



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

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Item 1 of the provisional agenda

**Organizational matters**

## **Report on the first regular session of 2022, 14 to 15 February 2022<sup>1</sup>**

### **I. Election of the Bureau**

1. On 11 January 2022, the Executive Board held elections for Bureau members of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for 2022. The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, H.E. Ms. Rabab Fatima (representing the Asia-Pacific States), was elected President of the Executive Board. The Vice-Presidents were elected from the following regional groups: (a) Latin American and Caribbean States: H.E. Ms. María del Carmen Squeff, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations; (b) Eastern European States: H.E. Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations; (c) Western European and Other States: H.E. Mr. Jörundur Valtýsson, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations; and (d) African States: H.E. Mr. Alhaji Fanday Turay, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the United Nations.

2. The outgoing President, H.E. Mr. Alhaji Fanday Turay, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the United Nations (representing the African States), congratulated the incoming President and Vice-Presidents and thanked the Executive Board, particularly the outgoing Vice-Presidents who served during his tenure: H.E. Ms. María del Carmen Squeff, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations (representing the Latin American and Caribbean States); H.E. Mr. Günter Sautter, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations (representing the Western European and Other States); H.E. Mr. Kimura Tetsuya, Ambassador, Economic, Social and United Nations Management Affairs, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations (representing the Asia-Pacific States); and Ms. Eka Kipiani, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations (representing the Eastern European States).

<sup>1</sup> Note: The present document was processed in its entirety by UN-Women.



## II. Organizational matters

3. The first regular session of 2022 of the Executive Board was held virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, from 14 to 15 February 2022. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the first regular session ([UNW/2022/L.1](#)) and approved the report on its second regular session of 2021 held from 14 to 15 September 2021 ([UNW/2021/9](#)). The Executive Board approved the provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2022 to be held from 21 to 22 June 2022 ([UNW/2022/CRP.1](#)) and adopted the annual workplan for 2022 ([UNW/2022/L.2](#)).

4. The Executive Board adopted two decisions: Decision 2022/1 – Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020 and report of the Board of Auditors; and Decision 2022/2 – UN-Women policies and procedures to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, which are contained in the annex of this report.

## III. Opening statements

5. The newly elected President of the Executive Board opened the session by welcoming the appointment of the incoming Executive Director, Sima Sami Bahous, and thanked her for already initiating measures to strengthen the relationship between the Executive Board and the Entity. She thanked her Bureau member colleagues and stressed that the Bureau was committed to strengthening the effectiveness of the Executive Board's oversight function for improved governance. Although noting that the Executive Board had adjusted its working methods efficiently to ensure full business continuity since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, the President assured the Executive Board that every effort was being made to revert to pre-pandemic arrangements when possible. She announced that the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director had agreed to hold informal briefings with the different regional groups, which would allow for a more in-depth focus on regional challenges and priorities.

6. The President commended UN-Women for making remarkable contributions to the lives of women and girls worldwide during the past decade yet emphasized that more remained to be done while noting that the pandemic had had a disproportionate impact on women and girls. She underscored that 2022 would be an important year for UN-Women as it rolled out the implementation of its Strategic Plan 2022–2025. She stressed the need for the strategic plan's implementation to be impactful and cohesive on the ground, while being guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its overarching vision of "leaving no one behind". She further outlined the Executive Board's 2022 workplan and emphasized the importance of synergy and coherence among United Nations organizations to prevent duplications, overlaps and gaps. The President noted that she would be meeting with the Deputy Secretary-General and working closely with the presidents of the other Executive Boards to continue the process of harmonizing their working methods and aligning their interventions for a more effective delivery of the operational response of the United Nations system. She closed by highlighting that UN-Women must be strengthened if transformative change and gender equality was to be achieved, so that the Entity could take on the role it was expected to play given that it was entrusted with achieving women's empowerment and ending gender inequality.

7. In her opening statement, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director congratulated the newly elected President and Bureau. She expressed pride in welcoming such a high-level Bureau, composed entirely of Permanent Representatives. After emphasizing the importance of multilateralism, she announced that she had brought the Executive Board Secretariat directly under her leadership to ensure an open and direct dialogue between the Executive Board and herself.

8. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted that gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls was one of the biggest challenges of our time, permeating in the global COVID-19 response, peace and security, and the climate emergency. With only eight years until 2030, she stressed that most work remained on gender equality and highlighted that globally only one of 18 indicators for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 was close to target. The head of UN-Women stated that the pandemic had acted as a “revealer”, exploiting and worsening existing inequalities, including gender inequalities, and argued that UN-Women must act as an accelerator for SDG 5 and the other 16 SDGs. She outlined three immediate accelerators: (1) implementing UN-Women’s Strategic Plan 2022–2025; (2) boosting UN-Women’s coordination role and placing the Entity at the heart of a reformed United Nations development system; and (3) pivoting to country offices to achieve concerted action at the country level. She explained that the strategic plan would be UN-Women’s road map and the basis against which to measure impact and tell stories of change. On coordination, she argued that while gender equality was conceptually at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, it was not yet sufficiently incorporated into the United Nations’ everyday work on the SDGs. To bring UN-Women’s acumen and expertise to discussions and action across the spectrum to improve the lives of women and girls, the head of the Entity shared that she had started to work with her counterparts across the United Nations system through a series of strategic dialogues. She emphasized that UN-Women would also continue to work in partnership and engage in the common country assessment and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework processes to drive a shared gender equality agenda. Regarding a pivot towards country offices, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director mentioned that UN-Women was already working to recalibrate and recapacitate its presence in country offices. She underscored the need for local solutions and the lived experiences of women and girls to drive and inform UN-Women’s work. As a result, UN-Women would be seeking to deepen and broaden its relationships with Member States, civil society, youth, academia and others, but also to review its human and financial resources to ensure that they were invested where they were most needed.

9. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted the importance of UN-Women’s intergovernmental mandate and recalled the 2022 theme of the Commission on the Status of Women. She stressed that gender equality and climate change were at the core of shared development challenges and added that the Commission on the Status of Women provided an opportunity for Member States to make bold commitments for women and girls. In conclusion, the head of the Entity thanked donors for their support and called on funding partners to ensure that UN-Women was resourced to do the job it was mandated to do.

10. After opening the floor, numerous delegations welcomed the appointment of the Executive Director and congratulated the President and the members of

the Bureau on their election. Member States highlighted the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls and noted that UN-Women had a key role to play in getting back on track to achieve the SDGs. Delegations expressed support for the Executive Director's vision as outlined in her opening statement, noting how the newly endorsed UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 provided a crucial road map to achieve transformative results in the next four years. Several speakers specifically emphasized the importance of fully incorporating the strategic plan at the regional and country levels, while also noting that the strategy's successful implementation would require sufficient, predictable, timely and quality funding. Additional speakers highlighted the need to take national laws and priorities into account when implementing the strategic plan and to consider concerns addressed by delegations during the extensive consultation process. Furthermore, Member States stressed the need to engage men and boys and to strengthen and broaden partnerships, both inside and outside the United Nations system. Some speakers reiterated their support for the Generation Equality Forum. In addition, a group of States underscored the importance of inter-agency collaboration and stressed the need for stronger cooperation and complementarity within the United Nations development system to efficiently deliver lasting and meaningful results at the country level and to reach those furthest behind. They encouraged UN-Women to continue implementing the United Nations development system reform and the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR). Finally, delegations welcomed the focus on gender equality and climate change at the upcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

#### **IV. Audit matters**

11. In her opening remarks for this item, the Deputy Executive Director welcomed the tenth consecutive unqualified audit opinion by the United Nations Board of Auditors, noting that it was a tremendous achievement for an organization during its first decade of existence and an affirmation of UN-Women's operational performance. She highlighted that the Entity achieved its highest total revenue in 2020 and thanked donors for their ongoing support during such unprecedented and difficult times. She added that UN-Women also made significant progress in improving its internal governance, risk management and controls in 2020 through the timely implementation of audit recommendations.

12. The United Nations Board of Auditors Representative and Director of External Audit of the Republic of Chile presented the report of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020 ([A/76/5/Add.12](#)). In the opinion of the Board of Auditors, the financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of UN-Women as at 31 December 2020 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year ended on that date, in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). In its overall conclusion, the Board of Auditors did not identify significant errors, omissions or misstatements from the review of the financial records of UN-Women for the year ended 31 December 2020. However, it did identify scope for improvement in areas such as enterprise risk management, voluntary contributions, information and communications technology, and programme management, for which it issued 23 recommendations, all of which management accepted. The Board of Auditors noted that there were 17 recommendations outstanding up to 2020, of which

nine were fully implemented, six were still under implementation and two had been overtaken by events. The Board of Auditors expressed satisfaction that UN-Women had implemented all its recommendations from previous reports, as well as its appreciation to UN-Women for the Entity's collaboration, as the audit was conducted remotely due to COVID-19.

13. The Deputy Director of Financial Management introduced the financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020 ([A/76/5/Add.12](#)), with total assets of \$535.7 million. Total expenses were \$439.5 million. The Entity recorded a surplus of \$96.2 million for the year ended 31 December 2020, compared with a surplus of \$41.6 million in 2019. The surplus was mainly due to increased revenue from other resources (non-core), which would be spent on programme expenditure in future years. The delivery rate for 2020 programme expenditure from other resources was 83.1 per cent against a target of 85 per cent. In outlining revenue and expenditure by funding source, it was noted that the increase in voluntary contributions from donors in 2020 of \$75.3 million was represented by an increase in other resources (non-core) of \$40.2 million and an increase in regular resources (core) of \$35.1 million. The Entity's total assets of \$1,049.5 million exceeded total liabilities of \$173.6 million, resulting in total net assets/equity of \$875.8 million. The Deputy Director shared that the accounting policy for recognizing revenues from voluntary contributions had changed in 2020, resulting in the need to retrospectively revise UN-Women's closing balances from 2019. The impact of the change in policy in 2020 was estimated to be a decrease in revenue and net surplus of \$28.2 million. The restatement of comparative amounts had been performed for prior year ends.

14. The Director of the Strategy, Planning, Resources and Effectiveness Division gave an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors. As at January 2022, actions had been completed for 21 of 29 outstanding recommendations (72 per cent). From its 2020 recommendations, the Board of Auditors assessed one as closed and 14 as implemented. UN-Women was on track to implement the remaining eight recommendations from 2020 that were in progress (28 per cent). Regarding the implementation status of audit recommendations prior to 2020, actions had been completed for all six recommendations, meaning that there were no outstanding prior recommendations, as requested by Executive Board decision 2021/1. The Director further highlighted positive impacts from implementing audit recommendations, which had contributed towards the implementation of UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025.

15. Delegations welcomed the tenth consecutive unqualified audit opinion and commended UN-Women for its high implementation rate and closing all remaining recommendations from prior years. One speaker highlighted the importance of partner evaluations and encouraged UN-Women to improve its efforts to align budgets with projected resources, especially with respect to regular resources. The delegation also noted the Board of Auditors' recommendation to increase the frequency of training on enterprise risk management at different staff levels and asked whether the Entity was on track to fully implement mandatory training by the fourth quarter of 2022. Regarding corporate internal control frameworks, one delegation noted that findings revealed there were different levels of maturity and awareness among regional and country offices, and therefore requested that UN-Women take appropriate action to address this. The same delegation underlined the need for the Entity's

risk management to be updated in line with its strategic plan. Another Member State expressed its appreciation for the explanation provided about the effects of the revised IPSAS accounting policy.

16. In response, the Deputy Executive Director stated that UN-Women was currently in the process of evaluating the feasibility of providing mandatory training to all staff in 2022 and noted that in the meantime it was ensuring that each risk focal point received such training so that they would be empowered and able to share knowledge with their team. She further highlighted other measures that UN-Women had taken to strengthen risk culture to ensure that matters of risk were the business of all personnel serving the first line of defence functions.

## **V. Policy and programme matters**

17. In her introductory remarks, the Deputy Executive Director shared that UN-Women's presence in the Arab region had grown to seven country offices – two of which were cluster offices – with a regional portfolio of almost \$63 million. She added that in countries where UN-Women was not present, the Entity engaged through United Nations country teams. She noted that UN-Women's flagship programme – the Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP) programme – which was implemented in response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan, was conceptualized in the region. In her presentation, UN-Women's Regional Director for the Arab States detailed the regional context and highlighted vast regional differences in the areas of women's political participation, education and women's economic participation. The Regional Director shared key results and progress from the implementation of the regional Strategic Note 2018–2021, including through highlighting that the women, peace and security portfolio was one of the most successful portfolios of UN-Women in the region. She further shared that the LEAP programme, which focused on providing basic social services and economic opportunities, had reached more than 100,000 women in more than six countries. Finally, she mentioned the Men and Women for Gender Equality programme, which aimed to bring about gender equality in Arab States through behavioural and social norm changes, describing how it had already brought about significant attitude shifts in less than two years.

18. In response, one Member State expressed appreciation for its collaboration with the regional office and said it was proudly supporting the regional programme to engage men and boys. However, the speaker also noted the absence of some crucial references from the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 in the briefing note, not least the ambition to apply a human rights-based and intersectional approach and to leave no one behind. It highlighted the importance of deepening and expanding UN-Women partnerships with women's organizations and of integrating a gender perspective in regional climate efforts and programming. Another delegation referred to the striking paradox between the high number of educated women but low female employment levels and asked how it could assist UN-Women in improving women's economic participation. A third speaker expressed appreciation for the good results of the joint programme of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN-Women on decent jobs, noting that the results could serve as an example for more joint programmes. The speaker also asked how the work on social norms and engagement with men and boys would be continued and how it could

be scaled up. Another delegation asked UN-Women to consider online violence when developing action plans on gender-based violence.

19. In response, the Regional Director underscored the importance of working on social norms and engaging men and boys. She further informed the Executive Board that the final version of the regional Strategic Note 2022–2025 would have a strong focus on women’s economic empowerment and include an environmental lens and language on a human rights-based approach and leaving no one behind. The Regional Director shared that the regional office would continue to work on how to address online violence in a robust manner.

20. Next, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director presented an update on UN-Women’s work to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEA/SH). She thanked Member States for their ongoing support for this issue and emphasized that UN-Women was committed to using its unique experience and expertise to eliminate SEA/SH both within UN-Women and across the United Nations system. The head of UN-Women mentioned that the Entity was employing a victim/survivor-centred approach in all its efforts and noted that it had dedicated the past two years to implementing the 12 recommendations of the independent victim/survivor-centred review of UN-Women’s policies and procedures. She emphasized that the 100 per cent completion of this work had enabled the Entity to establish a strong framework to tackle SEA/SH, which had been operationalized across all levels of the Entity, with a special focus on empowering country and regional offices, while simultaneously expanding engagement with United Nations system-wide efforts. She added that the Entity’s Strategic Plan 2022–2025 included the advancement of an inclusive culture and the nurturing of a diverse and empowered workforce to holistically address the root causes of SEA/SH. She further stressed that a robust monitoring framework had been established, which included a new key performance indicator dedicated to the prevention of SEA/SH as part of the 2022–2025 Integrated Results and Resources Framework.

21. In response, Member States expressed their appreciation for UN-Women’s leadership and strong commitment on this issue and recognized the progress made. More specifically, one Member State acknowledged UN-Women’s work on SEA/SH, which included almost doubling its SEA/SH focal points and adding a key performance indicator for SEA/SH in the Entity’s Strategic Plan 2022–2025. It asked for more information about these focal points, welcomed regular updates about the key performance indicator and encouraged UN-Women to develop specific and separate approaches for SEA/SH. In a joint statement, several Member States emphasized that strong leadership, effective inter-agency collaboration, responsibility for implementing partners, transparent, safe and accountable reporting, and support for victims and survivors were crucial elements at the core of each agency’s efforts to prevent SEA/SH. The group recognized the important role of SEA/SH networks, coordinators and focal points, and asked how UN-Women’s new terms of references differed from previous ones. It requested further information on progress made to prevent SEA/SH regarding implementing partners, as well as an update on the expansion of Clear Check to contractors and implementing partners. Additionally, the group highlighted the need for timely and thorough victim/survivor-centred investigations and asked how UN-Women was ensuring that support for victims and survivors of SEA/SH was adequate and tailored to individual needs. Another speaker encouraged UN-Women to strengthen the prevention of and response to SEA/SH within UN-Women and across the United

Nations system, to build and foster a trustful environment and corporate culture, and to invest in dedicated capacities within headquarters and at decentralized levels to ensure adequate implementation and follow-up of policies and procedures. One delegation encouraged UN-Women to continue working against all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons, and to work with Member States to address the demand that fostered trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation. Another Member State asked about any efforts under way to develop a stand-alone child protection policy for UN-Women.

22. In response, the Deputy Executive Director emphasized that UN-Women actively engaged with inter-agency coordination mechanisms and collaborated with all key stakeholders across the United Nations system. Additional responses were provided by the Chief of the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Section on UN-Women's programmatic work on SEA/SH and the Director of the Human Resources Division on child protection.

## **VI. Evaluation**

23. The Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services presented the meta-synthesis of UN-Women evaluations ([UNW/2022/CRP.2](#)). The evaluation collated insights and evidence on the key types of support that UN-Women provided during the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 period from 67 corporate and decentralized evaluations. The evaluative evidence was organized around: normative support; integrated policy advice and thought leadership; capacity development and technical assistance; and advocacy and social mobilization. As part of its five recommendations, the report recommended that UN-Women work towards planning longer-duration projects to support the implementation and monitoring of frameworks and policies to capitalize on its broad range of work in the normative space. It also suggested that UN-Women enhance its measurement of impact and results tracking beyond inputs and outputs, particularly in areas of large investment and effort. The evaluation further recommended that UN-Women focus on key strategic areas and work with partners to provide long-term support and build on sustainability measures. The assessment emphasized that holistic approaches should be developed with multilevel engagement, involving a combination of advocacy, capacity-building, training and normative support to enhance the impacts of capacity-building and policy/normative support. Finally, the evaluation suggested enhancing the use of gender data, research and standardized needs assessments.

24. Speaking on behalf of management, the Director of the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division welcomed the evaluation and indicated that UN-Women was working consistently to address these observations, many of which reflect long-standing issues and challenges. She reiterated that UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 was informed by learnings from across all the 67 corporate and decentralized evaluations that were reviewed and that the observations would continue to be key to successfully delivering the strategic plan. The Director further detailed how UN-Women planned to address each of the five recommendations across the different areas of support the Entity provided, while often recalling the ways in which the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 already reflected the observations highlighted in the review.

25. In a joint regional statement, Member States expressed their appreciation for the meta-synthesis of the UN-Women evaluation, as well as for management's response to the report. The joint statement requested that UN-Women build on this report, including by enhancing alignment with local contexts, building institutional capacity, strengthening technical assistance, fostering long-term alliances and investing in research and data collection and disaggregation. The joint statement mentioned that UN-Women could add considerable value by working more closely with African countries to strengthen coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls across the system, through holistic and measurable programming aimed at greater impact and concrete deliverables in line with UN-Women's theory of change. It called upon the Entity to continue to focus on key performance indicators while adapting the evaluation functions to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

26. Speaking in a national capacity, one Member State expressed strong support for the proposed work on data, knowledge and evidence, especially on data aggregation and comparability to better inform strategies, policies and procedures as cited in management's response. Another speaker expressed support for the recommendation to enhance the measurement of impact and result tracking beyond inputs and outputs, and requested future updates on the implementation of the guidance note. Another Member State made note of the underlying challenges and expressed appreciation for management's reflections on how to overcome these challenges in line with the strategic plan, and supported UN-Women in its endeavours to attract more multi-year funding commitments. Another delegation encouraged the Entity to focus on three areas to maintain and consolidate independent, credible and useful evaluation functions: (1) ensuring that adequate resources were provided to guarantee a strong and effective evaluation function and capacity at all levels; (2) focusing its efforts in a strategic manner by reducing ad hoc interventions and enhancing the measurement of impact and results tracking beyond inputs and outputs; and (3) extending the importance attributed to inter-agency collaboration in the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 to all programme and project evaluations that include partnerships with other United Nations organizations.

27. In response to comments made by Member States, the Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services stressed the importance of results-based management and highlighted progress in this regard. The Director of the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division emphasized that UN-Women always sought to develop programmes with national counterparts and while taking national context and priorities into consideration to enhance and support national ownership.

## **VII. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinating Board meeting**

28. In her opening remarks, the Deputy Executive Director presented key updates on the implementation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Programme Coordinating Board recommendations. She shared statistics and data that showed women continued to bear the brunt of the HIV and AIDS pandemic and welcomed the adoption of the 2021 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS for its bold and unequivocal commitments to end gender inequalities. She referred to the 2021 Human Rights Council resolution

on human rights in the context of HIV and AIDS, which urged States to address the needs of adolescent girls and young women to develop quality, accessible, available and affordable health services and to provide tailored services for women living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. She further mentioned resolution 60/2 of the Commission on the Status of Women on women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS, which supported the Southern Africa Development Community to pilot a gender-responsive oversight model. She further outlined UN-Women's collaboration with UNAIDS and highlighted different joint programmes and activities to help tackle HIV and AIDS. In conclusion, she underscored how UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 had prioritized work on HIV and AIDS and stressed the need to continue to invest resources to support the leadership of women living with and affected by HIV and AIDS.

29. The Director of the UNAIDS New York office welcomed Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous to the UNAIDS family and updated the Executive Board on progress made across the work of the Joint Programme. He mentioned how UNAIDS's strength was in its ability to address HIV and AIDS in an integrated manner, from multiple perspectives and through multiple sectors, drawing on the expertise of UN-Women and the other cosponsoring organizations, as well as the UNAIDS Secretariat. Referring to COVID-19, he noted that the global HIV response was now under even greater strain as the pandemic continued to have impacts, disrupting HIV prevention and treatment services, schooling and violence-prevention programmes, among others. Yet he assured the Executive Board that at the onset of the pandemic, UNAIDS had mobilized quickly and was continuing to do so to lend its help to the global COVID-19 response, protect the gains made in the AIDS response, keep people living with HIV under treatment and sustain HIV prevention activities. He further emphasized that efforts were being made across cosponsors and the UNAIDS Secretariat to align their human and financial resources. The Director shared that this alignment was not only driven by the priorities of the new Global AIDS Strategy, but also by financial considerations and the reality that the resources available to UNAIDS were far from commensurate with the strategy's level of ambition. Stressing the need to redouble efforts to meet the 2025 targets and to place particular attention on the prevention of new HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women aged 15–24 years, he added that the continued engagement of UN-Women would be essential in achieving these targets and welcomed that the Entity had included HIV in its strategic plan. The Director stated that more needed to be done for HIV and noted that this would require additional resources. He concluded by emphasizing that secondary education offered protection to adolescent girls and young women from HIV and was looking forward to working closely with UN-Women on the Education Plus Initiative and the Transforming Education Summit scheduled for September 2022.

30. A joint statement delivered on behalf of 25 countries commended UN-Women for its initiatives and impressive results as outlined in the presentation by the Deputy Executive Director. As the world continued to grapple with the pandemic, the group welcomed the Entity's efforts to mitigate the devastating impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, including through providing access to personal protective equipment and reliable and accurate information about COVID-19. The joint statement further appreciated the focus on HIV in the Entity's Strategic Plan 2022–2025, along with efforts to integrate such work into its broader mandate. The group asked how UN-Women and other UNAIDS cosponsors would strengthen work to address the intersection of

violence, HIV and COVID-19 for women and girls. The group also asked for an update on the Entity's work to remove structural and sociocultural barriers to reduce stigma and discrimination for women and girls who were seeking HIV-related services and wanted to know what measures the Entity would take in the coming year to amplify the voices of women and girls living with HIV. Speaking in a national capacity, one delegation emphasized the importance of integrating sexual and reproductive health services as part of the HIV response, arguing that a more effective and preventative response would require a stronger focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights and comprehensive sexuality education.

31. In her response, the Deputy Executive Director underscored that this was a human rights issue. The Director of the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division highlighted that UN-Women, in partnership with UNAIDS and across the United Nations system, worked to ensure that national policies, strategies and budgets were informed by disaggregated data and analysis, to upscale what worked to tackle the root causes of inequality, including through mainstreaming HIV within other areas of the strategic plan, and to support the leadership of women and girls in all their diversity, in particular women living with HIV, to meaningfully engage in decision-making at all levels. She described how UN-Women used its normative, coordination and operational mandate to respond to the HIV epidemic.

## **VIII. Address by the Chair of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS and UN-Women Staff Council and management action**

32. In her statement, the Chair of the UN-Women Staff Council conveyed her appreciation and gratitude to UN-Women's senior leadership for engaging with personnel to minimize the impacts of numerous challenges, including those due to COVID-19, and for prioritizing the well-being of personnel. The Staff Council highlighted three areas that required ongoing and additional engagement in line with the United Nations' commitment to decent work standards, namely: (1) conditions of service, job security and equal opportunities; (2) work-life balance and mental health; and (3) anti-racism and non-discrimination.

33. On conditions of service, the Staff Council emphasized the need to remove all kinds of inequalities in the workforce, including inequalities between staff and "non-staff" personnel. The Staff Council expressed concern about the potential attrition and turnover in personnel and the vulnerabilities related to existing contractual modalities, while also recognizing that the current trends and nature of funding impacted the ability to issue staff contracts. She acknowledged agencies' efforts to address the shortfalls, as well as the Entity's need to remain flexible and agile and to adjust in order to deliver in a complex and constantly changing peacebuilding, humanitarian and development reality. The Staff Council also underscored that the delivery rates that were expected of UN-Women required a strong and dedicated workforce, with equal opportunities and equal pay for equal work for staff and other personnel performing the same jobs. It also highlighted the lack of a "One UN" approach and urged for a harmonized use of contract modalities, which would provide equal opportunities and support inter-agency mobility. The Staff Council added that the issue of different contract types posed a challenge for "non-staff" personnel when change management processes were launched or when accessing agencies'

informal or formal justice systems. It called on UN-Women to do more to eradicate disparities in recruitments both locally and internationally, invest in career progression for General Service staff into Professional roles, and issue five-year fixed term appointments contracts.

34. The Staff Council highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic had increased mental health issues and argued that more remained to be done to improve the organizational culture for personnel, including addressing stigma, preventing suicide and addressing the fear of the unknown and uncertainty. It expressed concern about access to vaccines for colleagues in duty stations with weak health systems, though noted that a significant number of actions had been implemented to provide support to personnel during the pandemic. The Staff Council also highlighted its collaboration with UN-Women management to provide support to colleagues in countries affected by a lack of medical services, local currency devaluations and economic crises, natural disasters and conflict. Noting that large numbers of personnel were burned out and faced great hardship, the Staff Council stressed the importance of ongoing dialogue to support shared responsibility and shared accountability. It welcomed the UN System Model Policy on Flexible Working Arrangements adopted by the Chief Executives Board and urged management at all levels to exercise maximum flexibility to achieve work-life balance. The Staff Council also urged the adoption of a unified people-centred approach for dealing with individual situations. Touching upon the future of work, it highlighted how colleagues remained preoccupied and anxious about the workplace and shared key findings and trends from the 2021 Work Trend Index.

35. With regard to anti-racism and non-discrimination, the Staff Council welcomed and expressed its full support for UN-Women's commitment to the cause. It noted that racism was a long-term systemic issue that required ongoing dialogue and education, as well as concrete measures to deal with discriminatory and abusive practices, special measures to address past failures and injustices in terms of recruitment, access to opportunities, performance evaluations and promotions. The Staff Council stressed that more work was needed to foster such a culture, including by improving policies, creating better processes for accountability and implementing better measures to protect UN-Women colleagues from retaliation. In closing, the Staff Council called upon UN-Women to announce the full-time release of at least one staff/personnel representative to advocate for the rights of personnel both within UN-Women and in multiple forums across the United Nations system.

36. In her response, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the Staff Council for its commitment, dedication and hard work to build a healthy workplace of equal opportunities at UN-Women. The head of the Entity recognized that multiple humanitarian crises, accelerating climate change and the continuation of the global pandemic gave rise to increased demands on the Entity and its personnel, resulting in additional stress, uncertainty and anxiety for all. She stressed that the creation of a culture that nurtured and supported the well-being and mental health of personnel had been and continued to be a top priority for the Entity. Furthermore, she highlighted that UN-Women had continued to build resilience for dealing with the ongoing COVID-19 crisis by further strengthening its resources and dedicated support offerings for all personnel, including by providing stress management and counselling support, undertaking a United Nations-wide health survey to improve system-wide policies and shape future approaches, and sharing mental health and well-being

resources with UN-Women managers to support personnel and create a thriving workplace. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director shared that the United Nations COVID-19 vaccination programme was available in 88 countries where UN-Women had a presence and that it supported all personnel and their families to benefit from the programme. She added that UN-Women continued to advance flexible working arrangements to support colleagues wherever possible, while acknowledging that for field colleagues such arrangements may have been a luxury that was not readily available.

37. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director further underscored that all personnel, irrespective of their type of contract, were crucial to the fulfilment of the Entity's mandate. She highlighted that the Strategic Plan 2022–2025, for the first time ever, included a specific focus on the creation of a diverse and empowered workforce and the advancement of an inclusive culture within UN-Women. She added that managers were working to ensure that staffing needs were addressed with the appropriate modality and use of contracts, and that UN-Women was working closely with other United Nations organizations to adopt the Personnel Services Agreement modality (to be rolled out in 2022) which would offer benefits to a significant part of the Entity's workforce. She assured the Executive Board and Staff Council that the future of work continued to be on the agenda at the highest levels and would include discussions on the possibility of new contract modalities not linked to a duty station.

38. With regards to anti-racism and non-discrimination, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director stressed that she and her senior management team remained committed to increasing diversity and tackling discrimination, including race-based discrimination. She highlighted that this was integrated into UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and that specific actions, such as promoting inclusive and participatory decision-making processes, were clearly outlined in the results framework. The head of UN-Women assured the Executive Board that the Entity was well on its way to addressing the question on data and noted that the Senior Adviser on Diversity and Inclusion had worked closely with colleagues across UN-Women to identify a framework that would support the strategic plan's objectives. She added that UN-Women was heavily involved in the High-Level Committee on Management's Working Group on New Ways of Working in the United Nations, specifically with the team providing recommendations on diversity and inclusion. In closing, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the Staff Council again for its collaborative approach and for engaging on the many issues brought about in 2021.

39. After opening the floor, one delegation stressed that active and diversified efforts against racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination were central parts of creating a safe, creative and sustainable work environment. The Member State added that sustainability included clarity around job security and contracts, since staff who feel safe, seen and appreciated were more able to easily embrace necessary change and face unexpected challenges. The same Member State expressed its expectation for UN-Women to take a sustainable and gender transformative approach to work-life balance. Another delegation expressed support for both sides in their open dialogue and joint efforts to address the issues raised, and noted that the new strategic plan could only become a reality with UN-Women's workforce. The Member State asked the Staff Council about inter-agency mobility and to share its account of the Entity's crisis response in relation to its duty of care. In response, the Chair of the Staff

Council invited the Member State to a follow-up conversation to share more information.

## **IX. Closing**

40. In her closing statement, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the Executive Board President for her efficient and skilful leadership of the first regular session. She also thanked the Vice-Presidents for their substantive contributions and recognized the facilitators of Iceland and Ukraine for their skilful guidance that led to the adoption of two decisions. She further expressed appreciation for the interactive engagement of all members and observers and noted that the solid relationship between the Executive Board and UN-Women would benefit the Entity as it embarked on implementing its strategic plan.

41. Regarding COVID-19, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director mentioned that she shared delegations' concerns about the continued devastating impact of the pandemic on women and girls. She noted that the impact of COVID-19 on UN-Women's personnel and the related future of work discussions remained high on the agenda. She added that UN-Women was committed to creating a diverse and empowered workforce to tackle discrimination, and to providing a safe and healthy workplace where everyone had access to adequate mental health support.

42. After agreeing with delegations that UN-Women had a key role to play in getting back on track to achieve the SDGs during the current decade of action, the head of the Entity underscored that the strategic plan was vital to deliver transformative results in this regard. She noted Member States' calls to ensure that the strategic plan would be fully incorporated at the regional and national levels and for UN-Women's work to be informed by national contexts and priorities. She also recalled Member States' support of the Action Coalitions and mentioned that UN-Women would be working on their integration into the strategic plan's implementation. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked delegations for highlighting the need for sufficient, predictable, timely and quality funding for the implementation of the strategic plan, in line with the commitments in the Funding Compact. She stressed that the Entity was committed to diversifying funding sources and to strengthening and broadening partnerships to achieve transformative results for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director mentioned that UN-Women would build on the impetus of the QCPR to mainstream gender equality work across the system in support of a joined-up approach.

43. With regard to the prevention of and response to SEA/SH, the head of the Entity reiterated that UN-Women was committed to using its experience and expertise to eliminate SEA/SH both within UN-Women and across the United Nations system. She further stressed that UN-Women would act on the evaluation's findings and continue to be ambitious to ensure accountability and learning. In closing, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director highlighted the upcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women and thanked the Executive Board Secretary and Secretariat team for their work.

44. The Executive Board President concluded by conveying her appreciation for the timely and efficient proceedings, and the focused, interactive and rich discussions on each agenda item. She thanked the Bureau for its support during

and in the lead up to the session, including for its skilful facilitation of the two decisions. She thanked the Executive Board members and observers for their active participation and engagement throughout the session, as well as the Executive Board Secretary and Secretariat team for their support. The President welcomed the vision of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director as outlined at the opening of the session and thanked her for highlighting the injustice and discrimination that women continued to face globally, which had been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The President expressed her appreciation for the measures already initiated to strengthen the relationship between the Executive Board and UN-Women Executive leadership, noting that it would have positive implications in forging stronger collaboration between the Executive Board and the Entity.

45. Reflecting on the session, the President recognized the many diverse, high-level and wide-ranging interventions. She noted the overwhelming support for the incoming Executive Director and UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025. She further recalled that delegations urged UN-Women to ensure that the strategic plan would be fully incorporated at the regional and country levels in order to leave no one behind. She added that Member States underscored the value of UN-Women's unique triple mandate, as well as the importance of supporting gender-responsive COVID-19 recovery. Additionally, the President mentioned that Member States stressed the relevant and urgent need to discuss gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the context of climate change at the upcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Finally, she concluded by thanking the briefers for their rich presentations and hard work, which helped ensure the high quality of the Executive Board's deliberations.

46. The session was then adjourned.

## Annex I

### Decisions adopted at the first regular session of 2022

#### 2022/1

##### **Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020 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 year ended 31 December 2020;
2. *Takes note with appreciation* of the tenth unqualified audit opinion issued by the Board of Auditors on the financial statements of UN-Women for the year ended 31 December 2020;
3. *Takes note* of the management response of UN-Women to the report of the United Nations Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2020;
4. *Acknowledges* the progress made by UN-Women in implementing the recommendations of the Board of Auditors and *requests* UN-Women to continue its ongoing efforts to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors;
5. *Encourages* UN-Women to harmonize further its management response to the report of the Board of Auditors with other United Nations funds and programmes and the implementation of the recommendations, as appropriate, in alignment with UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, WFP and UNCDF.

*15 February 2022*

#### 2022/2

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

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the update by UN-Women on actions to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment (SEA/SH);
2. *Takes note with appreciation* of the implementation of all the recommendations contained in the Independent review of UN-Women's policies and procedures for tackling Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH) of UN-Women's policies and procedures on tackling SEA/SH at headquarters, regional and country offices;
3. *Notes* the progress made and the need for continued effort to prevent and respond to SEA and SH in UN-Women's policies, procedures and operations at HQ, regional and country office levels and in this context *encourages* UN-Women to continue to take action, properly resourced, within existing resources, to ensure a victim/survivor-centred, long-term, joint, system-wide approach aligned with the UN system to tackle sexual exploitation, while leveraging its mandate, including during the COVID-19 response and recovery;
4. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to promote a culture change to address the root causes of sexual exploitation and abuses, and sexual harassment at HQ, regional

and country offices and to this end strengthen efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment there through measures such as, but not limited to, raising awareness, education and training; and Urges UN-Women to ensure that leadership at all levels continue to be aware of their PSEA/SH responsibilities, and that staff with specific PSEA/SH duties participate in inter-agency coordination mechanisms, as appropriate;

5. *Urges* UN-Women to continue to ensure through OIOS and in accordance with its internal procedures the provisions of timely, and thorough victim/survivor-centred investigations, and to continue to ensure prompt reporting on allegations of SEA and SH to the members and observers of the Executive Board through the annual report on internal audit and investigation activities;

6. *Takes note of* the development of UN-Women's SEA and SH framework and annual submission to the United Nations Secretary-General of action plans on preventing and responding to SEA that are implemented at headquarters, regional and country office levels, and requests UN-Women to share headquarters-level action plans with the Executive Board annually;

7. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to present its annual certification on SEA and SH to the Executive Board at each annual session in accordance with decision 2018/3 (para 10) and to present annually, within existing reporting, an update on how UN-Women is improving its organizational culture to address the underlying causes of SEA and SH, and its actions to prevent and respond to SEA and SH in its policies, procedures, operations, including analysis of its implementation of system-wide initiatives and asks that this includes analysis of their implementation of UN system-wide initiatives, including of the Implementing Partners Protocol, the Implementing Partner Capacity Assessment and ClearCheck;

8. *Requests* an update from UN-Women, at the first regular session of the Executive Board 2023, on metrics used to measure progress on tackling SEA/SH and how its integrated results and resources framework indicators on SEA/SH have aligned with relevant QCPR indicators and those of other United Nations development system agencies and encourages that all relevant data obtained is subsequently analysed in order to inform UN-Women strategies, policies and procedures.

15 February 2022