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Normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [64/289](#), provides a summary of the normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in 2018, through its substantive support to intergovernmental processes. The report also provides information on the Entity’s contribution to the implementation of the policy guidance provided by the Commission, including examples of programme activities at the country level.

* [E/CN.6/2019/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. In 2018, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) continued to support Member States in accelerating progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls through research, policy analysis, recommendations in reports of the Secretary-General and the provision of substantive and technical support and expertise to Member States for the systematic integration of a gender perspective into intergovernmental norms and standards.

2. UN-Women provided substantive support to the Commission on the Status of Women, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. The Entity also contributed to thematic intergovernmental processes, including in the areas of human rights, climate change, humanitarian action and the urban agenda. Opportunities for dialogue and partnership-building to accelerate progress towards realizing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls were fostered through the organization of briefings, meetings and side events with representatives of Governments, United Nations system entities, civil society, academia, the private sector and other stakeholders.

3. UN-Women also continued to support United Nations system entities in incorporating global norms and systematically mainstreaming a gender perspective, in accordance with the Entity's coordination mandate. UN-Women supported the implementation of commitments aimed at achieving the empowerment of women and girls through operational activities, including the agreed conclusions and other outcomes adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women.

4. The Entity's triple mandate endows it with a unique capacity to support the strengthening of global norms and standards; promote more effective coordination, coherence and gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system in support of commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment; and support Member States, upon request, in translating global norms and standards into legislation, policies and development plans at the regional, national and local levels, as part of its operational activities. It also enables UN-Women to provide information to support the development of global norms and standards with country-level experiences and puts the Entity in a unique position to respond to challenges and opportunities in the context of the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

II. Strengthening the normative aspects of the Entity's work

5. The section below provides an overview of the comprehensive support provided by UN Women in order to strengthen global norms and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as in the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, including its subsidiary bodies, and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

A. Commission on the Status of Women

6. As the substantive secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN-Women continued to support the Commission in its role as the principal intergovernmental policymaking body charged with setting global standards and formulates policies to promote gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and their human rights worldwide. This included substantive and logistical support in the preparation and in-session servicing of the Commission's official meetings during

its sixty-second session, from 12 to 23 March 2018. UN-Women also provided technical support for the negotiation process on the agreed conclusions on the priority theme.

7. The agreed conclusions on the priority theme of the sixty-second session, “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls” (see [E/2018/27](#), chap. I.A), build on the conclusions and recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General ([E/CN.6/2018/3](#)) and expand the global normative framework in three key areas: strengthening normative, legal and policy frameworks; implementing economic and social policies for the empowerment of all rural women and girls; and strengthening their collective voice, leadership and decision-making. The agreed conclusions elaborate on a range of rights of rural women and girls and on opportunities for strengthening their contributions to sustainable development, while highlighting their diversity and the discrimination and marginalization they may face and which need to be addressed.

8. UN-Women also supported the Commission in its review of progress made in the implementation of the agreed conclusions adopted at the Commission’s forty-seventh session on the theme, “Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women” (see [E/2018/27](#), chap. III.C). On a voluntary basis, 13 Member States presented information on lessons learned and challenges faced and identified best practices and means for accelerated programme implementation through national and regional efforts.

9. The documentation prepared by UN-Women for the session supported high-level interactive dialogues and expert panel discussions, including on the priority theme and the review theme, and provided policy advice through reports of the Secretary-General on the situation of, and assistance to, Palestinian women; the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts; and women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS.

10. UN-Women prepared for the session in a comprehensive manner. In collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme, UN Women convened an expert group meeting on the priority theme in September 2017. A working group of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, together with FAO, held an online discussion, entitled “Rural women: striving for gender-transformative impacts”, from July to August 2017.

11. At the regional level, UN-Women collaborated with partners in the organization of preparatory consultations in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Arab States. Those consultations facilitated the identification of priorities ahead of the session and the exchange of good practices. At the global level, UN-Women convened a multi-stakeholder forum in January 2018 in New York, bringing together Member States, United Nations system entities, civil society and other stakeholders to strengthen networks and help to build a conducive environment for the session.

12. In addition to adopting three resolutions on issues referred to in paragraph 9 above, the Commission took critical steps to set in motion the 25-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In particular, the Commission agreed to conduct, at its sixty-fourth session, a review and appraisal of their implementation. Comprehensive national-level reviews and regional intergovernmental meetings are envisaged. UN-Women collaborated with the regional commissions on the preparation of a guidance note for comprehensive

national-level reviews,¹ which was transmitted to all permanent and observer missions to the United Nations in September 2018, in all official languages.

B. General Assembly

13. For the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, UN-Women prepared three reports of the Secretary-General, the first of which was the report on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (A/73/294), which highlighted the need to enact laws that recognize sexual harassment as a form of gender-based discrimination and a human rights violation and that comprehensively address multiple contexts, including online and public spaces. It also called for greater efforts to address social norms, attitudes and practices that condone sexual harassment and violence against women, to create safe reporting mechanisms, to ensure comprehensive services to victims and survivors, and to strengthen data collection.

14. The report on trafficking in women and girls (A/73/263) highlighted the role of technology in facilitating trafficking and demonstrated that enforcement of legislation remained weak and conviction rates extremely low. It called for a gender-responsive approach that put survivors at the centre of efforts and ensured long-term protection and support to enable their full integration into society. The report on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation (A/73/266) called for increased efforts to improve the collection and analysis of data in order to enable more targeted responses for women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. It also called for comprehensive prevention strategies that engaged a variety of actors, including families, communities, traditional and faith leaders, as well as men and boys, to address attitudes and belief systems that normalized harmful practices.

15. In addition to its work relating to gender-specific agenda items, UN-Women offered technical support to strengthen the integration of a gender perspective in other General Assembly resolutions. On the basis of the findings of the report of the Secretary-General on measures taken and progress achieved in follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (A/72/203), outreach and advocacy efforts targeted resolutions of the First, Second and Third Committees that, in the past, had had few or no references to gender perspectives. Those efforts may have facilitated an increase of approximately 12 percentage points in the number of resolutions adopted between 2016 and 2018 that reflected a gender perspective.

16. UN-Women organized a special event of the Second Committee on gender-responsive infrastructure investments, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Project Services. Participants discussed the strategies, financing and partnerships required to address infrastructure investment gaps in order to meet global needs and promote environmental sustainability, while ensuring that a gender perspective is integrated in the design and delivery of infrastructure systems and services. Attention was paid to the impacts of safe and accessible infrastructure on women's political, economic and social participation and on the care economy; the importance of women in decision-making processes related to infrastructure development and the need for greater investments, including in the collection of data disaggregated by sex, and social safeguards to ensure inclusive and equitable benefits; the limitations of private financing in delivering long-term public benefits and the need for good governance; and the cross-cutting role of infrastructure in achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The discussion also contributed to the preparations for the sixty-

¹ Available at www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020.

third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, where sustainable infrastructure is part of the priority theme.

17. The Entity's contributions during the high-level week of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly raised awareness of effective policies and practices for accelerating progress towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women co-organized, together with the Permanent Missions of Liechtenstein and Mexico and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), a high-level event to mobilize support from Member States for gender-responsive implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. UN-Women also helped to organize a ministerial-level side event during the high-level week to discuss ways to strengthen action ahead of the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in 2020. In September 2018, UN-Women convened global business and philanthropic leaders to a forum on Sustainable Development Goal 5, at which it launched the Gender Innovation Principles initiative, led by the Global Innovation Coalition for Change, a coalition of partners consisting of private sector stakeholders, non-profit organizations and academic institutions. The Principles are a global set of standards adopted by the Coalition with the aim of taking a gender-responsive approach to innovation and technology. UN-Women also organized the 2018 HeForShe IMPACT Summit to discuss innovative solutions for achieving gender equality, as part of its efforts to engage men and boys.

C. Security Council

18. UN-Women continued to play a leading role in promoting and supporting the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, including by facilitating policy dialogues, gender analysis, the documentation of good practices, the provision of technical expertise and the monitoring of and reporting on progress. Its coordination role has been amplified since 2015, in the follow-up to the three peace and security reviews.²

19. In order to inform the Security Council's annual open debate on women and peace and security, held on 25 October 2018, UN-Women coordinated the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2018/900), with the support of the Standing Committee on Women, Peace and Security. In particular, the report emphasized women's meaningful participation in conflict resolution and peace negotiations. In preparation, UN-Women convened an expert group meeting in May 2018, which resulted in a report³ that put forward good practices, resources and recommendations for different actors.

20. As in previous years, UN-Women provided substantive support to Security Council members to strengthen the integration of women and peace and security concerns in thematic areas of work and country-specific situations. UN-Women served as the secretariat of the Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, established by Council resolution 2242 (2015) to facilitate a more systematic approach to women and peace and security within the Council's work and enable greater Council oversight and coordination of implementation efforts. The Group convened meetings on the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic

² See A/70/95-S/2015/446; A/69/968-S/2015/490; and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325* (New York, 2015).

³ Available at www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/10/egm-report-womens-meaningful-participation-in-negotiating-peace.

of the Congo, Iraq, the Lake Chad Basin region, Libya, Yemen and Mali and the broader Sahel region, which helped to improve the quality and depth of analysis on women and peace and security priorities and concerns and to monitor implementation of recommendations. UN-Women provided extensive information to Council members ahead of the Council's missions to Afghanistan, to Bangladesh and Myanmar and to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which increased the visibility of issues pertaining to women and peace and security during the three visits. UN-Women also briefed the Council regarding the Entity's high-level missions to Chad, Niger and South Sudan and supported women from civil society in their briefing of the Council during country-specific meetings on Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, the Lake Chad Basin region, Libya and South Sudan.

21. UN-Women worked with Security Council members and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to further mainstream considerations pertaining to women and peace and security within the Council's sanctions regimes. In 2018, the newly established sanctions regime for Mali included an explicit reference to sexual and gender-based violence, and the sanctions regimes for the Central African Republic and Libya were amended to provide for sexual violence as a separate designation criterion.

22. In line with Security Council resolution [2242 \(2015\)](#), UN-Women continued to strengthen the integration of its work on women and peace and security, counter-terrorism and the prevention and countering of violent extremism. UN-Women and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, as Co-Chairs of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force working group on a gender-sensitive approach to preventing and countering terrorism, continued to strengthen their partnership to promote gender-responsive strategies to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. UN-Women also worked with the Directorate and the Office of Counter-Terrorism to strengthen efforts to protect and promote women's human rights ahead of the 2020 review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and engagements with civil society.

23. UN-Women continued its advocacy for increased financing to support the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. As secretariat of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, UN-Women advocated increased and sustained support for the peace and security efforts of women's organizations. The Fund, which has contributed evidence and innovation to global efforts to prevent conflict, has set a target of \$40 million by the end of 2020. In partnership with the Peacebuilding Support Office, UN-Women supported efforts by the Peacebuilding Fund to exceed its minimum funding target for gender-responsive peacebuilding investments, which was raised from 15 to 30 per cent for the period 2017–2019.

24. In order to advance implementation of commitments to women's meaningful participation and leadership, UN-Women continued to provide support to women leaders and mediators. As secretariat of the Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network, UN-Women helped to organize its annual capital-level meeting in April 2018, which was hosted and chaired by Germany.

25. UN-Women supported efforts to translate global commitments to ensuring women's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict settings, including through the provision of gender expertise and support for women's meaningful participation in justice efforts, with tangible results. For example, in Kosovo, UN-Women supported the establishment of a commission to deliver reparations to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. In Colombia, UN-Women supported consultations with more than 300 conflict-affected women on their priorities for justice, which influenced the establishment of the country's truth commission in 2018.

D. Economic and Social Council

26. UN-Women prepared the report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (E/2018/53). The report highlighted gender equality initiatives of the Secretary-General, including on financing, gender parity, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as progress made under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Under the Plan, the percentage of reporting entities that met or exceeded requirements more than doubled between 2012 and 2017, from 31 to 65 per cent, owing to system-wide ownership, the leadership of senior management, coordination, networking, capacity development and facilitation by United Nations networks. Significantly, 54 entities (or 82 per cent of United Nations system entities) now have gender equality policies and plans in place, compared with 21 in 2012. However, performance fell short in areas related to gender architecture and parity, resource allocation and capacity assessment, which require increased attention from senior leadership to propel the system forward on gender mainstreaming. The report also elaborated on the Entity's key role in coordinating an extensive, system-wide consultative process to update the accountability framework for the second version of the System-wide Action Plan, launched in June 2018, which entities will implement from 2018 to 2022. Through a refined set of indicators, the second version expands the accountability framework to encompass system-wide reporting on results linked to gender-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

27. UN-Women supported Member States during the negotiations on Economic and Social Council resolution 2018/7, in which the Council called upon the United Nations system, including its agencies, funds and programmes, within their respective mandates, to continue to work collaboratively to accelerate the full and effective mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the United Nations system at the global, regional and country levels. Entities were encouraged to fully implement the second version of the System-wide Action Plan and enhance the consistency and accuracy of reporting to achieve full annual reporting by the entire system; collaborate with UN-Women to harmonize gender marker systems; and strengthen collaboration and coordination among United Nations staff working on gender equality and gender focal points to ensure systematic gender mainstreaming across the work of the United Nations in development, peace and security, and human rights, as well as in humanitarian action.

28. Substantive support was also provided to Member States by UN-Women to further enhance a gender perspective in Council resolution 2018/11 on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. Technical input regarding the use of existing data collection mechanisms in addressing sexual and gender-based violence contributed to such progress.

29. UN-Women supported the continued integration of a gender perspective in the Council's forum on financing for development follow-up. Together with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN-Women co-chaired the gender cluster working group of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, which consists of 17 agencies that have the mandate to mainstream a gender perspective in the report of the Task Force (E/FFDF/2018/2). The report tracked progress across the seven action areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and served as the main substantive input for the intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome document of the forum (E/FFDF/2018/3), which, in turn, served as key input for the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The Entity's leadership and technical

contribution resulted in more consistent gender mainstreaming across the report, including increased integration of gender analysis in relation to trade and taxation.

30. In their negotiated outcome, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to promoting gender equality through fiscal policies, finance, development cooperation, labour markets and other areas and stressed the importance of gender-responsive budgets and sustainable, gender-responsive infrastructure. Member States also called for more analysis, in the follow-up process, on how to realize the potential of blended finance, including its impact on closing gender equality gaps, and committed to strengthening efforts to collect, analyse and disseminate data disaggregated by sex and gender statistics in order to improve policy design and implementation.

31. For the first time, financing for gender equality was featured as part of the main programme of the forum. UN-Women participated in an expert panel that reviewed trends in financing for gender equality and explored policy options to increase fiscal space to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Examples of good practices presented were universal childcare services for all children, which can contribute to reducing women's unpaid care and domestic work, improving health, education and nutritional outcomes for children and creating decent jobs in the social service sector, and progressive corporate and income taxes, which can enhance equality and support investments in infrastructure, services and social protection transfers that improve the well-being and rights of women and their families.

32. UN-Women continued its engagements with the global process for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda through its contributions to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, held under the auspices of the Council. In 2018, forum participants considered the theme, "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies" and conducted a review of Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, and 15, as well as Goal 17, which is considered each year.

33. During the preparatory process, UN-Women systematically supported Member States and other stakeholders by providing policy advice and dialogue on the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This included technical support to Governments in the preparation of voluntary national reviews to facilitate the integration of a gender perspective. The Entity's participation in the regional forums on sustainable development contributed to greater attention to gender equality issues in regional consultations ahead of the high-level political forum.

34. In order to provide high-quality data, evidence and policy analysis to inform the national, regional and global reviews and implementation of the 2030 Agenda, UN-Women prepared various knowledge products, including the first-ever monitoring report, entitled *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.⁴ On the basis of available data, the report reviews global and regional trends on how the Sustainable Development Goals deliver for women and girls, assesses progress, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Goals from a gender perspective and provides recommendations to Governments and other stakeholders on gender-responsive policies and accountability processes. Drawing on the findings of the report, UN-Women produced targeted publications on

⁴ Available at www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/sdg-report.

the Goals under review in 2018, including a policy brief on inclusive cities for all⁵ and an issue brief on gender-responsive water and sanitation systems.⁶

35. As a contribution to the high-level political forum, UN-Women convened an expert group meeting in June 2018 on the gender perspectives of the Goals under review, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Bringing together representatives of Member States, United Nations system entities, civil society organizations, academia and other stakeholders, the meeting focused on good practices, implementation challenges and lessons learned with regard to the building of sustainable and resilient societies through the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The recommendations emanating from the meeting⁷ called for incorporating a gender perspective into the development of all national sustainable development policies, programmes and budgets to ensure gender-responsive procurement, expenditures, design and expansion of public services, as well as the full, effective and equal participation of women in decision-making processes, including in regard to natural resource management. Specific recommendations on each Goal stressed that the collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics must be strengthened to improve service provision; that planning and management efforts must take into account women's and girls' use of time and space; and that their disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work must be addressed.

36. The recommendations and other inputs provided by UN-Women contributed to strengthening the role of the forum in providing political leadership, guidance and recommendations for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. During negotiations on the ministerial declaration of the high-level political forum (E/HLS/2018/1), UN-Women drew attention to gender equality and women's empowerment as a cross-cutting issue across the Goals being considered. The declaration called for the leadership and participation of women in decision-making with regard to the design, budgeting, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes and reiterated the urgency of ensuring women's equal access to, and control over, land and natural resources.

37. As a contribution to the high-level political forum and as part of the Council's coordination and management meeting, UN-Women, together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), organized a round-table discussion with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of six functional commissions: the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the United Nations Forum on Forests and the Statistical Commission. The discussion highlighted the work of each commission on cross-cutting issues, such as gender mainstreaming and partnerships, to strengthen the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as ongoing efforts to deepen collaboration, interaction and information-exchange for more integrated results.

38. The Entity's continued engagements with the functional commissions contributed to stronger coherence and coordination on the systematic integration of a gender perspective across their work and to strengthened global normative frameworks for gender equality and women's empowerment. To that end, UN-Women

⁵ Available at www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2018/un-women-policy-brief-10-rights-of-women-in-informal-self-employment-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5824.

⁶ Available at www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/6/issue-brief-gender-responsive-water-and-sanitation-systems.

⁷ Available at www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/7/egm-on-building-sustainable-and-resilient-societies.

supported the participation of the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women in the sessions of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the United Nations Forum on Forests.

39. The Entity's efforts to improve gender statistics globally also contributed to the work of the Statistical Commission. UN-Women continued to provide countries with technical and financial support to improve the production and use of gender statistics through its global flagship programme initiative, "Making every woman and girl count". As a member of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics and the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, UN-Women provided leadership in improving statistical coordination. UN-Women also strengthened its collaboration with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to refine the indicator framework and develop indicator methodology. Together with the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN-Women continued to implement the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality project, aimed at accelerating improvements in national capacities to produce relevant and high-quality gender statistics.

40. UN-Women continued to contribute to the work of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. During the twenty-seventh session of the Commission, UN-Women participated in the general discussion and moderated a side event on gender-responsive programming and evaluation in the context of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, emphasizing the importance of monitoring and accountability for gender equality results. The strengthened collaboration between UN-Women and UNODC benefited from the expanded cooperation between the Chairs of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

41. UN-Women expanded its engagement with the United Nations Forum on Forests. The Entity's technical support to Member States on gender perspectives in sustainable forest management during the Forum's thirteenth session contributed to the reflection of gender perspectives in the outcome documents. The catalytic role of women and women's organizations with regard to forests and sustainable development was highlighted in the Chair's summary of the ministerial round-table discussions and the panel discussions, which also served as the Forum's input to the high-level political forum, as well as in the omnibus resolution (see [E/2018/42-E/CN.18/2018/9](#)).

III. Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women through international thematic and other normative processes

42. The following section summarizes the normative support provided by UN-Women to a number of intergovernmental processes through technical inputs, engagement and advocacy.

A. Human rights

43. UN-Women continued to provide normative support in relation to the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council to strengthen the integration of a gender perspective, including by supporting Member States in their preparations for the review, assisting with the preparation of reports by stakeholders, contributing to

United Nations country team reports, making interventions at meetings of the Council and supporting the implementation of recommendations.

44. The significant expansion of the Entity's engagement with the Human Rights Council, including through technical support to Member States, participation in official meetings and the organization of side events, contributed to the strengthened integration of a gender perspective in the outcomes of the Council and to greater visibility of gender equality and women's human rights in its deliberations. Of the 20 resolutions adopted by the Council during its thirty-eighth session, six were focused on gender equality: resolution 38/1 on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls; resolution 38/4 on human rights and climate change; resolution 38/5 on accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls: preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in digital contexts; resolution 38/6 on the elimination of female genital mutilation; resolution 38/7 on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet; and resolution 38/8 on human rights in the context of HIV and AIDS. New elements included the addition of the digital dimension with regard to violence against women; attention to the medicalization and transborder nature of female genital mutilation; gender mainstreaming in climate policies from a human rights perspective; and an acknowledgement of the need for gender-sensitive accreditation processes for non-governmental organizations. UN-Women provided information about recent results of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women with a view to contributing to the Council's outcomes, in particular on discrimination against women.

45. In support of the thirty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council, UN-Women focused its contributions on safe drinking water and sanitation and on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity. Regarding the latter issue, UN-Women provided substantive inputs to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the follow-up on the application of the technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce preventable maternal mortality and morbidity ([A/HRC/39/26](#)). The inputs provided pertained to addressing discriminatory laws, harmful social and cultural norms, stigma and discrimination, violence against women and girls and the lack of comprehensive sexuality education, all of which affect women's and girls' ability to seek maternal, sexual and reproductive health care that is available, accessible, affordable, acceptable and of good quality.

46. During the Council's general debate on youth, UN-Women highlighted the importance of young people having comprehensive and accurate knowledge on sexual and reproductive health and rights and access to discrimination-free sexual and reproductive health services. UN-Women moderated and participated in panel discussions on the integration of a gender perspective in human rights investigations, in which it called for a coordinated, victim-centred and human rights-based approach to documentation and justice, and on the experiences and contributions of indigenous women and girls. In its participation in a number of other panel discussions and interactive dialogues, UN-Women raised the importance of menstrual hygiene management and of ending cultural taboos around menstruation so that women and girls can lead healthy and productive lives and, in the context of the human rights situations in Syria and Yemen, drew attention to the perpetration of sexual violence and the significance of women's participation in peacebuilding processes.

47. In support of the work of special procedures, UN-Women, OHCHR and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, in collaboration with other partners, co-organized an expert group meeting on violence against women in politics in March 2018, which brought together more than 40 experts, including representatives of the Committee on the Elimination of

Discrimination against Women and other global and regional women's rights monitoring mechanisms. The findings of the meeting and the Entity's submission to the Special Rapporteur helped inform the first-ever report on that theme (A/73/301).

48. UN-Women continued to ensure that all Council-mandated commissions of inquiry and, increasingly, all fact-finding and expert missions have the required gender equality expertise to fulfil their mandates. In 2018, this included providing sexual and gender-based crime investigators or gender advisors from the Justice Rapid Response–UN-Women roster of sexual and gender-based violence justice experts for investigations on Burundi, the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, South Sudan, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

49. In coordination with OHCHR, UN-Women continued to support the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in all regions. Support was provided to States parties for reporting under the Convention, for preparing for the constructive dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and in connection with the preparation of shadow reports by civil society organizations and reports by United Nations country teams submitted to the Committee. Through its operational work, UN-Women continued to support implementation of and follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations, including the reflection of Committee recommendations in national laws, policies and programmes. UN-Women also supported the Committee in the development of its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change. This included the provision of inputs to the drafting of the document, participation in consultations and facilitation of the collaboration between the Committee and women's groups. The Entity's contribution resulted in strengthened accountability mechanisms on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and greater coherence between the disaster risk reduction and climate change agendas.

50. Together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), OHCHR and UNODC, UN-Women designed *A Practitioner's Toolkit on Women's Access to Justice Programming*. Premised on the human rights-based approach to programming, the toolkit supports sustainable access to justice for women, based on the three mutually reinforcing entry points: creating an enabling environment through reforming formal and informal legal norms that discriminate against women; reforming justice institutions to make them effective, accountable and gender-responsive as front-line points of contact; and empowering women through legal literacy and actions that are important for sustaining the first two entry points.

51. UN-Women continued its engagement with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to increase attention to the situation of women and girls with disabilities in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As the current rotating Chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UN-Women briefed the Committee on the work of the Group and participated in the meeting of Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies. Side events were organized at the margins of high-level events to discuss strategic approaches for promoting the rights of women and girls with disabilities, including migrant women and girls with disabilities.

52. In addition to providing written inputs to the reports of the Secretary-General and technical support to Member States for the development of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, UN-Women also served as the substantive secretariat for the expert working group for addressing women's human rights in the Global Compact, which was co-chaired by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of

All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. The expert working group produced a series of guidance notes that served as a pivotal toolkit for Governments and other stakeholders in the development of a human rights-based and gender-responsive Global Compact and that could inform national migration policies more broadly.

B. Humanitarian action

53. In an effort to highlight the imperative for gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience-building, UN-Women contributed to the development of the relevant reports of the Secretary-General, as well as to operational guidelines for a proposed common framework on risk and resilience (CEB/2017/2, paras. 41 and 42). For example, the Entity's contributions to the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa (A/73/340) helped to highlight the need for humanitarian efforts to address the resilience and self-reliance of women and girls in order to ensure a sustainable approach to reducing vulnerabilities and bridging the humanitarian-development divide. The Entity's inputs also drew attention to the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence, which disproportionately affects women and girls, and further recommended the collection, use and analysis of data disaggregated by sex and age at every stage of the humanitarian programme cycle.

54. As the Co-Chair of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Gender in Humanitarian Action, UN-Women was instrumental in developing the Committee's newly adopted Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, in which it updated the global humanitarian system's commitments to gender equality and established a formal accountability framework to monitor its future delivery. The adoption of the new policy was the culmination of the Entity's normative work over the last four years in that area and responded to existing commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls adopted at the World Humanitarian Summit, including in the Grand Bargain, and in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

55. UN-Women provided substantive support to Member States and key stakeholders to further promote gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience-building at relevant regional and international forums, such as the Africa-Arab Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction, the sixth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the third meeting of the Senior Leadership Group on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience. The Entity's technical inputs helped to ensure that the imperative of gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience-building was reflected in outcome documents.

C. Environment

56. Continuing its engagement in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change implementation process, UN-Women played an active role in the implementation of its gender action plan, the first concrete tool for implementing the gender-specific mandates adopted by the parties to the Convention. To that end, at the forty-eighth session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation in May 2018, UN-Women provided substantive inputs to the in-session workshops on gender and climate change and engaged in the dialogue with the constituted bodies on the integration of a gender perspective in their work areas. A joint submission by UN-Women, OHCHR and the International Labour Organization to the seventh Durban Forum on Capacity-building emphasized the need for capacity-building

efforts to be gender-responsive and adhere to human rights principles. UN-Women raised the visibility of gender issues through its participation in the *Talanoa* (facilitative) dialogue process, launched by Fiji as President of the twenty-third Conference of the Parties.

57. As input to the discussions of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement, UN-Women analysed the integration of a gender perspective in the discussions and prepared proposals for strengthening the gender-specific references in the Working Group's informal notes. UN-Women contributed to the regional dialogue on nationally determined contributions in the Caribbean, held in October 2018, and identified specific and concrete entry-points for gender mainstreaming in regard to the contributions.

58. During the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties in December 2018, UN-Women raised the profile of gender equality issues by co-organizing side events with United Nations system entities and by participating in mandated panel discussions and other events. UN-Women continued its collaboration with national gender and climate change focal points and the Women and Gender Constituency.

59. UN-Women contributed to the implementation process for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, with a focus on the implementation of its gender action plan, in particular in the context of the development of gender-responsive land degradation neutrality transformative programmes. UN-Women, together with the Convention secretariat and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, organized two technical workshops in November 2018 on capacity-building for Governments to mainstream gender perspectives in land degradation neutrality programmes in the Caribbean and in the Philippines.

60. UN-Women initiated collaboration with the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to strengthen the integration of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Convention. Together with the Convention secretariat, UN-Women organized a capacity-building workshop on gender mainstreaming ahead of the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, held in July 2018. The workshop strengthened the knowledge of Convention focal points and delegates on the interlinkages between gender equality and biodiversity issues and built up the capacity of delegates to integrate a gender perspective into decisions by the parties to the Convention, particularly in the development of the post-2020 biodiversity framework. The workshop resulted in the creation of the Friends of Gender Equality Group, which was co-convened by Malawi and Canada and provides a platform for both parties to the Convention and observers to collectively advocate for gender equality in the biodiversity process.

61. In the lead-up to the fourteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in November 2018, UN-Women provided inputs to the Convention secretariat regarding the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, with specific suggestions for making the process gender-responsive. It also collaborated with the Convention secretariat on the preparation of a mandated advice paper, which informed the Conference discussions. At the Conference, UN-Women co-organized events and strategy meetings that highlighted the interlinkages between gender equality and biodiversity, in support of a gender-responsive post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Discussions were also held on the successor to the current gender plan of action for the Convention, which ends in 2020.

62. UN-Women co-chaired the climate change working group of the Gender Equality Advisory Council for the Group of Seven, established by Canada in its capacity as President of the Group for 2018. Together with other members of the

Advisory Council, UN-Women co-authored recommendations for the Group on a gender-responsive approach to climate action. Furthermore, UN-Women engaged with the Advisory Council to review and integrate a gender perspective into the Group's decision documents.

63. The Entity's expertise in support of the Rio Conventions also contributed to the For All Coalition initiative, which was launched by the Government of Costa Rica during the high-level week of the General Assembly. The goal of the Coalition is to support countries in raising the visibility of gender equality and human rights messages and actions across the different multilateral environmental agreements. UN-Women provides technical support to the Coalition by convening an informal working group consisting of the gender focal points in the secretariats of the relevant conventions.

D. Urban agenda

64. In order to support the gender-responsive implementation of the New Urban Agenda, UN-Women participated in the ninth session of the World Urban Forum in February 2018. The resulting multi-stakeholder declaration includes a call for accelerated implementation of the New Urban Agenda through frameworks for implementation, platforms for multi-stakeholder dialogue, integrated territorial development and diversified means of implementation; governance and partnerships that engage all levels of government; and innovative solutions that develop monitoring and data collection mechanisms, create an enabling environment through municipal and other financing and adopt accessibility and universal design as core principles. As a result of the Entity's advocacy efforts, in the declaration, the stakeholders recognized gender inequality in urban economic and leaderships spheres as a persisting challenge, stressed the importance of strengthening age- and gender-responsive environments to ensure meaningful participation and engagement at all levels and drew attention to the limited opportunities and mechanisms available for multiple stakeholders to work together on planning, implementation and monitoring.

IV. Support for the implementation of policy guidance

65. The strengthening of global norms, policies and standards on gender equality and on the empowerment of women and girls was a foundation for the Entity's operational activities during the implementation of its strategic plan for 2014–2017 (see [UNW/2018/2](#)) and is reflected in the results structure of its strategic plan for 2018–2021 ([UNW/2017/6/Rev.1](#)). Accordingly, UN-Women is leveraging its normative support functions, its United Nations system coordination functions and its operational activities in an integrated and mutually reinforcing manner in support of transformative results. Consistent with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution [71/243](#)), UN-Women supports Member States, upon their request, in developing national capacities, including through policy advice and normative support. This includes support in the preparations for, and follow-up to, the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. Pursuant to the Commission's launch, in March 2018, of the process leading up to the 25-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN-Women will, within its resources, step up such support for accelerated realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

66. For example, in follow-up to the agreed conclusions on women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, adopted by the Commission at its sixty-

first session, UN-Women offices held consultations with Governments, civil society organizations, women's business associations and other development partners in a number of countries, including Afghanistan, India, Timor-Leste and Turkmenistan, to discuss additional strategies to advance women's economic empowerment.

67. UN-Women continued to support national mechanisms for gender equality in the development of institutional capacities for the integration of a gender perspective in national sustainable development policies and plans and the implementation of national action plans and programmes for gender equality, including strategies for women's economic empowerment. In Afghanistan, for example, UN-Women provided support to the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the development of its five-year strategic plan, 2018–2022, as well as the Women's Economic Empowerment National Priority Programme, which focuses on increasing women's access to economic assets and opportunities. UN-Women also supported the Government's Inter-Ministerial Committee in the preparation of an action plan based on the agreed conclusions of the Commission on women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, which was then shared with line ministries for implementation.

68. In efforts to eliminate the structural barriers that women face and promote women's economic rights and equal access to property and productive assets, UN-Women expanded normative and policy support to Governments to reform legal and regulatory frameworks and customary practices, including those on women's land rights. In Albania, for example, UN-Women advised officials on regulatory changes to simplify property registration procedures and encourage joint registration by both spouses, provided information to women on equal access to property and supported the training of officials and free legal aid for women. In Mali, through its flagship programme on climate-resilient agriculture, UN-Women engaged local leaders in allocating limited arable land to horticulture cooperatives of women farmers and facilitated the installation of modern storage facilities to prevent food loss and waste, resulting in an increase of at least 23,000 women farmers participating in smart-agriculture value chains and markets.

69. UN-Women supported the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated data on women's economic empowerment with the aim of facilitating evidence-based decision-making. In partnership with the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank, UN-Women delivered a regional capacity-building workshop on gender-responsive poverty assessments, methodologies for undertaking country gender profiles and the collection, dissemination and use of gender statistics that brought together representatives of national institutes of statistics and gender equality ministries from 53 African countries. In Ethiopia, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, UN-Women engaged stakeholders to strengthen national action in regard to the global indicators on women and land rights. In Colombia, in partnership with the National Administrative Department of Statistics, UN-Women supported the consolidation and analysis of national data in order to support greater integration of a gender perspective in economic public policies and plans, including agricultural and rural development plans and projects. Following a study on the energy sector in India, UN-Women partnered with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and the subnational government of Madhya Pradesh to reduce emissions. The programme works through women-owned and women-managed enterprises to provide solar power and train women in the management of the systems.

70. UN-Women supported initiatives and networks that promote women's economic opportunities and enjoyment of their rights. It also strengthened partnerships with strategic organizations and institutions. For example, in partnership with the European External Action Service, two programmes on engaging the private sector and other partners were implemented in the Group of Seven countries (We Empower) and in six Latin American and Caribbean countries (Win-Win: Gender Equality

Means Good Business) that place the Women's Empowerment Principles on the future of work agenda. As a founding partner of "EQUALS", the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age, and a member of the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, UN-Women continued to advocate for and organize knowledge-sharing events to achieve gender equality in the digital economy, while decreasing the risk of labour market disruptions, and to improve the livelihoods of millions of women and girls around the world.

71. In partnership with private sector companies, women's networks and business enterprises, UN-Women delivered business development training and support to women entrepreneurs in Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan and South Africa. Through the flagship programme, Stimulating Equal Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs, UN-Women enhanced women's access to and benefits from global value chains and promoted a better business ecosystem for women. UN-Women also partnered with Ashoka, Diversio, Open Society Foundations, UNDP, the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and the World Bank to identify good practices for women's economic empowerment, including by women entrepreneurs and business start-ups.

V. Conclusion

72. The provision of normative support to intergovernmental processes and bodies remained a high priority for UN-Women in 2018. The Entity strengthened its engagements in and contributions to various sectoral and thematic intergovernmental processes to bring greater attention to the urgency of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The Entity drew on lessons learned and evidence gathered through the normative support it provided in the context of operational activities, in order to reinforce coherence, consistency and coordination between the normative and operational aspects of its work. The Entity's efforts were guided by a commitment to support the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in partnership and in collaboration with multiple stakeholders to ensure that no one is left behind.

73. The 25-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2020 presents a momentous opportunity to assess progress and remaining gaps and challenges at all levels and galvanize intensified and impactful actions and partnerships to close those gaps. UN-Women will support the work of the Commission as it strengthens the global normative framework and will contribute to the accelerated implementation of the Commission's policy guidance to achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the fulfilment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.