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Annual report of the Administrator

Report of UNDP on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in 2018

Summary

In 2018, the Joint Inspection Unit issued six reports containing 38 recommendations (at the time of the present report). Of those, four reports contained 30 recommendations directed at UNDP, including 5 recommendations addressed to the Executive Board as the governing body of UNDP. In 2018, of the 30 recommendations directed at UNDP, 19 (63 per cent) are accepted (implemented and in progress), 7 (23 per cent) are under consideration, 2 (7 per cent) are not accepted, and 2 are not relevant (7 per cent). Of the total 26 (accepted: 7 implemented and 12 in progress, and 7 under consideration) recommendations, 10 (27 per cent) have already been implemented and 12 (46 per cent) are in progress.

In line with General Assembly resolution 59/267 of 23 December 2004, and as reiterated in resolution 62/246 of 3 April 2008, the present report provides a synopsis of management responses to the recommendations and draws attention to the recommendations directed to the legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations. The present report includes an update of the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in reports issued in 2017 and 2016.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report, including the management responses to the five recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit intended for consideration by the Executive Board (see annex II, available on the Executive Board website).

* Reissued for technical reasons on 2 May 2019.



II. Overview of Joint Inspection Unit reports issued in 2018

1. The present report provides a summary of the UNDP management responses to 30 recommendations¹ of the Joint Inspection Unit directed to UNDP (out of 38 recommendations contained in the six reports issued by the Unit in 2018, at the time of the present report), as well as the implementation status of relevant recommendations issued in 2017 and 2016. It draws attention to recommendations made by the Unit in 2018 for consideration by the governing body of UNDP, and to the proposed management responses (see annex II, available on the Executive Board website). The complete reports of the Joint Inspection Unit and any additional annexes and comments such as those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), for example – can be obtained through the Joint Inspection Unit website (<http://www.unjiu.org>), or through the hyperlinked titles of each report in chapter II. Comments of the CEB available at the time of drafting of the present report have also been included.

2. Four (out of the six) reports issued in 2018 (at the time of the present report) contain 30 recommendations directed to UNDP. The reports are: (a) Review of internship programmes in the United Nations system ([JIU/REP/2018/1](#)); (b) Review of whistle-blower policies and practices in United Nations system organizations ([JIU/REP/2018/4](#)); (c) Opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness in administrative support services by enhancing inter-agency cooperation ([JIU/REP/2018/5](#)); and (d) Enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities to conferences and meetings of the United Nations system ([JIU/REP/2018/6](#)).

II. Synopsis and review of relevant Joint Inspection Unit reports and recommendations in 2018

3. The management responses to the relevant recommendations in the reports are provided below. Annex I contains a statistical summary of reports issued by the Joint Inspection Unit in 2018, and annex II contains proposed management responses to recommendations directed to the Executive Board as the governing body of UNDP. Annexes III and IV provide information on the implementation status of recommendations issued in 2017 and 2016 (annexes are available on the Executive Board website).

A. Review of internship programmes in the United Nations system ([JIU/REP/2018/1](#))

4. The review addresses the role of internship programmes as part of the ongoing reform of human resources management in the United Nations system. The review covers the years 2009 to 2017, during which period the size of internship programmes in the United Nations system grew significantly. It is a follow-up to the previous work of the Joint Inspection Unit on this subject ([JIU/NOTE/2009/2](#)).

5. UNDP welcomes review and its findings and support initiatives to reform the internship programmes in the United Nations system, but wishes to note, as flagged in the comments of the Secretary-General and the CEB² ([A/73/377/Add1](#), paragraph 3) that applying the implementation of the proposed recommendations, including the benchmarks, would differ in each organizational context, including that of UNDP, would require additional time and resources, and would have budgetary implications.

¹ The 30 recommendations directed to UNDP are contained in four out of the six reports issued by the Unit in 2018 at the time of the present report.

² Hyperlinks to comments by the CEB that were available at the time of publication are provided throughout this report.

6. Five of the seven recommendations of the review are directed to UNDP. Recommendations 2, 3, 5, and 7 are directed to the Administrator. Recommendation 6 is directed to the Executive Board for consideration and is discussed further and commented on in annex II.

7. *Recommendation 2 states that executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, under the leadership of the Secretary-General as the chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should work together towards the establishment of more coherent internship programmes for the United Nations system, taking into account the benchmarking framework for good practices in internship programme.* UNDP is in agreement with this recommendation, noting that its current internship policy is largely consistent with that of the United Nations Secretariat, and UNDP is ready to participate in reform efforts undertaken at the United Nations common system level. Bearing that in mind, UNDP highlights that recommendation 2 is under consideration.

8. *Recommendation 3 states that the executive heads of JIU participating organizations should consider updating their internship policies, taking into account the proposed JIU benchmarking framework for good practices in internship programmes and identifying those benchmarks to be streamlined in the policies of their respective organizations.* While many of the good practices proposed by the Joint Inspection Unit are already integrated into the UNDP internship programme, UNDP is now studying outstanding elements, such as payment of stipends, for future consideration as part of the new people strategy. Bearing that in mind, UNDP highlights that recommendation 3 is under consideration.

9. *Recommendation 5 states that the executive heads of JIU participating organizations should put in place a mechanism to systematically track information related to internships, including on gender, country of origin, university from which the highest diploma was received, duration of the internship for each intern engaged and related costs (direct and indirect) generated by the internship programme. A report should be presented for information to the governing and/or legislative bodies of the organizations at their next sessions.* UNDP will be guided by the CEB recommendations on whether such a mechanism should be put in place. Bearing that in mind, UNDP highlights that recommendation 5 is under consideration.

10. *Recommendation 7 states that executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system should establish a collaboration mechanism between the public information services of the organizations and the permanent representatives of Member States to facilitate outreach to their capitals on a worldwide basis so as to attract young candidates for internships from diverse educational backgrounds from all recognized educational entities, based on the World Guide to Higher Education published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.* UNDP will be guided by the CEB recommendations on the establishment of such a mechanism, noting that UNDP is uniquely placed to conduct such outreach directly with local educational institutions and would support the basic premise that interns should preferably be recruited locally (or from local institutions). Bearing that in mind, UNDP highlights that recommendation 7 is under consideration.

B. Review of whistle-blower policies and practices in United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2018/4)

11. The review analyses the effectiveness of whistle-blower policies and practices across United Nations system organizations to ensure that whistle-blowers are accorded adequate levels of protection, especially with regard to retaliation. The review focuses on system-wide policies, processes and procedures for reporting misconduct and wrongdoing and for protecting those who report from retaliation. The review concludes that while there has been some progress, all organizations need to: (a) continue improving in terms of their written

policies; (b) pay particular attention to the practices associated with supporting those who do report; and (c) proactively protect those persons from retaliation (CEB comments are available in [A/73/665/Add.1](#)).

12. Overall, UNDP is appreciative of the useful findings and recommendations of the review, but wishes to note, as flagged in the comments of the Secretary-General and the CEB ([A/73/665/Add.1](#), paragraphs 3, 5 and 6), that applying the review's identified good practices as assessment criteria or targets for the broad spectrum of United Nations system organizations covered may not sufficiently take into account the different organizational contexts and circumstances of each organization. The review would have benefitted from a deeper analysis of the root causes of the challenges involved in ensuring whistle-blower protection within the United Nations system, as those challenges are closely linked to issues of policy harmonization and implementation, both across and within organizations, rather than policy languages. The review could have accorded greater prominence to the respective institutional and governance structures of the organizations to better describe which legal and internal administrative tools are available to guarantee justice for staff members or other complainants. Such an approach would have allowed the inclusion in the review of the elements for comparison with respect to seeking and finding justice and the sub-element on the protection against retaliation, when necessary, which at present are missing. The review contains eleven recommendations, eight of which are directed to UNDP. Recommendations 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 are directed to the Administrator. Recommendations 1 and 4 are directed to the Executive Board for consideration.

13. *Recommendation 3* states that *executive heads of United Nations system organizations should update their relevant whistle-blower policies by 2020 to address shortcomings and gaps identified in the JIU best practices ratings*. The UNDP protection against retaliation policy was reviewed and updated in 2018 informed by the findings of this report. The updates are in line with the latest guidelines in the Secretary-General's bulletin on protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations ([ST/SGB/2017/2/Rev.1](#)), and include:

- (a) protection of individuals who choose to report wrongdoing to an external entity in limited circumstances;
- (b) reducing the turnaround time for the Ethics Office to complete the preliminary review stage (from 45 to 30 days);
- (c) changing the definition of retaliation so that it aligns with the most recent bulletin of the Secretary-General;
- (d) the option of recommending transfer of the alleged retaliator; and
- (e) explicitly prohibiting retaliation against outside parties; and
- (f) additionally, UNDP introduced the possibility of interim protective measures during the preliminary review stage.

14. UNDP is fully aligned with the note by the Secretary-General and the CEB on this recommendation by the Joint Inspection Unit, which states *that applying those [JIU's] practices as assessment criteria or targets for the broad spectrum of United Nations system organizations covered by the report may not sufficiently take into account the different organizational contexts and circumstances of each organization and that such updates should be done as and where relevant for each entity* ([A/73/665/Add.1](#), paragraph 3, 19). UNDP commits to reviewing its protection against retaliation policy based on its own initiatives and identified best practices. The policy is reviewed every two years in accordance with its paragraph 12, the next review being due in 2020. Bearing that in mind, UNDP notes that recommendation 3 is not relevant.

15. *Recommendation 5* states that *by the end of 2019, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should develop comprehensive communications tools for all personnel on what, how, where and to whom to report misconduct/wrongdoing, including harassment and retaliation, in all the working languages of the*

organization. The Joint Inspection Unit identified UNDP as embodying best practice for this recommendation. In paragraph 163 of the review: “to aid staff in understanding what, where and to whom to report misconduct/wrong-doing, good practices identified by the Inspectors that are worthy of replication system-wide include: the UNDP publication ‘Where To Go When – A Resource Guide for UNDP Personnel’, which includes sections on reporting misconduct and reporting retaliation”. Further, the protection against retaliation policy and the newly updated policy on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination both contain adequate instruction on how and where to report concerns, and are available in English, French and Spanish. The anti-fraud policy details how and where to report concerns. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 5 and highlights that it has been implemented.

16. *Recommendation 6* states that *Executive heads of United Nations system organizations should develop by 2020 standard operating procedures for proactively protecting those who report misconduct/wrongdoing from retaliation, which should include undertaking relevant risk assessments and clearly identifying available support mechanisms and resources.* UNDP is fully aligned with the Note by the Secretary-General and the CEB on this recommendation by the Joint Inspection Unit, which states that *this recommendation is unclear and therefore difficult to support* and that *most organizations are doubtful that a standard operating procedure, on its own, would proactively protect from retaliation* ([A/73/665/Add.1](#), paragraph 26 and 27). In the context of UNDP, the protection against retaliation policy already includes the possibility of providing protection to any and all reporters, including during the preliminary assessment stage. As the policy already contains a sufficient description of procedures, developing separate, free-standing standard operating procedures is not necessary. Bearing that in mind, UNDP notes that recommendation 6 is not relevant.

17. *Recommendation 7* states that *executive heads of United Nations system organizations should develop standard operating procedures by 2020 for handling retaliation cases, with specific checklists and protocols for investigation, support services and communication.* The UNDP policy for protection against retaliation already provides clear and detailed procedures for the handling of retaliation cases. Relevant policy information addresses, inter alia, time frames, intake and review processes, investigation requirements, complainant notification obligations, and interim and final protection measure recommendation procedures. UNDP is fully aligned with the Note by the Secretary-General and the CEB on this recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit that *the proposed approach may create an unnecessary administrative burden that would not make the processes more efficient* ([A/73/665/Add.1](#), paragraph 28). Bearing that in mind, UNDP does not accept recommendation 7.

18. *Recommendation 8* states that *executive heads of United Nations system organizations should ensure that, by 2020, anonymous channels to report misconduct/wrongdoing are: (a) developed and operational; (b) available in all the working languages of the organization; (c) accessible to all personnel, vendors and beneficiaries; (d) reflected in their relevant policies; and (e) widely communicated.* This is already in place in UNDP. The Office of Audit and Investigations will investigate anonymous reports of wrongdoing. One area where such reports were not allowed until recently was that of harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination, which was changed with the updating of the policy in May 2018. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 8 and highlights that it has been implemented.

19. *Recommendation 10* states that *by the end of 2019, executive heads of United Nations system organizations should ensure that all supervisors and managers are required to complete specific training on whistleblowing policies and on how to appropriately respond to and handle misconduct/wrongdoing and retaliation reports.* In UNDP, the Ethics Office and the Office of Audit and Investigations have direct access to leadership

at all levels of the organization. In the context of UNDP, a separate mandatory training for managers is not deemed necessary, as UNDP already has in place a mandatory ethics training course for all personnel (staff and service contract holders), which details how to respond to, handle, and where to report misconduct or wrongdoing. The ethics training course also contains a section on the UNDP protection against retaliation policy. Further, the Joint Inspection Unit notes in paragraph 282 of the review that “the training provided by UNDP for new resident coordinators includes an ethics session that covers how to access and implement the protection against retaliation policies. The Ethics Office also provides customized training for field office staff that is based on country-specific data from the staff survey and inputs from audit and investigations staff on risks for the particular country”. The training for new resident coordinators is now provided to UNDP resident representatives, as the resident coordinator function no longer resides with UNDP as of 1 January 2019. UNDP has a mandatory course on ethics and one on protection against retaliation. The mandatory course on the legal framework also contains some of the same guidance. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts the recommendation and notes that it has been implemented.

C. Opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness in administrative support services by enhancing inter-agency cooperation (JIU/REP/2018/5)

20. The review assesses the opportunities to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of administrative support services, particularly at the country level. It was undertaken on a system-wide basis for organizations that maintain field operations. While focused on inter-agency cooperation on administrative support services at the country level, the interplay between country-level and global arrangements was also examined. The review sought to:

- (a) Clarify what organizations consider is required by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in terms of more common and integrated administrative support service delivery;
- (b) Estimate the scale of resources devoted to the delivery of administrative support services in general and at the country level;
- (c) Draw lessons that should inform future arrangements from current inter-agency administrative support cooperation at the country level, with a particular focus on business operations strategies and the country-level integrated service centres;
- (d) Assess the interplay between administrative support service arrangements at the country level and at the global and regional levels;
- (e) Assess opportunities to leverage established mandates and capacities in the United Nations system for administrative support delivery;
- (f) Assess the opportunities offered by mutual recognition of each other’s policies and procedures as a strategy for achieving efficiency; and
- (g) Examine governance, leadership and transparency requirements to drive efficient administrative support service delivery.

21. UNDP is appreciative of the Joint Inspection Unit review, as it provides detailed comparative analysis and recommendations on the topic of inter-agency cooperation that is useful for UNDP and for the broader United Nations system in the context of United Nations development system reform. UNDP is committed to the Secretary-General’s vision of the reform of the United Nations development system and is engaged in efforts at the global, regional, and local levels to ensure its success. At the same time, we are conscious that UNDP – like the rest of the United Nations system – must continue to seek ever more efficient and responsive ways of working. UNDP has a demonstrated track record in providing services to resident and non-resident

agencies around the world, as the report acknowledges; this work has enabled other parts of the United Nations system to achieve success and deliver results. We also recognize that such a history represents a wealth of experience from which UNDP can and must draw lessons learned and improve. UNDP is in agreement with the central tenet of the Joint Inspection Unit review that improvements must be made in how inter-agency administrative support services are provided, and to that end – in line with many of the findings – UNDP has accelerated its efforts towards improving administrative service delivery and client-oriented services.

22. UNDP is actively engaged in the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Business Innovations Group process and the work streams on business operations strategies (BOS), common premises, and other areas. UNDP continues to support BOS, and has developed beta software and an underpinning methodology to help United Nations country teams compare location dependent service quality and cost. This toolkit is a core component of the revised BOS guidelines, and will allow United Nations country teams to achieve full BOS compliance by 2021 (in accordance with the 2030 Agenda), by reducing the BOS development process from 6-12 months to less than eight weeks. The toolkit is in high demand by United Nations country teams and other United Nations organizations, and its pilot testing began in April 2019. UNDP is planning to roll out a ‘global customer relations management’ solution that will allow headquarters, regional offices and country offices to track and manage the quality of back-office services provided at the country level while also allowing UNDP clients to provide customer satisfaction feedback. We are strengthening the key performance indicator-based service level agreements at the local level and have established a working group to improve our service costing approach. We have begun a comprehensive improvement process of our management services capacity that aims to digitally transform the way we work and improve our administrative service provision through both shared service and country-level modalities.

23. Importantly, UNDP is not doing this alone. UNDP plays an active role in the logic of having lead agencies agree on some of the principles in terms of improvements to administrative service delivery, and lead by example. Through its recent review of management services and business processes UNDP has sought the feedback of peer United Nations entities including UNFPA, UNCDF, UNV, UN-Women, and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). At the executive level, the UNDP’s Administrator has engaged in frequent and consistent dialogue with the heads of the other development agencies, programmes and funds to seek tangible and realizable opportunities for better collaboration.

24. The review contains 10 recommendations, seven of which are directed to UNDP. Recommendations 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10 are directed to the Administrator. Recommendation 2 is directed to the Executive Board for consideration.

25. *Recommendation 1* states that *executive heads, in coordination with the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and with a view to a coherent system-wide approach, should, by the end of 2020, enhance existing systems or implement new ones to accurately identify resources devoted to administrative support services, irrespective of funding source or cost classification, and set out how efficiency should be defined and assessed.* This is a system-wide recommendation and is not of the sole remit of UNDP. In line with General Assembly resolution [A/RES/72/279](#), the commitment of the strategic results of the UNSDG Business Innovations Group of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group is to demonstrably increase value for money in the United Nations system through transformational change in the management of back-office functions. To deliver on that commitment, the Business Innovations Group established a project team, with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), UNDP and UNICEF constituting the four core actors and

volunteering full-time resources to the project team. The project team will create the Strategic Plan towards Common Back Offices by 2022, as called for by the Secretary-General and the United Nations Member States. As part of that work, the project will conduct the necessary data-gathering and analysis required to diagnose the current back-office(s) to help design the back-office models for high-quality, customer-centered service delivery through the most recent technology. UNDP is actively working and collaborating on the project and is committed to providing inputs to the process. In implementing this recommendation, UNDP will be guided by the processes and results of the Business Innovations Group. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 1 and highlights that it is in progress.

26. *Recommendation 4 states that in order to overcome the bureaucratic barriers, the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, should initiate, by the end of 2020, the testing of a model under which a single agency provides hosting services for the others.* United Nations development system agencies are already collaborating within the Business Innovations Group to propose an outcome that reflects the strengths and mandate of each agency to implement the Secretary-General's vision on business operations at the country level. In that regard, the Business Innovations Group could consider recommending to the General Assembly a good practice model for roll out as part of the reform effort of the United Nations development system. The Business Innovations Group could also act as the mediator and neutral platform for the scoping and key resourcing decisions on the model. The Business Innovations Group could be the catalyst for this model under the overall leadership of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and the Secretary-General. The Business Innovations Group project team will develop an implementation/transition plan for the move towards a common back office; models of consolidation; the results of the pilots; and the way forward for scaling up. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 4 and highlights that it is in progress.

27. *Recommendation 5 states that the Secretary-General should designate, by September 2019, a limited group of executive heads, which would include those of UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, to formulate a proposal for consolidated country-level administrative support arrangements, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution A/RES/72/279.* This is a system-wide recommendation and is not of the sole remit of UNDP. The Business Innovations Group could be the catalyst for these efforts under overall leadership of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and the Secretary-General. The Business Innovations Group is working towards establishing common back offices for all United Nations country teams by 2022, possibly through a consolidation of location-dependent services, and consolidation of location-independent business operations into networks of shared service centres. Shared services could be a key entry point for consolidated local service provision, since they provide value-added support to most processes where the client interface is located in the country offices. Agreeing on a global support arrangement will therefore clarify a large share of the support-role scoping in the country offices. This should be complemented by a strategy to increase the percentage of common United Nations premises, which will be the enabler for a local common services arrangement for general administrative services. UNDP is already contributing to the process by deploying capacity to the Business Innovations Group, supplying data and conceptual thinking. To promote data-informed thought leadership around this complex topic, UNDP developed a comprehensive analytics software system that allowed agencies to model business operation strategies data collected from over 73 United Nations country teams since 2012. Hosted by WFP, UNDP facilitated an inter-agency workshop to consolidate and analyse the data. UNDP is uniquely positioned as an operational service provider at the local level, with its global

office network and global support structure. Bearing in mind the need for system wide agreements, UNDP accepts recommendation 5 and highlights that it is in progress.

28. *Recommendation 6 states that the United Nations Sustainable Development Group should refocus the common business operations of United Nations country teams on a more limited agenda, such as common premises, facility services and procurement. All country teams should be required, by the end of 2020, to put forward a business case on common premises.* This is a system-wide recommendation and is not of the sole remit of UNDP. UNDP agrees that the business operations strategy of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group is a good approach to analysing the potential for United Nations inter-agency collaboration. UNDP is committed to the revision of the business operations strategy framework being more focused and widely applied. UNDP does not agree that each and every United Nations country team has to be in common premises, because this will depend on local circumstances that might not grant the elaboration of a business case for all country teams. When it comes to common premises, a funding mechanism should be developed that partnering organizations can tap into, also incorporating mechanisms to manage the associated risks. Joint long-term agreements and service contracts are already part of the business operations strategy service lines and will continue to be recommended for each and every UNDP country office. Bearing this in mind, UNDP notes that recommendation 6 is under consideration.

29. *Recommendation 7 states that the Secretary-General, in conjunction with other executive heads of entities with field-based programmes, should, by the end of 2020, develop a specific proposal that defines how to apply mutual recognition as a vehicle for capacity consolidation, so as to reduce redundancy and rationalize physical presence.* This is a system-wide recommendation and is not of the sole remit of UNDP. In November 2018, a joint statement on mutual recognition of policies was signed by UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCHR and WFP to facilitate inter-agency collaboration and leverage each other's best practices, thus also accelerating the United Nations development system reform process. The mutual recognition statement represents a broad consensus to enable the adoption of common or shared services, without requiring a review of the providers' policies and procedures. The mutual recognition statement provides the necessary high-level sponsorship for agencies to collaborate and benefit from each other's best practices, including innovative ways of working at the local level. It will remove barriers to collaboration where partnering is essential for a successful implementation of United Nations development system reform. At the same time, it reminds agencies of their responsibility to maintain sound financial and internal control systems when applying the principle of mutual recognition. The signing of the statement will facilitate setting up common service arrangements in the form of a soft collaboration or joint capacity at the local or global level. The key benefit of the tool is that it allows bottom-up collaboration with the overall agreement as the chapeau to the effort. UNDP will work with the other agencies in implementing the statement, since the established flexibility can now be utilized at all organizational levels to resolve barriers of inter-agency collaboration, allowing for entrepreneurial thinking among United Nations agencies. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 7 and highlights that it is in progress.

30. *Recommendation 10 states the Secretary-General and the executive heads of organizations that operate global, multifunctional shared services centres or envisage one (FAO, the Secretariat, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS and WHO) and of WFP, as well as other executive heads willing to participate, should, by the end of 2019, constitute a shared services board to develop the business case for and operational design of global shared services.* This is a system-wide recommendation and is not of the sole remit of UNDP. As the other agencies develop their offers for cross-United Nations agency service provision, UNDP is willing to participate in an inter-agency

shared services board that might be formed under the leadership of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Internally, UNDP is developing its own business case for further expansion of the scope of its global services being clustered from country offices. As the business case is available for the consolidation of services within an agency, the business case will also be there when expanding the offer of services to other United Nations agencies. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 10 and highlights that it is in progress.

D. Enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities to conferences and meetings of the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2018/6).

31. The review assesses the current status of accessibility for persons with disabilities to United Nations system conferences and meetings on a regular/periodic basis – events hosted by United Nations system organizations, as well as accessibility arrangements provided by host countries for persons with disabilities for all major United Nations system conferences/summits from 2008 to 2017. The review builds on the findings of the August 2016 Secretary-General’s report on an inclusive and accessible United Nations for persons with disabilities ([A/71/344](#)), and the accessibility plan for persons with disabilities adopted by the Human Rights Council Task Force in December 2017.

32. UNDP welcomes the review and wishes to note that promoting an inclusive development agenda that fosters equal opportunities for all, including persons with disabilities, is an important prerequisite for the achievement of the sustainable development goals and a key priority for UNDP as a development agency, as a human rights and social justice issue, as well as an important business imperative. With this, UNDP has committed to ‘walk the talk’, and UNDP teams across the globe are working to progressively support and enable the integration of persons with disabilities into their societies and addressing barriers and exclusion they often face, with a particular focus as the appropriate opportunities arise. While UNDP organizes and hosts meetings, conferences and events as part of its development work, this is not a core part of its mandate or functions.

33. The review contains 10 recommendations all of which are directed to UNDP. Recommendations 1 to 9 are directed to the Administrator. Recommendation 10 is directed to the Executive Board for consideration.

34. *Recommendation 1 states that the executive heads of United Nations system organizations should task the relevant offices with developing, by the end of 2020, a draft policy on the accessibility of conferences and meetings for persons with disabilities, as well as guidelines for policy implementation, and present them to their respective legislative bodies, should the endorsement of those bodies be required for the policy to take effect.* To enhance the accessibility for persons with disabilities to its premises, UNDP implements the [comprehensive guidelines on common premises](#) of the United Nations Development Group and has set minimum levels of functional accessibility for its offices, including access to the building itself, and to at least accessible office, one accessible bathroom, and one accessible meeting space/conference room. UNDP is a decentralized organization with presence in over 170 countries and locations, and the extent of compliance with the guidelines may be uneven across the organization due to resource constraints or the inability to make modifications in government buildings where UNDP offices are often located. However, UNDP persistently considers access when leasing or constructing new premises, and pursues all avenues to make modifications to the existing locations. UNDP if and when organizing large conferences factors the physical accessibility element of identified venues. With regard to information technology accessibility, UNDP follows the common standard for web accessibility (WCAG 2.0) that was

developed and promulgated by the World Wide Web Consortium (www.w3.org). The UNDP.org global website meets WCAG 2.0 standards, including navigating with screen readers. The most recent UNDP web template was created with accessibility in mind. UNDP complies with WCAG 2.0 requirements so that UNDP.org can be used by people with disabilities through the browser without any third-party ‘app’. UNDP follows the UN web accessibility guidelines (<http://www.un.org/en/webaccessibility>). Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 1 and highlights that it has been implemented.

35. *Recommendation 2 states that for all major conferences that are hosted off the premises of United Nations system organizations, the executive heads of these organizations should ensure that accessibility requirements are clearly stipulated in individual agreements concluded with the hosting entity for specific conferences and meetings.* If and when organizing large conferences, UNDP factors in the physical accessibility of identified venues. Additionally, the UNDP [stakeholder engagement guidance note](#) applies principles of accessibility and requires that reasonable accommodation is made for persons with disabilities. Considering how to overcome potential barriers to inclusion would be contextual, and considered in the stakeholder analysis and stakeholder engagement plan. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 2 and highlights that it has been implemented.

36. *Recommendation 3 states that the executive heads of United Nations system organizations that have not yet done so should appoint, by December 2021, a focal point on accessibility within their organization under terms of reference that clearly define the focal point’s role and responsibilities as regards enhancing the accessibility of conferences and meetings for persons with disabilities.* Accessibility to conferences and meetings is a complex matter that needs to be addressed holistically, including in premises, information technology services, and organizational culture and environment. In UNDP, accessibility is decentralized and managed locally within each office. Functional focal points in the Bureau for Management Services (human resources, information technologies and facilities), and the Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy (communications), provide accessibility advice to offices on an as-needed basis. While reasonable accommodation requests for accessibility are not centrally managed, a guidance note on reasonable accommodation is being prepared and will be piloted in the context of the new Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities in 2019 onwards. UNDP implements extensive communications training with offices on managing country- and office-level web pages, including the non-technical guidance such as adding textual information to a photo file (without the textual information, the image would be unreadable to software for people with visual disabilities). All communications training on digital design emphasize that universal design principles should be adopted as part of the content production in order to make final product accessible. This training and support is provided through webinars, toolkits, Yammer discussion groups, and responsiveness from communications advisors in each region, Europe and headquarters, so questions are answered quickly. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 3 and highlights that it has been implemented.

37. *Recommendation 4 states that the executive heads of United Nations system organizations should instruct relevant offices that address accessibility-related matters to develop, by December 2021, standard operating procedures with regard to their operational responsibilities to improve the accessibility of conferences and meetings for persons with disabilities.* To support the efforts of all UNDP offices to provide reasonable accommodation for colleagues as well as for partners with disabilities, UNDP has established several corporate long-term agreements that its offices can use, as needed, in 2019. These include:

- (a) Long-term agreement on assistive technologies, such as sound amplifiers and screen reading software;
- (b) Long-term agreement on information technology accessibility services, such as accessibility assessments, rapid accessibility remediation, and training for content developers and information technology personnel; and
- (c) Long-term agreement on Braille embossing on business cards (headquarters).

38. UNDP is working to ensure that the UNDP ‘eRecruit’ system and the UNDP job site are fully accessible. A disability accommodation mechanism is being designed to enable UNDP offices to provide reasonable accommodation through measures such as special office equipment, sign language interpretation, personal assistants or companions on missions, and the format of documents (such as Braille or large type). A guidance note on reasonable accommodation is being developed and will be piloted as part of the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities.

39. A number of quick guides for managers and personnel are being finalized. They will cover disability etiquette and strategies for communicating and interacting with persons with disabilities, creating disability inclusive job descriptions, recruitment and selection processes, tips for managers, and creating accessible materials and websites. As part of the implementation of the new United Nations System-wide Action Plan on disability accommodation, the UNDP approach to reasonable accommodation will be further refined and developed, possibly to include additional guidance, as needed, for meetings and conferences. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 4 and highlights that it is in progress.

40. *Recommendation 5 states that the executive heads of United Nations system organizations should make it mandatory for organizers of meetings and conferences to ensure, by December 2021, that:*

(a) The participation of persons with disabilities is fully supported by registration processes that are accessible for persons with diverse disabilities;

(b) Clauses are included in accessible registration forms to ask specifically about accessibility requirements;

(c) Information on accessible facilities and services is disseminated to all potential participants through accessible websites and information notes;

(d) Accessible post-conference and post-meeting satisfaction surveys consistently include questions to assess satisfaction with the accessibility of facilities and services.

As confirmed by the results of an internal, self-reported UNDP survey on the inclusion of persons with disabilities, a large number of UNDP offices reported that arrangements to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities to participate in UNDP events are made on a regular basis. Reasonable accommodation measures included accessibility of premises (such as the selection of disability-friendly venues or installation of fixed or mobile access ramps), transportation from/to the event, sign language interpretation, personal assistance, training security staff, and the availability of information in different formats. To ensure that reasonable accommodations were in place, some offices reported the use of a special questionnaire to collect the requests of participants at the event. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 5 and notes that it is in progress.

41. *Recommendation 6 states that the executive heads of United Nations system organizations should, by December 2021, provide the option for remote participation in all meetings and conferences that they organize, with no prejudice to the efforts to make attendance at meetings and conferences accessible to persons with disabilities.* The UNDP [minimum standards for ICT infrastructure and telecommunications](#) include the provisions for videoconferencing in terms of specifications, audio and video standards,

protocols, data interface, network connection and bandwidth. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 6 and notes that it has been implemented.

42. *Recommendation 7 states that the executive heads of United Nations system organizations should issue instructions to information and communications technology and facilities management offices to undertake periodic accessibility assessments of organizational facilities and services for conferences and meetings, and to ensure that organizations of persons with disabilities are adequately consulted at all stages of the process.* The UNDP Office of Information Management and Technology coordinates, guides and supports the global network of local information and communications technology managers of country offices. The office is redesigning the instructions for assessing and implementing conference accessibility technological solutions in country and regional offices. Once the instructions are finalized, they will be rolled out globally and monitored through the same network. UNDP will endeavour to ensure that all meeting and workshop venues on common premises meet the prescribed standards of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 7 and notes that it is in progress.

43. *Recommendation 8 states that the executive heads of United Nations system organizations should task procurement offices with drafting, by December 2021, provisions for incorporating accessibility checks and/or requirements into procurement policies and guidelines for consideration and adoption by the relevant decision-making authority.* As noted in the Joint Inspection Unit review, during the procurement process for premises at field locations for UNDP, when inspections are conducted, accessibility is carefully reviewed to ensure that at least the ground floor is fully accessible (paragraph 157, p. 42). UNDP will align with the policy changes to be introduced at the High-level Committee on Management towards incorporating accessibility checks and requirements into procurement policies and guidelines. The UNDP social and environmental standards include provisions for their objectives and requirements to be considered throughout the UNDP programme and project management cycle of which procurement is an integral part. (p.8, paragraph 11). The general terms and conditions for UNDP contracts therefore require suppliers to comply with the guidance provided in the UNDP social and environmental standards (www.undp.org/ses) and the supporting [stakeholder engagement guidance note](#). The commitments of the social and environmental standards build on the United Nations normative framework, including reference to articles 3 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 8 and highlights that it is in progress.

44. *Recommendation 9 states that the executive heads of United Nations system organizations should develop and implement through relevant inter-agency mechanisms, by December 2021, a common system-wide mandatory specialized training module on disability inclusion and accessibility for personnel involved directly or indirectly in the servicing of conferences and meetings, including, but not limited to, staff in conference management, facilities and services management, human resources management, and procurement, legal, ICT, medical, public information and safety and security services.* In order to increase awareness and sensitize staff about the importance and value of accessibility services, UNDP, jointly with the United Nations Secretariat, is working on the development of a set of learning and reference materials. These will include a core set of guidance notes for managers and staff, as well as a review and update of the content of the UNDP on-line course ‘Persons with Disability, Ability, Capability, and Employability’. The guidance notes for managers and staff will cover various inclusion topics, including: disability etiquette, creating disability-inclusive job descriptions and hiring processes, and creating accessible materials and websites. These learning materials are expected to be rolled out in 2019.

Additionally, a number of offices that will be receiving United Nations volunteers with disabilities as part of the UNDP-UNV Talent Programme for Young Professionals with Disabilities will be receiving special training on inclusion of people with disabilities. Some of the topics covered will include disability etiquette, inclusive human resources practices, and reasonable accommodation in the workplace. Bearing that in mind, UNDP accepts recommendation 9 and highlights that it is in progress.

III. Status of UNDP implementation of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations

45. In 2018, of the 30 recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit directed at UNDP, 19 (63 per cent) are accepted (implemented and in progress), 7 (23 per cent) are under consideration, 2 (7 per cent) are not accepted and 2 are not relevant (7 per cent). Of the total 26 (accepted: 7 implemented and 12 in progress, and 7 under consideration) recommendations, 10 (27 per cent) are already implemented and 12 (46 per cent) are in progress. Of the two recommendations that are not accepted, recommendation 7 concerns the review of whistle-blower policies and practices in United Nations system organizations ([JIU/REP/2018/4](#)) and is addressed to the Administrator. The management response to that recommendation is presented in chapter II of this report. The other recommendation, not accepted, is addressed to the Executive Board, and the management response is presented in annex II of this report. That is recommendation 6 of the review of internship programmes in the United Nations system ([JIU/REP/2018/1](#)).

46. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/258 of 8 May 2006, in which the General Assembly requested the Joint Inspection Unit to enhance dialogue with participating organizations and thereby strengthen the implementation of its recommendations, the implementation status of relevant recommendations contained in reports issued in 2017 and 2016 are reported in annexes III and IV to the present report.

47. UNDP has implemented 22 (59 per cent) and is pursuing 11 (30 per cent) of the 37 relevant (accepted and under consideration) recommendations directed at UNDP by the Joint Inspection Unit in 2017. Of the 11 recommendations that are in progress:

- (a) Two (18 per cent) recommendations are in results-based management and relate to the ongoing work on its enhancement and capacity-building within the organization to be implemented by end-2020;
- (b) One (9 per cent) recommendation relates to donor reporting and is in progress, as it relates to establishing joint evaluations across United Nations agencies to minimize reporting to individual donors;
- (c) Six (55 per cent) recommendations are in private-sector partnership arrangements and are system-wide and are not of the sole remit of UNDP;
- (d) Two (18 per cent) recommendations are related to the mechanisms and policies addressing conflict of interest, one of which is to link certification of the required ethics training course to the annual staff performance appraisal cycle and the other is related to monitoring conflict of interest issues.

48. UNDP has implemented 39 (83 per cent) and is pursuing 8 (17 per cent) of the 47 relevant (accepted) recommendations directed at UNDP by the Joint Inspection Unit in 2016. Of the 8 recommendations in progress, 7 (88 per cent) are not under the sole remit of UNDP implementation but rather are for consideration by the CEB. The remaining one (of the eight) recommendation that is in progress will be implemented by the end of 2020.

49. UNDP is committed to following up on implementing the remaining recommendations relevant to it, and to continuing its contribution to the various future initiatives of the Joint Inspection Unit.
