



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

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## Second regular session of 2022

13 and 14 September 2022

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

### Organizational matters

## Report on the annual session of 2022, 21 and 22 June 2022<sup>1</sup>

### I. Organizational matters

1. The annual session of 2022 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, on 21 and 22 June 2022.
2. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session ([UNW/2022/L.3](#)) and approved the report on its first regular session held on 14 and 15 February 2022 ([UNW/2022/1](#)). The Executive Board also approved the provisional agenda and workplan for the second regular session of 2022 ([UNW/2022/CRP.3](#)), to be held on 13 and 14 September 2022.
3. The Executive Board adopted four decisions (2022/3, 2022/4, 2022/5, and 2022/6) as contained in the annex to the present report.

### II. Opening statements

4. At the opening of the session, the President of the Executive Board commended UN-Women for staying on course in delivering its targets and fulfilling its mandate despite global challenges and paid tribute to UN-Women staff in the field. She further congratulated the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her leadership and delivering a successful session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Highlighting the interlinked challenges posed by COVID-19, conflict and climate, the President stressed the need to ensure that the implementation of UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 is impactful and cohesive on the ground. She added that there must be concerted efforts to close the gaps of gender inequalities and fragilities that were further exacerbated by the global emergencies, climate crisis and resulting instability and encouraged UN-Women to step up its efforts to ensure synergy and coherence among the UN organizations in the field.

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



5. In her opening statement, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the President and congratulated her on her appointment as High Representative for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The head of the Entity thanked the Bureau and her UN-Women colleagues for their collaboration and support. She described how the combined crises of conflict, climate and COVID-19 jeopardize the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and roll back women's rights in every part of the world. Noting that none of the SDGs are on target today, she stressed the need to work together to get back on track for 2030. She emphasized that women and girls represent one of the most powerful solutions to crisis prevention and sustainable development, while underscoring the transformational power of young people and the need to ensure a whole-of-society approach in addressing harmful gender norms. Referring to the Agreed Conclusions adopted at CSW66, the head of the Entity encouraged delegations to work together to support resilient recovery to climate emergencies.

6. The head of UN-Women reiterated her wish to collaborate closely with all Member States to advance the gender equality agenda. She committed to further strengthening the Entity's financial management, risk management and ethics functions and officially announced the establishment of a dedicated ethics function within UN-Women. She updated the Executive Board on the progress made on key senior-level recruitments, including in the Executive Office. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director announced that the Entity continues to set records for resource mobilization, with UN-Women receiving over \$550 million in 2021. She thanked all development partners for their continued prioritization of gender equality and promised to continue to expand UN-Women's partnership base. Furthermore, she stressed the importance of close collaboration with UN sister entities and assured the Executive Board that UN-Women does not just participate in reform processes but is leading at the heart of the UN system and at all levels. The head of the Entity highlighted the Spotlight Initiative as an example of where the UN system has come together, with the support from the European Union, to ensure transformative change in the lives of women and girls. Beyond the UN system, she further recognized collaboration with youth, civil society, philanthropy, governments, and the private sector, as exemplified in Generation Equality.

7. Presenting her annual report, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director highlighted key results achieved in 2021 in cooperation with governments, UN partners, civil society, and others. In the area of women's economic empowerment, she shared that UN-Women has helped 44 countries to have a stronger legal, regulatory and policy environment alongside 55 laws and policies promoting women's access to decent employment. On violence against women, UN-Women supported 22 new countries to adopt or strengthen legislation addressing violence against women and 57 countries to strengthen national action plans and strategies to end violence against women. She further described UN-Women's work on women's representation and leadership, as well as women, peace and security, and humanitarian action. She added that the Entity has leveraged its coordination mandate, while noting that more than 70 per cent of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks developed in 2021 featured gender equality results at the outcome level and that UN-Women expenditure through joint programmes grew to a record 31 per cent (up from 12 per cent in 2018). She assured delegations of her determination to continue to deliver and to deliver more during her tenure. In closing, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director asked Member States to be bold in enacting the most powerful measures to advance gender equality, to advocate alongside UN-Women in every intergovernmental space, to be focused

on gender equality in every part of the UN system, and to ensure that commitments to gender are resourced.

8. Upon opening the floor for delegations, numerous Member States thanked the head of UN-Women for her comprehensive update. In response to the presentation of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director's annual report, delegations welcomed UN-Women's key results achieved during the 2018–2021 strategic plan period, especially considering the difficult circumstances that 2021 presented. Several delegations expressed concern about the trajectory of gender equality due to COVID-19, climate change and conflict, threatening progress made on achieving SDG 5 and the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Member States reiterated their support for UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025. Additionally, some speakers commended the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women for its vital work.

9. Delegations encouraged UN-Women to continue exploring synergies and collaboration with international financial institutions and other partners and to diversify its donor base with new and innovative financing approaches. They underlined the importance of predictable and flexible funding to enable UN-Women to implement its strategic plan. Member States expressed appreciation for UN-Women's leading efforts on UN development system reform and encouraged the Entity to continue leveraging its coordination mandate. Additionally, speakers welcomed the inclusion of common and complementary indicators in the Integrated Results and Resources Framework to ensure joint action. Many delegations welcomed the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director's announcement to create an independent ethics function within UN-Women. Four joint statements were delivered in total, one of which highlighted obstacles to gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa while another group statement delivered on behalf of 24 countries asked questions about UN system coordination, climate change, and women, peace and security.

### III. Evaluation

10. The Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) presented the report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2021 ([UNW/2022/4](#)). The report provides an overview of the UN-Women Global Evaluation Strategy and Corporate Evaluation Plan 2022–2025; offers a snapshot of the completed strategic evaluations; reviews the performance of the UN-Women evaluation function as captured through the Global Evaluation Oversight System; and documents capacity-building and advocacy efforts for gender-responsive evaluation globally and in the UN system. The 2022 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) was outlined. In 2021, the IES completed two corporate evaluations, a meta-synthesis, and a joint study. Additionally, three corporate evaluations were initiated. The office delivered 40 decentralized evaluations, consisting of eight country portfolio evaluations, five regional evaluations, 20 programme-project evaluations, and nine joint evaluations. The overall evaluation results showed a strong uptake of evaluation findings in key strategic processes, significant progress in key performance indicators, and increasing interest and efforts towards system-wide joint evaluation initiatives in the context of joint programme or system-wide goals.

11. The Director of the IEAS presented the corporate evaluation of UN-Women's policy advocacy work ([UNW/2022/CRP.4](#)). The evaluation focused on the Entity's policy advocacy roles, initiatives and interventions and the organizational, operational, and strategic structures and approaches UN-Women has put in place to

support policy advocacy. The evaluation examined the linkages at the global, regional, and country levels to understand how policy advocacy work translates into changes in the everyday lives of women and girls. The evaluation findings led to eight conclusions, including that there is an opportunity for UN-Women to define policy advocacy and use the Strategic Plan to develop a coherent approach for planning, implementing, monitoring, and reporting on policy advocacy. The evaluation further determined that evidence-based and credible knowledge is central to UN-Women's policy advocacy work and that partnerships are critical to ensuring a multiplier effect, leveraging resources, and having a comprehensive approach to policy advocacy work. Additionally, the assessment revealed that there is a need to clarify the organizational architecture for policy advocacy to form better coordination and communication linkages between headquarters and regional and country offices. It also mentioned that UN-Women's monitoring and results tracking systems do not adequately capture policy advocacy results and lessons learned, that current resources are not always adequate to conduct policy advocacy work to the Entity's full potential, and that there are capacity gaps in the availability of necessary personnel and expertise. While the evaluation noted that UN-Women's policy advocacy work contributes to shaping and promoting government policies and legislation to address gender equality and empowering women, it added that it does not always clearly lead to longer-term outcomes for women and girls for a variety of reasons, such as capacity, funding, and internal coherence, as well as external factors that are beyond UN-Women's direct control. Finally, the evaluation notes that the process of implementing "leave no one behind" is often uneven and not systematically planned or monitored. As a result, the evaluation made six recommendations.

12. Speaking on behalf of management, Deputy Executive Director Åsa Regnér expressed appreciation for the high-quality work of the Independent Evaluation Service and the guidance that it provides for improvement of the Entity's performance. She endorsed the proposals outlined in the report on the evaluation function of UN-Women in 2021 and detailed how the Entity has benefited from corporate and decentralized evaluations in the implementation of its triple mandate and during the development of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025. On increasing the use of evaluations, the Deputy Executive Director suggested that the IEAS invest more time in the dissemination of the corporate evaluation findings and recommendations and facilitate cross-organizational ownership of follow-up actions. She reiterated that UN-Women remains fully committed to further strengthening quality, coverage, and using both corporate and decentralized evaluations. Regarding the corporate evaluation on UN-Women's policy advocacy work, the Deputy Executive Director stressed that this work is a key element of the Entity's efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. She highlighted that UN-Women accepts the evaluation's five main recommendations and explained that it partially accepts one on relationship-building since the Entity is already working closely with national governments, UN agencies, feminist movements and women's organizations on policy advocacy. The Deputy Executive Director further added that the new Strategic Plan 2022–2025 provides a strong framework through which UN-Women can scale up its policy advocacy work. She mentioned time frames and responsible units were assigned across the Entity and noted that in some instances additional funding will be required to fully implement the recommendations.

13. In a national statement, one Member State commended UN-Women's efforts to strengthen the evaluation function and to have considerably improved the quality of evaluations. It further encouraged the Entity to allocate funds to the evaluation functions in line with the evaluation policy, with 3 per cent of the programme expenditure remaining for the achievement of the goal. The delegation welcomed the strong role of UN-Women in developing and implementing normative frameworks for

women's rights and gender equality and asked how UN-Women will ensure that the knowledge and expertise on policy advocacy work is also available at country level. Another delegation commended the IES for the quality of its evaluations while noting that in 2021, 98 per cent of UN-Women evaluation reports obtained an overall rating of "very good" or "good", which was an increase from 90 per cent in 2020. Noting that the corporate evaluation of UN-system coordination and the broader convening role in ending violence against women mentions that UN-Women's coordination role was constrained by an ability to articulate the value of UN coordination, the Member State asked how UN-Women will strengthen its coordination mandate in line with the recommendations in the evaluation.

14. In response to a question from Member States, Deputy Executive Director Regnér highlighted that the new strategic plan instructs countries to work on policy advocacy and normative support with oversight provided by regional offices and headquarters. She further added that the UN system and the Common Agenda and other steering documents of that nature emphasized the importance of policy advocacy. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director responded to another question on coordination, highlighting that strengthening and deepening coordination within the UN system is one of UN-Women's priorities going forward. She added that this means not only investing in the coordination division at headquarters, but also strengthening UN-Women's coordination at the country and regional levels. The head of the Entity is said to be reviewing the possibility of creating a stand-alone coordination function in the regional offices and exploring greater collaboration with the Development Coordination Office to ensure that there are gender advisers in every Resident Coordinator Office, especially in areas where UN-Women is not present to ensure that gender continues to be highlighted everywhere.

15. The Director of the IEAS mentioned that the expenditure on evaluation in 2021 was only slightly below the commitment of 2 per cent, namely 1.8 per cent. She further assured delegations that the budget for the IES is protected and that it receives staunch support from the Entity to ensure that it has the funding to complete the corporate evaluations and to provide the technical support. In addition to evaluation expenditure, the Director highlighted that it is important to ensure adequate resources at the country and regional levels and to consider other oversight mechanisms that are not included in that 2 to 3 per cent goal. She recognized and appreciated that the new strategic plan has several cross-cutting outcomes, which will help the Entity to push and monitor the value that it is achieving in policy advocacy. Finally, the Director stressed the importance of joint and system-wide evaluations and announced that the IEAS is working on a system-wide synthesis of SDG 5 evaluations mapping progress on SDG 5 across UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women.

#### **IV. Audit and investigation matters**

16. The Director of the IEAS presented the report of the IAS on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021 (UNW/2022/3). As requested by the Executive Board in its decision UNW/2015/4, and in relation to internal audit activities, 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 being adhered to; 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 provided an update on the status of the management and implementation of internal audit recommendations. Based on the internal audit work performed in 2021, the IAS's annual overall opinion is that the Entity's

governance, risk management and control processes were generally well established and functioning but needed some improvement. More specifically, the report identified four areas for improvement that require UN-Women management's attention: (1) further enhance corporate oversight mechanisms; (2) improve management absorption capacity to implement oversight recommendations and enhance accountability to receive the existing processes to plan for the recommended actions; (3) strengthen capacity, particularly in the field, both in terms of staffing and skills; and (4) demonstrate managerial accountability for risk management and related systems of internal control through preparing an annual statement of internal controls.

17. On the caseload of investigations in 2021, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) registered an intake of 36 allegations against UN-Women while 18 were carried over from 2020. Out of the 54 total allegations, 40 were closed in 2021. Out of those 40 closed allegations, 20 were closed after preliminary assessment by the OIOS and 20 were closed after investigation. Of the 20 allegations closed after preliminary assessment, the OIOS referred 11 allegations to UN-Women for potential management action. Of the 20 cases investigated by the OIOS and closed in 2021, 15 were substantiated and five were unsubstantiated. The 15 cases that were substantiated relate to a variety of types of misconduct, including abrasive management style, irregularities in attendance records and in recruitment, waste of resources by personnel, forgery and falsification of documents, vendor collusion, and non-disclosure of conflict of interest.

18. Deputy Executive Director Anita Bhatia presented the management response to the respective recommendations received. She expressed appreciation for the work done by the IEAS and the OIOS, noting that this supports the efficient and effective operation of the Entity and helps safeguard it against waste, fraud, and abuse. She noted that UN-Women accepts the key issues noted during the 2021 audit and then continued to outline the management actions taken to address the four overarching areas of improvement as identified by the IAS. She described the Entity's actions to enhance the second line of defence and detailed initiatives to increase the management's absorption capacity. To support an effective pivot to the field, she stressed that UN-Women's presence typology framework guides the Entity to deliver optimally on its triple mandate and deliver transformational results. She announced that UN-Women will develop a statement of internal controls later this year. She further shared positive results from the implementation of the audit recommendations that were implemented to date. On fraud, the Deputy Executive Director shared that UN-Women completed fraud assessments of all regional and country offices in 2021 and announced that it would do a fraud assessment risk of all headquarter divisions. Regarding investigations, she underscored that the Entity remains committed to effectively reporting on misconduct to the OIOS as demonstrated by the 2021 disciplinary report. The Deputy Executive Director concluded by underlining the importance of a diverse and empowered labour force and shared the initiatives conducted in 2021 to support this inclusive environment.

19. 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 2021. This report reviewed the functioning of the Entity's oversight function, as well as its internal control accountability, including governance, risk management and control systems. Overall, the ACO concluded that all oversight functions are providing useful results to the organization, although it suggested that UN-Women needs to better position itself to take ownership of and benefit from the work done by these entities. Despite the limitations of the pandemic, the ACO noted that the IAS continued to produce audits, reports, studies, and assessments. The ACO further noted that follow-up by management on previous years' audit recommendations has shown slow progress, probably due to the pandemic. The ACO also raised that the lack of

accountable officials designated to follow up on audit results may potentially continue a less mature control environment. On evaluation, the ACO noted the IESs continued contributions to corporate evaluations, as well as its role in overall UN-system evaluations. It considered the IES's synthesis of overall evaluation findings a noteworthy contribution. With regards to investigations, ACO affirmed the key role that the Director of the IEAS plays as the responsible official in UN-Women interacting with the OIOS on investigation findings. It further referred to the Anti-Fraud Review and its recommendations for a more mature anti-fraud system in UN-Women. The ACO applauded the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director's announcement of establishing a new ethics function in UN-Women, which it deemed in line with its previous recommendations.

20. With regards to governance, risk management and control, the ACO expressed appreciation for UN-Women's commitment to organizational excellence and business transformation as laid out in its Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and encouraged the Entity to honour those commitments with concrete action. The ACO underlined that a lack of regular resources continues to negatively impact robust governance structures, particularly affecting human resources, information technology, and field structures. While noting that some gains were made despite the pandemic, the ACO identified several remaining governance risks, including under-investment in second line of defence functions, despite assessments that many processes are at low levels of maturity.

21. Deputy Executive Director Anita Bhatia delivered the management response to the ACO report where she welcomed the report's findings and underscored UN-Women's commitment to operational excellence. She highlighted actions taken by UN-Women to strengthen areas identified by the ACO as needing improvement, such as establishing an uptake mechanism that identifies high-risk and priority recommendations and assigns corporate owners and deadlines to each. The Deputy Executive Director shared that UN-Women took immediate action on the findings of the anti-fraud report and asked the IAS to prepare a costed proposal that would address the report's findings related to the investigations' functions and asked for their views on how to best strengthen UN-Women's capacity to address any fraud or misconduct allegations. On the ethics function, she repeated that UN-Women will continue to promote a culture of accountability. The Deputy Executive Director expressed her appreciation for the ACO's attention to resource levels and pointed out that UN-Women has invested additional resources (including on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, as well as corporate human resources policy, reporting and planning) to substantially mitigate the resource-level risks. She, however, agreed with the ACO on the importance of regular resources for core functions such as governance and risk management and committed to growing core resources by expanding the base of UN-Women's donors, using individual giving to grow regular resources, and direct project costing. Regarding governance risks, the Deputy Executive Director appreciated ACO's recognition on ongoing work to strengthen accountability and governance and described the key activities and results in 2021 to strengthen this second line of defence.

22. In an interactive dialogue following the presentations, one delegation thanked the ACO and requested UN-Women's management to clarify whether it endorsed the recommendations of the ACO and by when it plans to have implemented them. Another Member State congratulated UN-Women for the work done and results achieved and welcomed the announcement of the establishment of an independent ethics function at UN-Women. The Member State also stressed that the financial and risk management systems of all UN funds and programmes should follow uniform principles of international risk management and accounting procedures and regulations. The delegation announced that it would request assurances of the internal

oversight functions of all UN development funds and programmes it is financing before taking any decisions on further core contributions. Another Member State commended the IEAS for its work in 2021 and welcomed the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director's intention of establishing a dedicated ethics function within UN-Women. The delegation was pleased to hear that a revised policy on fraud is being developed yet noted that there is no information on reporting about UN-Women's compliance with environmental policies and procedures and requested an update on the current practice of environmental audits. Another speaker urged UN-Women to implement all long outstanding recommendations as soon as possible. A fifth delegation expressed being concerned by the conclusions of the different assessments regarding weak governance systems, a lack of accountability, and enterprise risk management. It asked why the statement of internal controls was delayed and inquired on what basis multipartner programmes are being developed under the Generation Equality initiative.

23. In response to comments from Member States, Deputy Executive Director Anita Bhatia clarified that UN-Women fully accepts the ACO recommendations on Quantum, human resources, accountability, and information and communications technology and that the timeline to implement these different recommendations varies. She further stressed that UN-Women is in the process of upgrading its fraud and risk assessment system. In response to the question on environmental audits, the Deputy Executive Director shared that the Entity is seeking Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for its new office premises, that it is in the process of developing an environmental conservation plan, and that it is looking into producing a sustainability report. Regarding the 19 long outstanding recommendations, she underscored that UN-Women has a time frame and action plan for completing all of them and highlighted that seven are high-priority and 12 are medium-priority, one of which is already closed. The Deputy Executive Director explained that a statement of internal controls will be built as soon as the new Quantum enterprise resource planning system is finalized and rolled out, so that it recognizes the new business processes. She concluded by mentioning that Generation Equality was fully mainstreamed into the Strategic Plan 2022–2025, which continues to be the guiding framework for implementation of UN-Women's triple mandate. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director reassured delegations that she is committed to deliver on the recommendations from the IAS and the ACO. The Director of the IEAS informed the Executive Board that the IEAS has planned for 2022 a corporate environmental and social governance audit and that it is completing the corporate evaluation of UN-Women's work on climate change. The Chair of the ACO pointed out the context in which it made its recommendations, while highlighting the eleventh unqualified audit and the establishment of the IAS, the Business Review Committee, and other governance mechanisms over the years.

## **V. UN-Women's operational response at the regional level**

24. In her opening remarks, Deputy Executive Director Åsa Regnér said that Latin America and the Caribbean had led the world in key areas related to gender equality. She highlighted that the region has a history of strong and influential legislation on violence against women, such as introducing the concept of "femicide". She further underlined the region's vibrant and well-organized civil society and strong regional human rights system. The Deputy Executive Director added that it is one of the most biodiverse regions in the world matched by human diversity, including approximately 50 million Indigenous people who belong to 500 different ethnic groups. She highlighted that, despite this richness and decades of progress, the region is facing economic and social challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in



polarization of the political spectrum within and among countries. She shared that UN-Women supports governments in the region to reverse gender-based discrimination and to address the care economy, to address violence against women in politics, and to support parity in political participation. In her presentation, UN-Women's Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean detailed UN-Women's regional presence, its resources, and impact areas. The Regional Director shared key results from the implementation of the regional Strategic Note 2018–2021, while specifically highlighting outcomes of regional programmes focused on women's leadership and political participation. She also shared examples of how UN-Women focuses on leaving no one behind through programmes concentrating on strengthening the rights and leadership of Indigenous women and Afrodescendant women. The Regional Director stressed the importance of establishing national integrated systems to strengthen the care economy and detailed how UN-Women has worked in partnership to support more than 15 countries in the region on this topic. She described several initiatives on women's economic empowerment in the region, including UN-Women's strategic partnership with the European Union and International Labour Organization called "Win-Win: Gender Equality Means Good Business" and the Second Chance Education Programme. The Regional Director detailed the results of the Spotlight Initiative in the region and highlighted work on the women, peace, and security agenda. She concluded her presentation by emphasizing that almost 50 per cent of the work in the region is done in partnership and through coordination with other UN organizations.

25. In response, one Member State expressed support to the priority areas of UN-Women's regional office in Latin America and the Caribbean and underscored the importance of promoting the implementation of women, peace, and security initiatives. The delegation added that it is essential to promote women's economic and political participation and noted its commitment to collaborate with UN-Women to create a care economy. It welcomed the efforts made to combat sexual and gender-based violence and underscored its commitment to the digital transformation for gender equality. Another delegation commended UN-Women's work in Latin America and the Caribbean to prevent and address violence against women and girls and thanked the Entity for the technical support provided to the country's National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. After highlighting the migration crisis in the region and the situation of women and girls in Haiti, the speaker asked the Regional Director how to address the lack of data on violence against women and girls to enable coordinated responses at the national and local level, to tackle sexual and gender-based violence, and to strengthen accountability mechanisms in Haiti. After welcoming UN-Women's work in the region and their country more specifically, a third speaker announced a new cooperation agreement with UN-Women and asked if the Entity plans to support follow-up control and evaluation of national action plans for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325. Another delegation thanked UN-Women for its support to the Global Alliance for Care, as well as for UN-Women's work on violence against women and girls and the synergies with the Inter-American Commission of Women. Another Member State recognized that UN-Women and other UN organizations are playing an essential role in providing countries with assistance to address the migration crisis in the region. It further welcomed UN-Women's results achieved in the region and noted considerable progress on women's economic empowerment in their own country. Finally, it called on the international community to look beyond gross domestic product figures and to look instead at multidimensional vulnerability measures to ensure access to international cooperation and funding.

26. Responding to comments from Member States, the Regional Director highlighted activities to support human rights defenders and the establishment of national action plans on women, peace, and security. She agreed on the importance

of considering elements other than gross domestic product in allocating funding. In closing, the Regional Director stressed the importance of addressing unpaid care work and mentioned that UN-Women is generating and using big data to support public policy to address violence against women.

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

27. The Executive Board received an update on the implementation of UN General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) as presented by Deputy Executive Director Anita Bhatia, who emphasized UN-Women's commitment to reform and highlighted how the Entity's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 includes a dedicated outcome on coordination while embedding the mandates of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review and UN repositioning resolutions. The Deputy Executive Director added that all UN-Women country office strategic notes are aligned with respective cooperation frameworks and shared that UN-Women recently introduced strategic dialogue pilots with UN country offices along with Resident Coordinators (RCs) to secure alignment and mainstream gender across the system. She emphasized that involvement with RCs is not limited to the development of UN-Women Strategic Notes, but also includes the performance evaluation of UN-Women country representatives. She further detailed how UN-Women's country office typologies are applied to country-level needs and programming approaches to augment structures and local presence. She added that country office typologies, as well as the role of Gender Equality Coordinators in those locations where UN-Women does not have a presence, are key elements through which UN-Women is strengthening its coordination mandate and supporting system-wide gender mainstreaming. With regards to gender markers, the Deputy Executive Director shared that gender markers have now become a UN-wide financial data standard that will be used for reporting to the International Aid Transparency Initiative, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Central Bank. She concluded by highlighting the importance of joint work and reported that joint programming has increased significantly, from 13 per cent in 2018 to 31 per cent in 2021.

28. After opening the floor, a delegation speaking on behalf of 38 members and one donor highlighted how compounding global crises risk further derailing the development gains made to date, requiring UN organizations to build on their respective strengths and comparative advantages, pooling knowledge, expertise, and resources. The joint statement acknowledged UN-Women's work in contributing to joint analysis through the UN Common Country Analysis and other analysis tools and requested an update on how UN-Women intends to support the use of collective outcomes in the planning process. It further urged UN-Women to continue to consolidate its operations and find efficiencies and reiterated the importance of the Resident Coordinator certifying country programmes to be in alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Emphasizing that a human rights-based approach is critical to ensure that UN development system programming reaches those most in need, the group inquired as to how UN-Women is strengthening its human rights-based approach and requested a discussion around the Management and Accountability Framework. Another delegation welcomed the progress made in implementing the mandates of UNGA resolution [72/279](#) and thanked UN-Women for its investment in the Resident Coordinator system, while urging the Entity to continue making use of the full potential of the Resident Coordinator system.

29. In response, Deputy Executive Director Bhatia emphasized that UN-Women is fully aligned with the new Management Accountability Framework, including with the requirement to ensure a dual reporting line of the country representatives to the

RCs and to the UN-Women Regional Directors. She further described the ways in which the Entity tries to identify efficiencies, while detailing how it is working to strengthen cooperation and mainstream gender across the UN country team. Deputy Executive Director Regnér detailed how UN-Women has integrated a human rights-based approach in its work and its new Strategic Plan 2022–2025. She also noted interest from members in UN-Women’s work on humanitarian action and crisis response and offered to prepare a briefing to the Executive Board on this.

## **VII. Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment**

30. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director presented an update on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. She emphasized that sexual exploitation and sexual harassment by UN personnel is a stain on the reputation of the UN organization and its credibility vis-à-vis the people it serves. After stressing that there is no greater betrayal of the oath of office, the head of UN-Women expressed gratitude for the Executive Board’s support in this endeavour. She mentioned that the strengthening of UN-Women’s Internal Prevention and Response Framework, as well as improving the UN-wide approach, are essential for success. Additionally, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director highlighted that the Entity’s role is not limited to ensuring that zero tolerance is a reality within UN-Women, but that it also has a responsibility to make a substantial contribution to the overall work of the UN.

31. Providing an update on progress achieved since February 2022, the head of the Entity shared that UN-Women recently established an inter-agency network in Moldova to address sexual exploitation and abuse, which is co-chaired by UNHCR. She further highlighted that UN-Women continues to contribute to the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the UN System (CEB Task Force), where it is the co-lead of the outreach and knowledge-sharing workstream, which has undertaken activities to share good practices on tackling sexual harassment among UN Member States, UN entities and the international community. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director added that lessons learned from these efforts are summarized in a new publication, “Making Zero Tolerance a Reality”. She further stated that UN-Women continues to provide technical contributions to the workstreams on advancing a victim-centred approach, learning and communication, and leadership and culture. In addition, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted that UN-Women represents the network of nearly 500 UN Gender Focal Points under the CEB Task Force, which provides unique insight and authority on this topic. The head of UN-Women stressed that this inward-looking work is aligned with the Entity’s outward-looking work with its partners. Recognizing that this topic is not limited to people on UN-Women’s payroll, the Executive Director emphasized that UN-Women has a duty to ensure that its implementing (and other) partners maintain the highest standards of conduct and shared that therefore UN-Women is working to strengthen the capacity of its partners.

32. Looking ahead, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director outlined a set of targeted actions planned for the remainder of 2022. This includes the introduction of learning modules on intersectionality, power relations, and positive masculinity into UN-Women’s preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment trainings; the creation of a knowledge hub to enable the efficient sharing of resources on addressing sexual harassment within the UN system and among external stakeholders; and the planning of global policy advocacy sessions on addressing sexual harassment. To conclude, she mentioned that UN-Women is preparing a

continuous data collection and comparative analysis strategy for metrics to be able to measure progress on tackling sexual misconduct.

33. A joint statement delivered on behalf of 61 Member States recognized UN-Women's commitment and efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment and to work towards an environment that prohibits sexual misconduct. The group expressed appreciation for the sessions organized by UN-Women and the CEB Task Force to facilitate peer-to-peer learning on preventing and addressing sexual harassment. Noting that significant challenges remain, the group stressed the importance of strong, proactive, and visible leadership; effective inter-agency collaboration, capacity-building of implementing partners; accessible, safe, and accountable reporting and follow-up; and a strengthened human rights-based, gender-responsive and victim-survivor centred approach. The group welcomed continual opportunities to learn about the impact of UN-Women's prevention and response efforts at the local, country, regional and global levels and reiterated the importance of further strengthening transparency and reporting to Member States in line with agreed terms.

## **VIII. Closing**

34. In her closing remarks, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the President for her effective leadership of the session, as well as the Vice-Presidents and delegations for their contributions and engagement. She specifically recognized Mr Markus Reisle for his skilful support during negotiations and wished him well as he returns to Bern as Chief of Staff at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

35. The head of the Entity reiterated her commitment to enhancing the transparency, accountability, and fiduciary strength of UN-Women and assured delegations that the Entity will act in line with the feedback provided by the IEAS and the ACO. She thanked delegations for their support in establishing a dedicated ethics function within UN-Women and welcomed the Board's formal decision on this subject. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director added that she shares the Executive Board's views on its crucial oversight role and committed to reflect carefully on how to make this role more effective, in addition to other aspects of internal controls. She thanked the Executive Board for placing its trust in UN-Women and stressed that the Entity is committed to continuing to deserve it. The head of the Entity committed to continuing to diversify and broaden UN-Women's donor base, strengthening strategic partnerships with international financial institutions, and pursuing the success of multi-stakeholder partnerships to support gender equality and empowerment, while at the same time noting the shared regard for national ownership to ensure sensitivity to local contexts.

36. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted that the results of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 reflect the strong relationship between country objectives and programme implementation. However, she added that we are still too far from achieving the SDGs. The head of UN-Women highlighted that the COVID-19 Policy Tracker was useful to highlight the gaps and identify priorities, though she also noted that among those gaps, social protection and care work are important for the revival of women's participation in the labour force, including the digital sector. She underscored the need to reach the most vulnerable populations, including those at the crossroads of multiple forms of discrimination.

37. Looking ahead to the implementation of the strategic plan in an increasingly challenging global context, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director highlighted that UN-Women shall continue to focus on core areas of work. These

include ensuring that women participate meaningfully in peace and security, as well as in humanitarian and climate action. She emphasized that UN-Women's coordination role is vital in this regard, to amplify support to women and girls and to make progress towards the achievement of SDG 5 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The head of the Entity took good note of the several requests for stronger engagement in areas such as climate change, education, and the use of digital technology. Appreciating Member States' recognition of UN-Women as a catalyst of systematic change within the UN system, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director assured delegations of UN-Women's continued commitment to drive UN reforms and ensure gender mainstreaming across the UN system. Before concluding her remarks, the head of the Entity thanked the Board for their continued support to the work and mandate of UN-Women and asked those who can, to maintain or increase the funding provided to the organization.

38. The President of the Executive Board concluded by thanking the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her statement and expressing her appreciation for the active engagement of and contributions from all members of the Board. She thanked her fellow Bureau Members, the UN-Women leadership, and the Executive Board Secretary and his team for their support. The President congratulated the Executive Board for adopting four decisions by consensus and thanked the delegations of Argentina, Iceland, the Republic of Korea, and Sierra Leone for their skilful facilitation.

39. The President welcomed the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director's commitment to continue strengthening UN-Women's financial management, risk management, and ethics functions and expressed the Executive Board's full support to establishing a dedicated ethics function within UN-Women. Reflecting on the opening statements, the President considered the many and wide-ranging interventions, as well as the presence of a high number of ambassadors, as an expression of strong support to the Entity. She highlighted Member States emphasizing the importance and value of UN-Women's coordination mandate and reiterated their call for multi-stakeholder partnerships in tackling the ongoing challenges to women's rights and gender equality, worsened by conflict, climate, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

40. Before concluding her remarks, the President announced that this would be her last session as President of the Executive Board before assuming her new position. She stated it was an absolute honour and privilege to be at the helm of the UN-Women Executive Board and to play a humble part in supporting UN-Women's mission to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women across the world. The President concluded by saying that she will keep looking for ways to work with UN-Women and the Executive Board to tackle the unique challenges faced by women in the LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS.

41. The session was then adjourned.

## Annex I

### Decisions adopted at the annual session of 2022

2022/3

#### **Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, and commends UN-Women on its strong performance on the Strategic Plan 2018–2021;
2. *Recognizes* UN-Women’s contribution and its focused engagement within the UN development system to ensure that gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment continue to be an integral part of the sustainable development agenda;
3. *Encourages* UN-Women to continue the full implementation of its triple mandate, in accordance with [A/RES/64/289](#), which includes normative support, UN system-wide coordination and operational activities;
4. *Recalls* the voluntary commitments made by both Member States and UN-Women in the UN Funding Compact, and takes note with concern of the funding gap in regular resources, and encourages all countries in a position to do so to increase voluntary contributions for the full and effective implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025, and encourages strengthened partnerships in this regard;
5. *Encourages* UN-Women to continue its strong performance in meeting its targets in line with the results framework of the Strategic Plan and applicable guidance of the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, and requests UN-Women, while taking into account its own priorities, to further advance collaboration with other UN entities to continue aligning methodologies for planning and reporting on results;
6. *Decides* to transmit the report to the Economic and Social Council.

22 June 2022

2022/4

#### **Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2021**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the 2021 report on UN-Women’s evaluation function and the Independent Evaluation Service 2022 programme of work and budget;
2. *Takes note with appreciation* of UN-Women continuous efforts to maintain an independent, credible, and useful evaluation function and of its contribution to system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts and national evaluation capacity development, and encourages UN-Women to continue to make use of evaluation results, including in its decision-making processes;
3. *Encourages* UN-Women to increase investments towards allocation of at least 2 per cent and up to 3 per cent of its total programme expenditure to the evaluation function, and requests UN-Women to continue working to safeguard the

independence of the Independent Evaluation Service and ensure evaluation expertise in the Advisory Committee on Oversight;

4. *Expresses* continued support for strengthening UN-Women's evaluation function and use of evaluations.

22 June 2022

**2022/5**

**Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021;

2. *Takes note* of the Advisory Committee on Oversight's report;

3. *Urges* UN-Women's management to continue its efforts to further strengthen its second line of defence and establish a statement of internal controls;

4. *Takes note* of the Executive Director's announced intent to create an independent ethics function within UN-Women;

5. *Requests* an informal briefing on the ethics function within UN-Women ahead of the second regular session 2022, including an update on the Executive Director's intent to create an independent ethics function; further requests ethics be added as a recurring stand-alone item for a decision on the agenda of annual sessions and for UN-Women to provide an annual official report on its ethics function starting at its annual session 2023;

6. *Requests* closed briefings from the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) of UN-Women, in coordination with the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), in a timely manner and on a regular basis throughout the year and as needed, on potential red flags, audit findings and the status of investigations;

7. *Requests* the Director of the IEAS, in coordination with OIOS, to provide at the second regular session of 2022 an assessment on the independence of the Service, containing reflections on (but not limited to) the degree to which the IEAS can determine freely: (a) how and when to report to and brief the Executive Board; (b) the scope of audits and investigations; (c) what and who to audit or investigate; (d) what assessments to make; (e) how to utilize available funds; and (f) its relationship with the OIOS; and requests the Director to also provide suggestions and pathways on how to further strengthen the independence of the Service, as well as the budget estimate required for the execution of the full mandate, and requests a closed informal briefing between the management of IEAS, together with OIOS, and Executive Board members and observers on this topic in advance of the second regular session of 2022;

8. *Decides* to include an item on internal controls for decision at the second regular session 2022.

22 June 2022

**2022/6****Implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system***The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the updates provided by UN-Women on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) and related mandates on the repositioning of the UN development system in the context of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the UN system;

2. *Encourages* UN-Women to continue to implement, as appropriate, General Assembly resolution [72/279](#), [75/233](#) and other relevant reform resolutions, including through supporting the efforts of the Secretary-General in implementing UNDS reform;

3. *Encourages* UN-Women, while delivering on its mandate, to continue aligning its Strategic Notes with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and takes note of progress in this regard;

4. *Takes note* of UN-Women's partnerships with international financial institutions, and seeks an update at the first regular session of 2023 on UN-Women's engagement with international financial institutions;

5. *Recalls* the QCPR and stresses the importance of integrated solutions to address complex, multi-faceted challenges impacting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and requests UN-Women to update the Board on how they are supporting collaboration in joint analysis, needs assessments, planning, including collective outcomes, and programme delivery, within existing reporting mechanisms;

6. *Recognizes* the important role of UN-Women and the respective contributions of UN-Women's country representatives to the collective results of the UN development system towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and requests an update on how UN-Women's country representatives are assessed in contributing to the implementation of reform at the country level and on UN-Women's compliance with the Management and Accountability Framework;

7. *Stresses* the need for UN development system entities to continue playing their part in enhancing system-wide coherence, coordination, harmonization, and efficiency, reduce duplication and build synergies, as appropriate and in accordance with decisions of their governing bodies, and requests UN-Women, in this regard, to provide the Executive Board with an update on realized efficiency gains through these efforts, within existing reporting mechanisms;

8. *Noting* UN-Women's mandate to support gender mainstreaming across the UN system, encourages UN-Women to continue strengthening the availability of its expertise in countries where it is non-resident, including through the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, or equivalent planning frameworks, in accordance with programme countries' priorities.

22 June 2022