



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

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## Annual session of 2019

18–20 June 2019

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

### Organisational matters

## Report on the first regular session, 12 February 2019

### I. Election of the Bureau

1. On 8 January 2019, the Executive Board elected the Bureau of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations, Penelope Beckles, (representing the Latin American and Caribbean States), was elected President of the Executive Board for the year 2019. The Vice-Presidents were elected from the following regional groups: (b) Asia-Pacific States: Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Yemen to the United Nations, Marwan Ali Noman Al-Dobhany; (c) Eastern European States: Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Hungary to the United Nations, Katalin Annamária Bogay; and (d) Western European and other States Group: Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations, Natalie Cohen. Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Kenya to the United Nations, Koki Muli Grignon, representing the African States, was elected on 12 February 2019 at the First Regular Session of the Executive Board.

2. The outgoing President was Deputy Permanent Representative, Ivana Pajević (Montenegro), representing the Eastern European States and the outgoing Vice-Presidents, Minister Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Representative, Christine Kalamwina (Zambia), representing the African States; Counsellor, Lee Joo-il (Republic of Korea), representing the Asia-Pacific States; Attaché, Desirée del Carmen Cedeño Rengifo (Panama), representing the Latin American and Caribbean States; and Minister Counsellor, Jyrki Juhana Terva (Finland), representing the Western European and other States Group.

### II. Organisational matters

3. The first regular session of 2019 of the Executive Board was held at United Nations Headquarters on 12 February 2019.

4. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the first regular session of 2019 ([UNW/2019/L.1](#)) in addition to the annual



workplan for 2019 ([UNW/2019/L.2](#)). The Board approved the provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2019, to be held 18–20 June 2019 (see Annex I), pending amendments to be duly considered by the Bureau, and also adopted the report on its second regular session of 2018, held on 10 and 11 September 2018 ([UNW/2018/7](#)).

### III. Opening statements

5. After officiating the election by acclamation of the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Kenya to the United Nations, Koki Muli Grignon, representing the African States in the capacity of Vice-President, the President of the Executive Board declared the session open and outlined the Executive Board's order of proceedings for the session.

6. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women in her opening remarks thanked the outgoing President and Bureau, as well as welcomed the newly-elected President and Vice Presidents of the Executive Board.

7. She described the year 2018 as one of profound change for the United Nations system and explained that UN-Women was deeply engaged in the reform process to ensure that it strengthens the United Nations system's coherence in supporting gender equality and women's empowerment. This will allow UN-Women to fully execute its coordination mandate to transform the lives of women and girls. UN-Women was poised to continue to contribute to the work of the United Nations Country Teams, towards ensuring a strong focus on gender equality and women's empowerment through the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks; supporting a gender-responsive Resident Coordinators' system; and providing inputs to system-wide guidance processes to ensure that gender equality is considered.

8. Expanding on the Entity's change management process, the head of the Entity stated that its objectives included a stronger focus on results; enhanced alignment between the budget and planning process to facilitate prioritisation, monitoring of progress and improvement of value for money; updating of processes to facilitate more effective and efficient decision-making; greater integration of normative, standards-setting and policy work into programming; ensuring capacity to absorb resources, deliver in a timely manner as well as on budget; and accountability to beneficiaries. She referred to the recently released report of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), stating that the UN-Women change management exercise aimed to address the challenges identified by the MOPAN assessment, such as, limited capacity in some countries, and a need for better alignment between resources and priorities.

9. She recalled the United Nation's overdue commitment to reach gender parity by the year 2000 and UN-Women's continued efforts to support the implementation of the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity through the development of the "Enabling Environment Guidelines". She underscored that gender parity is not only about numbers but transforming organisational culture so that it fosters a safe and respectful environment where all have equal access to opportunities and are free of abuse of authority, an issue that she is taking very seriously and actively addressing with the support of the Human Resources and Management Teams.

10. Looking ahead, she mentioned that several important milestones were to be reached in the year 2020: the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; five years of implementing the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals; 20 years of the United Nations Security Council

resolution 1325; and the 10th year of UN-Women's existence. These anniversaries would provide an inescapable opportunity to evaluate the progress made and to create an unprecedented political momentum and social mobilisation in support of gender equality. With respect to the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, Member States were urged to undertake participatory national reviews of the progress and challenges for women in the last 25 years. The head of UN-Women called on Member States to ensure that comprehensive national reviews were being undertaken, with UN-Women offices assistance where present.

11. UN-Women was planning to convene a civil society-led Global Forum for Gender Equality in June 2020. This Forum would recognise an expanded and deepened gender equality movement with inclusive engagement of stakeholders, to assist in identifying key actions to achieve irreversible progress for women and girls. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director expressed the hope that a stronger road map to achieve substantive equality by 2030 would emanate out of the 25th Beijing anniversary. This roadmap should build on the normative gains of the last few years and encompass strong agreed conclusions from previous Commissions as well as the upcoming Commission on the Status of Women in March 2019.

12. For the first time, the Commission would examine the topic of social protection systems, access to public services, and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Progress in these areas remained critical for women's empowerment.

13. Prior to concluding her opening remarks, the head of the Entity touched on the issue of resource mobilisation and thanked the Executive Board for its support over the past year. She reported that the preliminary estimate of 2018 income grew to a new record, reaching approximately US\$ 390 million, which amounted to US\$ 20 million more than the previous year. With the continued support of Member States, the Entity needed to continue to focus on reaching its target of US\$ 440 million, in order to become fully funded, particularly with respect to core resources, as well as deliver on its Strategic Plan. It was underlined that the growing gap between core and non-core resources limited the Entity's potential for impact. UN-Women continued to leverage system-wide processes to enhance its funding, contributing to the Funding Compact, and in the position of co-chair of the High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality, addressing barriers that limit resource mobilisation for the UN system, particularly for UN-Women. She stressed that as the Entity completed ten years on a strong foundation, the need for unwavering support of Member States was critical for the Entity to be well equipped to tackle the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and unfinished business of the Beijing Platform for Action globally.

#### **IV. Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on repositioning of the United Nations development system**

14. The UN-Women Senior Adviser on Change Management presented an update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on repositioning of the United Nations development system to the Board. This presentation responded to the Executive Board decision 2018/5, paragraph 8, requesting UN-Women to continue to engage with the Executive Board by providing regular updates on the progress made and actions taken towards the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#).

15. UN-Women's efforts in implementing General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) focused on ensuring the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment perspectives into the work and priorities of the United Nations Development System. UN-Women actively participated in mechanisms of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group at the global level to support the overall United Nations Development System repositioning process. The Entity was making necessary adjustments to be well prepared for changes in the United Nations Development System, particularly those in place as of 1 January 2019, with a focus on four areas: i) A new generation of United Nations Country Teams, including a revamped United Nations Development Assessment Framework. The Entity was strengthening its internal guidance and identifying its dedicated capacity to contribute to all Common Country Analyses and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks in 2019 and 2020, so that they adequately address gender equality and women's empowerment and have appropriate implementation arrangements to achieve results in this area; ii) A reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system. UN-Women fully supported a strong, mutually accountable and effective Resident Coordinator System and viewed this as vital for the implementation of the UN-Women's mandate and achieving greater results for women and girls in the context of the 2030 Agenda. An effective Resident Coordinator system plays a key role in strengthening UN-Women's effectiveness in country; iii) Funding for the United Nations Development System. UN-Women supported the funding compact as proposed by the Secretary-General and welcomed by the General Assembly. In addition to actions taken within UN-Women to advance transparency, common results, pooled financing, cost-recovery, and visibility of core contributions, UN-Women worked within the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group's Strategic Results Group on Financing and other relevant bodies to ensure that the Funding Compact addressed the need to track and ensure adequate financing for gender equality work and gender mainstreaming; iv) Strengthened governance and strategic direction for system-wide results. At its second regular session of 2018, the Executive Board of UN-Women adopted decision 2018/7 on working methods to strengthen the system's governance through streamlining horizontal coordination and coherence of the working methods of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and the WFP, as mandated in General Assembly resolutions [71/243](#) and [72/279](#).

16. In response, three main work streams were established: i) The Core Group of ten Member States from the four Executive Boards. The Group was expected to assess the efficiency and quality of current Executive Boards sessions, the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards, and the Joint Field Visits of the Executive Boards; ii) The Comparison of Common Agenda Items would ensure further coherence of agenda items common to all Executive Boards but not encompassed in Joint Agenda Items, such as External Audit, Internal Audit, the Annual Report of the Executive Director, the Strategic Plan, and the Integrated Budget; and iii) The Joint Calendar of the Executive Boards to list all formal and informal meetings of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women and be posted on a common electronic platform. This would strengthen coordination in the Executive Board processes. In addition, the Secretaries of the Executive Boards were expected to regularly meet for enhanced internal coordination among the Secretariats.

17. The change management plan aimed to optimise organisational efficiency and effectiveness to deliver on the Strategic Plan and consists of four interrelated workstreams as follows: i) Regional architecture and country typology; ii) Headquarters functional review and structure; iii) Business processes reengineering; and iv) Knowledge management. Within the coming months, UN-Women would continue to proactively engage in system-wide processes to define the repositioning of the United Nations Development System and ensure that they supported the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

UN-Women would also continue to implement key adaptations to its architecture and workflows to optimise delivery on its Strategic Plan. It was expected that the recommendations of the corporate evaluation of the regional architecture would be fully implemented by the end of the second quarter of 2019.

18. Responding to the opening statement of the head of the Entity and to the presentation on the Update on the implementation of General Assembly Resolution [72/279](#) on Repositioning of the United Nations Development System, several speakers congratulated the newly-elected President and Bureau members of the UN-Women Executive Board. They also thanked the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her leadership of UN Women and expressed appreciation for her comprehensive remarks. Member States reiterated their strong support and resolve to collectively strive toward translating global commitments into concrete actions and stressed the key role of UN-Women in this process.

19. Highlighting initiatives at the national level, one speaker emphasised the need to address the root causes of poverty while ensuring women's participation in development and peace building across the world. The delegation highly commended UN-Women's efforts to end discrimination towards women and girls, and to integrate gender equality perspectives into national priorities, stating that UN-Women was considered a trusted partner in their country's endeavours.

20. Another Member State expressed gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her active participation in the work of the Second Eurasian Women's Forum held in St. Petersburg in September 2018 and expressed its hope for the continuation of the constructive engagement.

21. While one Member State underscored the importance of women's economic empowerment, another speaker urged UN-Women to continue the important work on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and on strengthening gender mainstreaming in humanitarian response. The delegation applauded the Entity's contribution to more gender-responsive and sustainable peacebuilding, particularly its assistance to countries in the development of national action plans for Women, Peace and Security and building capacity in this regard, working closely with civil society organisations. The speaker opined that the guidance provided by UN-Women for gender mainstreaming in response efforts through enhanced coordination, advocacy, awareness-raising, training and technical support, could bring about better outcomes for women and girls who live in these difficult circumstances.

22. Delegations appreciated UN-Women's efforts towards achieving gender parity at the United Nations, improving workplace relations, bringing an end to sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse of authority. Member States welcomed the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director's open and frank remarks on recent allegations within UN-Women in this regard and on the actions taken. One speaker emphasised that it was the responsibility of management to ensure that UN-Women personnel feel safe within their work environment and looked forward to follow-up briefings on initiatives to address this issue moving forward. According to another delegation, addressing this issue should be done in partnership with the United Nations system, consistent with the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on reform.

23. Delegations commended the Entity's active participation and leadership in the implementation of the United Nations Development system reform process. A Member State opined that to make the reform sustainable, it would be important to operationalise the funding mechanisms prescribed in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#), including the 1 per cent levy system and the doubled cost-sharing arrangement. UN-Women was requested to further reduce its management costs so that increased resources would be available for development activities.

24. One speaker emphasised the importance of harmonisation among Programmes and Entities of the United Nations system, with the aim of avoiding duplication. UN-Women was urged to continue keeping the Executive Board abreast of its work on the reform process. UN-Women was also encouraged to minimise expenditure in this regard, to avoid the risk of adversely affecting the implementation of its programmes and projects.

25. About the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#), one delegation looked forward to more details on the updated country typology and asked for more information on what kinds of efficiencies and improved capacities this would bring to the Entity's regional architecture. The speaker commended UN-Women for the positive findings of the MOPAN review and asked for more detail on the actions that the Entity intended to take on the areas identified as requiring further improvement.

26. Delegations commended UN-Women for its policy-setting and coordination work, particularly with respect to the launch of the United Nations Country Team System-wide Action Plan, which one speaker felt would significantly assist in assessing the status of gender mainstreaming against the globally agreed set of minimum standards in the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks as well as joint programming.

27. A delegation emphasised the rights of women and girls with disabilities, urging the Entity to continue playing a key role in making sure that system-wide efforts to mainstream a disability perspective were gender-responsive.

28. Delegations looked forward to constructively engaging in the upcoming 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women pledging to work closely with other Member States and UN-Women for a successful and practical outcome document that could be concretely implemented on the ground.

## **V. Audit matters**

29. The Director of External Audits gave a brief overview of the related Report of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements ended 31 December 2017 ([A/73/5/Add.12](#)). The Board of Auditors issued an unqualified audit opinion. The financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of UN-Women as at 31 December 2017, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards. The Board of Auditors identified improvements in the areas of donor reporting; project closure; compliance with performance management; and development and liquidation of partner advances. However, to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of its programme and mandate delivery, the Board of Auditors noted that UN-Women needed to address issues observed in the following areas: i) financial management; ii) governance; iii) accountability and business transformation; iv) programme and project management; v) human resources management and payroll management; and vi) information and communications technology management.

30. The key findings in summary were as follows: i) UN-Women needed to establish an action plan / guidelines for making the entity inclusive of and accessible to staff with disabilities; ii) There was evidence of non-completion of fraud risks assessments; iii) UN-Women needed to address deficiencies in the assessment and selection of implementing partners; iv) Regarding audit reports on funds advanced to implementing partners, 14.4 per cent of these reports had a qualified opinion and 0.4 per cent had an adverse opinion; and v) There was accumulated ineligible expenditure from the audit of implementing partners. The Board of Auditors



considered that the level of ineligible expenditure indicated the need for UN-Women to have relevant policies in place to address the underlying weaknesses in project management.

31. On the implementation of the previous year's recommendations, the Director concluded the presentation by pointing out that of the 25 recommendations outstanding as at 31 December 2016, 21 were implemented (84 per cent) and 4 were still under implementation (16 per cent).

32. The UN-Women Deputy Director of Financial Management presented the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017 ([A/73/5/Add.12](#)). Total revenue for UN-Women was US\$ 378.2 million, and total expenses were US\$ 338.6 million. The Entity recorded a surplus of US\$ 39.6 million for the year ended 31 December 2017, compared with a deficit of US\$ 5.5 million for the year 2016. This surplus was primarily due to increased revenue from other resources (non-core), which would be spent on programme expenditure in future years. The delivery rate for the 2017 programme expenditure from other resources was 87 per cent, against a target of 85 per cent. The increase in voluntary contributions from donors in 2017 of US\$ 40.8 million was represented by an increase in regular resources (core) of US\$ 4.7 million and an increase in other resources (non-core) of US\$ 36.1 million.

33. Total expenses for 2017 amounted to US\$ 338.6 million (2016: US\$ 340.0 million) representing expenses incurred, both paid and payable. Regular resources represented US\$ 141.4 million (2016: US\$ 142.4 million), other resources represented US\$ 188.5 million (2016: US\$ 188.9 million), and assessed expenses represented US\$ 8.8 million (2016: US\$ 8.7 million).

34. Total assets of US\$ 507.7 million (2016: US\$ 457.5 million) exceeded total liabilities of US\$ 124.8 million (2016: US\$ 109.8 million), resulting in total net assets/equity by segment which comprised: (a) Regular resources, the cash required to fund employee benefits and liabilities; and to fund operations for the first few months of 2019, while waiting on new contributions (b) Other resources, the unspent budgets for earmarked projects and programmes, which will be expensed in future periods in accordance with donor agreements; and (c) Assessed resources, biennium funding for normative and intergovernmental work of UN-Women.

35. The Director of Management and Administration of UN-Women presented an updated status of management actions to address outstanding audit recommendations in the 'Implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors contained in its reports for the year ended 31 December 2017 on the United Nations funds and programmes' (contained in [A/73/353/Add.1](#)). It was noted that this was the 7th consecutive unqualified audit opinion and that UN-Women implemented 84 per cent (21 out of 25) of the prior year's audit recommendations. In addition, there was a sustained high and satisfactory recommendations' implementation rate.

36. In response to Executive Board decision 2017/9, UN-Women fully implemented all audit recommendations issued in 2014 and 2015; 2 out of 3 main audit recommendations issued in 2016. The last one was expected to be implemented in the first quarter of 2019. The Entity also provided a detailed 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' ([A/73/353/Add.1](#)), including presentation of the updated status for each recommendation.

37. In a joint statement, several delegations thanked UN-Women and the Board of Auditors for their presentations and reports and commended UN-Women for its 7th unqualified audit for the year 2017. Member States welcomed the updated

management response in addition to the steps taken thus far to ensure that findings and recommendations were addressed and urged the Entity to work towards full implementation of all recommendations.

38. They raised concerns that increases in core resources remained very modest and almost stagnant, therefore recognising the need for Member States to increase flexible and high-quality core funding. It was also mentioned that projected revenue targets, endorsed by the Executive Board through the integrated budget, were not reached. This shortfall was likely to adversely affect the implementation of the Entity's strategic plan and tripartite mandate. The delegations called on the Executive Board to assume responsibility for the full financing of the Entity.

## **VI. Evaluation**

39. The Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IAES) gave an update regarding the establishment of IAES, as well as on the UN-Women Evaluation Strategy as requested by the Executive Board through its decision 2018/2 on the Report on the evaluation function.

40. The UN-Women Global Evaluation Strategy, 2018–2021 (the 'Strategy') sets the direction of the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) to support UN-Women's efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women. Through corporate evaluations, activities to support decentralised evaluations, support to UN-system wide co-ordination, and national capacity building, the IES aimed to achieve the improved use of gender-responsive evaluation, by UN-Women and its partners, for learning, strategic decision-making, policy and programme development. To support the achievement of this outcome, the Strategy highlighted innovation, acting as a 'knowledge hub', and partnerships as key drivers of change to underpin evaluation activities in UN-Women. The Strategy also elevated focus on the use of evaluation, to generate accountability and to ensure the effectiveness of evaluation activities.

41. To implement the Strategy, IES has completed three corporate evaluation activities and two major works on methodological development since 2018. IES also supported 20 decentralised evaluations with technical and managerial support. In promotion of United Nations co-ordination on gender-responsive evaluation, IES co-chaired two United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) working groups, supported several United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks evaluations/reviews, and developed and promulgated guidance on institutional gender mainstreaming. Interventions were undertaken to support national capacity building for gender-responsive evaluation.

42. To ensure that evaluation activities translate into impact, in the context of ongoing reform processes, and to leverage potential synergies brought through the co-location of the Independent Audit Services (IAS) with IES, a review of the Strategy was expected to be initiated in 2019. The UN-Women Evaluation Policy would be reviewed in 2019 to ensure that it met the Entity's needs and aligned with good practice.

43. The IAS provides an independent and objective assurance and advisory service to add value and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of UN-Women's operations. IAS follows the International Professional Practices Framework of the Institute of Internal Auditors. As a new in-house function, IAS developed a rolling three-year strategy and plan to deliver relevant, professional, integrated and cost-effective internal audit and advisory services. Longer-term assurance mapping will help to contribute to a vision of combined assurance in UN-Women.



*Independent Evaluation and Audit Services Annual Plan*

44. To implement its evaluation and audit strategy, IEAS developed its 2019 work plan. In accordance with good practice, the plan will be kept under review and updated as new priorities and risks arise. The plan includes activities related to: corporate evaluations, support to decentralised evaluations, UN co-ordination and national capacity building on gender-responsive evaluation, internal audits of a selection of country and regional offices, and internal audit and advisory services related to a selection of thematic areas. Regular collaboration and specific joint work would help to leverage the synergies between evaluation and internal audit.

*Key changes to Internal Audit Services*

45. In line with professional standards and modern practices, internal audits carried out by the IAS would provide assurance on key risks to the achievement of UN-Women's objectives. To do so they will sharpen their focus on assessing governance, risk management, controls, and value-for-money. Appraisal of the performance of the internal audit function should therefore only focus beyond financial coverage, as the value of assessing some key risk areas cannot be easily quantified (e.g. information security, ethics and integrity, and project management). Internal audits would continue to review compliance with policy, but its updated focus would bring greater value in ensuring that UN-Women delivers results effectively and efficiently.

46. Further to this approach, IAS would discontinue outsourced audits of projects implemented under Direct Implementation Modality (DIM). The value of engaging external contractors to audit a selection of DIM projects each year was limited as their focus was primarily on rendering an opinion on the accuracy of DIM expenditures and fixed assets. Instead, IAS would provide assurance on the overall governance, risk management and control processes covering DIM and other projects through its comprehensive country office audits. This would mean fewer audit reports, but effectively greater assurance coverage for DIM projects. It will also mean better value-for-money in the use of internal audit resources.

47. Finally, IAS would update its practice for calculating implementation rates of audit recommendations. Implementation would continue to be tracked against agreed timelines, but the practice of awarding bonus points for early implementation will be discontinued.

48. In response to a question from the floor on how the evaluation strategy would inform knowledge management, it was mentioned that the IEAS was a member of the knowledge management working group. In addition, ongoing work on knowledge management would significantly improve the ability of UN-Women to capture concrete data and results, and would further serve to inform future programming.

## **VII. Briefings**

### **A. Operational response of UN-Women at the country level**

49. The Director of the Programme Division introduced this agenda item followed by the UN-Women Representative in Iraq, who made a presentation which included a video showcasing the work of UN-Women to support the Government, civil society and the people of Iraq on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and the voices of beneficiaries. The briefing provided to the Executive Board was structured around key thematic areas and country level operational response to meet the current context; approaches and business processes; partnerships, coordination, advocacy and outreach.

50. In summary, UN-Women, operated in Iraq since 2003, with the goal of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in line with the commitment of the country's leadership and its population's aspirations. The State of Iraq was moving from a conflict phase towards recovery, nation building and reconciliation. During 2018, many developments occurred, particularly with the parliamentary elections held in May 2018, the development of Iraq vision 2030 and the appointment of a new government in November. UN-Women's engagement in Iraq had grown and expanded in the country to date with the office beginning as a "programme presence" with several projects advocating for the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. It later grew to become a standalone country office with delegation of authority and a diverse portfolio of programmes for provision of holistic intervention packages to its beneficiaries and partners.

51. The year 2018 was marked by a solid partnership and continuous dialogue with all stakeholders and partners, the Government, various political blocs, the civil society and women's organisations. On the programmatic and policy levels, the role of UN-Women's Iraq Country Office was continuously evolving as both a "convener" and a "one stop shop" providing demand-driven substantial advice to the government, women machineries, the donor community in the form of policy and programmatic advice, research and evidence-based data and knowledge products.

52. Progress was achieved in several areas, creating more opportunities for the office to act and drive the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda in Iraq. The Country Office successfully implemented three years of its current Strategic Note 2016–2019 and was embarking upon the development of its upcoming Strategic Note 2020–2022, informed by a series of national consultations bringing diverse national actors together, including line ministries, women machineries, civil society organisations, particularly women's organisations, political parties and United Nations agencies, to discuss and agree on a coordinated approach to deliver on national priorities. UN-Women was supporting the Government in areas such as women's economic empowerment, ending violence against women, and women's leadership and participation.

53. In 2019, UN-Women implemented advocacy and capacity building activities to enhance women's political leadership and supported the creation of the Caucus of Women Parliamentarians. It was noteworthy that Iraq was the first country in the Arab States region to develop a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. This benefited from the support of the Entity in close collaboration and the Government and women's organisations.

54. Prior to ensuing questions from the floor and feedback from the secretariat, the Representative of Iraq first responded by thanking UN-Women for organising this briefing and the Representative for her comprehensive presentation. He commended the Representative and staff of the UN-Women country office in Iraq, underscoring the important role they played. He noted several initiatives, for example, the assistance they provided to refugees and internally displaced persons, through social, health, legal services and cash for work, in addition to its support in the adoption of the country's first National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

55. The delegate expressed interest in learning more about how UN-Women could play a role in counter-terrorism efforts. He concluded by thanking all donors and supporters and gave assurance of the Government's continued support to UN-Women and its office in Iraq.

## B. Knowledge management

56. The Head of the Research and Data section briefed the Executive Board on Knowledge Management strategy of UN-Women. The UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021 highlighted the importance of strengthened capacities for Knowledge Management for the advancement of gender equality and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Knowledge, together with innovation, results-based management and evaluation, was an element of high-quality programmes. The 2018–2021 Strategic Plan required UN-Women to continue strengthening its knowledge platforms; develop communities of practice bringing together thematic expertise and knowledge from across the organisation and its partners; strengthen its capacity to anticipate emerging issues and trends to better drive normative advances, monitor progress on Sustainable Development Goals, develop effective advocacy strategies and enhance gender-responsive programming; explore operational innovations for agenda-setting; and further develop South-South collaboration and triangular initiatives.

57. The Knowledge Management strategy proposed three objectives to move from ad-hoc knowledge production and sharing to standardised Knowledge Management practices:

1. Strengthen knowledge production, capturing and analysis;
2. Strengthen knowledge sharing within UN Women and with partners; and
3. Develop a knowledge sharing culture and better collaboration across sections.

58. These objectives were based on an understanding of a hierarchical relationship between data, information and knowledge and the way organisational learning occurs. They were aimed at improving Knowledge Management systems at each level, to foster links between different kinds of knowledge and ultimately to support thought leadership within the Entity. Their achievement would be supported by cutting-edge Information and Communication Technology tools that facilitate knowledge production and sharing. The strategic outcomes as outlined were: i) Improved performance across UN-Women's triple mandate (normative, coordination, operational) and most urgently in terms of capacity development through training; ii) Enhanced technical advisory services and evidence-based advocacy to mainstream gender into national policies and initiatives; and iii) Strengthened capacity to engage in policy dialogue on gender equality as a non-resident agency (through, for example, country gender profiles in contexts where UN-Women did not have programme presence).

59. In response to the presentation, one delegation asked about how UN-Women had benefitted from the experiences of other UN system partners.

## VIII. Closing of the session

60. In closing, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director expressed her gratitude to the President and Bureau for their effective leadership. She expressed her appreciation to all the delegates for their active participation, including deliberations that resulted in agreement on the decisions.

61. She noted concerns raised in the statements, covering the United Nations Reforms as well as other aspects related to the work of UN-Women, including workplace relations, those arising from the audit report and reference to the upcoming Commission on the Status of Women – all of which she stated, were well noted and would be followed up accordingly.

62. The head of UN-Women appreciated all those who reiterated their commitment to the major task of attracting resources to the Entity, noting the Government of Germany's significant announcement that it will double its core contribution in 2019 to 8 million Euros, as well as the reminder of the Government of Canada's multi-year Multi-Partner Trust Fund of Can\$ 26 million.

63. The session was then adjourned.

## Annex I

### Proposed provisional agenda and workplan for the Annual Session 18 and 20 June 2019

#### Note by the Executive Board secretariat

#### Provisional agenda

1. Organisational matters
2. Annual Report of the Executive Director
3. Evaluation
4. Audit
5. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters
6. Policy and programme matters
7. Investigation
8. Other matters

#### Provisional workplan

<i>Day</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Subject</i>
<b>Tuesday, 18 June</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	Organisational matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoption of the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2019</li> <li>Adoption of the report on the first regular session of 2019</li> </ul>
	3–6 p.m.	2	Annual Report of the Executive Director <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the Strategic Plan 2018–2021</li> </ul> <i>Informal consultations on draft decisions</i>
		2	Annual Report of the Executive Director ( <i>continued</i> ) <i>Informal consultations on draft decisions</i>
<b>Wednesday, 19 June</b>	10 a.m. – 1 p.m.	3	Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on the evaluation function of UN-Women, 2018</li> <li>Corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to governance and national planning</li> <li>Management responses</li> </ul>

Day	Time	Item	Subject
		6	Policy and programme matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Briefing on UN-Women operational response at the country level: Côte d'Ivoire</li> <li>Briefing on UN-Women's work on the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities</li> </ul> <i>Informal consultations on draft decisions</i>
	3–6 p.m.	4	Audit matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on the internal audit and investigation activities for the period 1 January to 31 December 2018</li> <li>Report of the Audit Advisory Committee</li> <li>Management responses</li> <li>Management response to Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) reports issued in 2018</li> </ul>
		7	Investigation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An independent victim-centred review of UN-Women's policies and processes on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment</li> <li>Management response</li> </ul>
Thursday, 20 June	10 a.m. – 1 p.m.	5	Financial, budgetary and administrative matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance unedited version of the draft integrated budget estimates for the biennium 2020–2021</li> <li>Update on the steps taken to reduce the granting of waivers lowering the agreed cost recovery rates</li> </ul>
		8	Other matters <p><i>Adoption of draft decisions</i></p>
		1	Organisational matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval of the provisional agenda and workplan for the second regular session of 2019</li> </ul> <p>Closing of the session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statements by the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women and the President of the Executive Board</li> </ul>



## Annex II

### Decisions adopted at the first regular session 2019

#### Decision 2019/1 – Update on the implementation of GA resolution 72/279 on repositioning of the United Nations development system

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Welcomes* the updates provided by UN-Women on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 of 31 May 2018 on repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system;

2. *Recognises* the continuing contributions of UN-Women in operationalising resolution 72/279; and requests it, in line with General Assembly resolution 71/243 of 21 December 2016 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, resolution 72/279 as well as the Secretary General's implementation plan for the inception of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, to continue to support and contribute to the full implementation of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including a matrixed, dual reporting model, with United Nations country team members accountable and reporting to their respective entities on individual mandates, and periodically reporting to the resident coordinator on their individual activities and on their respective contributions to the collective results of the United Nations development system towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda at the country level, on the basis of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework;

3. *Calls on* UN-Women to provide written, harmonised and entity-specific information to the Executive Board at its annual session 2019 on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279, based on the information previously provided during informal consultations/briefings;

4. *Recognises* the importance of improving efficiency and effectiveness in administrative support services through, inter alia, enhancing inter-agency cooperation, and encourages the Executive Director of UN-Women to continue to take action as appropriate in these areas;

5. *Acknowledges with appreciation* the efforts undertaken by UN-Women to continue delivering on its Strategic Plan 2018–2021, while implementing resolution 72/279;

6. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to support the Secretary-General to collaboratively implement a new generation of United Nations country teams, with needs-based tailored country presence, to be built on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and finalised through open and inclusive dialogue between the host Government and the United Nations development system, facilitated by the resident coordinator, to ensure the best configuration of support on the ground as well as enhanced coordination, transparency, efficiency and impact of United Nations development activities, in accordance with national development policies, plans, priorities and needs;

7. *Welcomes* the strong commitment of UN-Women, as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, to redeploy its efficiency gains from United Nations development system reform for development activities, including coordination, and requests UN-Women to contribute to the Secretary-General's report

on the cost-savings and efficiency gains and their redeployments and to update the Executive Board through existing reporting mechanisms;

8. *Recognises with appreciation* the steps already taken by UN-Women to support the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including the transfer of its 2019 cost-sharing contribution to the United Nations Development Coordination Office.

## **Decision 2019/2 – Working methods of the Executive Board**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the rules of procedure of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP;

2. *Recalls* decision 2018/7 on working methods of the Executive Boards in which the Bureau of UN-Women, in collaboration with the Bureaux of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and WFP, was asked to launch a joint consultative process with the Member States starting at the first regular session 2019;

3. *Takes note* with appreciation of the formation of the core group of Member States to lead the joint consultative process with Member States, in an open, transparent and inclusive manner, with a view to examining the efficiency and quality of its current sessions, as well as the functions of the joint meeting of the Boards, building on the joint response prepared by the secretariats, and in close consultation with all Member States, seeking Member States' inputs to the written account of the core group;

4. *Requests* the Executive Board secretariats to support the core group, upon request, in analysing the effects of its findings and suggestions/recommendations;

5. *Looks forward* to the written account of the core group, to be presented at the joint meeting of the Boards in May 2019, for subsequent consideration of its findings and suggestions/recommendations by the members and observers of the respective Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP.

## **Decision 2019/3 – Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017 and 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 2017;

2. *Takes note* of the seventh unqualified audit opinion issued by the Board of Auditors on the financial statements of UN-Women for the year ended 31 December 2017;

3. *Notes with appreciation* the high implementation rate of audit recommendations to date and encourages UN-Women to continue increasing the rate of implementation even further;

4. *Requests* UN-Women to prioritise the implementation of the five main audit recommendations identified by the United Nations Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2017 on the need to: make the entity inclusive of and accessible to staff with disabilities; ensure field offices comply with the organisation-wide risk assessment plan and provide staff with fraud assessment awareness training;

and address the findings related to implementing partners, including strengthening field offices' capacity to address these issues;

5. *Further requests* UN-Women to fully address the four outstanding recommendations from the 2016 report of the United Nations Board of Auditors;

6. *Takes note* of the updated management response of UN-Women to the report of the United Nations Board of Auditors for the financial period that ended on 31 December 2017.

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