in economic benefits.

38. Sexual and reproductive health were the foundation for gender equality, on which all Sustainable Development Goals depended, she continued. Yet powerful opposition to women’s rights was well-organized and well-financed, threatening to reverse hard-won gains. It was vital to be just as bold, organized and unrelenting as those seeking to roll back the clock, discarding divisions to come together in the spirit of international cooperation and solidarity. The 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was a moment to find common ground for a common future. She described how UNFPA was bringing data and evidence to bear in pursuing equity and justice. Further, transformational national data partnerships could unlock a powerful “data dividend” conservatively estimated to bring in \$32 for every \$1 invested.

39. UNFPA was making every effort to manage risk effectively and resources wisely and draw on evaluative evidence, she said. More investments were urgently needed to reach the “three zeros.” UNFPA was exploring innovative financing to scale up investments, including through impact bonds linked to adolescent sexual and reproductive health. With strong evidence of what worked, it was time to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals and the ICPD Programme of Action by standing up for the rights and freedoms of women and girls.

³ See <https://www.unfpa.org/events/executive-board-undp-unfpa-and-unops-second-regular-session-2023>.

40. The Regional Director, Arab States, described another challenging year marked by natural disasters, conflict and protracted crises, and stressed the importance of resilience and investing in empowering women and girls. In Yemen, for example, UNFPA has supported 620,000 women and girls to access reproductive health services, 56,000 to have safe deliveries and 236,000 to gain services to mitigate and respond to gender-based violence, laying foundations for longer-term recovery. In a region with significant resources and vibrant young populations, investment in young people and women would unlock demographic assets and lead to a better future for all.

41. Delegations referred to the SDG Summit as an opportunity to accelerate momentum around the three transformative results of the UNFPA Strategic Plan. The 30th anniversary of the ICPD was a critical moment to accelerate the delivery of its promises. It was essential to adhere to funding compact principles to ensure predictable funding. Given gaps in concessional financing, partnerships with international financial institutions could generate more resources for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Mobilizing domestic resources would also contribute to achieving the three zeros. South-South and triangular cooperation could open further opportunities for innovation.

42. A group of delegations commended UNFPA for enhancing the effectiveness of resource allocations and supporting struggling communities. Transparent, effective funding frameworks should channel resources where needed most and ensure that plentiful human and natural resources become engines of a prosperous, sustainable world. They pointed to the transformative dividends of investment in sexual and reproductive health in realizing all Sustainable Development Goals. They appreciated the emphasis on data and invited other Member States to support these efforts. There was a rich tapestry of perspectives but restricting development finance based on these would widen gaps in multilateralism. The funding dialogue should be reframed to reflect an unwavering commitment to ambition, effectiveness, sustainability, equity and respect.

43. A group of delegations referred to regrettable polarization, pushback and barriers to progress, including climate change and persistent conflict. UNFPA had a vital mandate for important work that must continue. It should invest in high-impact, evidence-based solutions, such as expanding the midwifery workforce, and pursue gender-transformative approaches. The ICPD anniversary offered a significant milestone to reinvigorate work on fulfilling past commitments and creating a world where all people could exercise their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

44. Another group of delegations expressed appreciation to UNFPA for its close work with partner governments, other stakeholders and United Nations entities, which amplified its impact and demonstrated a collaborative spirit. UNFPA had noteworthy funding achievements, including high expenditure on reducing sexual and gender-based violence and other harmful practices. However, significant investment gaps remained on the three transformative goals. More collective efforts were needed to ensure that UNFPA had sufficient, high-quality resources and it was suggested that UNFPA link resources and substantive results more clearly in reporting.

45. In individual interventions, delegations stressed the importance of regional reviews before the ICPD anniversary to assess progress, provide tailor-made solutions and further strengthen links to the 2030 Agenda. The review process could open new opportunities for building consensus and cooperation. Delegations commended UNFPA for scaling up its humanitarian response and strengthening resilient health systems and urged renewed focus on normative change and the social determinants of health. They appreciated an emphasis on tackling the root causes of gender-based violence but stressed that the phenomenon continued to grow, including through technology. They congratulated UNFPA for a healthy resource picture but noted

challenges, and underlined innovative financing, domestic resource mobilization, a broader donor base and efforts to redress the imbalance in regular resources as central to fulfilling normative functions and providing fundamental services. They noted the value of prudent approaches to budget management and emphasized robust forecasting and a long-term strategic approach.

46. In response, the Executive Director pointed to the organization's move from funding to financing, and its work with partners to leverage both their resources and influence in society. UNFPA has made strides in innovation and advancing the normative agenda. Progress on domestic finance included family planning commitments with 43 governments. As part of the universal health coverage movement, UNFPA was engaging governments to dedicate greater domestic resources to health systems and sexual and reproductive health services. It continued to work with the international financial institutions. On South-South and triangular cooperation, UNFPA was collaborating with at least 130 countries on improved data, surgical skills for obstetric fistula and other issues.

47. The Executive Director called on Member States to engage in the ICPD anniversary, noting opportunities for sharing experiences at a time of demographic shifts. The anniversary was a chance to embrace people-centred development, with an emphasis on reducing polarization and helping countries adapt to changing realities such as burgeoning youth and ageing populations. Noting that population was about people, not just numbers, she said UNFPA focused on policy approaches, data and evidence, technical guidance and reaching marginalized groups. Gender-based violence required continuous and new actions, with UNFPA engaging with men and on positive masculinities, for example, and working towards zero rapes in conflict. She pointed to improved forecasting abilities, including through new artificial intelligence applications.

48. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) described the UNFPA youth and disability strategies. The Deputy Executive Director (Management) indicated a significant jump in humanitarian activities, with funding up by 150 per cent since 2018. Yet in some emergencies, appeals continued to fall short. UNFPA was improving preparedness for humanitarian crises, particularly by reorganizing its humanitarian response programme, updating standard operating procedures and repositioning supplies.

Interactive dialogue

49. The President of the Executive Board introduced the interactive dialogue on addressing gender-based violence in a digital world, saying that while digital technology offered enormous potential, it also presented new spaces for the subjugation of women and girls. Addressing these concerns was crucial to upholding rights and choices.

50. The Executive Director recounted stories of women tracked through technologies by violent partners or chased from political leadership positions by online campaigns of abuse. With two in five women subjected to online violence, the issue demanded urgent action; UNFPA was stepping up with partners in more than 150 countries and territories. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence affected broader work on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

51. A representative of the Association for Progressive Communications stated that technology could increase participation and access to information and offered new tools for mobilization and activism. Yet technology-facilitated gender-based violence contributed to making societies less peaceful and less democratic. It was both a cause and effect of gender inequality. Some subgroups at heightened risk included young women and girls, women in public life, racial and other minorities, migrants and

people with disabilities. Gender-based violence occurs across an online and offline continuum with the same root causes. Women must participate in creating technology and the laws and policies regulating it; the United Nations had a key role in discussing principles to guide the Internet and standards.

52. The representative of another non-governmental organization, Derechos Digitalis, emphasized that combating technology-facilitated gender-based violence requires multiple measures and the strengthening of institutional responses, legal and non-legal. States have obligations under human rights laws. Legislation needs to be rights-based. Some efforts have mainly focused on broad criminal statutes that were ineffective and could put victims at greater risk. Legal responses should take a human rights-based, survivor-centric, intersectional perspective; consider the range of criminalization and investigative powers; and uphold the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality.

53. The UNFPA technical adviser on gender-based violence described how technology had broken down barriers and increased access to high-quality services and information. However, misuse and poor design meant that technology had also reinforced and deepened inequalities and harmful norms. UNFPA integrated work on technology-facilitated gender-based violence across its broader programme on gender-based violence to meet the needs of survivors of violence in all spaces and contexts. It worked to increase the digital literacy of practitioners and decision makers to better understand the effects of technology and the ways in which it could facilitate the perpetration of violence; to strengthen response mechanisms; and continue to work to transform harmful gender and social norms to prevent the perpetration of violence through technology. UNFPA supported data governance mechanisms to ensure transparency and data protection; and standard-setting in technology design, rights-based laws and policies and protection and redress for survivors. It brought together feminists, youth, digital rights advocates, academia and business and technology actors to respond to the multiple dimensions of technology-facilitated violence.

54. Delegations repeatedly thanked UNFPA for its leadership on technology-facilitated gender-based violence. They expressed support for the “bodyright” campaign and welcomed the guidance on the safe and ethical use of technology. They regretted that online gender-based violence continued to be seen as less serious than violence offline. They stressed the importance of the global digital compact, the urgent need for digital entities to commit to preventing and correcting technology-facilitated violence, and for working with industry on a safer digital ecosystem and innovative technological solutions. Gender equality and non-discrimination principles should be embedded in every aspect of the design and development of new technologies. More should be done to prevent gender-based violence and bring perpetrators to justice. They asked about synergies between UNFPA and other United Nations organizations in combating technology-facilitated gender-based violence and gathering data and statistics.

55. The panellists underscored that gender should be a key consideration in the global digital compact. They pointed to tools to combat technology-facilitated violence, noting that many such tools still do not work in languages beyond English. With young people the highest users of technology and facing increased risks, UNFPA has integrated technology into comprehensive sexuality education and worked with youth to design technologies that are user-friendly, safe and ethical.

56. In conclusion, the UNFPA Executive Director stressed the organization’s important convening role and commitment to creating inclusive and safe spaces for debate and action, bringing together diverse stakeholders.

IV. Structured funding dialogue

57. The Deputy Executive Director (Management) and the Director, Division of Communication and Strategic Partnerships, presented the report on the structured funding dialogue, 2022–2023 (DP/FPA/2023/8), in response to General Assembly resolution 75/233, to further improve the functioning and effectiveness of structured dialogues on how to fund the development results agreed in the strategic plans, including through the implementation of the United Nations funding compact commitments.

58. A group of delegations stressed that unearmarked, multi-year contributions were key; decreasing contributions to regular resources was a great concern, especially amid negative trends in the Sustainable Development Goals. UNFPA had to respond to crises, provide high-quality support and essential services, uphold its normative mandate and have sound fiduciary, oversight and management functions. It was important to implement the funding compact. The group appreciated the initial steps to better report on results achieved using regular resources as it was increasingly difficult to advocate for unearmarked resources. The group emphasized moving beyond the same discussions to find solutions to improve funding quality and predictability.

59. Delegations stressed that UNFPA had maintained a strong financial position. It was among the United Nations entities with the highest portions of other resources from pooled funds and joint activities, although there were some concerns related to decreased expenditure on joint activities. They commended a diversified resource mobilization strategy involving the international financial institutions, the private sector and domestic resources.

60. The Deputy Executive Director (Management) said there had been progress on increasing the visibility of regular resources-financed results, including through dedicated communications. UNFPA remained keenly aware that all results depended on regular resources funding for institutional robustness, knowledge and core competencies. UNFPA was actively campaigning to expand its diverse regular resources donor base from 100 to 150 members. Every dollar counted as did the political signal from broad support.

61. The Director, Division of Communication and Strategic Partnerships cited improved visibility at the country level for results from regular and other resources through work with regional directors and country offices. The UNFPA strategic investment fund provided regular resource funding to catalyse new resources and partnerships. Innovative financing such as development impact bonds depended on regular resource funding to get started.

62. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/21 on the report on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue, 2022–2023.

V. Country programmes and related matters

63. Following an overview by the Deputy Executive Director (Programme) and introductions by the regional directors for the Arab States, East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa, the Executive Board approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the UNFPA country programme documents for Angola (DP/FPA/CPD/AGO/9), Benin (DP/FPA/CPD/BEN/10), Burundi (DP/FPA/CPD/BDI/9), Chad (DP/FPA/CPD/TCD/8), Equatorial Guinea (DP/FPA/CPD/GNQ/8), Lesotho (DP/FPA/CPD/LSO/8), Libya (DP/FPA/CPD/LBY/2), Malawi (DP/FPA/CPD/MWI/9),

Mauritania ([DP/FPA/CPD/MTR/9](#)), Senegal ([DP/FPA/CPD/SEN/9](#)) and Togo ([DP/FPA/CPD/TGO/8](#)).

64. The Board also took note of the first one-year extension of the country programme for Sierra Leone as approved by the Executive Director and approved the second one-year extension of the country programme for Myanmar, the third, two-year extension of the country programme for Burkina Faso, the third one-year extension of the country programme for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the fourth, two-year extension of the country programme for Afghanistan ([DP/FPA/2023/9](#)).

UNOPS segment

VI. United Nations Office for Project Services

Statement by the Executive Director

65. In his opening remarks (available on the UNOPS website),⁴ the Executive Director said that despite challenges, the reform journey was progressing well. More than half of actions in the comprehensive response plan were complete; the majority of outstanding actions should be concluded by the end of 2023. Remaining items were longer-term, including a business transformation and digitalization programme to fundamentally change how UNOPS operates. A third-party culture assessment was nearly finished as the baseline for a renewed organizational culture. He proposed mainstreaming these changes within the implementation time frame of the renewed Strategic Plan. UNOPS had clarified its demand-side role in enabling financing for development, which would involve no new activities, and the former Sustainable Investments in Infrastructure and Innovation (S3i) office in Helsinki, Finland would close by the end of 2023. He recognized the trust placed in UNOPS, vowing not to take it for granted.

66. Actions to achieve the objectives of the newly endorsed UNOPS Strategic Plan were under way. Internal coordination would be key along with measuring the impact of services under the expanded results framework. Dedicated structures at the highest levels were being established to focus expertise and drive contributions to the objectives of the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda. The process of appointing two Deputy Executive Directors was in motion. Demand for support remained strong, with recent agreements on 60 new projects and extended existing agreements on a further 90 projects in over 60 locations.

67. The Executive Director presented the UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium, 2024–2025 ([DP/OPS/2023/7](#)) and the findings of the annual statistical report on United Nations procurement ([DP/OPS/2023/9](#)).

68. Delegations said that UNOPS had gone through a year of steadying the ship and charting a path forward. The Executive Board had endorsed the revised Strategic Plan and provided guidance on the future of S3i, the comprehensive response plan and the UNOPS reserves. It had requested UNOPS to distribute all excess reserves accumulated after 31 December 2021, and to propose a methodology and time frame for distributing excess reserves accumulated during this budget period. In exercising its mandate, the Board found compromise by focusing on an institutionally and culturally reformed UNOPS, adequate redress for the S3i case, accountability for those culpable and a path forward. UNOPS cooperation, responsiveness, the speed of reforms and steady management were critical.

69. On the comprehensive response plan, delegations urged implementation of lagging areas, particularly governance and management. They recognized the

⁴ See <https://www.unops.org/statement-to-the-second-regular-session-of-the-executive-board-2023>.

inability of UNOPS to absorb an \$11.8 million tranche and its request to carry over parts to the next biennium. UNOPS had made commendable efforts to distribute excess reserves with up to 41 per cent refunded to paying entities, and urged UNOPS to continue to accelerate this process. They took note of the proposed methodology for the distribution of reserves for the 2022–2023 biennium and urged UNOPS to make data related to its progress in fee generation and refunds available on public platforms. On the budget estimates for 2022–2025, they acknowledged increased management costs and fees and emphasized the importance of net-zero revenues. They emphasized the importance of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and stated that the Board would act as deemed fit. Finally, they reiterated the need for UNOPS to report to the Board whenever possible on the ongoing process of recovering S3i funds and holding perpetrators accountable.

70. A group of delegations applauded the determination of the UNOPS workforce in the face of internal and global challenges; appreciated positive strides in reforms; and underlined the importance of a non-programmatic, demand-driven mandate anchored in United Nations values and norms. It was imperative to focus the UNOPS portfolio on mandated areas of infrastructure, procurement and project management services where it had valuable knowledge and experience, and expertise was needed. Since the S3i and management crisis had highlighted major structural deficiencies that would shape engagement priorities for some time, clarity and transparency around finances and decision-making were key to rebuilding trust, along with achieving zero net revenue. The group appreciated the focus on a safe, inclusive, responsive organizational culture, recognizing that cultural change required consistent, dedicated, long-term efforts. It welcomed progress on the comprehensive response plan but called for accelerated action to complete it.

71. A group of delegations said that UNOPS remained a critical partner in expanding implementation capacity to achieve development aspirations and commended decisions to renew this focus. These delegations emphasized the importance of updates to the comprehensive response plan, implementation of the 2021 recommendations of the Board of Auditors and the distribution of excess reserves. Appreciating the pace of change and commitment in line with agreed timelines, they took note of progress on monthly briefings and encouraged a third-party review at the end of the response plan. They welcomed the measures in the Strategic Plan to mitigate strategic risks as well as more information on strategic internal investment and digital transformation. On the annual statistical report ([DP/OPS/2023/9](#)), they welcomed a 19 per cent increase in procurement from the least developed countries and encouraged a continued expansion in procurement from developing countries.

72. Delegations endorsed a renewed focus on the core mandate of UNOPS. They appreciated efforts to show how UNOPS contributed to the 2030 Agenda through implementation for partners, and how it was realigned with United Nations norms and values. Positive steps to address major deficiencies included the independence of the ethics office and of the internal audit and investigations group. The Board needed assurances on implementation of the comprehensive response plan; and governance, risk management and internal controls must be fully satisfactory. UNOPS should not expand outside its core mandate, including in financing for development. They asked for clarity on challenges in implementing the response plan and on what UNOPS would do and not do vis-à-vis its original mandate, including in terms of the Strategic Plan requirement for a clear Executive Board mandate to guide work on financing for development.

73. The Executive Director replied that UNOPS had a deep commitment to deliver everything in the comprehensive response plan and go beyond it, with a management review of additional reforms under way. The reform agenda did not end with the response plan. UNOPS has no sense of complacency or expectation that delegations

would immediately go back to normal engagement. Some members had already lifted UNOPS from the suspension list; he hoped that all would do so, recognizing that this depended on remaining accountable, transparent and committed to reforms.

74. On financing for development, UNOPS had learned from past mistakes and would not engage on impact investment, blended finance, de-risking investment or any other activity on the supply side. It had communicated its work on the demand side to be transparent and accountable because even though this was an existing area of work, it involved a reputational issue. UNOPS provided technical assistance on the demand side and had tried to outline this in practical terms; a monthly meeting could be organized to share more details. He stressed the importance of an enabling context for finance and how UNOPS often had a clear understanding of bankable projects, which helped to design projects that could be funded by others. He reiterated that UNOPS expanded partners' capacity for implementation based on their requests.

Interactive dialogue

75. The President of the Executive Board introduced an integrated dialogue on infrastructure for energy: pathways towards a just, green and resilient transition.

76. The Executive Director said that there were huge gaps in progress under Sustainable Development Goal 7, on affordable and clean energy. One in three people, mostly in the poorest regions, still lacked clean cooking facilities. In 2021, almost 700 million people had no electricity, largely in sub-Saharan Africa. This had serious consequences across the Goals. The question was not whether but how to provide access to energy for all, and to transition from fossil fuels in a just and equitable way while sustaining jobs and economic opportunities. Progress was moving faster in parts of the energy system like electricity generation; the pace was slower for transport and industry, heating and cooling. While developing countries needed \$1.7 trillion in renewable energy investment annually, they had attracted just \$500 billion in 2022. Only 3 per cent of energy investments worldwide went to Africa even though it had 60 per cent of the best solar resources. Infrastructure was key to the energy transition and at the core of the UNOPS mandate, along with technical assistance to make renewable energy projects more bankable so that demand met supply.

77. A speaker described how her country's energy transition had started in the 1970s when it invested heavily in renewable sources. Today, 99.4 per cent of the population had access to electricity, which was 100 per cent renewable for 300 days per year. This achievement was due to enlightened leadership, a national sense of ownership, strong institutions and foresight. Globally, the transition required investments, public-private partnerships and alignment with the international financial institutions; having UNOPS as a connector and enabler would help many countries make this shift. Member States had a responsibility to ensure that projects were financially viable and attractive to investors; they should closely examine what they were doing to fulfil climate and Sustainable Development Goals commitments.

78. Another delegation expressed appreciation for the dialogue's understanding of the centrality of energy to all Goals and its emphasis on Africa. Continuous movement towards cleaner energy was the only viable path. Countries should help each other to reduce harm to the environment, the sooner the better, while respecting the diverse realities in which people lived. Africa's two most important problems, poverty and climate, were both connected to energy; every effort was needed to get the mix right. Towards that end, he welcomed exchanges of knowledge and experiences with other countries. A just transition implied not relying only on market forces as otherwise major inequalities could result.

79. A speaker described how her country had proposed hydrogen and ammonia-based energy technologies for energy security, economic efficiency and lower

environmental impact. The country had launched its first hydrogen strategy in 2017 and focused on accelerating supply chains. Other important initiatives were thermopower technologies, carbon capture and storage, and carbon capture utilization and storage. There must be realistic pathways to transition suitable to each country's situation, and UNOPS, in cooperation with United Nations partners, should develop studies tailored to country situations. Her country had tried to show what was possible and was investing domestically and internationally, with an emphasis on investment, not assistance, since the returns would benefit everyone.

80. Another speaker said that small island developing States were scaling up mitigation with ambitious targets, such as 100 per cent renewables by 2025 in Samoa. Technology should be accessible to all vulnerable States; consultations were crucial for national ownership. UNOPS in particular could work with national governments on operationalizing projects. Talk about a just transition should centre on what countries were transitioning, since even if all 39 members of the Alliance of Small Island States went to 100 per cent renewables by 2025, the needle would not move. The biggest economies with lower levels of renewable energy needed to be most ambitious. Small island developing States needed partners because for them, climate change was an issue of survival.

81. Delegations said that people-centred approaches and clean energy were terms backed by international consensus, but this was not the case for renewable energy. Many people did not have access to renewable energy even as they needed electricity today. Delegations asked where UNOPS saw its niche and competitive advantage in work on energy, and if it had learned from evaluating past work in the face of accelerating demand. Given significant support required for national energy ambitious, they asked about stakeholder coordination and synergy, and suggested that UNOPS promote South-South cooperation. They commended the enhanced implementation capacity of the United Nations towards transition and underscored coordination with UN-Energy. UNOPS added value through its expertise in infrastructure and project services and should continue to assess this to retain focus on its original mandate.

82. The Executive Director said that increasing demand for clean energy came from partners. UNOPS did not design national strategies or provide finance but knew how to implement projects originated by others. In some cases, it provided technical assistance in designing high-quality, bankable projects. UNOPS worked in highly fragile contexts that were not a priority for the private sector. Even if policies, national will and funding were in place, they still needed quality infrastructure and technical capacity. All countries should be able to decide their options and have implementation capacity and resources. He announced that UNOPS planned to join UN Energy and was working on clean energy procurement and a catalogue of renewable energy solutions where procurement played a fundamental role.

83. In closing, the Executive Director said that UNOPS had reviewed all projects and its new enhanced evaluation framework would go further in gauging impact. UNOPS had shown a willingness to implement projects in collaboration; other organizations had demonstrated a willingness to get the best expertise from UNOPS on clean energy.

84. The President of the Executive Board concluded the integrated dialogue by encouraging UNOPS to continue bringing forward concrete examples of its contributions.

85. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/22 on UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium 2024–2025; decision 2023/23 on the comprehensive response plan in response to the recommendations of the two independent third-party reviews on UNOPS; and decision 2023/24 on the annual statistical report on the procurement activities of United Nations system organizations, 2022.

Annex I**Decisions adopted by the Executive Board during 2023****Contents****First regular session 2023
(30 January to 3 February 2023)**

<i>Number</i>		<i>Page</i>
2023/1	Reports of UNDP, UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2021	68
2023/2	UNDP evaluation.	69
2023/3	Report of the working group on UNOPS	69
2023/4	UNOPS update on the implementation of the comprehensive response plan, use of reserve and impact investments in UNOPS	70
2023/5	Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session 2023	72

**Annual session 2023
(5 to 9 June 2023)**

2023/6	Update on the implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system	75
2023/7	Reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on internal audit and investigation, and management responses	76
2023/8	Reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS.	78
2023/9	Joint update on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment	78
2023/10	Report of the UNDP Administrator on results for 2022 and progress on the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.	79
2023/11	UNDP evaluation.	80
2023/12	Report on results achieved by UNCDF in 2022.	81
2023/13	United Nations Volunteers programme: Annual report of the Administrator	82
2023/14	UNFPA: Annual report of the Executive Director	82
2023/15	UNFPA evaluation.	83
2023/16	Early midterm review of the UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, including the annual report of the Executive Director for 2022, and UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, restated	83
2023/17	Comprehensive response plan in response to the recommendations of the two independent third-party reviews on UNOPS	84
2023/18	UNOPS distribution to paying entities, including those of the United Nations system, of excess reserves accumulated after 31 December 2021	84
2023/19	Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its annual session 2023	85

**Second regular session 2023
(28 to 31 August 2023)**

2023/20	Structured funding dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022–2025	88
2023/21	Report on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue, 2022–2023	89
2023/22	UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium 2024–2025	90
2023/23	Comprehensive response plan in response to the recommendations of the two independent third-party reviews on UNOPS	91
2023/24	Annual statistical report on the procurement activities of United Nations system organizations, 2022	93
2023/25	Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its second regular session 2023 . . .	93

2023/1

Reports of UNDP, UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, 2021

The Executive Board

1. *Notes* the unqualified audit opinions on UNDP, UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS issued by the United Nations Board of Auditors for 2021;
2. *Acknowledges* the progress made by UNDP, UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS in implementing the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, and supports the ongoing efforts of UNDP, UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS management to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors;
3. *Calls on* UNDP, UNCDF, UNFPA and UNOPS to state the impacts of implemented recommendations, including on organizational culture, in its reporting on audit recommendations;

With regard to UNDP:

4. *Takes note* of the UNDP commitment to integrate the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, in accordance with its financial regulations and rules, in its new procurement strategy, and takes note of the UNDP commitment to make this strategy publicly available to ensure full transparency;
5. *Requests* UNDP to continue assessing matters which may affect the implementation of the general procurement principles (i.e., best value for money, fairness, integrity and transparency, effective international competition, the interest of UNDP) outlined in the UNDP financial regulations and rules;
6. *Notes* that audit findings and recommendations regarding the UNDP system of financial internal control is a recurring area in Board of Auditors reports over the last years and that the Board of Auditors has chosen to reiterate a recommendation from 2018 regarding the need for enhancing this, and calls on UNDP to increase its focus on measures targeted towards strengthening the systems for financial internal control;
7. *Takes note* of the long-standing Board of Auditors recommendations concerning fraud prevention and welcomes the recent achievements of UNDP in addressing these while also encouraging UNDP to continue its efforts to strengthen this area;

With regard to UNFPA:

8. *Acknowledges* the high rate of implementation of recommendations by UNFPA in the last three consecutive years;

With regard to UNOPS:

9. *Notes with serious concern* the “emphasis of matter” issued by the Board of Auditors for 2021 related to the sustainable investments in infrastructure and innovation (S3i) initiative and urges UNOPS to accelerate the implementation of all recommendations contained in the report;
10. *Notes with concern* the finding regarding weaknesses in decision-making, management and internal controls related to the projects “We are the Oceans” and “Ocean Generation”, and strongly encourages UNOPS to establish a compliance and accountability mechanism to avoid the recurrence of such issues;
11. *Notes* the Board of Auditors recommendation regarding the high use of individual contractor agreements and encourages UNOPS to ensure that all positions that entail “inherently United Nations activities” are filled with staff members and to limit the use of individual contractor agreement to the greatest extent possible.

3 February 2023

2023/2**UNDP evaluation***The Executive Board*

With regard to the formative evaluation of the integration by UNDP of the principles of leaving no one behind (DP/2023/8) and the management response thereto (DP/2023/9):

1. *Takes note* of the formative evaluation of the integration by UNDP of the principles of leaving no one behind and the management response;
2. *Welcomes* the formative nature of the evaluation and its findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons, acknowledging the important role and contribution of UNDP to leaving no one behind;
3. *Urges* UNDP to accelerate further action on reaching the furthest behind first, advancing a systems-thinking approach and strengthening intersectionality;
4. *Requests* UNDP to continue developing evidence-based guidance and tools to enhance staff capacity through the development of intersectional approaches when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating development programmes;
5. *Urges* UNDP to further advocate the leaving no one behind agenda on forward-looking approaches for advancing equity, equality and non-discrimination, including through intersectionality;
6. *Urges* UNDP to expand its partnerships with non-governmental actors, in support of the delivery of the UNDP country programmes and of the UNDP Strategic Plan, particularly at the country level;
7. *Urges* UNDP to further consider the integration of the principles of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first in its resource mobilization strategies and resource allocation, bearing in mind multidimensional criteria, while recognizing that adequate, flexible and predictable funding enables UNDP to integrate those principles in its programmatic work in a more cohesive and balanced manner.

3 February 2023

2023/3**Report of the working group on UNOPS***The Executive Board*

1. *Recalls* its decision 2022/13 on the annual report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the sustainable investments in infrastructure and innovation (S3i) reserve;
2. *Welcomes* the report of the working group formed in response to decision 2022/13 (DP/OPS/2023/2) and expresses appreciation to the members of the working group for their timely and detailed report;
3. *Takes note* of the reactions of the working group in response to the KPMG recommendations contained in the report and reiterates its decision 2022/24 on the two KPMG third-party reviews;
4. *Recalls* decisions 2022/13 and 2022/24 and welcomes the cooperation between the working group and UNOPS management;

5. *Reaffirms* decision 2022/24, paragraph 11, on the need for further consideration by the Executive Board of the recommendations from the KPMG third-party reviews on UNOPS governance structure, addressed to the Executive Board;
6. *Decides* to dissolve the working group, established by the Executive Board in its decision 2022/13, paragraph 10.

3 February 2023

2023/4

UNOPS update on the implementation of the comprehensive response plan, use of reserve and impact investments in UNOPS

The Executive Board

With regard to restating the UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, and road map for the midterm review+ process:

1. *Takes note* of the information note DP/OPS/2023/CRP.2, the framework for restating the UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, including a road map for the midterm review+ process;
2. *Requests* that UNOPS proceed with preparations for a midterm review+ and restated Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, in accordance with its proposal as contained in the information note;

With regard to issues concerning the future of S3i and impact investing and blended finance by UNOPS:

3. *Takes note* of the information note DP/OPS/2023/CRP.1 on UNOPS role in blended and impact financing, as requested in decision 2022/24;
4. *Requests* that UNOPS organize an informal briefing in hybrid format, before the informal consultation with the Executive Board on the midterm review+ process, at the latest by the end of February 2023, to provide further information on existing elements of innovative, blended and impact finance in UNOPS portfolio based on the multifaceted portfolio analysis, and on the current organizational capacity;
5. *Welcomes* UNOPS implementation of Board decision 2022/24 to disengage from any direct impact investment finance and underlines the need to refocus on UNOPS original mandate, providing technical expertise in infrastructure, procurement and project management;
6. *Reaffirms* and *emphasizes* that UNOPS does not have a programmatic mandate and is a demand-driven United Nations entity providing infrastructure, procurement and project management services as its original mandate;
7. *Discourages* UNOPS from initiating any new initiative in the area of innovative, blended or impact financing pending the approval of the restated Strategic Plan, 2022–2025;
8. *Requests* that UNOPS management implement all outstanding S3i-related recommendations and actions contained in the comprehensive response plan without delay and work towards completely phasing out the S3i initiative;

With regard to the comprehensive response plan:

9. *Welcomes* the comprehensive response plan in response to the recommendations of the two KPMG independent third-party reviews as presented in a publicly accessible online monitoring platform, in line with decision 2022/24;
10. *Further requests* that UNOPS update its comprehensive response plan elaborating on the prioritization, timelines of implementation, and costing of all outstanding action items, and reflect this in the online monitoring tool, and inform the Executive Board when this has been completed in the monthly update briefings;

11. *Recalls* decision 2022/24 to provide monthly briefings on the status of the implementation of Executive Board decisions and the recommendations of the KPMG reviews to the Executive Board until the annual session 2023, and further requests that UNOPS extend monthly briefings until the first regular session 2024;

12. *Decides* to include an item for decision on the comprehensive response plan on the agenda of every session of the Board throughout the duration of the implementation period;

13. *Recalls* its decisions 2022/21 and 2022/24 requesting that UNOPS take all measures necessary within its remit to recover all funds, and ensure full accountability, including individual accountability, in accordance with United Nations staff regulations and rules, and further requests that UNOPS provide the Executive Board by the annual session 2023, including potentially through confidential briefings, with any additional available information about progress and the costs associated with the recovery of S3i-related funds;

With regard to UNOPS reserves and use thereof:

14. *Recalls* decision 2022/13 to freeze all transfers out of the operational reserve for any purpose other than daily operations;

15. *Reaffirms* that all necessary organizational investment requirements and other expenses required to keep UNOPS fit-for-purpose should be included in the financial biennium that is approved by the Executive Board;

16. *Requests* that going forward UNOPS set its fees to ensure it has the financial means required to maintain the minimum operational reserve level and make any organizational investment, as per the biennial budget estimates, while eliminating any accumulation of reserves over and above the minimum operational reserve, and in this regard requests an informal briefing before the annual session 2023 on adjustments made to the UNOPS cost recovery model;

17. *Decides* to approve the allocation of a maximum sum of \$35.4 million to be distributed in tranches to UNOPS from the operational reserve towards the implementation of defined elements of the comprehensive response plan, and as detailed in the UNOPS financial outlook for 2023;

18. *Approves* one immediate single transfer of \$11.8 million, of the maximum sum of \$35.4 million, out of the operational reserve into the UNOPS budget to allow for the initial implementation of defined elements of the comprehensive response plan, and as detailed in the UNOPS financial outlook for 2023, for which no resources are available in the existing 2023 regular budget;

19. *Decides* to release subsequent tranches at the request of UNOPS, at a formal session in 2023, contingent upon demonstrated progress in implementing the comprehensive response plan and the provision of information on how the previous tranche was utilized;

20. *Further requests* that UNOPS provide the Executive Board with detailed information on the timelines of anticipated and actual expenditures, progress of implementation, and results achieved with these expenditures during the monthly update briefings to the Executive Board as well as during the updates to the Executive Board requested in paragraph 11 of this decision;

21. *Decides* that UNOPS distribute to paying entities, including those of the United Nations system, its excess reserves, defined as total accumulated reserves minus the minimum operational reserve, as established by the Executive Board in its decision 2021/21;

22. *Requests* that UNOPS distribute without delay its excess reserves accumulated as of 31 December 2021, minus \$35.4 million, to each paying entity, including those of the United Nations system, based on the management fees generated from each

paying entity as a proportional share of total management fees received by UNOPS from 1 January 2018 through 31 December 2021 (four calendar years);

23. *Directs* UNOPS to proceed with the request in paragraph 22 with the understanding that total accumulated reserves as of 31 December 2021 minus the minimum operational reserve and minus \$35.4 million would be fully distributed;

24. *Decides* to take a decision at the annual session 2023 on the distribution to paying entities, including those of the United Nations system, of excess reserves accumulated after 31 December 2021, on the basis of additional information provided by UNOPS in its monthly update briefings or as requested by the Executive Board, including the Bureau of the Board.

3 February 2023

2023/5

Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session 2023

The Executive Board

Recalls that during its first regular session 2023, it:

Item 1

Organizational matters

Elected on 10 January 2023 the following members of the Bureau for 2023:

President: H.E. Mr. Martin Kimani (Kenya)

Vice-President: H.E. Mr. Muhammad Muhith (Bangladesh)

Vice-President: H.E. Ms. Maritza Chan (Costa Rica)

Vice-President: H.E. Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya (Ukraine)

Vice-President: H.E. Mr. Feridun Sinirlioğlu (Türkiye)

Adopted the agenda ([DP/2023/L.1](#)) and approved the workplan for its first regular session 2023;

Approved the report of the second regular session 2022 ([DP/2023/1](#)) and the special session 2022 ([DP/2023/2](#));

Adopted the annual workplan of the Executive Board for 2023 ([DP/2023/CRP.1](#));

Approved the tentative workplan for the annual session 2023;

Agreed to the following schedule for the remaining sessions of the Executive Board in 2023:

Annual session: 5 to 9 June 2023

Second regular session: 28 August to 1 September 2023.

Joint segment

Item 2

Update on UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS engagement with the international financial institutions

Took note of the update on UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS engagement with the international financial institutions

Item 3
Recommendations of the Board of Auditors

Adopted decision 2023/1 on the recommendations of the Board of Auditors reports of UNDP (DP/2023/5), UNCDF (DP/2023/6), UNFPA (DP/FPA/2023/1) and UNOPS (DP/OPS/2023/1) on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors for 2022;

Item 4
Follow-up to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board meeting

Took note of the joint UNDP/UNFPA report on the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board (DP-FPA/2023/1);

Item 5
Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

Took note of the joint update on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment;

UNDP segment

Item 6
Human Development Report

Took note of an update by the secretariat on consultations on the Human Development Report;

Item 7
UNDP country programmes and related matters

Approved the following UNDP country programmes in accordance with decision 2014/7:

Africa: Cabo Verde (common country programme, DP/FPA-ICEF/CCPD/2023/CPV/1); Central African Republic (DP/DCP/CAF/5), Gabon (DP/DCP/GAB/4), Nigeria (DP/DCP/NGA/4), São Tomé and Príncipe (DP/DCP/STP/4);

Arab States: Algeria (DP/DCP/DZA/4), Lebanon (DP/DCP/LBN/3), Morocco (DP/DCP/MAR/4);

Asia-Pacific: Islamic Republic of Iran (DP/DCP/IRN/4); Nepal (DP/DCP/NPL/4); Pacific islands countries (multi-country programme, DP/DSP/PIC/3);

Latin America and the Caribbean: Plurinational State of Bolivia (DP/DCP/BOL/4); Costa Rica (DP/DCP/CRI/4); Dominican Republic (DP/DCP/DOM/4); Ecuador (DP/DCP/ECU/4 and Corr.1); Haiti (DP/DCP/HTI/4); Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (DP/DCP/VEN/3);

Took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programme for Mauritania (DP/2023/7) and the first six-month extension of the country programme for Chile (DP/2023/7/Add.1);

Approved the one-year extensions of the country programmes for Afghanistan, Brazil and Gambia from 1 January to 31 December 2023, the two-year extension of the country programme for Bahrain from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024, and the second six-month extension of the country programme for Papua New Guinea from 1 January to 31 December 2023 (DP/2023/7);

Item 8

UNDP evaluation

Adopted decision 2023/2 on the formative evaluation of the integration by UNDP of the principles of leaving no one behind (DP/2023/8) and the management response thereto (DP/2023/9);

UNFPA segment

Item 9

Evaluation

Took note of the formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system (DP/FPA/2023/CRP.1) and the management response to the evaluation.¹

Item 10

Country programmes and related matters

Approved the following UNFPA country programmes in accordance with decision 2014/7:

Arab States: Algeria (DP/FPA/CPD/DZA/7), Egypt (DP/FPA/CPD/EGY/11); Lebanon (DP/FPA/CPD/LBN/5), State of Palestine (DP/FPA/CPD/PSE/7);

Asia and the Pacific: Islamic Republic of Iran (DP/FPA/CPD/IRN/7); Nepal (DP/FPA/CPD/NPL/9); Pacific Island countries and territories (multi-country programme) (DP.FPA.CPD.PIC.7);

Latin America and the Caribbean: the Plurinational State of Bolivia (DP/FPA/CPD/BOL/7); Costa Rica (DP/FPA/CPD/CRI/6); Dominican Republic (DP/FPA/CPD/DOM/7); Ecuador (DP/FPA/CPD/ECU/8); Haiti (DP/FPA/CPD/HTI/7); and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (DP/FPA/CPD/VEN/4 and DP/FPA/CPD/VEN/4/Corr.1);

West and Central Africa: Cabo Verde (common country programme) (DP/FPA-ICEF/CCPD/2023/CPV/1); Central African Republic (DP/FPA/CPD/CAF.9); Gabon (DP/FPA/CPD/GAB/8); Nigeria (DP/FPA/CPD/NGA/9); Sao Tome and Principe (DP/FPA/CPD/STP/8);

Took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programme for Mauritania and Rwanda (DP/FPA/2023/2);

Approved the second extensions of the country programmes for Brazil, the Gambia and Papua New Guinea and the third extensions of the country programmes for Afghanistan and Libya (DP/FPA/2023/2).

UNOPS segment

Item 11

United Nations Office for Project Services

Adopted decision 2023/3 on the report of the working group on UNOPS (DP/OPS/2023/2);

Adopted decision 2023/4 on the UNOPS update on the implementation of the comprehensive response plan, use of reserve and impact investments in UNOPS;

¹ Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/board-documents/main-document/Management%20Response%20to%20UN%20Reform%20Evaluation%20-%2019%20December%202022.pdf>.

Item 12
Other matters

Heard an address by the Chairperson of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN-Women Staff Council.

3 February 2023

2023/6
Update on the implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the updates provided by UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) and related mandates on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system;
2. *Welcomes* the commitment of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to the United Nations development system repositioning and encourages UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to continue to work closely with other United Nations development system entities, under the leadership of the resident coordinators in the country, to support countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and national plans, needs and priorities;
3. *Recalls* its decision 2022/14 and requests UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to continue to implement General Assembly resolutions [72/279](#), [75/233](#) and [76/4](#) and to support the efforts of the United Nations development system in implementing related mandates;
4. *Calls on* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to strengthen efforts to implement the Management and Accountability Framework, notes the evolving nature of the Framework and calls on the organizations to share their experiences in implementing the Framework at all levels;
5. *Recalls* decision 2022/14 and requests UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to continue to include contributions of representatives at the country level and regional directors to the implementation of United Nations development system reform within existing reporting;
6. *Requests* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to report annually on the complete United Nations development system reform checklist as an annex to existing reporting on the implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system;
7. *Also requests* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to continue to strive for inter-agency harmonization of reporting on implementation efforts and results of the repositioning of the United Nations development system, including improved delivery of development programming at the country level;
8. *Recalls* decision 2022/14, stresses the importance of integrated solutions to address complex, multi-faceted challenges impacting achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and requests UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to strengthen collaboration in joint analysis, needs assessments, planning, including collective outcomes, and programme delivery, and update the Board within existing reporting mechanisms;

9. *Further requests* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to continue to update the Executive Board annually on their implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system and to include this as an item for decision during the annual session.

9 June 2023

2023/7

Reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on internal audit and investigation, and management responses

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the reports of the respective audit and investigation offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS (DP/2023/12; DP/FPA/2023/6; DP/OPS/2023/3), which have been harmonized with those of UNICEF and UN-Women, in line with Executive Board decision 2020/10, and the reports of the respective audit committees as well as the management responses hereto;
2. *Takes note* of the opinions of the audit and investigation functions on the adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and internal control elements of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS;
3. *Expresses* its continuing support for the internal audit and investigation functions of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS and reiterates the importance of their full independence and direct access to the Executive Board;
4. *Commends* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on their high rate of implementation of audit recommendations, and encourages ongoing focus on timely implementation and closure of recommendations;
5. *Recalls* decision 2022/22, paragraph 3, reiterates the importance of the full independence of the internal audit and investigation offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, and reaffirms the current practice that the offices comply with the standards of the International Professional Practice Framework by the Institute of Internal Auditors and the Uniform Principles and Guidelines for Investigation;
6. *Requests* that the audit and investigation offices proactively organize closed briefings to the Executive Board to share the annual workplan, the consolidated risk assessment and any updates and concerns related to budget and staffing;
7. *Recalls* decisions 2022/15 and 2022/22 on more regular closed briefings with audit and investigation offices on potential red flags, emerging risks and control issues, audit findings and the status of investigations, with due regard to confidentiality and privacy;
8. *Requests* the audit and investigation offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to further improve their reports by including substantive analysis of findings and providing an overview of strategic and systemic issues and trends in a dedicated section, and requests the audit and investigation offices to undertake a proactive approach in high-risk areas that are susceptible to fraud, corruption and other wrongdoing and to include a section on that topic in their annual reports;
9. *Requests* the UNDP Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee, the UNFPA Oversight Advisory Committee and the UNOPS Audit Advisory Committee to present their annual reports and key considerations to the Executive Board at the annual session, and encourages the management of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to consider gender balance and geographical representation in the composition of the committee membership;

10. *Recalls* Executive Board decision 2022/22 on the self-assessment of the independence of the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI), the UNFPA Office of Audit and Investigation Services (OAIS) and the UNOPS Internal Audit and Investigations Group (IAIG), requests UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to update the Executive Board in writing, at the second regular session 2023, on the status of implementation of the recommendations included in the self-assessment of the independence of the audit and investigation offices, and requests UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to provide explanations for any recommendations that have not been fully implemented or agreed to by management;

With regard to UNDP:

11. *Takes note* of the continued high number of audit recommendations related to programme management, procurement and financial management, including management of implementing partners, and encourages UNDP to take continued steps to address recurring recommendations;

12. *Requests* OAI to share with the Executive Board its implementation plan for the recommendations made by the Institute for Internal Auditors in the 2022 external quality assessment, following decision 2022/15, and report on progress on implementation;

With regard to UNFPA:

13. *Notes with concern* the increasing backlog of investigation cases, and requests OAIS to continue streamlining investigation procedures and to address the reduction of cases as a matter of high priority;

14. *Recognizes* the efforts of OAIS and UNFPA management in implementing the recommendations contained in the self-assessment by OAIS of its independence, as requested in Executive Board decision 2022/22;

With regard to UNOPS:

15. *Takes note* of IAIG compliance with international standards, as confirmed in an external quality assessment of its audit function;

16. *Welcomes* the progress made in strengthening IAIG and encourages UNOPS management to further ensure the independence of IAIG and to equip IAIG with all necessary resources to adequately perform its mandate;

17. *Urges* UNOPS management to take all necessary measures to address the overall opinion of IAIG that the adequacy and effectiveness of UNOPS governance, risk management and control processes were only partially satisfactory with major improvement needed;

18. *Further urges* UNOPS management to take all necessary measures to address the reoccurring key audit findings on grant management, project expenditure, procurement, human resources and recruitment;

19. *Notes with concern* that there are still limitations to the independence of IAIG;

20. *Recalls* decision 22/2022, paragraph 15, and reiterates to management the importance of UNOPS continuing to change and strengthen its organizational culture with regard to transparency, accountability, ethics and integrity;

21. *Takes note* of the revised terms of reference of the Audit Advisory Committee.

9 June 2023

2023/8

Reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, and management responses*The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS for 2022 (DP/2023/13; DP/FPA/2023/3; DP/OPS/2023/4), and the management responses;
2. *Commends* the important work of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS ethics offices in strengthening an ethical organizational culture, and encourages them to continue their work in full independence;
3. *Requests* the ethics offices of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to continue to strengthen the whistle-blower protection procedures and policies of their respective organizations to meet the standards of the best international practices, including protection from retaliation, and to provide annual updates to the Board on these efforts within existing reporting;

With regard to UNOPS:

4. *Welcomes* the completion of the external independent review on the UNOPS ethics function to ensure its independence and impartiality and takes note of the report on the findings of the review and encourages UNOPS to implement the recommendations;
5. *Urges* the Ethics Office and IAIG to review its procedures and design them in a manner that ensures full confidentiality.

9 June 2023

2023/9

Joint update on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment*The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note of* the updates by UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on actions to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment;
2. *Notes with appreciation*, recalling Executive Board decision 2022/2, the progress made and the need for continued effort to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, as part of the “zero tolerance for inaction” approach, including ensuring that the required actions implemented at country, regional and global levels are properly resourced and deliver impact;
3. *Requests* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to continue to take action to ensure a victim/survivor-centred, system-wide and coherent approach to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, while leveraging their respective mandates, and to continue to foster inclusive and respectful organizational cultures where all personnel are empowered and encouraged to report sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment;
4. *Encourages* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS in this regard to continue to report to the Executive Board about all cases in a transparent and accountable manner, to ensure that reporting mechanisms are safe, inclusive and victim/survivor-centred, and to strengthen their efforts in whistle-blower protection against retaliation;
5. *Requests* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to develop a more uniform template for future reports on this topic, to be shared with the Executive Board, to better track

year-on-year progress against indicators, allow for enhanced comparison of reports and gain a more strategic understanding of the results, impact and organizational culture change achieved from their efforts and activities;

6. *Also encourages* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to further increase their system-wide collaboration efforts to improve coordination, reporting and transparency and to work together effectively at country, regional and global levels to ensure optimal learning from lessons learned and best practices from the entire United Nations system;

7. *Welcomes* the continued use of ClearCheck, and invites UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to examine how ClearCheck and the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme can be used to complement each other to further improve vetting and to provide an update to the Board;

8. *Further encourages* UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to consider piloting the scheme and report any results within existing reporting;

9. *Notes with appreciation* the efforts of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS to conduct risk assessments in respect of sexual exploitation and abuse, to work with implementing partners to assess and support their capacity to ensure adequate safeguards to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, and to address the rights of victims/survivors to support and assistance, in accordance with the United Nations protocol on the provision of assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

9 June 2023

2023/10

Report of the UNDP Administrator on results for 2022 and progress on the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report of the Administrator for 2022 and its annexes (DP/2023/14), the report of UNDP on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in 2021 (DP/2022/17/Add.1) and the statistical annex (DP/2022/17/Add.2);

2. *Commends* the continuing progress made by UNDP in 2022, the first year of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, towards becoming a fully agile, innovative and resilient organization capable of providing effective local and global integrated solutions that advance sustainable development, particularly in the face of the global reversal of human development for two years running;

3. *Takes note* of the programmatic and institutional results achieved in 2022 on poverty and inequality, innovative development financing, digitalization, climate action, social protection, and gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, while also noting the need to scale up efforts for economic empowerment for all;

4. *Recognizes* the overarching role of UNDP in poverty eradication and reducing inequalities, and encourages UNDP to further its efforts in this regard; and to strengthen the capacities of countries at all levels, including institutions and people, to accelerate structural transformations for sustainable development; and to prevent, mitigate and respond to risks, including crisis, conflict, natural disasters, climate and social and economic shocks, in line with the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025;

5. *Recognizes* that in 2022, UNDP achieved its highest-ever level of programme delivery, meeting 95 per cent of planned programmatic targets for the year and reaching tens of millions of people, including those left furthest behind;

6. *Expresses concern* with the current low level and continued decline of regular (core) resources, as these are critical for UNDP to deliver on the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, respond to the effects of multiple crises, help realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and maintain robust internal control and accountability systems;

7. *Welcomes* the continued strong commitment of UNDP to the United Nations development system repositioning, and encourages UNDP to continue to work closely with other United Nations organizations, based on each agency's respective comparative advantages and mandates, under the coordination of the resident coordinators in country, to support countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and national development needs, plans and priorities;

8. *Recognizes* the ambitious targets set out in the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, and urges continued commitment to: results-based programmes; results-driven, cohesive portfolio approaches; agile, effective and efficient operations; and multi-stakeholder partnerships that can help to unlock systemic transformation towards realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

9 June 2023

2023/11

UNDP evaluation

The Executive Board

With regard to the annual report on evaluation, 2022 (DP/2023/16) and management commentaries:

1. *Takes note* of the annual report on evaluation and the management commentaries thereon, welcomes the analysis provided on key findings and lessons learned from evaluations carried out in 2022, and requests that UNDP address the issues raised;

2. *Takes note* of the efforts of UNDP management and the Independent Evaluation Office to improve the quality and coverage of decentralized evaluations, and requests UNDP management to: (a) work with the Independent Evaluation Office to strengthen guidance on reporting expenditures for decentralized evaluations; (b) promote a mix of project, outcome and portfolio evaluations to assess results and impact; and (c) step up efforts to further improve the quality of decentralized evaluations at UNDP;

3. *Encourages* the Independent Evaluation Office to: (a) continue investing in innovative inter-agency practices, including artificial intelligence and leadership of evaluative syntheses of achievements against the Sustainable Development Goals; and (b) ensure full coverage of independent country programme evaluations in a timely manner to inform the design of new country programmes;

With regard to the evaluation of UNDP support to social protection (DP/2023/17) and management response (DP/2023/18):

4. *Takes note* of the evaluation of UNDP support to social protection and the management response thereon;

5. *Welcomes* the evaluation as the first dedicated global assessment by the Independent Evaluation Office on UNDP support to social protection, and encourages UNDP and its partners to use the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations, while noting the programmatic areas identified for consolidation and strengthening;

6. *Requests* UNDP to explore the convergence between social protection and programmes in other areas and to strengthen the connection between social protection

and just and green transition, as well as the linkages between humanitarian assistance and national social protection systems at the country level;

7. *Requests* UNDP to continue strengthening its support to digitalization for social protection and to gender-responsive social protection;

8. *Encourages* UNDP to provide practical guidance for strategic positioning in different country contexts and explore partnerships to allow a more holistic and integrated approach in supporting national social protection systems;

With regard to the evaluation of UNDP support to access to justice (DP/2023/19) and management response (DP/2023/20):

9. *Takes note* of the evaluation of UNDP support to access to justice and the management response thereon;

10. *Welcomes* the evaluation as the first dedicated global assessment by the Independent Evaluation Office on access to justice, and encourages UNDP and its partners to use the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations to inform future work by UNDP in this area;

11. *Acknowledges* the results achieved by UNDP in promoting access to justice, especially for those furthest behind;

12. *Encourages* UNDP to enhance its capacities as a provider of technical assistance on access to justice, and reinforce the dialogue with other United Nations stakeholders and bilateral partners to address persistent challenges to access to justice;

13. *Urges* UNDP to continue to strengthen the use of monitoring, evaluation and evidence in programming to promote a fuller understanding of its contribution to effective, people-centred and fair justice processes;

14. *Invites* UNDP to continue to promote rights-based, people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented approaches to digitization, and to strengthen synergies between justice programmes and other areas of work.

9 June 2023

2023/12

Report on results achieved by the United Nations Capital Development Fund in 2022

The Executive Board

1. *Commends* the progress made by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) in implementing its strategic framework, 2022–2025;

2. *Reaffirms* its commitment to the UNCDF strategic framework and the position and role it sets for the organization within the United Nations development system, and requests UNCDF to provide the Executive Board with an informal briefing on developments within the organization no later than the second regular session in 2023;

3. *Emphasizes* the critical role of UNCDF in delivering innovative and blended financing solutions to support least developed countries to deliver on the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

4. *Encourages* UNCDF to engage with the broader United Nations development system to allow the system to benefit from the comparative advantages and expertise of UNCDF, and vice versa;

5. *Expresses concern* with the current low level and decline of regular (core) resources to UNCDF, noting the importance of regular resources to the

implementation of the strategic framework, 2022–2025, and the provision of required levels of oversight;

6. *Recommits* to supporting UNCDF, including by fully funding, as a minimum, base growth resource requirements in accordance with the strategic framework, 2022–2025, of \$25 million per year in regular resources and \$125 million in other resources.

9 June 2023

2023/13

United Nations Volunteers programme: Annual report of the Administrator

The Executive Board

1. *Commends* the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) for results achieved in 2022, as reflected in the report of the Administrator ([DP/2023/23](#));

2. *Reaffirms* the continued crucial role of the Special Voluntary Fund in promoting volunteerism as powerful means of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and calls upon all development partners in a position to do so to contribute to the fund;

3. *Expresses* appreciation to all United Nations Volunteers for their outstanding contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

4. *Expresses* appreciation to UNV for its rapid and dedicated response to emergencies, as part of United Nations system-wide efforts.

9 June 2023

2023/14

UNFPA: Annual report of the Executive Director

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note of* the report of the Executive Director: progress on the implementation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 [[DP/FPA/2023/4 \(Part I\)](#)], and its annexes; the statistical and financial review, 2022 [[DP/FPA/2023/4 \(Part I/Add.1\)](#)]; and the report of UNFPA on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in 2022 [[DP/FPA/2023/4 \(Part II\)](#)];

2. *Notes with appreciation* the progress made by UNFPA in achieving the results of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, during the first year of its implementation;

3. *Takes note of* the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the review of management and administration in UNFPA ([JIU/REP/2023/1](#));

4. *Notes* that this report could provide additional context for the assessment by the Unit (initiated by decision 2022/22, paragraph 9) on how the Executive Board executes its oversight and governance functions;

5. *Also notes* the need for further consideration by the Executive Board of the recommendations from the Unit's review of management and administration in UNFPA, including those addressed to the Executive Board;

6. *Requests* UNFPA to report to the Executive Board on the risks, costs, status and functions associated with the information and communications technology transformation project by the second regular session in 2023, and thereafter annually, through existing reporting.

9 June 2023

2023/15**UNFPA evaluation***The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note of* the annual report on the evaluation function and of the programme of work and budget of the Evaluation Office in 2023;
2. *Welcomes* the achievements across the evaluation performance indicators and the continued adaptability and responsiveness of the evaluation function to local contexts and new and emerging global challenges;
3. *Welcomes* the achievements in contributing to United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts and in fostering national evaluation capacity development;
4. *Welcomes* the update of the peer review of the evaluation function, which will inform the revision of the evaluation policy;
5. *Requests* the Evaluation Office to present a revised evaluation policy for endorsement by the Executive Board during the first regular session in 2024;
6. *Encourages* UNFPA to continue to enhance the capacity of the decentralized evaluation function and humanitarian evaluations and to increase investments in the evaluation function.

9 June 2023

2023/16**Early midterm review of the UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, including the annual report of the Executive Director for 2022; UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, restated***The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note of* the fast-tracked midterm review of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, including the annual report of the Executive Director, 2022, ([DP/OPS/2023/5](#)) presented in accordance with decisions 2022/24 and 2023/4, and based on the format presented at the second regular session 2022;
2. *Recognizes* that the midterm review was informed based on comprehensive internal and external consultation; and analysis of performance, including an external evaluation with case studies of how projects implemented contribute to Sustainable Development Goals 3, 7 and 13;
3. *Endorses* the restated UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, ([DP/OPS/2023/6](#)) presented in accordance with decisions 2022/24 and 2023/4;
4. *Notes that* the strategic plan, as the overall strategic framework for UNOPS, is not intergovernmentally negotiated, and acknowledges that the strategic plan includes some references to terms, concepts and documents that have not been intergovernmentally endorsed in the United Nations system;
5. *Welcomes* the inclusion of UNOPS non-programmatic mandate as a service provider in the restated Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, confirming the return to its original mandate of providing infrastructure, procurement and project management services, as stated in General Assembly resolution [65/176](#) of 20 December 2010;
6. *Encourages* UNOPS to continue and consolidate systematic analysis and reporting to the Executive Board on the contributions of its service delivery to the operational results of partners, the expansion of partners' implementation capacity

and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals;

7. *Acknowledges* the potential for a mutually reinforcing relationship between procurement and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and directs UNOPS to continue to undertake procurement activities in line with its financial regulations and rules, giving due consideration to the principles of best value for money, fairness, integrity, transparency, effective competition and the best interests of UNOPS and its clients;

8. *Notes* with concern the decline in procurement from local suppliers in 2022 and requests UNOPS to strengthen efforts to support local capacity development through engagement with suppliers in local supply chains, in line with the UNOPS financial regulations and rules.

9 June 2023

2023/17

Comprehensive response plan in response to the recommendations of the two independent third-party reviews of UNOPS

The Executive Board

1. *Acknowledges* the progress made by UNOPS in implementing the comprehensive response plan in response to the third-party reviews of UNOPS;

2. *Notes with appreciation* the monthly update briefings provided to the Executive Board by the UNOPS Executive Director and the online monitoring tool to increase transparency;

3. *Recalls* decision 2023/4, paragraph 11, and reiterates the request that UNOPS extend the monthly briefing until the first regular session in 2024;

4. *Decides* to also incorporate the comprehensive response plan reporting into the regular reporting cycle of the strategic plan;

5. *Recalls* decision 2023/1, paragraph 11, and requests UNOPS to provide the Executive Board with its plan to implement the decision in advance of the second regular session 2023.

9 June 2023

2023/18

UNOPS distribution to paying entities, including those of the United Nations system, of excess reserves accumulated after 31 December 2021

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the conference room paper on UNOPS cost-recovery model and reserves (DP/OPS/2023/CRP.5);

2. *Welcomes* UNOPS commitment to target zero net revenue and directs UNOPS to proceed with the return of any excess reserves, in accordance with this decision;

3. *Recalls* decision 2022/13 to freeze all transfers out of the operational reserve for any purpose other than daily operations;

4. *Recalls* decision 2023/4 and reiterates that:

(a) All necessary organizational investment requirements and other expenses required to keep UNOPS fit-for-purpose be included in the financial biennium that is approved by the Executive Board;

(b) UNOPS sets its fees to ensure that it has the financial means required to maintain the minimum operational reserve level and make any organizational investment, as per the biennial budget estimates, while eliminating any accumulation of reserves over and above the minimum operational reserve;

(c) Excess reserves are defined as total accumulated reserves minus the minimum operational reserve, as established by the Executive Board in its decision 2021/21;

5. *Recalls* decision 2023/4 on reserves accumulated as of 31 December 2021 and in this regard:

(a) Recognizes the ongoing process by UNOPS of distributing without delay these excess reserves to paying entities;

(b) Requests UNOPS to make a good faith effort over a maximum of 12 months to distribute all these excess reserves to paying entities, after which UNOPS will propose to the Executive Board at the first regular session of 2024 an alternative use for undisbursed funds, within the United Nations system and/or to replenish the UNOPS minimum operational reserve;

6. *Notes* the upcoming third-party independent review of the distribution of excess reserves and requests an update on the findings and recommendations during the monthly update briefings;

For all excess reserves accumulated after 31 December 2021:

7. *Requests* UNOPS to propose to the Executive Board for approval at every second regular session at which the UNOPS biennial budget is considered, starting in 2023, a fair and transparent methodology, and time frame for distributing, within 12 months following the receipt of report of the United Nations Board of Auditors, any excess reserves accumulated in the relevant budget cycle to paying entities, including those of the United Nations system, to be presented to the Executive Board in an informal session prior to those second regular sessions;

8. *Requests* UNOPS to make a good faith effort to distribute all excess reserves and propose to the Executive Board for approval an alternative use for the undisbursed funds;

9. *Requests* UNOPS to report to the Executive Board at every session the status of the distribution of excess reserves to paying entities, including undisbursed funds.

9 June 2023

2023/19

Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its annual session 2023

The Executive Board

Recalls that during its annual session 2023, it:

Item 1

Organizational matters

Adopted the agenda (DP/2023/L.2) and approved the workplan for the annual session 2023;

Adopted the report of the first regular session 2023 (DP/2023/10);

Adopted the tentative workplan for the second regular session 2023;

Joint segment

Item 2

Update on the implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system

Adopted decision 2023/6 on the update on the implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system;

Item 3

Internal audit and investigation

Adopted decision 2023/7 on the reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on internal audit and investigation, and management responses;

Item 4

Ethics

Adopted decision 2023/8 on the reports of the ethics offices of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS;

Item 5

Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

Adopted decision 2023/9 on the joint update on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment;

UNDP segment

Item 6

Annual report of the Administrator

Adopted decision 2023/10 on the report of the UNDP Administrator on results for 2022 and progress on the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025;

Held an interactive discussion with the Administrator on the subject, “Development Pathways Out of Crises Today: UNDP Support to Advancing National Development Choices for Tomorrow”;

Item 7

Gender equality at UNDP

Took note of the annual report on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy, 2022–2025 ([DP/2023/15](#));

Item 8

UNDP evaluation

Adopted decision 2023/11 on UNDP evaluation;

Item 9

UNDP country programmes and related matters

Approved the following UNDP country programme, in accordance with decision 2014/7:

Latin America and the Caribbean region: Chile ([DP/DCP/CHL/6](#));

Took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Namibia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, already approved by the Administrator and presented in document [DP/2023/21](#);

Item 10**United Nations Capital Development Fund**

Adopted decision 2023/12 on the report on results achieved by the United Nations Capital Development Fund in 2022;

Item 11**United Nations Volunteers programme**

Adopted decision 2023/13 on the United Nations Volunteers programme: annual report of the Administrator;

UNFPA segment**Item 12****Annual report of the Executive Director**

Adopted decision 2023/14 on the report of the Executive Director;

Held an interactive dialogue with the Executive Director on the topic, “Demographic Resilience in a World of 8 Billion”;

Item 13**UNFPA evaluation**

Adopted decision 2023/15 on UNFPA evaluation;

Item 14**UNFPA country programmes and related matters**

Took note of the first-time extension of the country programme for Namibia, approved by the Executive Director, as presented in document [DP/FPA/2023/7](#);

Approved the fourth extension of the country programme for Libya, as presented in document [DP/FPA/2023/7](#);

UNOPS segment**Item 15****Annual report of the UNOPS Executive Director**

Adopted decision 2023/16 on the early midterm review of the UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, including the annual report of the Executive Director for 2022, and UNOPS Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, restated;

Adopted decision 2023/17 on the comprehensive response plan in response to the recommendations of the two independent third-party reviews of UNOPS;

Adopted decision 2023/18 on UNOPS distribution to paying entities, including those of the United Nations system, of excess reserves accumulated after 31 December 2021.

9 June 2023

2023/20

Structured funding dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022–2025

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 (DP/2023/26) and its annexes;
2. *Commends* the substantial progress made on United Nations entity-specific commitments under the funding compact, encourages UNDP to continue its efforts to meet the commitments under the funding compact and reaffirms the call, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 75/233, for entities of the United Nations development system and Member States to contribute to its full and effective implementation;
3. *Notes* the importance of sufficient and predictable regular (core) resources linked to intended and demonstrated results, as these are critical for UNDP to deliver on the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, respond to the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and multiple crises, help to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and maintain robust internal control and accountability systems;
4. *Expresses concern* with the current low level and continued decline of regular (core) resources as these are also key to restoring development gains eroded by the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple crises;
5. *Notes with appreciation* that annex III of the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 (DP/2023/26) provides, pursuant to decision 2022/18, a detailed analysis of the factors contributing to the decline of regular (core) resources and the potential implications on the ability of UNDP to deliver on its Strategic Plan; and takes note of the recommendations on measures to address this, which should be taken by UNDP and could be considered by Member States;
6. *Emphasizes* the importance of an integrated approach to reporting and requests that both the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP strategic plan and the annual report of the Administrator include information on total resources budgeted and disbursed for each development output (signature solutions) of the integrated results and resources framework;
7. *Recalls* the importance of funding predictability and multi-year contributions for 2023 and future years to enable UNDP to respond to the evolving needs of programme countries with agility and reduce the risk of jeopardizing its ability to achieve the results of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025;
8. *Encourages* UNDP to continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to diversify its potential sources of funding, including the private sector, foundations, civil society and individuals, and through strengthened partnerships with international financial institutions;
9. *Notes* the importance of effective and efficient collaboration with international financial institutions and requests that UNDP, on an annual basis within existing reporting, provide further detail to the Executive Board on joint plans, frameworks and tools underpinning this collaboration, as well as relevant results and outcomes attained;
10. *Notes* the importance of flexible thematic and pooled funding, which complement regular (core) resources and are critical for UNDP to accelerate programming to meet the Sustainable Development Goals;

11. *Recalls* decision 2022/18, to continuously strengthen and promote its funding windows as an additional flexible funding mechanism and a useful complement to regular resources, and requests a briefing to the Executive Board on how flexible funding modalities, including the funding windows, contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025;

12. *Welcomes* the shift towards portfolios by UNDP and urges UNDP to continue its engagement with Member States, through structured funding dialogues, on shifting from highly earmarked to regular and flexible resources and adhering to the mutually reinforcing commitments of the funding compact, and in this regard, looks forward to UNDP continuing to provide information on programme results achieved with the funding provided;

13. *Approves* the exceptional variation from the core programme budget allocation framework to address the 2023 shortfall in the UNDP contribution to the cost sharing of the resident coordinator system as outlined in the present report, and requests that UNDP inform the Board if future variations are anticipated and whether adjustments to the framework are needed.

31 August 2023

2023/21

Report on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue, 2022–2023

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the report on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue, 2022–2023 ([DP/FPA/2023/8](#)) and related annexes;

2. *Commends* the substantial progress made on United Nations entity-specific commitments under the funding compact, encourages UNFPA to continue its efforts to meet the commitments under the funding compact and reaffirms the call for entities of the United Nations development system and Member States to contribute to its full and effective implementation, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [75/233](#);

3. *Notes* the importance of sufficient and predictable regular (core) resources linked to intended and demonstrated results, as these are critical for UNFPA to deliver on the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, respond to the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and various humanitarian crises and help realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

4. *Recalls* the importance of broadening the contributor base and encourages UNFPA to engage with Member States to consider prioritizing contributions to UNFPA regular resources in a timely and predictable manner, in line with the United Nations funding compact, and also encourages UNFPA to continue to make efforts in terms of visibility and recognition of contributions, particularly for regular resources;

5. *Encourages* UNFPA to continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to diversify its potential sources of funding, including the private sector, foundations, civil society and individuals, and through strengthened partnerships with international financial institutions;

6. *Notes* the importance of effective and efficient collaboration with international financial institutions and requests that UNFPA, on an annual basis within existing reporting, provide further detail to the Executive Board on joint plans, frameworks and tools underpinning this collaboration, as well as relevant results and outcomes attained;

7. *Notes* the importance of flexible thematic and pooled funding as critical for UNFPA to be able to accelerate programming to meet the three UNFPA transformative results and the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in those areas in which development gains have been eroded by the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple crises;

8. *Encourages* UNFPA to continue its dialogue with Member States, through the structured funding dialogues, on shifting from highly earmarked funds to more predictable and flexible funding, especially for regular (core) resources, and to adhere to the mutually reinforcing commitments of the funding compact.

31 August 2023

2023/22

UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium 2024–2025

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the UNOPS budget estimates, 2024–2025 (DP/OPS/2023/7), and its annexes, as well as of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (DP/OPS/2023/8);

2. *Approves* the net-zero revenue target for the biennium, 2024–2025;

3. *Reiterates* the need for UNOPS to return to and remain within its original mandate of providing infrastructure, procurement and project management services, as stated in General Assembly resolution 65/176 of 20 December 2010;

4. *Notes* the estimated project expenses and requests UNOPS to provide, during a briefing before the first regular session 2024, information on the project portfolio underlying the biennium budget estimates, 2024–2025 and its alignment to UNOPS original mandate and its restated Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, as per decision 2023/16, including detailing the nature of services provided;

5. *Recalls* decision 2020/12 in which the Executive Board approved harmonized approaches for cost classification, results-based budgeting and budget presentation, and welcomes the alignment of the UNOPS budget with the harmonized presentation adopted by UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Children’s Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women);

6. *Endorses* the approach for setting indirect cost-recovery rates based on required revenue needs;

7. *Underlines* the need for full cost recovery, direct and indirect, to fully fund the investments needed to restore the operational and organizational capacity of UNOPS, and to ensure fully functional accountability structures of the highest international standard;

8. *Also endorses* the two-year aspiration of UNOPS with respect to its management results and the targeting of resources to support its contribution and management goals;

9. *Takes note* of the estimated composition of net assets following decisions 2021/21, 2022/13 and 2023/4;

10. *Recalls* decisions 2022/13 and 2023/18 to freeze all transfers out of the operational reserve for any purpose other than daily operations;

11. *Approves* the release of committed sustainable investments in infrastructure and innovation (S3i) initiative funds to the operational reserve;

12. *Recalls* decision 2023/4 to approve the allocation of \$35.4 million from the operational reserve towards the implementation of the comprehensive response plan, to be distributed to UNOPS in tranches, with an initial transfer of \$11.8 million;
13. *Takes note* of and approves the request by UNOPS to carry forward the balance of \$23.6 million of the allocated sum of \$35.4 million for use within the current Strategic Plan cycle, 2022–2025;
14. *Takes note* of the request from UNOPS to release \$23.6 million out of the \$35.4 million committed in the operational reserve, and approves the release of \$11.8 million into the UNOPS biennium budget for 2024–2025 to continue the implementation of the comprehensive response plan;
15. *Decides* to release further tranches at the request of UNOPS at a future formal session contingent upon demonstrated progress in implementing the comprehensive response plan and the provision of information on how the previous tranche was utilized;
16. *Recalls* decision 2023/18, in which the Executive Board decided that UNOPS will propose, for approval of the Board during every second regular session at which the UNOPS budget for the subsequent biennium is considered, methodologies and time frames for the distribution of excess reserves accumulated in the then ongoing budget cycle;
17. *Endorses* the proposed methodology and time frame for distributing, within 12 months following receipt of the report of the United Nations Board of Auditors for the financial period of 2023, any excess reserves accumulated in the 2022–2023 budget cycle to paying entities, including those of the United Nations.

31 August 2023

2023/23

Comprehensive response plan in response to the recommendations of the two independent third-party reviews on UNOPS

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of and welcomes the progress made by UNOPS in the implementation of the comprehensive response plan in response to the third-party reviews of UNOPS;
2. *Acknowledges* with appreciation the role of the monthly update briefings provided to the Executive Board by the UNOPS Executive Director and the online monitoring tool in contributing to increasing transparency and effective communication within the organization, and welcomes their continuation until the first regular session in 2024;
3. *Decides* that UNOPS continue to prioritize the implementation of the comprehensive response plan;
4. *Continues to note* that the Internal Audit and Investigations Group states in its annual report for 2022 that issues identified could significantly affect the achievements of UNOPS objectives;
5. *Recalls* decision 2023/7, paragraphs 17 and 18, on the urgent need to address the effectiveness of UNOPS governance, risk management and control processes that were found to be only “partially satisfactory with major improvements needed”;
6. *Reiterates* the need for UNOPS to return to and remain within its original mandate of providing infrastructure, procurement and project management services, as stated in General Assembly resolution [65/176](#) of 20 December 2010;

7. *Requests* that UNOPS provide the Executive Board, before the first regular session 2024, with:

(a) An additional breakdown of the 2014–2022 portfolio along the three pillars of the UNOPS original mandate, including the subcategories of the five functional services;

(b) Information on the impacts of Executive Board decision 2022/24, calling on UNOPS to return to its original mandate, the recently conducted multifaceted portfolio analysis and the midterm review + of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, on the current UNOPS portfolio and decision-making regarding future developments of the portfolio;

8. *Decides* that UNOPS must refrain from new strategic initiatives, subject to approval from the Executive Board, based on the full implementation of the comprehensive response plan, and that internal assurances and external review have been provided on sound financial management and well-functioning governance, risk management and control processes;

With regard to the implementation of paragraph 18 of decision 2022/24, which requested that UNOPS commission an external third-party review at the end of the implementation period of the comprehensive response plan:

9. *Requests* that the review cover all the categories and actions of the comprehensive response plan, with a view to evaluate the quality of implementation and the degree to which the results achieved by the comprehensive response plan respond to the KPMG recommendations;

10. *Requests* that the terms of reference of the review are submitted to the Executive Board for input and validation;

With regard to UNOPS organizational culture:

11. *Acknowledges* the initial efforts taken regarding the improvement of the organizational culture of UNOPS, and requests UNOPS to share with the Executive Board a strategy for the implementation of organizational culture reform fully aligned with United Nations norms and values, to continue conducting regular Pulse surveys among its workforce in this regard and also to measure management performance;

12. *Requests* that UNOPS share with the Board the complete and unredacted results and reports of all the Pulse surveys and of the organizational culture assessment of UNOPS conducted by KPMG;

13. *Requests* that a decision item on organizational culture be added to the agenda of the first regular or annual session;

With regard to UNOPS plan on the implementation of paragraph 11 of decision 2023/1 on limiting the use of individual contractor agreements:

14. *Endorses* the proposed approach for determining which positions are to be established as fixed-term appointment posts and how they will be filled, in accordance with the staff regulations and rules of the United Nations;

15. *Welcomes* the update that identified positions are on track to be filled, in line with the original recommendation of the United Nations Board of Auditors by January 2024;

16. *Decides* that an update on progress towards the January 2024 milestones be provided at the first regular session of the Executive Board in 2024;

17. *Recognizes* the importance of the findings of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit on the review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities

in the United Nations system (Joint Inspection Unit project A.468), to guide future decisions regarding UNOPS application of individual contractor agreements across the organization.

31 August 2023

2023/24

Annual statistical report on the procurement activities of United Nations system organizations, 2022

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual statistical report on United Nations procurement, 2022 ([DP/OPS/2023/9](#));
2. *Welcomes* the data and analysis contained therein;
3. *Recalls* decision 2018/20, paragraphs 4, 5 and 6, and decision 2022/20, paragraph 3.

31 August 2023

2023/25

Overview of decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its second regular session 2023

The Executive Board

Recalls that during its second regular session 2023, it:

Item 1

Organizational matters

Adopted the agenda and agreed on the workplan for the second regular session 2023 ([DP/2023/L.3](#));

Adopted the report of the annual session 2023 ([DP/2023/24](#));

Agreed with the tentative workplan for the first regular session 2024;

UNDP segment

Item 2

Structured funding dialogue

Adopted decision 2023/20 on the structured funding dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022–2025;

Item 3

UNDP country programmes and related matters

Approved the following UNDP country programmes, in accordance with decision 2014/7:

Africa region: Angola ([DP/DCP/AGO/5](#)); Benin ([DP/DCP/BEN/4](#)); Burundi ([DP/DCP/BDI/5](#)); Chad ([DP/DCP/TCD/4](#)); Equatorial Guinea ([DP/DCP/GNQ/4](#)); Lesotho ([DP/DCP/LSO/4](#)); Malawi ([DP/DCP/MWI/4](#)); Mauritania ([DP/DCP/MRT/4](#)); Senegal ([DP/DCP/SEN/4](#)); Togo ([DP/DCP/TGO/4](#));

Asia-Pacific region: Papua New Guinea ([DP/DCP/PNG/3](#));

Approved the third two-year extension of the country programme for Burkina Faso; the fifth two-year extension of the country programme for Afghanistan and the second one-year extension of the country programme for Myanmar ([DP/2023/28](#));

UNFPA segment

Item 4

UNFPA structured funding dialogue

Adopted decision 2023/21 on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue;

Item 5

UNFPA country programmes and related matters

Approved the following UNFPA country programmes, in accordance with decision 2014/7:

Angola ([DP/FPA/CPD/AGO/9](#)); Benin ([DP/FPA/CPD/BEN/10](#)); Burundi ([DP/FPA/CPD/BDI/9](#)); Chad ([DP/FPA/CPD/TCD/8](#)); Equatorial Guinea ([DP/FPA/CPD/GNQ/8](#)); Lesotho ([DP/FPA/CPD/LSO/8](#)); Libya ([DP/FPA/CPD/LBY/2](#)); Malawi ([DP/FPA/CPD/MWI/9](#)); Mauritania ([DP/FPA/CPD/MRT/9](#)); Senegal ([DP/FPA/CPD/SEN/9](#)); Togo ([DP/FPA/CPD/TGO/8](#));

Took note of the first one-year extension, approved by the UNFPA Executive Director, of the UNFPA country programmes for Sierra Leone ([DP/FPA/2023/9](#));

Approved the second one-year extension of the country programme for Myanmar; the second, two-year extension of the country programme for Afghanistan; the third one-year extension of the country programme for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; and the third, two-year extension of the country programme for Burkina Faso ([DP/FPA/2023/9](#));

UNOPS segment

Item 6

Adopted decision 2023/22 on the UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium 2024–2025;

Adopted decision 2023/23 on a comprehensive response plan in response to the recommendations of the two independent third-party reviews on UNOPS;

Adopted decision 2023/24 on the annual statistical report on the procurement activities of United Nations system organizations, 2022.

31 August 2023

Annex II

Membership of the Executive Board in 2023

(Term expires on the last day of the year indicated)

African States: Algeria (2023), Cameroon (2024), Chad (2024), Côte d'Ivoire (2024), Ethiopia (2025), Kenya (2024), Lesotho (2024), Nigeria (2023).

Asia-Pacific States: Bangladesh (2023), China (2025), Iran (Islamic Republic of) (2023), Kazakhstan (2024), Myanmar (2024), Qatar (2024), Republic of Korea (2025).

Eastern European States: Republic of Moldova (2025), Russian Federation (2023), Slovakia (2025), Ukraine (2024).

Latin American and Caribbean States: Colombia (2025), Costa Rica (2024), Cuba (2023), Ecuador (2025), Guatemala (2023).

Western European and other States:* Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Türkiye, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

* Western European and other States has its own rotation schedule, which varies every year.

Annex III

Report of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP held on 2 June 2023

1. The President of the Executive Board of UNICEF welcomed the joint meeting of the Boards (JMB) and provided introductory remarks around the topic for discussion: “The importance of joint development solutions and quality financing in the face of multiple crises”. She noted that, while the global health emergency related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) had ended, the pandemic had caused disruptions and exacerbated vulnerabilities, particularly among the poorest populations. These challenges were compounded by ongoing crises, including the climate, food and nutrition crises, and had contributed to a reversal in the progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Noting that the gap on development financing have increased, she underscored that the JMB provided an opportunity to explore solutions to set the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development back on track, and to identify ways to secure quality financing, maximize resources to ensure that the United Nations development system delivers as one, and encourage Member States to abide by their commitments to the Funding Compact, including to finance climate adaptation.

2. In his introductory remarks, the President of the Executive Board of UN-Women noted that conflicts continued to emerge and that climate-related shocks were more intense and frequent. He highlighted the importance of contributing to the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus, particularly to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable populations while addressing the root causes of vulnerability, including gender inequality and discrimination, poverty and a lack of accountability systems. He underlined that women and girls were disproportionately affected by emergencies and suffered from unequal economic participation and sexual and gender-based violence. Implementing a nexus approach presented a substantial opportunity to enhance gender justice and ensure that women’s rights were integral to immediate responses and long-term outcomes. The President underscored that this would require building consensus and new partnerships, using a systems-based approach and fostering open dialogue and co-creation. He noted that investment was needed to develop joint tools and analysis and to ensure that the views of people, including women and girls affected by crisis, were integrated at every step. He concluded by underlining the importance of working together and using the nexus approach to achieve effective and sustainable impact.

3. Delivering opening remarks, the Deputy Secretary-General commended the active engagement of governing bodies to galvanize action on joint development solutions and stable quality finance. She stressed that implementing the integrated agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals required coordination and capacities, including surge capacities, from United Nations entities. She highlighted that governing bodies played essential roles in ensuring a flexible United Nations footprint with the right skillset to respond to countries’ evolving needs. She noted that this required more conducive policies and tools for integrated policy advice; a sharper focus to accelerate transitions in key areas; and agencies pooling their resources together. She stressed the importance of supporting the development and implementation of good-quality and evidence-based United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) in countries, in alignment with national priorities. Furthermore, she underscored the convening role of the United Nations development system in supporting acceleration towards the Sustainable Development Goals and their financing, particularly through Integrated National

Financing Frameworks (INFFs). She emphasized the criticality of increasing core funding to the United Nations development system to enable integrated programming, including through the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, which had contributed to joint programmes that supported the implementation of INFFs, mobilized additional resources and seed funding, increased access to social services and addressed cross-border development issues such as climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction. She noted that the United Nations development system reform check list had been shared with all governing bodies as they consider the transformations needed in each United Nations entity. She concluded by expressing confidence that working together would lead to finding solutions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

4. Echoing the importance of coordination and joint solutions, the President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS introduced the topic, underscoring that taking stock of the progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals allowed to openly discuss existing challenges. He said that acceleration towards the Goals by 2030 required more joint solutions. He noted that many countries were still dealing with the financial and development impacts of the pandemic, while simultaneously being affected by extreme weather patterns, crises and geopolitical confrontations that impact trade systems. He said that many countries had adopted stimulus packages to respond to crises at a time when economic growth challenges were limiting their abilities to generate revenue. This had led them to turn to solutions in the public debt market that involved high interest rates, further affecting their financial abilities to ensure basic social services. He stressed that concerted and integrated solutions by United Nations entities were crucial to achieving development goals, and that the respective Executive Boards should ensure that the entities were fit for purpose and had the required systems and capacities to design and implement joint solutions. He concluded by urging Member States to determine what support they could provide to agencies to ensure that they were ready to implement joint solutions, including through innovation and technology.

5. The Director of Social Policy and Social Protection at UNICEF moderated a panel discussion on joint development solutions and quality financing, including in humanitarian contexts. The Administrator of UNDP discussed the role of finance in poly-crisis contexts, noting that the United Nations was focusing on supporting countries in coping with shocks while assisting them in developing strategies to manage uncertainties. He noted that INFFs enabled the United Nations to support countries in quickly responding to short-term shocks while investing in sustainable development: 17 United Nations agencies had worked together and with other organizations and institutions, including under the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, to support 86 countries, demonstrating the capacity to develop joint responses and to mobilize resources and competencies across the system. The Administrator highlighted that the INFF Facility was developed to provide capacities to implement country-led INFFs. He stressed the importance of engaging with the private sector to integrate considerations on inequality and inequality-related financial disclosures, and of working together to inform transition finance discussions. He concluded by saying that joint solutions must always start from a country's request.

6. The Executive Director of UN-Women underscored the importance of advancing gender equality as a prerequisite and a catalyst to accelerating progress towards all Sustainable Development goals. She said that gender equality must be put at the heart of joint solutions and that these solutions must be centred on national priorities. She stressed the need for more joint programmes that were ambitious, had clear and measurable goals, and convened key stakeholders working in harmony to generate impact. An example of such efforts was the work supported by UN-Women

and ILO on promoting decent employment for women, particularly in the care economy. She highlighted that approximately one third of the programming expenditure at UN-Women was dedicated to joint programmes. She also noted that real resources must back up commitments to advance gender equality and that gender markers, bonds and gender-responsive budgeting tools were important and had to be strengthened. She said that 28 out of 68 entities within the United Nations system used gender-responsive financial tracking and she encouraged others to join.

7. Noting that 92 per cent of Sustainable Development Goal targets depended on infrastructure, the Executive Director of UNOPS spoke of the importance of joint action to support infrastructure and public procurement to respond to global compounding crises. Highlighting the multidimensional aspect of crises, he stressed the need for systems thinking and policy coherence to address gaps in existing capacities for implementation. He said that procurement, which can represent up to 22 per cent of a country's gross domestic product, is a powerful force for change, particularly with regards to jobs, gender equality and climate action. He noted that UNOPS supported projects and programmes of other agencies and Governments, focusing on expanding capacities for implementation, aligning priorities and influencing the demand side of financing.

8. Against a backdrop of rising needs and increasingly protracted and complex crises, the Executive Director of WFP spoke of the challenge of reaching a growing number of hungry people (up to 828 million people globally) while financing had been declining. She noted three solutions in response to this dual challenge: (a) strengthening collaboration across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus, capitalizing on comparative advantages to build resilience among Governments and societies to withstand the impacts of food security shocks and to increase investments in strengthening anticipatory action, preparedness and early warning systems; (b) further mobilizing every potential source of financing, increasing flexible and predictable multiyear financing and expanding engagement with financial institutions and the private sector; and (c) supporting national Government-led efforts to end humanitarian crises and to promote sustainable development. She also urged Member States to strengthen their financial commitments to help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through contributions to their own national development budgets or to official development assistance.

9. Speaking about the impact of crises on the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights, the Deputy Executive Director (Programme) of UNFPA underscored that overall progress on reducing maternal mortality had stagnated. She noted that the situation was related to unavailable and poor-quality health-care services and was exacerbated by humanitarian situations. She said that investing in sexual and reproductive health was essential for sustainable development and that joint solutions were key, because improving health outcomes depended on other factors such as social protection, road infrastructure, education and gender equality. Noting that investing in sexual and reproductive health and rights saved lives and generated economic gains, she urged countries to mobilize domestic resources, invest in generating evidence and data, and integrate sexual and reproductive health into development frameworks and national strategies to prevent maternal mortality and promote social norms that enable women and girls to develop to their full potential.

10. The Deputy Executive Director a.i. (Partnerships) of UNICEF highlighted the importance of social protection as a means of lifting the most vulnerable populations out of poverty. She underscored that this was particularly needed given the unprecedented increase in child poverty and multidimensional poverty, including in low-, middle- and high-income countries. She noted that, in many countries, revenues had decreased during the pandemic and governmental spending on social services was

often inadequate, inequitable and ineffective. She urged Governments and donors to invest in social protection and in social services that were resilient to climate change and to other shocks. She said that the international community, including the United Nations, international financial institutions (IFIs), the private sector and development partners, had an essential role to play in improving access to financing in low-income and fragile contexts, and that this would allow countries to increase spending on social services. She noted that collaborative efforts of the INFF Facility could be leveraged to help to finance human capital development and green transformation, and she urged to rally under the Global Accelerator Initiative. She concluded by saying that improving the lives of children was transforming the planet's future.

11. The moderator noted that the panel discussion had allowed to showcase the breadth of United Nations collaboration while acknowledging that there was still much work to be done to scale up innovative solutions and quality financing. She highlighted the key elements that had been discussed by the panel of speakers. She emphasized the importance of strengthening social spending and social protection and of focusing on the most vulnerable populations, including children living in poverty. She underscored the need to align different strands of financing, including the financing of development, humanitarian and climate action, to support integrated solutions while upholding national leadership, and she emphasized the key role of INFFs in supporting this alignment. She noted the potential of the United Nations to support comprehensive approaches that engage the Governments, the public sector, the private sector, civil society, community workers and society. Finally, she stressed the importance of investing in preparedness, working across the nexus, and of strengthening implementation capacities at country level to effectively translate policies into actions that lead to real impact at the local and community levels.

12. The Senior Managing Director at the World Bank noted the need for strengthening partnerships and joint efforts to address multiple and overlapping crises and to ensure long-term development. He said that the World Bank had initiated an evolution roadmap to revamp its operations model and it was seeking to optimize financing for developing countries and to become more effective in its partnership with the United Nations, countries and other entities to increase the impact of available resources. He noted positive examples of collaboration between the Bank and United Nations entities in the field and globally, including to address food security, education, safety nets, gender equality and the pandemic response. He stressed the importance of collaboration to build long-term resilience. He concluded by stating that more could be done, including to increase joint advocacy for development, expand progress to reach vulnerable populations and strengthen complementarity across organizations to achieve long-term development.

13. As part of a series of statements representing voices from the field, the First Undersecretary at the Ministry of Finance and Planning of South Sudan thanked the United Nations country team for supporting humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts. He said that joint development solutions and quality financing were important, especially given that the Government's ability to deliver on development objectives had been affected by multiple crises. He said that the United Nations provided support through the implementation of the UNSDCF, which was aligned with and contributed to national objectives, and through other joint financing and peacebuilding initiatives, which had demonstrated positive results. He spoke about the implementation of joint programmes that brought coordinated and coherent responses to challenges, including in the areas of health, population estimations, education, gender-based violence, food security and climate change. He said that a joint financing strategy was also being developed. He called on the United Nations and development partners to provide unearmarked long-term funding to enable

responses and to strengthen systems, and reiterated the Government's commitment to strengthen partnerships to deliver on the development objectives.

14. The United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth noted that the just transition agenda was a key priority for young people around the world and that the fear or risk of unemployment was one of their greatest concerns. She highlighted that just transitions could lead to the creation of an additional 8.4 million jobs for young people by 2030 through the implementation of "green" and "blue" economic policy measures. She said that young people had called for the adoption of ethical and rights-respecting technologies that integrate an environmental perspective, and for the creation of social support systems to promote "green" jobs. A key concern for young people was to ensure that just transitions do not harm the most vulnerable communities, particularly young people in developing countries. She emphasized the importance of supporting, investing and scaling up youth-led actions and initiatives towards just transitions. She concluded by highlighting joint interagency initiatives and partnerships, including the Green Jobs for Youth Pact, and called on Member States to further support the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy.

15. Noting that excluded communities suffer disproportionately during crises, the Executive Director of the International Budget Partnership underscored that tracking budgets, enhancing their transparency and implementation credibility, was a powerful tool to convene actors around solutions and to ensure that excluded communities' needs are met. She noted that diverse coalitions that bring together non-traditional actors with financial institutions, the United Nations and policy makers can generate innovative change. Lastly, she stressed the importance of changing the narrative about the role of civil society and enabling its active participation, including in generating data, and its prominent role in designing programmes of the United Nations and financial institutions.

16. The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Türkiye said that United Nations reforms had led to achievements in strengthening joint work, particularly under the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund. He urged Executive Boards to call on their agencies to further enhance work on joint programmes. He noted that some challenges that hampered joint work were beyond the control of United Nations entities: this included donors having different funding envelopes and procedures for humanitarian versus development work, which undermined the capacity to work effectively across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus. He also spoke of the need to expand deliberate collaboration and engagement with the private sector, guided by national priorities, given that it was a major source of funding, employment and potential green growth.

17. During an interactive discussion between Member States and the principals of the United Nations entities, delegations raised the following points:

(a) There is a need for: (i) a stronger focus on effective delivery at the country level, particularly in countries affected by crises; (ii) excellent leadership of United Nations efforts by resident coordinators and agency representatives; and (iii) a renewed commitment to cost-saving measures, avoiding competition. A delegation noted that national Governments must be the drivers of change and were responsible for their citizens' wellbeing, ensuring inclusive and transparent political institutions and economic development. The delegation pleaded with the United Nations to continue playing a key role in pushing the normative agenda to protect human rights, strengthen governance and promote sincere development efforts.

(b) While United Nations agencies had made positive contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, efforts had to be strengthened to improve the living conditions of people, using a long-term development approach. A delegation called for adequate, predictable and stable

financing for agencies, and for greater commitment by developed countries to assist developing countries, including middle-income countries, particularly in the transfer of technology and in infrastructure development. They stressed that the work of the United Nations must be aligned with national policies and guidelines and avoid fragmentation and overlap between agencies.

(c) As countries struggled to address the impacts of interlinked crises and shocks that tested their resilience, global cooperation had to be scaled up to support social safety net programmes, revisit the global economic order and mobilize and provide the scale of finance needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Noting that poor countries with low credit ratings were unable to access private funds at low cost, a delegation stressed the importance of delivering on commitments regarding official development assistance and climate funding, while also enabling financing on a concessional basis and ensuring access by developing countries to funds, especially during emergencies. They underscored that all lending instruments should include disaster clauses and that debt relief should be considered rather than debt restructuring.

(d) Institutions needed to be structured in a way that enables tangible solutions to meet existing challenges, reconciling human rights and development through creativity and innovation to tackle vulnerabilities, particularly in the face of multiple crises. A delegation underscored the importance of debt swaps for climate action and the proper allocation of available resources to support initiatives that ensure human rights to those who are left behind. They stressed that solutions must be informed by the views of communities who are most affected by the challenges.

(e) To strengthen access to financing and more inclusive development cooperation, spending patterns must change and investments must be channelled to reach the most vulnerable populations. A delegation emphasized the importance of investing in risk-informed social protection systems to tackle multidimensional poverty and of investing in women and girls and in just transitions. They also urged the United Nations to act as one to maximize impacts, but cautioned that financing deficit represented a significant risk to the implementation of priorities. In response, it was noted that innovation can help to reduce costs.

(f) As progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals lagged behind, there was hope that the Sustainable Development Goals Summit would inject some new impetus to accelerate progress. A delegation said that development agencies should take measures to improve efficiency, particularly in: (i) fostering conditions to enable development and inclusion, coordinating efforts to focus on developing countries; (ii) considering the views of countries when working on capacity development; (iii) promoting the reform of the global financial governance to ensure that it better reflects the demands of developing countries and that developed countries meet their development and climate financing commitments; and (iv) strengthening partnerships to support initiatives and actions led by Member States, including through strengthening support to South-South and triangular cooperation.

(g) The focus should be on implementation, especially of the roadmaps towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and particularly to enhance development financing and strengthen partnerships. A delegation expressed support for the reform of the IFIs and the Stimulus Package proposed by the Secretary-General. They noted that all actions taken by the United Nations should be in line with a country's UNSDCF. They said that regional cooperation should be further harnessed and they enquired whether the newly created Executive Board of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme would be invited to participation in future JMBs.

(h) Several delegations mentioned that unearmarked and flexible resources were important to help the United Nations to support countries to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. A delegation called on Member States to commit to the Funding Compact and stressed the need to improve feasibility and demonstrate results with core funding, while expanding the donor base, identifying new sources of financing and continuing innovative cooperation, including with non-traditional partners.

(i) United Nations entities must better incorporate gender equality considerations in their work, strengthen synergies to protect the rights of women and girls, and promote the empowerment of women to enable their full, equal and meaningful participation in political, economic, social and cultural life. A delegation stressed the need for a greater allocation of predictable financial resources to promote gender equality, saying that gender equality, and particularly as it relates to health, was a cross-cutting priority that contributed to building long-term resilience.

(j) Promoting the implementation of human-centred and comprehensive strategies is key. A delegation said that the actions of the United Nations development system were pivotal to addressing the impact of interrelated crises. They appealed for greater capacity building to promote the mobilization of domestic resources and for the strengthening of mechanisms to promote transparency and combat corruption. They sought greater details on the strategies that were planned to implement initiatives with resources from the Stimulus Package and on the implementation and coordination of INFFs.

(k) Resilience building permeated the mandate of various United Nations entities, as it was essential to ensure the effectiveness and continuity of results in development and humanitarian settings. A delegation noted that the promotion of resilience in an integrated manner had been hampered by the segmentation of resources between these two areas. Taking the example of financing resilience efforts within the WFP, they stressed the need for greater financing of resilience-building programmes for the medium and long term.

18. In response, the Administrator of UNDP underscored that, while United Nations agencies support countries in implementing global priorities, the departing point for agencies' work had to be the countries themselves and their priorities. He believed that the United Nations could not ignore human rights violations but nor could it act as a principal lecture podium. He said that the Resident Coordinator system had become more independent and empowered. He stressed that coordination, particularly with the IFIs and among United Nations entities, happened through several different channels. He encouraged delegations to assess whether inefficiencies within the United Nations, while existent, were any greater than those that may exist within each Government. The Executive Director of UN-Women underscored the need to find a balance between what was needed and what could be achieved. She noted that UN-Women supported initiatives that linked women's empowerment, climate action and technology. Highlighting that the normative agenda was key for UN-Women, she stressed the importance of investing in women and girls, advocating for them to remain at the centre of Sustainable Development Goals, and strengthening core funding to allow agile and effective action. She also reiterated the importance of partnerships to achieve results. The Executive Director of UNOPS noted that the results framework of UNOPS had been expanded to ensure greater accountability towards the Sustainable Development Goals. He reiterated the commitment of UNOPS to work across the nexus and to contribute to coordinated efforts and to the United Nations Common Country Analysis, particularly regarding infrastructure and procurement. He noted that the energy sector was a concrete example of an area where delivering as one will be crucial. The Assistant Executive Director of WFP underscored that, while crisis response is crucial, response efforts alone were not

enough and that United Nations entities must work together to anticipate crises and reduce needs. She emphasized the importance of investing in nutrition, supporting national safety nets – including through school meal programmes – strengthening social protection and building resilience to recurring shocks. She also noted that innovation was key to increasing cost-effectiveness and she endorsed calls from Member States on debt relief, the mobilization of domestic resources and strengthened partnerships. The Deputy Executive Director of UNFPA added that capacity building was key, particularly to reach those most left behind. She underscored the importance of working jointly to build on and learn from other entities' innovations and she underlined the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation. The Deputy Executive Director a.i. (Partnerships) of UNICEF underscored the importance of teamwork, collaboration and perseverance, particularly to strengthen effective governance, transparency and justice, with the normative agenda at its centre. Noting that debt servicing can at times amount to more than countries' combined investments in education, health and social protection, she stated that UNICEF and other United Nations agencies do not encourage Governments to reach unsustainable levels of debt by working with IFIs, but rather help them, if requested, to mobilize, sequence and make more effective use of a wide variety of financing sources. She said that innovative finance was another option for accessing financing, and that several mechanisms exist to facilitate this.

19. The President of the Executive Board of WFP concluded the meeting by noting the importance of collaboration for joint development solutions and for quality financing in the face of poly-crises. He underlined some of the key solutions that had been discussed during the JMB, including the need for strengthened social protection, integrated programming across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and increased system preparedness and readiness to respond to emergencies. He noted that implementing these solutions would require increasing public quality financing and unlocking new sources of financing, including innovative finance. It would also require strengthening broad-based collaboration, including between United Nations entities, Governments, the private sector, civil society and international development partners, to eliminate siloed approaches and duplications and to help countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly for the most vulnerable populations. He emphasized that national Governments were leading efforts to achieve these goals and that the United Nations system must continue to strengthen its support to national objectives, including by investing in local solutions and strengthening national capacities. He concluded by underscoring the need to put the discussed ideas into action and to pool solutions and efforts.

