



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

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**Second regular session 2019**  
9 and 10 September 2019  
Item 1 of the provisional agenda  
**Organizational matters**

## **Report on the annual session 2019, 18 to 20 June 2019**

### **I. Organizational matters**

1. The annual session 2019 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) was held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 18 to 20 June 2019.
2. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session ([UNW/2019/L.3](#)), and approved the report on its first regular session held on 12 February 2019 ([UNW/2019/1](#)). Following discussion on proposed amendments, the Executive Board also approved the provisional agenda and workplan for the second regular session 2019, to be held on 9 and 10 September 2019.
3. The Executive Board adopted six decisions (2019/4, 2019/5, 2019/6, 2019/7, 2019/8 and 2019/9) as contained in the annex to the present report.

### **II. Opening statements**

4. The President of the Executive Board, Penelope Beckles (Trinidad and Tobago), in her opening remarks, gave an overview of the reports to be considered, in addition to the draft decisions pending adoption by the Executive Board at the current session.
5. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka thanked the President and the Bureau for their active engagement in addressing all matters requiring the Executive Board's attention, which included the recent Field Visit to the Caribbean, as well as the Joint Field Visit of the Executive Boards to Colombia.
6. She introduced the following newly appointed officials: Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships, Anita Bhatia; Senior Adviser on Women's Leadership, Hanna Kristjansdottir; and HeForShe Programme Manager, Edward Wageni. The Executive Board was also informed that the Director of the Programme Division, Maria-Noel



Vaeza, would soon be assuming her new role as Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

7. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women announced that as a result of the recent elections of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN-Women Staff Council, UN-Women had unprecedented representation. She expressed her appreciation for the Council's collaboration on several areas of critical importance, such as the quest for gender parity across the United Nations system and improving the workplace environment. She stated that while encouraged by the strengthened open culture, whereby staff feel more comfortable in reporting wrongdoing, she was however concerned by the relative increase of allegations. Outlining some measures already taken to improve the situation, the head of the Entity looked forward to further discussions with Member States in this regard.

8. In the introduction of her report on the implementation of the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan, she laid out the context within which the Entity functioned with respect to progress made and challenges encountered. She stressed the importance of collectively working to achieve stronger partnerships, increase resources and promote sustainability.

9. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director announced the launch of a new Strategic Plan Results Portal to enhance transparency. She reported strong performance against priorities and indicators endorsed by the Executive Board, mentioning that 75 per cent of all indicators in the results framework met their milestones. Highlighting several concrete achievements, she stated that the year 2018 saw the highest level of programme delivery. Corrective action was under way in cases where slower performance was detected.

10. UN-Women is actively engaging in the repositioning of the United Nations development system, focusing on positioning gender equality and the empowerment of women at the heart of the reforms, so the entire system delivers for women and girls. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are being incorporated as key principles in the guidance on the new Cooperation Frameworks. The Entity is also making necessary adjustments to its policies to ensure recognition of the enhanced role of the Resident Coordinator.

11. The Executive Board was provided with an overview of the comprehensive change management process currently under way, which aimed to achieve a broad set of objectives including, for example, a stronger focus on results and capacity-building of the Entity's counterparts; and a more effective structure that eliminates silos and duplications and enhances accountability. In this regard, the head of the Entity sought the Executive Board's support when considering the draft integrated budget that included an allocation for change management.

12. Turning attention to the area of resource mobilization, it was stated that in 2018 UN-Women reached its highest level of voluntary contributions since its inception, totalling US\$ 384 million. However, while earmarked contributions increased by 10 per cent, regular resources increased by only 2 per cent. Member States were urged to consider prioritizing regular resources and soft earmarking resources at the country level, such as direct funding of the Entity's Strategic Notes. Efforts towards seeking diverse funding sources continue, with focus on private sector partnerships. Over the last 5 years, the share of revenue from the private sector tripled to 6 per cent of total funding.

13. The year 2020 was cited as one of particular significance given major commemorations such as the following: the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action; the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325; the five-year milestone of the Sustainable Development Goals; the

seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the tenth anniversary of the establishment of UN-Women.

14. She concluded her remarks by highlighting the release of UN-Women's flagship report, *Progress of the World's Women*, on 25 June 2019, focused on "Families in a Changing World", and thanking the Executive Board for its support, underscoring the common resolve required to bring an end to gender inequality by the year 2030.

15. Member States thanked the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her comprehensive remarks and congratulated the new appointees, including the Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships. They also expressed appreciation for the hard work of the entire UN-Women team around the world.

16. Many speakers highlighted their accomplishments and initiatives at the national level in relation to the promotion and advancement of gender equality. There was resounding commendation from the floor of the results achieved by UN-Women in the year 2018, with many delegations applauding the Entity for effective delivery of its mandate, which despite limited resources, was testament to its value added to the United Nations system. Some delegations alluded to the pushback against gender equality and the empowerment of women currently permeating societies around the world and pledged their continued support, while acknowledging the pivotal role of UN-Women.

17. Delegations underscored the significance of lessons learned from the first year of implementation of the current Strategic Plan, as well as from previous strategic plans and the need for UN-Women to continue work on enhancing its efficiency; sustainability of results; and accountability. A speaker noted the importance of an innovative resource mobilization strategy, with clear prioritization, urging UN-Women to reflect on lessons learned, and to ensure that areas needing improvement were reported on, particularly within the context of the midterm review of the Strategic Plan. Another delegation referred to the outcome on women's income security, decent work and economic autonomy that did not meet its milestones for four indicators. It was therefore the outcome with the lowest performance. Emphasizing the importance of this area with respect to at least 13 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the delegation called on UN-Women to focus on lessons learned with a view to improving performance in this area moving forward.

18. Delegations applauded the Entity's commitment to seeking diverse sources of funding; efforts to strengthen partnerships, particularly with youth groups and civil society networks; to enhance the collection of data disaggregated by age, sex, migratory status, disability and urban or rural location for example, to better inform the planning and monitoring of its interventions. Some delegations expressed their concern about insufficient data-collection in relation to indicators for evaluating progress towards implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving its Sustainable Development Goals. One speaker called for the mainstreaming of data-collection processes and for further collaboration with other United Nations agencies.

19. The second generation of the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP 2.0) was specifically mentioned by some speakers who expressed appreciation for the constructive role played by UN-Women in this regard. Several Member States welcomed the Entity's active engagement in the repositioning of the United Nations development system to focus on contributing to gender-responsive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. UN-Women's ongoing work on reforming the United Nations development system, according to one speaker, should enable the organization to increasingly optimize and capitalize on its specific knowledge and capacity to ensure that gender equality is taken into consideration in normative and strategic processes at the United Nations

Headquarters and at the country level. However, one delegation noted that the overall compliance rate of the United Nations system stood at 58 per cent, which represented a decline in comparison with the year 2017. This encouraged UN-Women to accelerate support in this area, particularly since the speaker opined that it was important for the United Nations to lead by example on gender mainstreaming.

20. UN-Women was commended for its work on the comprehensive change management process under way and stressed the importance of the value of partnerships in maximizing coherence. Some Member States looked forward to learning more about the country typology review and progress made on these processes.

21. Some Member States who participated in this year's Executive Board Field Visits took the opportunity to thank the Executive Board secretariat of UN-Women and the team in the Multi-Country Office of the Caribbean for the enriching experience which served to inform the Executive Board's discussions. The visits showcased the vital assistance provided to women and girls in the most vulnerable situations. One speaker called for enhanced communication, noting that activities of UN-Women lacked visibility on the ground, which led to them not receiving the credit they deserved.

### **III. Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#)**

22. Pursuant to paragraph 3 of its decision 2019/1 and paragraph 8 of its decision 2018/5, the Chief of the Political Analysis and Programme Development Unit made a presentation to the Executive Board on UN-Women's approach to resolution [72/279](#), the actions taken, and the progress made with respect to the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). Recognizing that a strong coherent and coordinated United Nations development system could accelerate the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment, UN-Women continued to advocate for transformational change in various aspects of the United Nations development system reform. It was reiterated that a strong, coherent and coordinated United Nations development system would be better equipped to support Member States seeking to achieve better gender equality and women's empowerment results; the 2030 Agenda; and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Entity was in the process of updating its policies, procedures and guidance to align them with the outcomes of the United Nations development system reform. Examples were given to outline actions taken and progress made with respect to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework; the review of agency assets and country and regional levels; the Resident Coordinator system; system-wide analysis, planning and reporting; and the efficiencies of shared business operations and premises.

23. Using a two-pronged approach, UN-Women was implementing its own change process designed to adjust its structure and way of working to enhance its impact and better support Member States to deliver results for women and girls. As previously noted in the papers submitted to the Executive Board at the second regular session 2018 and the first regular session 2019, these changes occurred both in the context of the United Nations development system repositioning and in the process of reflecting on lessons learned from the last eight years of UN-Women operations, including recommendations from evaluations and independent assessments that were presented to the Executive Board.

24. The Senior Adviser on Change Management provided detail on the process, mentioning that the change management exercise sought to position UN-Women to be more effective over the next decade by ensuring that staff, processes and structure

were in place, in partnership with United Nations entities, Governments and other organizations to drive the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda forward. Outcomes included optimizing the field architecture, the headquarters structure; and enhancing processes.

25. Several Member States in a joint statement, welcomed the report presented and reaffirmed their support for the United Nations development system reform. They thanked UN-Women for its continued support to the ongoing reforms and remarked that they looked forward to the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The delegations emphasized that the framework, and the work of the United Nations country teams, should aim at implementing the 2030 Agenda, which is the overarching objective of the United Nations System reform. UN-Women was urged to accelerate progress on reviewing its accountability and reporting frameworks to ensure alignment with the new Management and Accountability Framework, including the implementation of matrixed reporting.

26. With respect to the Resident Coordinator appraisal, Member States opined that UN-Women should contribute to the performance assessments of Resident Coordinators, including in countries where it is not formally represented in the United Nations country team. They expressed concern that UN-Women Regional Directors are excluded from participating in the Resident Coordinators' appraisals given their lower seniority. It was stressed that this restriction deprived United Nations country teams of an opportunity to ensure accountability and advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and to leverage the expertise and mandate of UN-Women. Delegations called on the Executive Board members to join them in recommending to the United Nations Development Coordination Office that this restriction be removed, as part of the ongoing United Nations reform.

27. A speaker took the opportunity to commend UN-Women for its active contribution to developing the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework guidance. It was noted that the new Resident Coordinator system brought with it an opportunity for the Resident Coordinators to become true champions and advocates for UN-Women's core values as a rights-based organization. The Member State appreciated the Entity's contribution to the Mutual Accountability Framework, to define the roles and responsibilities of the Resident Coordinator and country team members, in the context of leaving no one behind, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

28. Touching on the subject of the levy, the delegations jointly welcomed the Entity's doubled cost-sharing contribution to support the functioning of the Resident Coordinator system in 2019 and encouraged UN-Women to continue the implementation of this contribution through existing resources, as well as to assure the processing of the 1 per cent levy.

29. They welcomed the Secretary-General's Funding Compact and looked forward to UN-Women's first report to the Executive Board's second regular session in September 2019 on the specific follow-up to commitments under the Funding Compact, incorporating efficiency gains and their redeployment for programming, including coordination.

30. The delegations appreciated the work of the head of UN-Women, in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Strategic Results Group on Partnerships, to address the need for tracking and assuring adequate financing for gender equality work and gender mainstreaming.

31. They recalled the Secretary-General's proposal to develop clear system-wide guidance and principles on working in partnerships and asked UN-Women to support

this effort and to present proposals to the Executive Board on how to establish partnership collaboration as the basic organizing principle for its engagement.

32. They expressed appreciation for UN-Women staff's engagement at all levels on the implementation of the reform, and for UN-Women management's support of institutional and culture change.

#### **IV. Draft integrated budget estimates 2020–2021**

33. The Director, Management and Administration made a preliminary presentation to the Executive Board – prior to its formal submission at its 2019 second regular session – on the draft integrated budget estimates for the Entity for the biennium 2020–2021.

34. The two-year integrated budget was aligned with the current four-year Strategic Plan and complemented with assessed contributions funding under the Regular Budget of the United Nations. The integrated budget reflected the projected financial resources that would allow the Entity to have the financial and institutional capacities to implement its mandate, in line with the Strategic Plan, and covered regular and other resources. The estimated resources were presented in line with the harmonized approach agreed by the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and UN-Women.

35. To deliver on the last two years of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, UN-Women proposed an integrated budget with estimated voluntary contributions of US\$ 970.0 million for 2020–2021 and requested an institutional budget appropriation of US\$ 204.4 million.

36. The proposed institutional budget reflected a cost increase of US\$ 2.6 million to meet the doubling of UN-Women's share to the United Nations Development Group cost-sharing arrangement as mandated in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). In developing the present proposal, UN-Women continued to be guided by the overarching need to deliver measurable development results, particularly at the country level. The following major principles guided the preparation of the integrated budget proposal for 2020–2021:

(a) Maintaining estimates of contributions at similar levels as in the 2018–2019 biennium for regular resources while aligning estimates for other resources to reflect the rising trend;

(b) Adopting an overall budget-neutral approach to the preparation of the budget, with a focus on cost effectiveness and identification of efficiencies to absorb anticipated non-discretionary and inflationary cost increases in order to maintain the current level of institutional capacities, with the exception of the US\$ 2.6 million cost increase requested for the doubling of the United Nations Development Group cost-sharing arrangement;

(c) Enhancing efficiency, transparency and accountability by improving and embedding results-based management throughout the organization; and

(d) Aligning activities and funding sources, in order to ensure that each funding source bears its fair share of costs.

37. The Director noted that the following contingency measures would be taken into consideration should the Entity fall short of reaching its regular resources (core) projections: (1) Reduction in non-binding expenditures; (2) Delayed recruitment; (3) Increase in vacancy rate; (4) Delayed spending of allocations to Special Purposes; and (5) Draw on the Operational Reserve (requires Executive Board approval).

38. Some delegations requested specific clarifications. One speaker called on all Member States that were in a position to do so to assist UN-Women in reaching its funding targets. In the event that projections were not met, it would be important to continue to ensure transparency in planning and prioritization. The delegation called on the Entity, in the spirit of the Funding Compact, to increase its efforts in mobilizing regular resources revenues to ensure flexible and qualitative funding for all its activities. The decrease in regular resources was noted with concern (from 44 per cent in 2016 to 39 per cent in 2018). Regular resources were essential to financing core functions such as evaluations and audits, which were critical for the sustainability of the organization and the integrity of the Strategic Plan and also affected the Entity's ability to mobilize other resources.

39. UN-Women was cautioned against the growing imbalance between regular and other resources, since the mobilization of other resources could be associated with high transaction costs and/or result in cross-subsidization of non-core projects with core funds. The full picture of cost recovery needed to be addressed, particularly with respect to direct and indirect costs. More clarification was sought on whether UN-Women would need to change the methodology for allocating regular resources for regional and thematic distribution to better reflect its mandate and ongoing United Nations development system reform, and what would be the requirements.

40. In a joint statement, several delegations noted what they referred to as an ambitious increase in budget estimates, which exceeded the current budget for the 2018–2019 period – a budget that was not fully financed last year, despite record revenues. They stated that as major supporters of UN-Women, they shared the Entity's wish to reach the budget target of US\$ 500 million per annum, as envisioned by the Secretary-General when UN-Women was established. They also shared the Audit Advisory Committee's view that realistic targets and goals for resource mobilization were particularly important and emphasized the need for UN-Women to adhere to the principles of the Funding Compact, and to engage in a strategic structured dialogue with Member States and other donors. They recalled that the purpose of the dialogues was to identify the gaps in relation to the funding that UN-Women received, to ensure full and effective financing of the budget that the Executive Board approved and to deliver on the implementation of UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

41. The Entity was urged to continue engaging with new partners in the structured financing dialogue and to diversify its funding resources to close the persisting funding gap. The imbalance in targets for regular resources and other resources in the proposed budget was noted with concern. Member States looked forward to further engaging in this dialogue with UN-Women and other donors to achieve full financing of the budget and the secure delivery of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

## V. Evaluation

42. The Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) presented an overview of the performance of UN-Women's evaluation function at the corporate and decentralized levels, including the Entity's contribution to United Nations system-wide coordination and national capacity development for gender-responsive evaluation. The report outlined the establishment of the IEAS and presented the 2019 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Service (IES). In summary, the evaluation made the following conclusions against the key performance indicators:

- A high rate of progress was maintained, with most evaluations performing well against the quality standards.

- Evaluations generated knowledge on a range of thematic and organizational effectiveness and efficiency areas. UN-Women's management remained committed and increased uptake of lessons and recommendations was reported.
- Collaboration with other United Nations agencies on joint and United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations was enhanced. System-wide gender-responsive evaluation was intensified through the United Nations Evaluation Group.

The Executive Board was assured that UN-Women's management remained fully committed to further strengthening quality, coverage and use of both corporate and decentralized evaluations in strong collaboration with the IEAS. The UN-Women Programme Division would work closely with the IEAS on the following:

- Ensure adequate balance, synchronization and functional integrity of the combined oversight functions
- Ensure consistent management demand and better use of evaluations
- Develop results architecture to better capture UN-Women's impact
- Continue to ensure that adequate financial and human resources were allocated to the evaluation function through continuous capacity-building and improvement of results-based management and monitoring systems

UN-Women also remained fully committed to ensuring evaluation excellence by building on the success achieved to date.

43. The Chief of the Independent Evaluation Service presented the corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to governance and national planning (GNP). The report summarized the evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to GNP over the 2011–2017 period. The evaluation assessed the following: (a) Relevance of UN-Women's GNP work given the changing global development landscape and priorities at the country level; (b) Effectiveness of UN-Women's GNP work at the normative, operational and coordination levels; (c) Extent to which human rights and gender equality principles have been integrated into the design and implementation of country interventions; (d) Efficiency of UN-Women's organizational structures, systems and processes to support GNP programming; (e) Extent to which learning systems have supported UN-Women's GNP work. The primary intended users of the evaluation findings and recommendations were UN-Women's Executive Board, senior management and staff at headquarters and the regional and country levels.

44. The Chief ad-interim of the Leadership and Governance section presented the management response. UN-Women welcomed the findings and recommendations and appreciated the evaluation's recognition of the pioneering role of UN-Women over two decades in promoting gender-responsive GNP. The evaluation also identified the consistently high-quality technical support provided by UN-Women as contributing to the strong relationship of trust among partners and recognized UN-Women's strength in orienting its GNP work to government partner priorities.

45. UN-Women appreciated that the evaluation recognized the need for additional human and financial resources at all levels to facilitate full implementation of the recommendations.

46. In a joint statement, several Member States welcomed the reports of the Independent Evaluation Service, which confirmed that UN-Women had established a high-quality independent and impactful evaluation function. They pledged their commitment to the IES's important role of fostering learning, accountability and evidence-based decision-making and programming on gender equality within UN-Women, the United Nations system and beyond.

## VI. Audit and investigations

47. The Director of IEAS presented the report of the Internal Audit Service (IAS) on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018. As requested by the Executive Board in its decision [UNW/2015/4](#), this report included: (a) an opinion, based on the scope of work undertaken, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Entity's framework of governance, risk management and control; (b) a concise summary of work and the criteria that support the opinion; (c) a statement of conformance with the internal audit standards; and (d) a view on whether resourcing of the function is appropriate, sufficient and effectively deployed to achieve the desired internal audit and investigation coverage. The report also provided an update on the status of management implementation of internal audit recommendations. Based on the internal audit work performed in 2018, IAS's annual overall opinion is that no significant weaknesses were identified in the Entity's governance, risk management and control processes that would seriously compromise the achievement of UN-Women's strategic and operational objectives.

48. On the caseload of investigations in 2018, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) registered an intake of 36 allegations against UN-Women compared to the 17 registered by the United Nations Development Programme's Office of Audit and Investigations in 2017. Prohibited conduct constituted the largest category (43 per cent) of types of allegations registered by OIOS in 2018. Of these prohibited conduct allegations, 46 per cent related to harassment, 36 per cent related to abuse of authority, and 18 per cent related to sexual harassment. No allegations of discrimination were received by OIOS in 2018.

49. The Director of the Management and Administration Division presented the management response to the respective recommendations received. UN-Women welcomed the overall annual opinion.

50. With regard to investigations, note was taken of the significant increased intake of allegations registered by OIOS, as well as the increase in the proportion of allegations of 'prohibited conduct' (i.e. harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination) from 29.4 per cent in 2018 to 43 per cent in 2019 – with a total of 18 allegations registered in this category in 2018. It was noteworthy that a high number of allegations (all categories) were closed after preliminary assessment and that none of the above-mentioned substantiated cases fall into this category.

51. In an interactive dialogue following the presentations, Member States sought further information and clarifications. Several speakers commended the head of UN-Women for her report on disciplinary measures and other actions taken in response to misconduct and wrongdoing by UN-Women staff members, other personnel or third parties and cases of possible criminal behaviour between 2013 and 2018.

52. The Chair of the Advisory Committee on Oversight (ACO) presented the Report of the Audit Advisory Committee for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018. This report provided information on the performance of UN-Women's evaluation function at the corporate and decentralized levels, as well as information on UN-Women's contribution to United Nations system-wide coordination and national capacity development for gender-responsive evaluation. Furthermore, this report detailed the establishment of the IEAS and presented the 2019 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Service.

53. The Committee took note of the significant internal audit results identified, as well as of their investigative findings. It expressed support for the continued

strengthening of governance, risk management, internal controls and accountability at UN-Women. However, the Committee continued to be concerned that the current funding situation of UN-Women may affect its ability to adequately resource key accountability functions and activities such as internal audit, investigations, enterprise risk management, and monitoring and oversight, which included functions in the second line of defence in headquarters and in the field. The Committee pledged to support the continued collaboration of UN-Women with partners within and outside the United Nations in achieving its strategic objectives.

54. The Director of the Management and Administration Division delivered the management responses to the ACO report as well as the Joint Inspection Unit's reports issued in 2018.<sup>a</sup>

## **VII. Special briefings**

### **A. Operational response of UN-Women at the country level – Côte d'Ivoire**

55. Following a video and introduction by the UN-Women Regional Director for West and Central Africa, the UN-Women Representative in Côte d'Ivoire briefed the Executive Board on the Entity's operational response in the country.

56. As outlined in the background document, UN-Women in Côte d'Ivoire sought to align its operational response with the country's response, focusing its activities and partnerships around a number of ongoing UN-Women flagship programmes. Areas of intervention included: Women's Economic Empowerment; Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAW); Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action; and the UN-Women Normative and Coordination Mandate in Côte d'Ivoire.

57. Member States sought further information following a statement from the Deputy Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations who thanked the UN-Women Representative and her team for their extensive work and dynamism. He highlighted several examples of national initiatives and achievements of his Government with respect to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the country. While acknowledging the many challenges remaining, he underscored his Government's appreciation of the work of UN-Women and the country's commitment to the Beijing Programme of Action and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **B. Sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment**

58. According to the decision of the Executive Board, an independent victim-centred review was conducted by the consultancy firm Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited (Deloitte).

59. The head of UN-Women made a brief introduction on the findings of the Deloitte review. She highlighted with great appreciation the Executive Board's interest in this subject and assured the delegations that the victim-centred approach was at the heart of the work of UN-Women. She thanked the UN-Women team, including the office of Human Resources and the Executive Coordinator and Spokesperson on Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Discrimination of

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<sup>a</sup> Complete responses can be accessed through the JIU Follow-up System at <https://jiufus.un.org/UNFollowupSystem/login.faces>.

UN-Women for their efforts, and invited further interaction with Member States to include the issue of diplomatic immunity.

60. Deloitte representatives outlined the results of their review as presented in their report, with sections covering the methodology and theoretical approach of the review as well as observations and recommendations for next steps for UN-Women's efforts against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEA and SH). The input obtained from the document review and interviews was categorized in a framework of four key elements for effective prevention and management of SEA and SH efforts: Accountability and Governance; Prevention; Reporting and Investigations, and Assistance. These four elements provided a structure for the observations and recommendations presented in their report.

61. UN-Women's Director of Human Resources and its Executive Coordinator and Spokesperson on Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Discrimination provided the management response and interacted with Member States intervening from the floor.

62. Member States thanked Deloitte and sought feedback on some of the issues raised. Concern was noted with regard to the lack of official mechanisms to ensure the protection of personnel against retaliation, particularly those on temporary or short-term contracts. One speaker noted that Deloitte had included external stakeholders in their review and commended the consultants for using this approach.

63. Several speakers welcomed the Entity's efforts to address sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The measures outlined in the Annual Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director were underscored, including the appointment of an Executive Coordinator and Spokesperson on Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Discrimination and the development of the United Nations System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment. A delegation commended UN-Women for the steps taken to improve the workplace environment and called for the highest standards – zero tolerance for harassment and abuse of authority – to be upheld and for updates to be provided to the Executive Board in an open and transparent manner. Another Member State opined that the Entity should lead by example on this subject.

### **C. Update on the working methods of the Executive Board**

64. The President acknowledged the presence of the distinguished representative from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, standing in for the Deputy Permanent Representative and Coordinator of the Core Group on the Working Methods of the Executive Board. Member States were invited to comment and/or raise questions. The Secretary of the Executive Board responded to several speakers who sought the Executive Board secretariat's views on the areas of convergence and non-convergence, in addition to how the Executive Board could assist with any potential challenges that may occur. The Secretary outlined the leadership that UN-Women demonstrated in ensuring closer cooperation and coherence with the Executive Boards secretariats of the funds and programmes. He outlined the joint contributions of the Executive Board secretariats to the core group process. He assured delegations of the full commitment of the Executive Board secretariat to implementing the working methods once the respective decision is officially adopted. The Executive Board secretariat has been proactive in the ongoing process of seeking solutions in collaboration with the secretariats of the other United Nations funds and programmes. He added that he is looking forward to UN-Women becoming the coordinating agency for all joint Executive Boards activities. The Representative of the Republic of Korea thanked Member States for their acknowledgement of the work of the core group and delivered a statement on behalf of the Group in response to the questions raised.

## **D. UN-Women’s work on the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities**

65. The Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, United Nations System Coordination and Programme Results briefed the Executive Board on the Entity’s work on the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities. One out of five women in the world identify as living with a disability. People with disabilities tend to have lower incomes, and women with disabilities have lower incomes than men in the same cohort. The systemic marginalization and attitudinal and environmental barriers they face lead to lower economic and social status; increased risk of violence and abuse including sexual violence; discrimination as well as harmful gender-based discriminatory practices; and barriers to access to education, health care including sexual and reproductive health, information and services, and justice as well as civic and political participation. These factors hinder their participation on an equal basis with others. The Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director recognized the progress made to mainstream women and girls with disabilities into its work, but also the challenges faced. For UN-Women to further strengthen work in this area, there would need to be predictable financial and human resources, enhanced coordination and system-wide approaches, and equal participation of women and girls with disabilities. The importance of collective action through coordinated and coherent efforts was emphasized, to ensure the human rights of women with disabilities were upheld. She gave examples of UN-Women’s work to promote disability inclusion and highlighted the strategy launched in December 2018 entitled: “The Empowerment of Women and Girls with Disabilities – Towards Full and Effective Participation and Gender Equality”.

66. Delegations commended the Entity’s efforts to strengthen the rights of women and girls with disabilities across all outcome areas and appreciated the publication of a strategy, stressing the importance of inter-agency cooperation on this issue. UN-Women was urged to allocate sufficient resources to this area.

## **VIII. Closing of the session**

67. The Director of the UN System Coordination Division delivered the closing statement on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director, thanking the President of the Executive Board for her effective and efficient leadership. She expressed appreciation to the Vice-Presidents and delegations for their work and rich exploration of views over the past three days, in addition to the Secretary of the Executive Board and team that once again had delivered on a successful Board session, as well as the interpreters and all the staff of the conference management services and technicians of the United Nations Secretariat whose support was invaluable. She called attention to the important events ahead – such as the High-Level Political Forum in July 2019 and the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September 2019. These were important opportunities for Member States to make concrete commitments to address growing inequalities, take urgent climate action and strengthen institutions for inclusive, just and peaceful societies. This, she stated, required urgent actions from all stakeholders for sustainable change: actions that integrate gender perspectives at all stages of planning, budgeting and implementation to achieve progress for women and girls.

68. The President thanked the Executive Board and observers for their active participation and invaluable contributions and expressed appreciation to the Bureau for its support as well as to all the facilitators of the decisions, whose creativity and skill helped to arrive at a consensus.

69. The President expressed her gratitude to the head of UN-Women and all UN-Women staff for their responsiveness and full engagement throughout the process.

70. In closing, the President of the Executive Board recalled that women and girls around the world were looking to the international community to fulfil the mandate set out and called for continued collaboration on seeking to achieve its collective goals.

The meeting was then adjourned.

## Annex I

### Decisions adopted at the annual session 2019

#### 2019/4

#### Annual Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

*The Executive Board:*

1. *Takes note* of the 2018 Annual Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021;
2. *Notes* with appreciation the progress achieved as described in the report, including that 75 per cent of all indicators in the Strategic Plan have reached their expected milestone;
3. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to improve its organizational effectiveness, sustainability of results and accountability and to address the challenges weakening its results-based management, and to continue improving its policies and practices in support of an enabling environment;
4. *Encourages* UN-Women to take into account lessons learned from the first year of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, as well as from previous strategic plans;
5. *Recognizes* the inter-agency efforts to make progress on the common chapter of the strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women and urges UN-Women to continue working in close partnership with these organizations to further enhance effectiveness and delivery of results in line with their commitment to United Nations reform;
6. *Requests* UN-Women to keep the Executive Board updated on the status of its internal reform processes, including the country typology and the headquarters review, and to provide a timeline for progress in their implementation, including information with regard to possible budgetary implications and consequences for the internal control mechanisms at its first regular session 2020;
7. *Acknowledges* the increase in UN-Women's other resources; encourages countries in a position to do so to increase their contributions, especially to regular resources; and requests UN-Women to provide an overview of the funding situation in relation to the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 and the approved integrated budget for the biennium 2018–2019, taking into account both regular and other resources, in advance of the second regular session 2019 and in the context of the Structured Funding Dialogue;
8. *Takes note* of UN-Women's efforts to strengthen and expand its partnerships for gender equality and women's empowerment, and to increase visibility of its results through better communication, and encourages UN-Women to continue its efforts in this regard;
9. *Requests* the Executive Director of UN-Women to include in the annual report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, information on how the individual flagship programme initiatives contribute to the five outcome areas, identify their cooperating partners and indicate the role and contribution of these partners;
10. *Commends* UN-Women for successfully leveraging its mandate in supporting Member States, upon their request, and strengthening global normative frameworks

and their implementation; and reaffirms the important role of UN-Women in leading, coordinating and promoting accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and women's empowerment and on gender mainstreaming across the United Nations System;

11. *Decides* to transmit the report to the Economic and Social Council.

20 June 2019

## 2019/5

### **Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2018**

*The Executive Board:*

1. *Takes note* of the report on the evaluation function of UN-Women 2018 and the programme of work and budget for 2019 of the Independent Evaluation Service;
2. *Notes* with appreciation the steps taken by UN-Women to maintain an independent, credible and useful evaluation function and its contribution to system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts and national evaluation capacity development;
3. *Expresses* continuing support for strengthening the evaluation function in UN-Women; notes the progress made in implementing the decision 2018/2 that requested UN-Women to continue increasing the implementation rate, coverage and use of evaluations and to address the drop in the implementation of management responses in this regard;
4. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to address the quality of evaluation reports, to invest in evaluation capacity development and professionalization, especially at the country level, and to ensure that all regional and country offices complete evaluations;
5. *Requests* UN-Women to continue the gender-responsive evaluations of country programmes, in order to improve programming at country level; and to continue using evaluation findings and recommendations in policies, strategies and programming;
6. *Notes* with concern the continuing decrease in total spending on evaluations and encourages UN-Women to reach the target of allocating 3 per cent of the total UN-Women programme budget to the evaluation function by the end of the period of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021;
7. *Requests* that the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) continues to seek opportunities with other United Nations agencies to conduct further joint evaluations, and independent system-wide evaluations in line with General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on repositioning the United Nations development system;
8. *Takes note* of UN-Women's work in evaluating its performance in governance and national planning and encourages UN-Women to take into account lessons learned in the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

20 June 2019

**2019/6****Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018***The Executive Board:*

1. *Takes note* of the successful in-housing of the Internal Audit Service and its co-location with the Independent Evaluation Service, emphasizing that the independence of both functions needs to be preserved;
2. *Takes note* of the annual report on internal audit and investigation activities and the related management response; and expresses its continuing support for strengthening the capacity of Internal Audit Service;
3. *Takes note with appreciation* the transparency on the status of investigations and the actions taken, including the Report of the Executive Director of UN-Women on disciplinary measures and other actions taken in response to misconduct and wrongdoing by UN-Women staff members, other personnel or third parties and cases of possible criminal behaviour 2013–2018, and requests the Executive Director of UN-Women to continue efforts in this regard;
4. *Takes note* of the Audit Advisory Committee's report for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018; and encourages UN-Women to consider the Audit Advisory Committee's recommendations;
5. *Encourages* the management of UN-Women in its reporting on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment to further enhance transparency on how implemented actions ensure a victim-centred approach and are aligned with United Nations system-wide efforts;
6. *Notes with appreciation* that the Internal Audit Service has been allocated appropriate and sufficient resources in the year 2018, and requests UN-Women to continue to allocate sufficient resources to ensure a satisfactory number of internal audits and investigations each year and to support the increased responsibilities of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services Director, which involve coordinating and receiving information on investigation activities;
7. *Requests* UN-Women to address areas of recurring issues and the high number of audit recommendations related to implementing partners;
8. *Notes with concern* that there is one long outstanding and three high-priority audit recommendations and requests UN-Women to address these.

20 June 2019

**2019/7****Update on the implementation of General Assembly 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. *Requests* UN-Women to work towards adequately sequencing entity-specific country programming documents so that the individual programmes derive directly from the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (now renamed

United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework), which is to be prepared and finalized in full consultation and agreement with national Governments and is the most important planning document of the United Nations development system at the country level; and requests UN-Women to provide an update at the next session of the Executive Board on adjustments required;

3. *Requests* UN-Women to provide, for information at the next session of the Executive Board, a detailed mapping of their regional assets and capacities, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [72/279](#), and mindful of ongoing discussions on the revamping of the regional approach of the United Nations development system;

4. *Notes with appreciation* the preliminary updates provided by UN-Women on efficiencies, including through shared business operations and premises; calls upon the Executive Director of UN-Women to continue to take action to ensure full achievement of efficiency gains and their redeployment in line with relevant existing mandates, including from General Assembly resolutions [71/243](#) of 21 December 2016 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and [72/279](#) on repositioning of the United Nations development system, as well as to take into account the applicable recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in the report on opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness in administrative support services by enhancing inter-agency cooperation ([JIU/REP/2018/5](#));

5. *Requests* regular updates to the Executive Board on efficiency gains and their redeployments, through existing reporting mechanisms;

6. *Requests* UN-Women to support the efforts of the Secretary-General to develop a tracking system to monitor efficiency gains;

7. *Welcomes* that UN-Women contributed its doubled contribution to the resident coordinator cost-sharing, and calls on UN-Women to implement the 1 per cent levy, as applicable, as per the operational guidance for implementing the coordination levy (12 March 2019) issued by the United Nations Development Coordination Office;

8. *Recalls* decisions 2018/5 and notes that the agency-administered option for collecting the coordination levy adds administrative tasks to UN-Women and requires adjustments to agency administrative processes, and requests UN-Women to provide information on the adjustments and to promptly report to the Executive Board on any additional transaction and administrative costs associated with the administration of the levy, within existing reporting;

9. *Recalls* the importance of funding predictability and urges Member States in a position to do so to prioritize regular resources and multi-year pledges, given that reductions in regular resources risk jeopardizing the ability of UN-Women to achieve planned strategic results;

10. *Encourages* UN-Women in collaboration with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, to place special emphasis on the implementation of their respective Strategic Plans, including the common chapter on joint programming, in accordance with their respective mandates and comparative and collaborative advantages, and to report at the annual session in 2020, including through the midterm reviews of their respective Strategic Plans, where and how the inter-agency process among the United Nations funds and programmes has led to greater efficiencies and effectiveness.

20 June 2019

## 2019/8

### Working methods of the Executive Board

#### *The Executive Board:*

1. *Reaffirms* the rules of procedure of the Executive Board of UN-Women;
2. *Welcomes* the written account of the core group of Member States that led 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 Executive Boards in line with decisions 2019/2 and 2018/7;
3. *Recognizes* the technical support provided by the secretariats of the [UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS](#), UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP Executive Boards to the core group and notes in this regard the annex to the written account as prepared by the secretariats;
4. *Stresses* that the overarching principles of the discussion on working methods of the Executive Boards are the preservation of executive guidance and oversight of agencies; avoidance of duplication with the function of the Economic and Social Council operational activities segment and the respective Executive Boards; and respect for the different mandates and characteristics of each agency, fund, programme and entity;
5. *Requests* UN-Women, in collaboration with the [UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS](#), UNICEF and WFP, to organize joint informal briefings/consultations on common topics and strongly encourages that they be scheduled within socially acceptable hours to allow the WFP Executive Board to participate from Rome;
6. *Requests* the secretariat of the UN-Women Executive Board, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of [UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS](#), UNICEF and WFP, to present initial proposals to improve the working methods of the joint meeting of the Boards, including an optimal timing for convening the joint meeting of the Boards, for consideration by Member States at the second regular session 2019, mindful that the joint meeting of the Boards does not have decision-making authority and of the need to avoid duplication and overlap with the functions of the Economic and Social Council operational activities segment;
7. *Requests* that the secretariat propose different alternatives of adjusting the date of the second regular session, mindful that it does not overlap with the other schedules, for consideration by the Executive Board at the second regular session 2019;
8. *Requests* that an informal, at no cost to the organizations, meeting of the Presidents of the Executive Boards of [UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS](#), UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP be held on a regular basis for enhanced harmonization of common issues, and for increased coordination among agencies, funds, programmes and entities and the respective Executive Boards, while bearing in mind that according to the rules of procedure of Executive Boards the Presidents remain under the authority of the respective Executive Boards and do not have the authority to make decisions on any substantive matters, and that the outcome of the meetings be shared with the wider membership;
9. *Affirms* the need to elect the Bureau members early on to minimize leadership gaps and enhance the efficient functioning of the Presidency and Executive Board at large;

10. *Recommends* that for continuity and smooth transition between outgoing and incoming Bureaux, whenever appropriate and consistent with the relevant rules of procedure, regional groups could consider taking appropriate measures so that one of the Vice-Chairs/Vice-Presidents of the Bureau can take on the Chair/Presidency and could be effective in that capacity in the following year;
11. *Notes* the need for flexibility on chairing the informal meetings of the Executive Board from the President of the Bureau or one of the Vice-Presidents or designated members of their delegations;
12. *Requests* that the secretariat of the UN-Women Executive Board, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of [UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS](#) and UNICEF, continue convening consecutive formal sessions of the Executive Boards in order to avoid gaps between the formal sessions of the various Executive Boards;
13. *Requests* that the secretariat of the UN-Women Executive Board present practical proposals for improving the efficiency of the sessions of the Executive Board, including by reviewing the agenda items and the efficient consideration of these, for deliberation and consideration by the Executive Board at the second regular session 2019;
14. *Requests* that its sessions be made interactive, with the support of the secretariat, while securing the time slots for group and national statements as appropriate and necessary;
15. *Requests* that while encouraging interactive discussions, any format for enhanced interaction with senior management should have a follow-up within existing mechanisms;
16. *Encourages* the heads of agencies, funds, programmes and entities participating in Board sessions to provide the full texts of their statements or opening remarks (presentation) online in advance and deliver shorter statements at the Executive Board sessions. The statements and presentations should be concise in highlighting the main issues, evidenced-based and action-oriented in addressing the challenges;
17. *Strongly encourages* the President to enforce implementation of time limits for statements;
18. *Affirms* the participation of diverse stakeholders in Executive Board sessions with full respect of the relevant clauses in the rules of procedure and based on the agreement of the Executive Board, recalls decision 2018/7, paragraph 11, and reiterates its request to give due consideration to gender balance in all panels;
19. *Requests* the Bureau upon consultation with the respective regional groups to decide the destination of field visits two years in advance, while allowing the flexibility to change host countries if circumstances dictated, in order to give host countries as well as agencies as much time as possible to prepare for the visits;
20. *Requests* the Bureau, assisted by the secretariat, to consult with the Bureaux of the Executive Boards of [UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS](#), UNICEF and WFP, to coordinate for the selection of joint field visits and to propose harmonized criteria for individual field visits, for evaluation by the Board at the first regular session 2020;
21. *Requests* the secretariat to circulate proposed draft decisions to the wider membership at least four weeks prior to each session, at the discretion of the Bureau, and reiterates its strong encouragement to Member States to provide their comments on draft decisions, to the extent possible, prior to the start of the session, with a view to starting substantive consultations on the draft decisions on the first day of

negotiations, without pre-empting bringing in additional proposals during negotiations;

22. *Requests* the secretariat in collaboration with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of [UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS](#), UNICEF and WFP, to track the implementation of Executive Board decisions, using the matrix of common use as attached to the written account of the core group;

23. *Requests* the secretariat to distribute the minutes of Bureau meetings to members and observers of the Executive Board once these minutes have been approved by the Bureau;

24. *Reiterates* the request that the secretariat of the Executive Board of UN-Women regularly updates the joint online calendar of all Board meetings in real time so as to avoid overlap of schedules with other funds and programmes, as well as major official meetings including the Economic and Social Council operational activities segment.

20 June 2019

## **2019/9**

### **UN-Women policies and procedures to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment**

*The Executive Board:*

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the independent victim-centred review of UN-Women policies and procedures to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, as requested in the decision 2018/3, para. 11, and the related UN-Women management response; and requests UN-Women to provide an update on implementation of recommendations in the independent review and as noted in the related management response, within existing reporting, to the Executive Board at its annual session in 2020;

2. *Requests* UN-Women to lead by example in ensuring all its policies and procedures on matters related to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, including policies on protection from any form of retaliation, apply to all UN-Women's personnel, including consultants, volunteers, fellows and interns; and requests UN-Women to reinforce to its implementing partners the need to have appropriate policies in place and to make them aware of UN-Women's policies and reporting mechanisms;

3. *Supports* the ongoing strong commitment to 'zero tolerance' for sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, by the head of UN-Women, and appreciates the actions UN-Women has taken so far, including efforts to implement further institutional and cultural changes, including mechanisms for victim support, reporting, accountability and partnerships, and stresses the need for adequate resources;

4. *Encourages* UN-Women to continue to take action to ensure a joined-up, system-wide coherent approach to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, while leveraging its mandate.

20 June 2019