



# Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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**Organizational matters**

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## Report on the second regular session of 2017, 29 to 30 August 2017

### I. Organizational matters

1. The second regular session of 2017 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) was held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 29 to 30 August 2017.
2. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the second regular session (UNW/2017/L.4) and approved the report on its annual session, held from 27 to 28 June 2017 (UNW/2017/5). The Executive Board also approved the proposed provisional agenda and workplan for the first regular session of 2018, to be held on 13 February (see annex I), and discussed the draft annual workplan for 2018, in preparation for its adoption at the first regular session of 2018.
3. The Executive Board adopted five decisions: Decision 2017/5 - United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Strategic Plan 2018-2021; Decision 2017/6 - Integrated budget estimates for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women for the biennium 2018-2019; Decision 2017/7 - Structured Dialogue on Financing: Financing the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021; Decision 2017/8 - UN-Women Executive Board field visit; and Decision 2017/9 - UN-Women's Management Response to the Report of the Board of Auditors, as contained in annex II of the present report.

### II. Opening statements

4. The President of the Executive Board, Lana Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, officially opened the session. Speaking in her national capacity, she underscored her country's commitment to promoting the empowerment of women, as well as its unwavering

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support to and partnership with UN-Women from its inception. This led to the launch of a UN-Women Liaison Office in Abu Dhabi – the first of its kind in the region – under the patronage of the First Lady of the United Arab Emirates, Her Highness Sheikhha Fatima bint Mubarak.

5. With regard to the Executive Boards' joint and UN-Women Executive Board's field visits to Nepal and India, respectively, she highlighted her first-hand observance of UN-Women's normative, intergovernmental work in New York being implemented at an operational level on the ground. She also saw how this operational experience was integrated into the cycle of developing norms, refining policy, and improving operational response through UN-Women's internal thought leadership process. She emphasized that these field visits demonstrated the immense impact that UN-Women has on the ground – and the ever-growing workload that the Entity has undertaken to advance gender equality and empower women around the world, particularly in light of Agenda 2030. She stated that it was impressive to witness the dedication and professionalism of UN-Women's workforce and urged the Entity to organize its own Executive Board field visits on an annual rather than ad-hoc basis.

6. The President mentioned that the responsibilities of UN-Women and its areas of intervention have increased over time, and it relied almost entirely on voluntary financial contributions to sustain its work. Two per cent of UN-Women's budget emanates from the regular budget of the United Nations, and 98 per cent from voluntary contributions. It was worth noting that with only thirteen years left until the 2030 deadline to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, it was critical for UN-Women to be adequately resourced, to address gender inequality and accelerate progress. She emphasized that there was enormous demand around the world for UN-Women's immense expertise and experience and therefore, it was necessary to ensure that the Entity's ability to drive change was not hampered by a lack of resources.

7. In her opening remarks, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, thanked the President for her support, dedication and advice throughout her yearlong tenure. She extended her gratitude to the Bureau, thanking them for their extensive work, particularly in facilitating decisions, chairing meetings and fostering dialogue between UN-Women and Member States, and among Member States themselves. In addition, she took the opportunity to thank the Executive Board for its endorsement of her second term in office.

8. Referring to the new UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021, the head of the Entity indicated that as a management and planning tool, the Strategic Plan aimed to directly tackle the structural causes of gender-based discrimination and inequality through the repeal of discriminatory laws; the transformation of discriminatory social norms and stereotypes; and the strengthening and support of institutions, so that they could deliver equally for women and men. It was evident that momentum was already building for change with respect to these structural aspects. She took a moment to highlight some signals of progress made to end discrimination against women in some parts of the world, since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Despite existing challenges and the fact that they took years to achieve, these positive changes would have implications for generations to come.

9. She stated that the Strategic Plan articulated better than ever before, how the UN-Women mandate of normative support, United Nations coordination and operational activities could be implemented for greater impact. In mentioning some of the examples of progress in these areas she thanked the European Union for the opportunity to work in partnership with them and the United Nations System, to end violence against women. She reiterated that whether the targeting of women and girls in conflict zones, the harassment of women running for public office or the high rate of femicide in some parts of the world, violence against women remained one of the most serious obstacles to the realization of women's political, economic and social rights today. It was a barrier to women that existed in every country, with cumulative layers of discrimination based on race, age, class, disability, education, ethnicity and gender. She reiterated that while violence against women persists, true equality would be non-existent.

10. The head of the Entity outlined that the Strategic Plan had five main outcome areas, focused on concrete and specific results. For instance, UN-Women planned to continue to support Member States' efforts to strengthen and implement global norms and standards; to ensure that women can attain income security, decent work and economic autonomy; to facilitate more women and girls able to contribute to peace and security and benefit from prevention efforts and humanitarian action – including working with partners to increase funding earmarked for women in peacebuilding and humanitarian response. She emphasized that with the Board's support UN-Women would continue striving to improve results measurement, to be able to fully measure the extent of impact through this Strategic Plan.

11. Touching on the Secretary-General's initiative to reposition the United Nations Development System, as well as to ensure that the United Nations reaches gender parity, she reaffirmed UN-Women's commitment to support, underlining that gender equality was the leading area of concentration of United Nations joint programmes. UN-Women planned to continue identifying what measures would lead to a more effective and efficient United Nations System, particularly at the country level.

12. On the Integrated Budget, UN-Women was proposing projected voluntary contributions of \$880 million for 2018-2019 and requesting an institutional budget appropriation of \$203.8 million. The two-year Integrated Budget was aligned with the four-year Strategic Plan and complemented with assessed contributions under the Regular Budget of the United Nations. Stressing the importance she placed on accountability, the head of the Entity emphasized that financial accountability had ensured that UN-Women continuously produced clean audits. She pointed out that for the Entity to maintain this trend, it would be important to ensure that, as decentralization occurs, the Entity remained active system-wide, within and among UN Agencies, and strengthened its capacity. In this regard, she requested an upgrade of the P5 Chief of Accounts to a D1 Deputy Director level, underscoring that this was at a comparable level among United Nations peers for a controller, who could advocate for gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system-wide budget and finance fora.

13. It was mentioned that 193 donors, most of them Member States, provided the financial means for UN-Women in 2016, and the majority among them were renewing and expanding their contributions in 2017. In 2016 alone, 46 Member States expanded their financial support, 9 countries more than doubled their overall

voluntary contributions, while 16 countries doubled, or more than doubled their core contribution. The head of the Entity expressed her appreciation for this support.

14. Stressing the urgency in addressing the unmet needs of women and girls around the world, she stated that the Board's endorsement of the new Strategic Plan would allow UN-Women to immediately step up its support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda – working together with Member States towards substantive equality.

### **III. Financial budgetary and administrative matters**

15. The Director, Management and Administration presented the report on integrated budget estimates for the biennium 2018-2019, the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the related management response. The budget is the financial plan that allows the organization to have the financial and institutional capacity to achieve the results of its Strategic Plan, and covers all cost categories and funding sources, both regular and other resources, within a single, consolidated proposal. The integrated budget was grounded in results-based management principles and aligned with the integrated results framework of its Strategic Plan. To deliver on the integrated results framework, UN-Women would continue to engage Member States and other partners to increase regular resources, the bedrock of its activities, as underscored in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

16. Total resources projected for 2018-2019 were \$1,158.7 million, inclusive of \$880 million of projected voluntary contributions. Out of the total projected resources, \$460.5 million were regular resources and \$698.2 million, other resources. 83.8 per cent of resources in this integrated budget would be devoted to development activities (including development effectiveness), 12.8 per cent to management, 2.9 per cent to United Nations development coordination, and 0.3 per cent for special purpose activities. The management costs ratio for 2018-2019 was therefore decreasing, as compared to the estimates of 2016-2017.

17. While the regular budget did not increase since the establishment of UN-Women, it served intergovernmental mandates that expanded significantly since the Entity started its operations. The regular budget was a very small proportion, at only 1.7 per cent, of the total resources projected for the organization for 2018-2019. Considering the above, the functional analysis was elaborated with the aim of identifying posts funded from extra-budgetary resources (voluntary contributions) that contributed to the normative intergovernmental work of the Entity. The analysis was based on an internal review of the staffing table, functions, work plans, job descriptions and source of funds across Divisions. Five posts were identified as performing normative intergovernmental functions. To secure funding for the five posts proposed for conversion, a provision of \$2 million was included in the 2018-2019 integrated budget estimates. Should the United Nations General Assembly decide to approve the UN-Women's proposal to convert the five posts from voluntary contributions to regular budget, the extra-budgetary resources for these posts would be redirected to programme activities.

18. In this regard, the ACABQ recommended that the General Assembly approve the inclusion of the aforementioned five posts under the regular budget for the biennium 2018-2019, the Executive Board removed the corresponding costs from

the institutional budget 2018-2019, commensurately reducing the appropriation and increasing resources pertaining to programme activities. Subject to its recommendations in paragraphs 13 and 17 of its report, the ACABQ also recommended approval of the institutional component of the integrated budget estimates of UN-Women for the biennium 2018-2019, as well as that the Executive Board approve an appropriation in the amount of \$203.8 million (gross), including 31.4 million dollars for cost recovery for other resources.

19. Several Member States took the floor commending the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on her appointment for a second four-year term at the helm of UN-Women. They thanked the Bureau led by the President, and appreciated the extensive consultation process for the development of the new Strategic Plan, as well as the efforts made by UN-Women to achieve a balance among the various priorities, divergent views and concerns of Member States. Most member states overall agreed with the approach of the Strategic Plan, expressed the view that it would move the Entity in the right direction and looked forward to its adoption at this session.

20. Highlighting accomplishments at their respective national levels, delegations welcomed UN-Women's adherence to the principle of "leaving no one behind" and efforts to address the prevention of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against women, within the framework of the Strategic Plan. Some speakers were pleased to see that the Strategic Plan not only built on lessons learned, and recent evaluation recommendations, but that it adopted a more focused and coordinated approach to UN-Women's convening role and partnerships to catalyse change for women and girls. Some delegations underlined that the strategic work to ensure girls' right to education and women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, was an essential element of this framework. The Entity was commended for showing leadership in addressing, through its programming, the barriers preventing women and girls from realizing their rights.

21. Many speakers reiterated their full support of the tripartite mandate of UN-Women. They were pleased to note that the Strategic Plan was guided by key intergovernmental norms and standards including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development as well as the Review of the lessons learned from the implementation of the previous Strategic Plan.

22. While acknowledging the integrated nature of UN-Women's role in normative support, United Nations coordination and operational activities, several delegations were of the view that in the face of great demand, the normative and coordinating parts of UN-Women's mandate should be given sufficient priority. One speaker appreciated that the human rights-based approach was reflected as a guiding principle in the Strategic Plan. The Entity was commended for highlighting respect for national ownership in the implementation of its mandate. One delegation stressed that the essence of the Sustainable Development Goals lies with the empowerment of all people, including women and girls. Some speakers welcomed reference made to men and boys in the promotion of gender equality, as well as to youth as enablers and beneficiaries of a gender equal world.

23. Some voiced support for the proposed institutional and integrated budgets while others referred to it as optimistic, and reminded of the importance of the

structured dialogue on financing. The Entity was urged to continue actively taking on board the recommendations of the ACABQ.

24. One speaker stressed that understanding gender equality issues from the perspective of developing countries was key to mainstreaming gender in all development activities. The delegation further stated that the inclusion of UN-Women in United Nations system-wide humanitarian assistance efforts would help mitigate the negative effects experienced by women and girls in situations caused by crises and natural disasters. They emphasized that the Strategic Plan should be guided by the new Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review and priority given to the least developed countries – particularly in their implementation of the Istanbul Platform for Action. In addition, UN-Women was urged to take an organizational approach to address the digital divide between men and women, financial inclusion and strengthening national capacities for achieving the Entity's objectives.

25. Some Member States welcomed the Entity's efforts to improve the integrated results and resource framework, noting, however, that there was still room for improvement in defining a logical flow from outputs to outcome. This was viewed as critical for UN-Women to be able to report on all levels of the framework. They urged the UN-Women regional and country offices to ensure that they reflect the priorities and direction of the Strategic Plan in their own strategies and business plans.

26. One delegation opined that the Integrated Results and Resources Framework indicators could have been stronger, to facilitate better measurement of how UN-Women strengthens the rights of women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, in particular, the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

27. There was a specific call for UN-Women to increase its presence in the Pacific region, backed by quote from the Quadrennial Comprehensive Programme Review's paragraphs 10 and 11, which requests the United Nations development system "to continue to support developing countries and to address within existing resources and mandates, the special challenges facing the most vulnerable countries." It was stated that the Pacific was most vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters, and the displacement of women and children, due to the effects of climate change, warrant special attention to women in these situations. One Member State reminded of the importance to provide assistance to Member States upon their request.

28. One Member State expressed support for the flagship programme initiative for increased resources, greater impact and sustainable results on the ground. Other delegations emphasized the importance of resource mobilization including the need to diversify the donor base, urging continued investment in activities that would enhance the confidence of partners. Some Member States urged the Entity to leverage private sources of capital, calling for a balance in ambition to mobilize resources, with an in-depth assessment of expected income and budgets, together with strategic focus on prioritization. One speaker urged UN-Women to make more visible the positive results achieved with core funding, while others appreciated the Entity's work on innovation, stressing that the changing financial climate called for innovative approaches. One delegation emphasized that the amount of voluntary contributions should not affect the level of assistance provided to interested Member States.

29. About the United Nations reform agenda, one Member State opined that a strengthened United Nations Organization that delivers value for money with full transparency could be achieved by placing emphasis on four main issues: leadership, efficiency, accountability, and performance, and noted that these reform priorities are rooted in the Secretary-General's recent report on reform.

#### IV. Structured dialogue on financing

30. The Report on the Structured Dialogue on Financing: Financing the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021, was presented by the Director, Strategic Partnerships. The structured dialogue was particularly significant given UN-Women's unique tripartite mandate, which required adequate financing for each of its component parts. UN-Women leveraged its three functions of normative support, United Nations system coordination and operational activities in an integrated manner for transformative results. These three functions must be supported through: (i) knowledge management, strategic planning and performance management; (ii) a strong knowledge hub, advocacy, and strategic partnerships with civil society – including youth and women's groups – as well as the private sector; and (iii) operational and human resources management and accountability. UN-Women relies on three main sources of funding to support the full implementation of its mandate: (i) assessed contributions also known as "assessed resources"; (ii) regular resources also known as "core resources" or unearmarked voluntary contributions; (iii) other resource also known as "noncore resources" or specified voluntary contributions.

31. Between 2012 and 2016 UN-Women enjoyed revenue growth of roughly 9.5 per cent per year overall. Between 2012-2014 UN-Women experienced steady and relatively high growth, in 2015 revenue dipped, and in 2016 growth resumed, albeit below projections. The organization has leveraged this growth to deliver forward momentum to: (i) fulfil its normative support and UN system coordination functions; (ii) almost double its operational activities since 2011; (iii) improve results-based management; and (iv) receive clean audit findings every year.

32. To expand resources further and faster, UN-Women continued to strengthen its approach to resource mobilization. The organization launched a process of reviewing trends and lessons learned on resource development overall, analyzed the risks and opportunities of the diverse segments of current and future revenue streams, and initiated adjustments to its priorities, approaches, and systems. This report summarized these efforts, which grounded growth projections for the 2018-2019 period and preliminary growth estimates for 2020-2021.

33. Member States commended UN-Women for its work on mobilising resources and engaging non-traditional and non-state donors. They appreciated the report and the high-quality analysis undertaken. One speaker called for the clarification of which functions would be financed through core resources and other 'neutral' sources of funding, in future dialogues. The delegation noted that it was important that such resources be used for the UN-Women's normative work at global and country level.

34. With reference to the Secretary-General's report on United Nations reform, it was emphasized that the Structured Dialogue on Financing should also include how system-wide results would be financed. UN-Women was asked to elaborate in future annual reporting on how it prioritized within the framework of the Strategic Plan

and the criteria for country presence, if resource mobilization targets did not materialise. UN-Women was commended for efforts to raise core and non-core funding, and urged to bring the structured financing dialogue to yet another level by taking a proactive role in engaging in strategic dialogues with individual Member States as well as non-state donors. One Member State noted that effort would be made for greater programme focus; balanced portfolio; and to 'deliver as one'. They welcomed the Entity's plan to work towards enhancing joint/pooled funding.

35. UN-Women was requested to continue its efforts to ensure transparency with regard to financial resources and how they were spent. They urged other Member States to increase their contributions to UN-Women's core resources, in order to ensure that the Entity was in a position to deliver on its very important triple mandate.

## **V. Audit matters**

36. The Director of Management and Administration and the Chief of Accounts introduced and presented a review of the audited financial statements and the management response to the Board of Auditors report for the year ended 31 December 2016.

37. UN-Women continued to improve systems for performance management and reporting, financial accountability, audit, human resource management, risk management and operational infrastructure, and has a strong independent evaluation function. In 2016, it received a fifth consecutive unqualified audit report, confirming that the financial statements were in accordance with the International Public-Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), and that transactions tested as part of the audit were in all significant respects, in accordance with the financial regulations and rules of UN-Women. At the end of the third year of its Strategic Plan, UN-Women's performance against its targets, including targets revised in the midterm review, was positive. In total, 71 per cent of development targets were achieved or on track. Despite resource constraints, performance was strong at the outcome and output levels with 79 and 76 per cent achieved or on track respectively.

38. The management of UN-Women committed itself to addressing the implementation of the external audit recommendations issued by the Board of Auditors. For the financial year 2015, four of the 17 recommendations issued by the Board were implemented and 13 were under implementation. For the financial year 2014, four of the 12 recommendations were implemented and eight were under implementation.

39. In a joint statement, several delegations thanked UN-Women for its Annual Financial Report and the Board of Auditors for the reports provided. They welcomed the significant progress made by UN-Women on its implementation of strategic priorities, enhanced transparency and accountability, and strengthened organizational effectiveness and efficiency. It was stated that the presentation of these reports assured them that funds were used appropriately and in line with recognized accounting standards. In this vein, it was demonstrated that UN-Women continued to make strides in developing robust processes, procedures, rules and regulations and staff capabilities, thereby increasing the effectiveness of their operations. In addition, the unqualified audit report provided confidence that the



Entity's financial affairs were adequately managed and that its capacity in this area continued to grow.

40. Member States recognized the efforts made by UN-Women to resolve issues highlighted by previous Board of Auditors reports, noting 17 per cent of recommendations from previous years' reports are still outstanding, and urged UN-Women to address these.

41. In addition, this year's report noted areas where further improvements could be made, such as value for money, risk management, country presence and programme management.

42. It was noted that several issues relating to value for money required improvement. On travel management, concerns were identified by the Board of Auditors in the implementation of UN-Women's travel policy and their recommendation was that improved compliance with travel policy requirements could lead to savings for UN-Women. Delegations also noted recommendations made with respect to the management of UN-Women's service providers and urged the Entity to enhance best value in this area.

43. Mention was made of the Board of Auditors' findings relating to a lack of comprehensive risk mitigation plans. Whilst acknowledging the actions taken by UN-Women to identify risk, the report indicated that the management of risk was not well documented. Delegations recognized that UN-Women was working on enhancing guidance and tools to address risk in line with the Board of Auditor's recommendation, and underlined the need for the Entity to continue strengthening risk management as a matter of priority.

44. Regarding the absence of policy and guidance notes that govern the establishment of country field presences, the need to develop business cases for existing programmes and the need to implement policies for working in fragile and conflict affected states, Member States recognized efforts made to establish a country presence assessment tool. They encouraged UN-Women to take steps to address the recommendations made by the Board of Auditors in this area, in order to achieve the expected results.

45. On programme management, the deficiencies highlighted by the Board of Auditors in implementing partner selection and management, and the absence of guidance and criteria for determining and justifying support costs, were noted. Also highlighted were delays in monitoring, evaluation and research plans, and in donor reporting, where the Board of Auditors found that only 39 per cent of reports were submitted on time. Delays were also identified in liquidating advances to implementing partners, and in financial closure of projects. UN-Women was called upon to address the delays highlighted by the Board of Auditors to increase the overall effectiveness of programme management.

46. More generally, UN-Women was urged to continue to increase its efforts in implementing recommendations identified across the Board of Auditors report. Member States recommended that those which pose significant risk be prioritized. They requested UN-Women to provide more detail in future on their response to the Board of Auditor's recommendations, including the offices responsible, priority levels, and milestones and targets for implementing changes and improvements.

47. The delegations expressed appreciation for the Entity's commitment to ensuring the effective, efficient and sustainable use of its resources to achieve the greatest possible results for women and girls around the world, and thanked UN-Women management for its serious attention to the Board of Auditors report and looked forward to future improvements.

48. The Chief of Accounts noted that donor reporting had been de-centralized and donor reporting monitoring enhanced. Financial closure of projects had also been automated.

49. The Director of Programmes underlined that UN-Women was implementing the cost recovery policy. In addition, project management capacities were enhanced by identifying four major categories: risks, multi-stakeholder management, lessons learned and budgets. On country presence, the Entity is working with various tools to analyse needs.

50. The Director of Management and Administration emphasized that all views and guidance presented by Member States are taken very seriously. On risk management and mitigation, he underlined that UN-Women made good progress in establishing the enterprise risk management system and the risk identification compliance rate was 100 per cent. In addition, the implementation rate of the external audit recommendations had increased.

## **VI. Evaluation**

### **A. Meta-analysis of evaluations managed by UN-Women, 2016**

51. The Acting Director of the Independent Evaluation Office presented the meta-analysis of evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2016. The meta-analysis aggregated and synthesized information generated from 36 evaluations and transformed this evidence into accessible knowledge for future systematic strengthening of programming, organizational effectiveness and the evaluation function. The analysis will also help to inform the implementation of the new UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021. The meta-analysis considered insights according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee Network on Development Evaluation (DAC-EVALNET) methodological guidance for assessing development effectiveness: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and culture of results as well as insights into the drivers of change (evidence, data and statistics; knowledge-hub; alliance-building and movement for change; and innovation and technology) identified in the draft UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021. It also presented progress made by UN-Women in the aforementioned OECD/DAC criteria as compared to previous meta-analysis reports.

52. The overarching finding was that UN-Women interventions maintained good performance levels in terms of relevance and effectiveness. There was also new evidence of substantive improvement in results-based management systems, while sustainability and efficiency have the greatest potential for continued improvement. The five individual findings were outlined as follows:

Finding 1: Relevance - The relevance of UN-Women interventions has been increasingly positive since 2013, with more recent improvements being in improving relationships with partners.

Finding 2: Effectiveness - The establishment of decentralized capacity has been central to strengthening UN-Women's leadership on gender equality. Expanding this leadership role at the country level requires closer integration of UN coordination and operational programming within Strategic Notes.

Finding 3: Efficiency - UN-Women's systems are supporting efficient use of the resources that are currently available to the organization. This represents an improvement on ratings over the years.

Finding 4: Sustainability - Sustainability across UN-Women's operational portfolio was found to be mixed; with evidence that achievements are likely to continue increasing when they have been supported through longer programming cycles; and

Finding 5: Results-based management - Evaluations found a strengthened adequacy of UN-Women results-based management systems compared to previous years, which largely validates the effectiveness of the work recently done to implement the corporate results management system and the organizational focus on RBM.

53. Results of the qualitative synthesis as they relate to the drivers of change in the draft Strategic Plan 2018-2021 were outlined. The analysis applied a forward-looking approach to inform corporate perspectives as UN-Women transitions towards implementation of its new Strategic Plan. The following four insights were identified:

Insight 1: Evidence, data and statistics - Interventions focused on building national capabilities to generate and use data are an emerging strength for UN-Women at the country level. While these efforts have not yet been fully consolidated into a defining corporate asset, the new Strategic Plan 2018-2021 proposes to address this need. However, more and better evidence is also needed – including evaluative evidence – in respect to working with youth, men and boys, and on south-south cooperation.

Insight 2: Knowledge hub - UN-Women's role as a knowledge hub at the country, regional, and global level is emerging as the centrepiece of its current and future effectiveness in advancing gender equality and empowerment of women.

Insight 3: Alliance building - Facilitating meaningful relations and dialogue between diverse stakeholders is central to UN-Women's effectiveness across all country contexts. Partnerships are the area with the greatest potential for enhancing the relevance of UN-Women interventions, with a strong case for leveraging recent successes in improving partnership relationships to build greater effectiveness.

Insight 4: Innovation and technology - While evaluative evidence on UN-Women digital innovation strategies is not yet available, evaluations do highlight the effectiveness of innovating traditional processes to enhance participation, co-creation, and social cohesion. Furthermore, they highlight a

need for more evaluation evidence about innovative approaches to working with specific constituencies, especially youth, and men and boys.

54. The related management response was presented by the Director of Programmes.

## **B. Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018-2021**

55. The Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018-2021 was also presented. As outlined in its executive summary, its purpose was to provide a coherent framework within which useful evaluation evidence is generated systematically on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of work under the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021. This Corporate Evaluation Plan built on the previous one and outlined the corporate evaluations to be managed by the Independent Evaluation Office in the period 2018-2021, aligned with UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

56. The proposed corporate evaluations were selected based on the parameters and requirements of UN-Women's Evaluation Policy and an extensive consultative process with UN-Women's Extended Management Group (which includes Senior Management, all Regional Directors and all Chiefs of HQ divisions and units), Executive Board members, United Nations Evaluation Group members and civil society stakeholders to ensure the relevance of the Corporate Evaluation Plan. The total funding requirement to implement the Corporate Evaluation Plan is estimated to be \$1.65 million over 4 years, excluding staff costs and other costs related to strengthening the decentralized evaluation function; promoting UN coherence; and strengthening national evaluation capacity. Progress in plan implementation will be reported in the Annual Report on the Evaluation Function presented to the Executive Board each year, as well as to the Global Evaluation Committee and the Senior Management Team. The main risks to implementation of the Evaluation Plan concern mobilization of adequate resources, maintaining staffing and more broadly any major issues affecting implementation of UN-Women's Strategic Plan.

57. In a joint statement by several Member States regarding both documents presented under the agenda items, it was noted that the meta-analysis demonstrated UN-Women's leading role in gender equality and the empowerment of women and how it was consistently and effectively contributing to development outcomes, national policies and needs of women due to strengthened decentralized capacity. The Member States also noted with appreciation, the improved Results-Based Management system. The efficiency of systems in programme implementation remains a challenge due to implementing partners, and Member States inquired how UN-Women would improve programme procedures and the selection of partners in the future.

58. Member States further emphasized strengthening the ownership of national actors, for example, with respect to improving gender responsive budgeting. They also highlighted the importance of data and statistics, and encouraged UN-Women to work with partners to strengthen capacities in this regard.

59. On the Corporate Evaluation Plan, Member States highlighted the significance of corporate evaluations and asked about the availability of funding for joint evaluations.

60. In response to questions and comments made, the Director of Programmes noted that the process of selecting implementing partners had been enhanced through analyses of lessons learned and best practices and by bringing stakeholders into the selection process for increased transparency. The decentralized evaluations helped to select countries with more experience, which had therefore enhanced the results delivered.

61. The Acting Director of the Independent Evaluation Office noted that the resources for the joint evaluations will need to be mobilized separately but there will also be cost savings due to burden sharing among several agencies.

## VII. Field visits

62. The President of the Board presented the Report of the joint field visit to Nepal of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme (WFP) that took place from 17 to 21 April 2017. The delegation of 20 Board Members was led by Walton Alfonso Webson, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations and President of the Executive Board of UNICEF. She also shared her impression of the UN-Women Executive Board field visit to India, which focused on UN-Women's operational response.

63. The objective of the joint field visit was to help the Board Members to understand the ways in which and to what extent the organizations contribute to the achievement of national development plans and the goals of global United Nations programmes. The visit was expected to demonstrate the role of the Resident Coordinator system in ensuring the coordination and coherence of the United Nations system according to the objective of "delivering as one"; the harmonization and coordination among the United Nations funds and programmes; the national ownership of the programmes being implemented by the United Nations organizations; and the relevance of the thematic issues that they address as well as that of their goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

64. The President thanked the UN-Women India office, and the UN-Women Secretariat, who arranged an inspiring programme of activities. She expressed gratitude particularly to the UN-Women Representative, Rebecca Tavares, for showcasing the value-added of UN-Women's presence on the ground and UN-Women's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Miwa Kato, for joining the trip and sharing her expertise.

65. She also extended her gratitude to the governments of Nepal and India for their warm hospitality and for facilitating the tour experience, where Board Members witnessed first-hand the immense impact that UN-Women has in their countries in partnership with their governments.

66. On the UN-Women-specific field visit of the Board to India, she emphasized that Bhopal was particularly memorable, given the positive impact of UN-Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces programme on its beneficiaries. She stated that this programme develops, implements, and evaluates tools, policies, and

comprehensive approaches on the prevention of and response to sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls across different settings. It was initially launched in New Delhi alongside four other major cities around the globe. Following on its success, the Government of India decided to take this successful UN-Women model and replicate the programme in Bhopal. This, she said, was a great example of how governments can scale up and transfer best practices of UN-Women programming. She highlighted the launch a Global Flagship Programme on Women's Sustainable Energy, Entrepreneurship, and Access, a result of UN-Women's partnership with the Ministry of Energy and the UN Environment Programme. This programme identified and removed structural gender-specific barriers facing women entrepreneurs, enhancing women's productive use of sustainable energy, and increasing women's participation and leadership in gender-responsive energy policy-making. It was the first UN-Women programme in India where the Government first matched United Nations funding, and then leveraged this foundational partnership to secure additional funding from the United Kingdom's development agency to support the programme. This is a great example of how UN-Women Country Offices are using the Flagship Programme Initiatives' architecture to secure national ownership and diversify UN-Women's partnership portfolio.

67. She opined that this field visit also demonstrated the unique and effective tripartite mandate of UN-Women, that is: one, delivering on norms; two, operational response at country and regional levels; and three, coordination of the United Nations System on gender equality. She noted that the field visit reinforced her belief that UN-Women can and must play a critical role in leading efforts to empower women and advance gender equality worldwide.

68. The President called on the Executive Board's continued support to UN-Women to enable its global team to implement its critical mandate.

69. The Nepal delegation thanked the President of the Board and entire team for their work. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director was also thanked for her leadership as well as the UN-Women country team in Nepal for their service to Nepal. It was mentioned that while the joint field visit offered the respective Board Members insight into the work of the United Nations agencies in Nepal, it also provided government authorities with an opportunity to directly interact with the highest policy making bodies of these United Nations entities. The delegation welcomed the positive comments in the report regarding the United Nations Country Team's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment, and acknowledged that much remained to be done with respect to the effective utilization of resources for constructive engagement with the government in achieving the sustainable development goals. It was stated that for effective use of resources, it would be important to identify duplications and overlaps with the United Nations Country Team and among the implementing agencies; and to seek the most vulnerable groups in remote areas of the country, rather than continuously allocating resources to only the more accessible areas. The Government of Nepal continued to count on the meaningful partnership with UN-Women and all development partners and stakeholders in the implementation of their constitution.

70. The delegation of India highlighted India's commitment to the work of UN-Women since its inception both at national and international levels as well as its financial contribution for UN-Women. India has taken decisive steps to achieve

gender equality and women's empowerment through multi-sectoral approaches and the delegation of India hoped that the visit had provided evidence-based insight into the extent of collaboration. The delegation is looking forward to further collaboration with UN-Women and for its technical assistance always taking into account different political and economic contexts.

## **VIII. Briefing: Operational response of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women at the country level: Republic of Rwanda**

71. The UN-Women acting representative in the Republic of Rwanda outlined the work of UN-Women in Rwanda following a video presentation. She highlighted that gender equality and women's empowerment are mainstreamed in all national development frameworks, including Vision 2020, the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS II), the Government's 7-year programme. Gender equality principles have also informed the formulation of Vision 2050 and the upcoming Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy III 2018-2023. The national gender policy and its Strategic Plan 2016-2020 guide the implementation of the country's commitments on gender equality.

72. With over 200,000 signatures collected, Rwanda is leading the HeforShe campaign, which aims to promote a change in attitudes and mindset among men and boys. The President of the Republic of Rwanda, one of the ten HeforShe global champions, made three specific commitments: to promote training and vocational education for young women, to reduce the digital gender gap by 2020 and to eliminate violence against women. Within this enabling environment and in close collaboration with its national partners and the One UN family, UN-Women Rwanda is making a significant contribution to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, with a special focus on leadership and political participation, economic empowerment, ending violence against women and integrating gender into humanitarian response.

## **IX. Closing**

73. Following the adoption of the decision 2017/5 on the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Strategic Plan 2018-2021, the United States, Egypt, Yemen, Chile, Cameroon, Bahrain, Brazil and the Russian Federation made their statements. The statements can be accessed through the recording of the session at <http://webtv.un.org/search?term=un+women+executive+board> or in PaperSmart <http://papersmart.unmeetings.org/en/executive-boards/un-women/>.

74. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the President and her Bureau for their dedication, and for the consultations they facilitated between and among Member States, assuring them that their guidance was well appreciated. She also thanked the staff of UN-Women and all the managers who gave their inputs to the different aspects of the Strategic Plan. She appreciated the President's account of the field visit to India and thanked the other Board Members that were part of the

trip, as well as the staff whose work made it so valuable. She expressed appreciation for all insights shared with respect to the joint visit to Nepal, particularly statements made by the representatives of Rwanda, Nepal and India, who highlighted that UN-Women's work was not isolated from national interests and work as partners along with Member States.

75. The President of the Board expressed her appreciation to the Vice-Presidents for their collaboration and willingness to facilitate negotiations and to her own team for their support. She thanked Member States for their collaboration and flexibility and expressed appreciation for the work of the Executive Board secretariat team and all UN-women staff for their support. The meeting was then adjourned.



## Annex I

### Provisional agenda and workplan for the first regular session 13 February 2018

1. Organizational matters
2. Evaluation
3. Other matters

#### Workplan

<i>Day</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Subject</i>
<b>Tuesday, 13 February</b>	10 a.m. – 1 p.m.		Opening of the session
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women</li> </ul>
		1	Organizational matters
	3 p.m. – 6 p.m.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of the annotated provisional agenda and workplan of the first regular session of 2018</li> <li>• Adoption of the report on the second regular session of 2017</li> </ul>
		2	Evaluation
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to political participation and leadership</li> </ul>
			Briefing on innovation strategy for accelerating efforts towards gender equality and the empowerment of women
			Briefing on the operational response at country level: Haiti
			Briefing on UN-Women's follow-up to recommendations of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board
		3	Other matters
		1	Organizational matters
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of the provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2018</li> <li>• Adoption of the annual workplan 2018</li> </ul>

Closing of the session

- Statements by the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women and the President of the Executive Board
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## Annex II

### **Decision 2017/5 - United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* with appreciation of the preparatory work done and the various informal briefings and workshops with the Executive Board as well as other relevant stakeholders, on the process of elaboration of UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and endorses the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021;
2. *Requests* UN-Women to implement its Strategic Plan in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcome documents of their reviews, and applicable United Nations instruments, standards and resolutions that support, address and contribute to gender equality and the empowerment and the advancement of women, as well as with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the agreement and consent of the host country, taking into account the different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policy space, while remaining consistent with relevant international rules and commitments;
3. *Reaffirms* that the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development and should therefore continue to be the highest priority for and underlying objective of the operational activities of the United Nations development system, including UN-Women;
4. *Calls upon* UN-Women, in implementing its Strategic Plan, to continue to play a central role in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and in supporting Member States, upon their request, in coordinating the United Nations system and in mobilizing civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, at all levels, in support of the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
5. *Requests* the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director to submit to the Executive Board at its annual session in 2018, the final progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017;
6. *Requests* the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director to submit to the Executive Board, beginning at its annual session in 2019, an annual progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and to provide updates at its regular sessions in 2020, 2021 and 2022;

7. *Requests* the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director to undertake a midterm review of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021 that includes an assessment of results achieved, cost effectiveness, evaluations, and progress made in achieving the vision of the Strategic Plan, taking into account decisions by Member States on the Secretary-General's proposals responding to General Assembly resolution 71/243, and to present the findings in her annual report to the Executive Board in 2020;

8. *Takes note* of the Common Chapter to the Strategic Plans of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN-Women; requests UN-Women if changes are made to the Chapter to align it with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA after endorsement by their respective Executive Boards and to resubmit it for endorsement by the UN-Women Executive Board; and encourages UN-Women to provide details on its implementation in its annual reporting and, when applicable and as appropriate, at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP.

**Decision 2017/6 - Integrated budget estimates for the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women for the biennium 2018-2019**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the UN-Women integrated budget estimates for 2018-2019 which covers all cost categories and funding sources (both regular and other resources) within a single, consolidated proposal, to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021;

2. *Approves* gross resources in the amount of \$203.8 million for the institutional budget to support organizational effectiveness and efficiency and notes that these estimates include an amount of \$31.4 million for cost recovery from other resources (earmarked voluntary contributions);

3. *Notes with appreciation* the inclusion of separate budget lines for the independent internal audit and the evaluation office;

4. *Notes* that in the event that actual cost recovery is higher than the estimates included in the budget proposal, the additional amount may be used for management activities to allow more regular resources to be used for programme activities, requests the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director to report to the Executive Board on its utilization in the context of the next budget proposal, and asks UN-Women to further strive for an overall reduction of the ratio of its management costs;

5. *Takes note* of the related Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (UNW/2017/9) and the related response of UN-Women to the ACABQ report (UNW/2017/CRP.11);

6. Bearing in mind the ACABQ recommendation contained in paragraph 20 of its report (UNW/2017/9), *acknowledges* the submission of five posts performing normative intergovernmental functions for inclusion in the United Nations Secretariat regular budget 2018-2019 and agrees that, should these posts be approved by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, the corresponding costs will be removed from the institutional budget 2018-2019, thus increasing resources to be used for programme activities;

7. *Recalls* the General Assembly Resolution A/RES/64/289 whereby Member States agreed “that the resources required to service the normative intergovernmental processes shall be funded from the regular budget and approved by the General Assembly; the resources required to service the operational intergovernmental processes and operational activities at all levels shall be funded from voluntary contributions and approved by the Executive Board”;

8. Bearing in mind the ACABQ recommendations contained in paragraphs 13 and 17 of its report (UNW/2017/9) *requests* UN-Women to further consider its proposals to upgrade the P-5 Chief of Accounts post to a D-1 Deputy Director, Financial Management post, and the D-1 Director of Evaluation post to a D-2 Director post to provide level post for internal audit and evaluation;

9. *Requests also* UN-Women to revert to the original organizational arrangement as to the reporting line of the Human Resources Division as contained in the Integrated Budget estimates of UN-Women for the biennium 2014-2015, and to reflect this change in annex I of the Integrated Budget estimates of UN-Women for the biennium 2018-2019;

10. *Requests* UN-Women to present for information the concrete steps it will have taken under the consolidated internal audit and evaluation function to ensure appropriate audit coverage, the continued independence of evaluation and oversight, as well as measures taken to ensure effective linkages between audit and the outsourced investigation services, at least four weeks in advance of the first regular session of the Executive Board in 2018;

11. *Requests* UN-Women to provide for information a transitional risk-based audit plan; a multi-year plan for the audit function; and, an internal audit and evaluation charter for UN-Women, at least four weeks in advance of the first regular session of the Executive Board in 2018.

#### **Decision 2017/7 - Structured Dialogue on Financing: Financing the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the report on Structured Dialogue on Financing: Financing the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and encourages UN-Women to engage further in structured dialogue with Member States, with a view to tracking, assessing and following up on the level of funding it receives, including of core resources, as well as predictability, flexibility and alignment of resource provided for the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021;

2. *Recognizes* that sufficient regular resources are important to fully and effectively deliver on the implementation of UN-Women’s Strategic Plan 2018-2021; notes that regular resources enable UN-Women to plan ahead, be responsive and strategic; strengthen their oversight functions (evaluation, audit, and investigation) and accountability; contribute to strengthening UN system coherence and coordination; and leverage other resources to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment;

3. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to improve its efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability and in this regard to continue to provide

information on its programme activities, within the proceedings of the Executive Board;

4. *Notes* with appreciation the large number of contributors to UN-Women, and encourages all countries in a position to do so, to increase their voluntary contributions to UN-Women, particularly its core resources, preferably paid early in the year and/or in a timely manner, and, if possible, through multi-year pledges;
5. *Encourages* countries, in a position to do so, to provide timely and flexible Other Resources (earmarked) aligned with the Strategic Plan 2018-2021;
6. *Encourages* countries, in a position to do so, to support the United Nations pooled funding mechanisms, and *encourages* UN-Women to benefit from them in order to reduce the number of donor specific agreements and to strengthen coherence and coordination across the United Nations System;
7. *Calls* for resources to be distributed in a timely and predictable manner, to ensure efficient planning for the full implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, in line with UN-Women's available resources;
8. *Requests* UN-Women to provide information on the impact of donor-specific agreements on transaction costs and efficiency of UN-Women, as part of the next report of UN-Women on structured dialogue on financing.

#### **Decision 2017/8 – UN-Women Executive Board field visit**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Encourages* UN-Women to organize an annual field visit, funded by voluntary contributions, of 5 members of the Executive Board representing each regional group, with priority given to the members of the Bureau and taking into account a rotational principle within each regional group, to a country identified in consultation with the host country and the UN-Women Bureau;
2. *Encourages* UN-Women to find the best arrangements to keep the costs of such field visits as low as possible, covering the cost of four regions, except for the Western European and Others Group, by encouraging participating Member States, in a position to do so, to cover all or part of their costs, and by proposing visits coordinated with a joint field visit of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP in the same country or neighbouring countries and by keeping the length of the visits reasonable.

#### **Decision 2017/9 – UN-Women's Management Response to the Report of the Board of Auditors**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the report of the United Nations Board of Auditors for the financial period that ended on 31 December 2016, as well as previous reports of the United Nations Board of Auditors;
2. *Notes* that in 2016 UN-Women received its sixth unqualified audit opinion from the United Nations Board of Auditors;

3. *Encourages* UN-Women to prioritize the implementation of the four main audit recommendations identified by the United Nations Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2016;
  4. *Also encourages* UN-Women to continue to strengthen risk management, financial management, programme and project management, assets management, human resources and payroll management and information and communications (ICT) as identified by the United Nations Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2016;
  5. *Further encourages* UN-Women to fully address the five outstanding recommendations from the 2014 and 2015 reports of the United Nations Board of Auditors;
  6. *Requests* UN-Women to present to the Executive Board the more detailed management response to the United Nations Board of Auditors report prepared for its contribution to the “Report of the Secretary General on the Implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements of the United Nations funds and programmes for the financial period ended 31 December 2016”.
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