



**United Nations**

# **Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund**

**Report on the first and second regular  
sessions and annual session of 2019**

**Economic and Social Council  
Official Records, 2019  
Supplement No. 14**





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United Nations • New York, 2019

*Note*

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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**Part one**  
**First regular session of 2019**

**Held at United Nations Headquarters from**  
**5 and 6 February 2019**



## **I. Organization of the session**

### **A. Election of officers of the Executive Board**

1. The Executive Board elected as President the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations, Omer Dahab Fadl Mohamed, and as Vice-Presidents the following Permanent Representatives to the United Nations: Marie Chatardová (Czech Republic), Louise Blais (Canada), Masud Bin Momen (Bangladesh) and Jorge Skinner-Klée Arenales (Guatemala).

### **B. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF**

2. The President opened the session by expressing the hope that deliberations would be fruitful and deepen the Board members' understanding of the importance of protecting children. He looked forward to an effective working relationship between the Board and UNICEF and assured the delegations that the impressive results of 2018 would be built upon. He also looked forward to working closely with the Executive Director. He noted that the spirit of the Board was one of unity and collaboration and believed that it could become an even more strategic body.

3. The President urged the members to continue their discussions on working methods among themselves and with the Boards of the other funds and programmes, in the interest of strengthening governance and achieving more coherence. He mentioned that efficiencies could be achieved by reducing the number of sessions and days per session. He also raised the issue of how to optimize the joint meeting of the Boards and make it more action-oriented. The repositioning of the United Nations development system should be kept in mind during discussions about the working methods of the Board.

4. Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse remained an important agenda item for the Board, and the President noted his intention to continue the dialogue with the Executive Director on the issue.

5. He hoped that the Board would contribute to sustainable development, especially through the continued improvement of the quality and reach of education. He also mentioned the importance of the humanitarian-to-development continuum in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the uniqueness of UNICEF in holding both mandates. He hoped to bring the experience of his own region, Africa, to the table to enhance the discussions of the Board.

6. The President noted that 2019 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which he highlighted as a milestone to be honoured and celebrated.

7. The President closed by looking forward to the busy year ahead in realizing the ambitious 2019 programme of work.

8. The Executive Director welcomed the new Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, Ms. Charlotte Petri Gornitzka. She thanked Ms. Shanelle Hall, Deputy Executive Director, Field Results, and Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye, Deputy Executive Director, Management, who would both be leaving UNICEF soon.

9. She highlighted the accomplishments of the Board on working methods, particularly through the core group, and offered the support of UNICEF as discussions progressed.

10. She also noted the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and said that the next 30 years should focus on realizing children's rights.

11. The Executive Director remarked that UNICEF was strengthening from within and that its work with partners was an enabling influence. She noted that the United Nations reform was central to these efforts and that the organization's focus should be on results, not processes. She also mentioned that UNICEF staff were engaged across a range of United Nations reform reviews and processes that were driving change across the system.

12. The Executive Director expressed satisfaction that the Board of Auditors had issued an unqualified audit opinion on the UNICEF 2017 financial statements and said she was committed to upholding and going beyond this standard.

13. The core values of UNICEF drove its work to address sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment as well as the abuse of power and authority. The Executive Director mentioned the independent panel review of the response of UNICEF to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. She noted, and the organization had strengthened and simplified reporting mechanisms, enhanced investigations and improved screening. She underlined that sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment would not be tolerated.

14. The Executive Director mentioned programmatic priorities, including planting the seeds of development into humanitarian responses, scaling up community-based primary health care and supporting Generation Unlimited, a platform to identify, design and scale up new solutions for young people. She added that work on innovation had expanded, including collaboration with the World Economic Forum and partners, such as Microsoft, on the Generation AI initiative to shape a global agenda that balanced opportunities with risks.

15. Ties with the private sector were important to UNICEF, and the Executive Director announced an overall strategy to boost fundraising and create shared-value partnerships. UNICEF was also working with the network of National Committees to build larger teams of highly skilled and connected senior prospectors and relationship managers to seek and retain new private-sector partners. She highlighted the capacity of corporate partners to help the organization find new ways to provide children and young people with opportunities, training and jobs.

16. The Executive Director concluded by emphasizing the role of the Board in achieving more results for children and young people through its vision and stewardship.

17. The President opened the floor for general statements. The delegations congratulated the President and the Vice-Presidents of the Executive Board on their election and looked forward to working with them constructively in the coming year. Delegations expressed thanks to the UNICEF staff members for their dedication and tireless efforts in increasingly difficult and dangerous situations. They also welcomed the statement of the Executive Director, which, a delegation noted, challenged the Board to focus on strategic issues that would make a real difference in the lives of children. A group of delegations commended UNICEF for the interactive informal briefings on the various agenda items, held prior to the session. A delegation said that the Board session discussions should focus on issues of overall strategic importance, and that the Board should avoid micromanaging the daily business of UNICEF, which was best left in the capable hands of its leadership and staff.

18. Delegations highlighted the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the upcoming commemorative events. Much had been achieved, such as a decrease in child mortality, but many challenges remained, notably alarming trends of discrimination and inequality and the displacement and

immense suffering of children around the world, despite global efforts to protect children's rights, provide for their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. A delegation noted that coming to the aid of and empowering children and young people today was critical for ensuring a better future for all tomorrow, while another emphasized that the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development would be possible only by promoting the rights and interests of children.

19. A group of delegations emphasized that the work of UNICEF for the welfare and protection of children was more crucial than ever and reaffirmed the central role of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. Millions of vulnerable children continued to be left behind, including child victims of violence, conflict and sexual exploitation, migrants, refugees and asylum-seeking children and children living in poverty. The group of delegations was joined by others in stating that more focus was needed on children with disabilities and children belonging to indigenous and minority groups. The Executive Director agreed on the importance of becoming more effective in those areas, especially considering the fact that 9 out of 10 children with disabilities were out of school, and she affirmed that UNICEF was focusing on social inclusion.

20. A delegation noted that the disparity between children in developing countries and those in developed countries was greater than among their adult counterparts and likely to increase as the world approached the fourth industrial revolution. Several delegations called for a new education system in developing economies, particularly in the least developed countries, to prepare children for the highly competitive, technology-based workplace. They commended the Generation Unlimited initiative, which would bring together the private sector, Governments, international and local organizations and young people to identify and scale up efforts, so that youth could attain the level of education, skills and empowerment necessary to transform economies and nations. A delegation noted that government investment in secondary education for girls as well as social safety-net programmes and adolescent health would help to end child marriage. The Executive Director responded that education indeed needed an overhaul in many countries, so that young people obtained the skills necessary to become productive members of society. She added that secondary education for girls was very important to UNICEF.

21. Delegations affirmed their support for the United Nations development system reform. A delegation noted that UNICEF, as a strong and effective agency with a significant field presence, should lead on the reform effort, since success would be measured in the field. Delegations expressed their appreciation for the UNICEF commitment to reform, including its focus on increasing efficiency and value for money through service modernization, business innovation and the valuing of human capital, among other initiatives. Several delegations recognized the leadership of UNICEF in applying new technologies and innovative platforms to achieve goals on the ground, while a delegation also saw the need for adequate access for children to technology as well as the access of Governments and agencies to children through technology.

22. A delegation asked for more specific information on the allocation of efficiency gains to programmatic activities. The Executive Director responded that a 1 per cent decrease in management costs was forecast for the period 2018 to 2021, from 6.7 per cent of the total to 5.7 per cent, through savings from automating processes; centralizing transactions in the Global Shared Services Centre; and modernizing information technology, human resources and logistics systems. Efficiency was also achieved by freeing up the time of staff, which she called a valuable resource.

23. A delegation hoped that, while taking forward the reform, UNICEF would continue to implement the Strategic Plan and the country programmes. The delegation also urged UNICEF to improve communication with programme countries on the

ground, while collaborating with other agencies to better support Governments to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. A delegation added that such coordination was especially important in this resource-restrained period.

24. A delegation saw the reform and the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as opportunities to improve the efficiency of the system, while another noted that UNICEF, as a key member of the new generation of country teams under the strategic leadership of the resident coordinator, could contribute to a more coherent, collaborative and innovative United Nations, in partnership with stakeholders, and deliver greater impact for people on the ground.

25. A delegation said that it was important to continue to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus, and that the repositioning of the United Nations development system brought forward the linkage of humanitarian responses with sustainable development results. Another delegation considered UNICEF to be a leading partner for countries in both arenas due to its solid reputation and its role as the voice for the most deprived children, especially in conflict-affected areas.

26. A delegation noted that 2018 had been a difficult year for the humanitarian and development communities. An estimated 87 per cent of those living in extreme poverty, at least 661 million people, were living in countries affected by instability, environmental vulnerability or both. UNICEF had been at the front lines in the increasing number of countries around the world confronting the challenges of conflict, violence and natural disasters. A delegation highlighted a collaborative initiative of UNICEF, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme (WFP) to help children register to a digital system to simplify the provision of essential services in humanitarian settings. It was a good example of how collaboration across organizations in such settings could help to tailor holistic support to children over the long term.

27. A delegation expressed concern that the drastic drop in international support after the withdrawal of a peacekeeping mission often risked destabilizing the country and asked about the efforts of UNICEF in transition countries in anticipation of the withdrawal of such missions. The Executive Director responded that UNICEF provided support to the mechanism for the monitoring and reporting of grave child rights violations. She added that, as peacekeeping operations ended and responsibilities were transferred to UNICEF, it was very important that Member States provide funding to fill the gap.

28. A delegation pointed out that different principles guided humanitarian work and development assistance and it was important for UNICEF to acknowledge the priorities of national Governments and to continue to avoid bias and politicization. The delegation added that this was largely being achieved, but there were exceptions.

29. A delegation recognized that tackling systemic challenges, such as the persistent lack of educational opportunities for conflict-affected children and young people, required broad-based partnerships and increased support, not just from national Governments but from the private sector, including local and faith-based organizations. It commended UNICEF for its continued leadership in forging such partnerships and for exceeding its private fundraising and partnerships targets in 2017. The delegation encouraged UNICEF to expand its efforts to engage the private sector, not only towards philanthropic contributions but also towards identifying ways in which development and humanitarian assistance might fit into the business model and strategic planning of private entities. It encouraged UNICEF to ensure that those partnerships and new mechanisms met critical gaps and built on existing local capacities. It urged UNICEF to show continued leadership in strengthening the links between humanitarian and development programming and to engage the private sector

in addressing the increasing scale and scope of both development and humanitarian challenges. The Education Cannot Wait initiative was a good example of an existing funding mechanism that could increase humanitarian-development coherence.

30. Other delegations agreed that it was important and timely to engage multiple stakeholders to broaden the donor base and to spot new actors that could finance both new and ongoing projects. A delegation added that it was necessary to apply specific criteria to new private-sector partners to ensure that they were truly committed to development projects.

31. Two delegations had questions about the 1 per cent coordinating levy for the resident coordinator system, including whether it would have an impact on the ability to attract private resources into the system and what the financial implications might be, considering that 49 per cent of the total regular resources in 2017 were contributed by private-sector partners. The Executive Director responded that UNICEF and the Executive Board needed to make the case as to why the United Nations was important, and why the work that its agencies did in the field was important to countries and to children and young people around the world.

32. A delegation acknowledged the unqualified audit opinion for the 2017 financial statements by the Board of Auditors and requested that the Executive Director convey its appreciation to all UNICEF personnel, as it was a shared achievement. A delegation noted the importance of addressing fraud, conflict of interest and the mismanagement of funds, including the prevention and recovery of financial losses, and noted its agreement with the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the findings of the Board of Auditors, especially fraud-prevention training for staff in high-risk functions.

33. A delegation noted its appreciation of the Executive Director's strong leadership on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment within the humanitarian and development assistance communities, and for the commissioning of the independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. The delegation agreed with the recommendation that UNICEF develop a whole-of-organization strategy to address the challenge effectively. Sexual exploitation and abuse was an existential threat to the development and humanitarian aid sectors, in contradiction to the collective goal of saving lives and promoting human dignity around the world. The delegation also recommended that protection from sexual exploitation and abuse become an integral part of the organization's risk management systems.

34. The spokesperson for the NGO Committee on UNICEF noted that the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was not just one of celebration, but also evaluation. Children were often left the farthest behind. The spokesperson urged UNICEF to include children's voices when creating policies meant to solve child-related issues, noting that this was a fundamental child right, as articulated in the Convention.

35. The representative of World Vision said that a world without violence depended upon a strengthened vision on peace, security and sustainable development. Organizations needed to stand up for children whose stories and voices went unheard or were ignored.

### **C. Adoption of the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work**

36. The Executive Board adopted the agenda, timetable and organization of work ([E/ICEF/2019/1](#)) for the session.

37. The Secretary of the Executive Board announced that 38 observer delegations, including two intergovernmental organizations, two international organizations, nine non-governmental organizations and nine National Committees for UNICEF had submitted credentials, in accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure.

#### **D. Working methods**

38. The First Secretary, Guatemala, introduced the item on behalf of his own delegation and the delegation of Switzerland. The two delegations were serving as co-facilitators of the decisions on working methods for the core group, which had been constituted in accordance with the decisions on working methods adopted at the second regular sessions of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and WFP. The members of the core group, which comprised Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Finland, Guatemala, Mauritius, Korea, the Russian Federation, the Sudan and Switzerland, had met twice in January 2019 and would meet again on 8 February 2019. It was important that the core group members periodically provide updates to their respective regional groups. The goal during the current session was to adopt a decision that recognized the creation of the core group and referred to the written account to be presented at the joint meeting of the Boards in May 2019.

39. Following the introduction, the Secretary of the UNICEF Executive Board provided an overview of the implementation to date by the UNICEF secretariat of the relevant requests made by the Board in its decision 2018/4, including confirming the elimination of the yearly field visit of the Bureau of the Executive Board.

## **II. Deliberations of the Executive Board**

### **A. Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to the recommendations and decisions of the forty-first and forty-second Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinating Board meetings**

40. The Director, Programme Division, introduced the background note on UNICEF follow-up to recommendations and decisions of the forty-first and forty-second Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Programme Coordinating Board meetings (UNICEF/2019/EB/2), followed by the Associate Director, Programme Division, and Chief of the HIV/AIDS Section, who presented the report.

41. A group of delegations welcomed the leadership of UNICEF on HIV prevention among young people, including its focus on data on adolescent and young key populations, and commended UNICEF for its prevention efforts aimed at reaching those furthest behind, including through programmes in humanitarian settings and work on gender-based violence, given its impact on HIV infection rates. At the same time, the group expressed concern about the rates of infection in children, including mother-to-child transmission, and among adolescents and young people, with one delegation highlighting the gaps in antiretroviral treatment (ART).

42. Several delegations supported programming around the basic services of young people's health, well-being, sexual and reproductive health and gender equality to improve outcomes for adolescent girls and young women. A delegation expressed concern about the increased hindrance of such services as well as an increase in

stereotyping and stigmatization, especially regarding girls and adolescents. The group of delegations also highlighted stigma and discrimination as key barriers in the AIDS response and welcomed the work that UNICEF was doing in this area, especially in health-care settings, to ensure that needed services were accessible, particularly to adolescents.

43. A delegation said that it was important for UNICEF to remain focused on its areas of comparative advantage, including strengthening country capacities; scaling up proven multipronged prevention interventions; integrating HIV testing, prevention and treatment into routine antenatal care; and expanding access to rapid early child diagnosis and testing to end mother-to-child transmission. These should be backed by broader interventions to address gender-based violence and other social norms that put women and adolescents at risk. UNICEF should also continue its advocacy with Governments to increase their domestic investments and improve their national HIV-response programmes.

44. While commending the efforts of UNICEF to stop the spread of HIV, a delegation emphasized that national priorities and legislation should be taken into account. Existing international arrangements should be implemented more broadly to combat new infections in children and provide pregnant women with ART.

45. The group of delegations welcomed the feedback on the implementation of the UNAIDS Joint Action Plan and the country envelopes. A delegation asked how contributions to Sustainable Development Goal Target 3.3, ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030, were being measured under the Action Plan. The Associate Director responded that Goal Area 1 of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 results framework addressed health, nutrition, HIV and early childhood development together. UNICEF was defining how best, through its work and its comparative advantage, to support health systems to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals.

46. A delegation asked about leveraging UNICEF private-sector engagement to incentivize the development of treatments and diagnostics in orphan areas, such as child-friendly antiretroviral drugs. The Associate Director responded that the pharmaceutical and diagnostic industries were counted among the public-private partnerships for that very purpose. The Deputy Executive Director, Field Results, added that UNICEF engaged directly with emerging market manufacturers, multinational corporations and biotechnology companies for updates on their developments in prevention, diagnostics and treatment. UNICEF was already scaling up innovations, such as point-of-care diagnostics for early infant diagnostics. HIV self-testing and injectable treatments would soon be available, which would increase adherence.

47. In response to a question from a delegation on what more or differently UNICEF could do to help to drive progress on tackling HIV/AIDS, the Deputy Executive Director, Management and Governance, UNAIDS, recalled that the world had pledged to end AIDS by 2030. While remarkable progress had been made in children aged 0 to 9 years, adolescents had been left behind. Without additional investment in prevention, it was projected that 360,000 adolescents would die of AIDS-related diseases between 2018 and 2030. Collaboration and a comprehensive approach to bring AIDS out of isolation were needed, e.g., connecting prevention with social protection, as well as a focus on country-specific responses.

48. A delegation noted the important discussion that had taken place at the forty-third Programme Coordinating Board meeting on the report of the Independent Expert Panel on prevention of and response to harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and abuse of power at the UNAIDS secretariat. The delegation expressed its expectation that all the organizations with which it worked would

operate to the highest standards, and it looked forward to the special session of the Programme Coordinating Board, to be held in March 2019, and to subsequent actions towards a strong response to the Panel's findings.

49. The Associate Director noted the importance of ensuring the sustainability of the gains made to date, including by securing adequate funding and building stronger health systems, and she expressed appreciation for the reauthorization of the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. The Director, Programme Division, added that there had been other generous contributions to the HIV response, but support had been declining. UNICEF financing for HIV had been at \$120 million seven years earlier, but had dropped to \$40 million today, so that UNICEF had had to move some of its core resources to the HIV effort. This meant that choices had to be made, with UNICEF deciding to focus its resources primarily on sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Going forward, the response would have to rely more on domestic resources; shifts in national budgets were already occurring to accommodate that.

## **B. Update on UNICEF humanitarian action**

50. The Director, Programme Division, and the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, jointly presented the update on UNICEF humanitarian action. A background paper (UNICEF/2019/EB/3) was available.

51. Several delegations highlighted the role of UNICEF in humanitarian crises and welcomed the efforts of UNICEF to promote the implementation of the humanitarian-development nexus, noting the dual mandate of UNICEF in this regard.

52. A group of delegations welcomed the dialogue at the strategic level on the work of UNICEF in and around crises and noted that the organization was well placed to improve the way in which it anticipated, prevented and addressed crises. The group appreciated the efforts to adopt systemic and systematic approaches to linking humanitarian and development programming, noted the need for risk assessments and requested further information on how the new executive directive on risk-informed programming was being rolled out. The group believed that strengthening systems was paramount and would make communities more resilient. The Director, Programmes, noted that risk-informed programming would be part of a common United Nations approach. The specific intent of the executive directive was to make preparedness and risk-informed programming mandatory steps in countries' planning cycles.

53. The group commended UNICEF for achieving the Grand Bargain goal of localizing 30 per cent of humanitarian spending and requested more information in future reports on the quality of corresponding interventions and partnerships as well as how UNICEF would systemize its approach. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, addressing the issue of localization, noted that the capacity-building of local actors was key.

54. A delegation noted the importance of the work of UNICEF in humanitarian response and development. It advised that UNICEF should avoid politicizing its work and remain a neutral actor, using verifiable and reliable information. The delegation commended the use of risk-informed programming, the involvement of local populations and the focus on emergency preparedness.

55. A delegation expressed its appreciation for the work of UNICEF in crises and asked how it used its presence to shape national priorities. A delegation asked for further information on the emergency preparedness platform, while another asked if the new UNDAF would improve humanitarian and development programming. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, responded that the preparedness approach was aligned with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)



preparedness and emergency response. To develop high-quality preparedness plans, UNICEF engaged with the local partners, incorporating their assessments and delegating the responsibility for quality control to the regional offices and headquarters. Regarding the new UNDAF, he added that the commitment to leave no one behind could result in an UNDAF that was more sensitive to inclusion and more effective at addressing the populations most in need. Over time, the approach would likely reduce the humanitarian needs and protection concerns.

56. The group of delegations appreciated the efforts to improve the use of cash transfers and saw promise in the strengthening of social protection systems, while a delegation asked about how the long-term strengthening of social protection systems dovetailed with the system of cash transfers in emergencies. The Director, Programmes, responded that, in several cases, cash was initially dispensed quickly after a natural disaster using the existing social protection infrastructure. In the process, investments were made in increasing digitalization and decentralizing management authority to the local level.

57. A delegation asked for information on innovative financing and how UNICEF could further mobilize funds. Another delegation asked how UNICEF was ensuring coherence with other organizations on cash-based programming and the use of national social safety nets, while another delegation requested examples of the use of thematic, flexible funding.

58. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, provided examples of operative and innovative financing, such as the First Action funding initiative in support of emergency preparedness, which started with the investment of thematic and flexible funds received. UNICEF hoped that the fund would serve as a catalyst to leverage preparedness financing. The Director, Programme Division, spoke about the strengthening of social protection systems to respond to emergencies. UNICEF had conducted a mapping exercise of social protection systems in crisis-prone countries to see whether they could be used to respond to different disasters.

## **C. UNICEF programme cooperation**

### **(a) Country programme documents**

#### **West and Central Africa**

59. The Regional Director presented the country programme document (CPD) for Niger ([E/ICEF/2019/P/L.1](#)), noting that it was based on a solid theory of change and had been developed in full consultation with the Government of Niger, the United Nations country team and development partners. It was a three-year programme, to align with both the UNDAF and the remainder of the Government's economic and social development plan, 2017–2021. The CPD took into account the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and its common chapter, the 2030 Agenda and the African Union Agendas 2040 and 2063. It also reflected constructive comments from Belgium, Denmark and Norway.

60. The Regional Director highlighted some of the challenges for Niger, including one of the highest rates of population growth in the world, with child marriage being one of the contributing factors. Niger still struggled with neonatal and maternal mortality, immunization coverage and acute malnutrition and stunting. More children were in school, but education quality remained low and a low percentage of children had acquired acceptable literacy and numeracy skills by the end of primary school. The security situation in the country compounded these issues.

61. The proposed country programme would promote a strategic shift to scale up successful approaches in modelling sustainable institutional and community-based systems for the most deprived regions and population groups, including in cross-border regions affected by humanitarian situations.

62. The Permanent Representative of Niger to the United Nations thanked UNICEF and the Regional Director on behalf of his Government and welcomed the adoption of the country programme.

63. A delegation asked the Regional Director to elaborate on the commitment to work on social safety and social protection programmes, including how to make social protection systems shock resilient, and who the main partners were for that work. The delegation also asked about the organization's approach in the CPD to climate change risks.

64. The Regional Director responded that UNICEF was switching from its technical and sectoral approach to social protection to a systems-based one, incorporating the totality of the child protection system, and collaborating with WFP, the World Bank and the Government, starting within its programmes on water, sanitation and hygiene.

65. A delegation expressed appreciation for the positive dialogue it had had with UNICEF in connection with its comments on the draft CPD and appreciated that its requests for more focus on children with disabilities, gender-based violence and harmful practices for girls and women, especially their participation in education, had been reflected in the final version. The Regional Director emphasized that Niger was committed to the joint programme with UNFPA to end child marriage and violence against women in that context, and she affirmed that UNICEF was strengthening synergy with the education programme.

66. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/2 (see annex II).

**(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes**

67. The President stated that, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2009/11, the Executive Board was requested to approve the two-year extensions of the country programmes for Afghanistan and the Comoros and the proposed one-year extension of the country programme for South Africa, following a previous 15-month extension ([E/ICEF/2019/P/L.2](#)).

68. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/3 (see annex II).

**D. Evaluation reports and management responses**

**Formative evaluation of the Out-Of-School Children Initiative, and management response**

69. The Director of Evaluation presented the formative evaluation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative (executive summary: [E/ICEF/2019/3](#)), followed by the Director, Programme Division, who presented the management response ([E/ICEF/2019/4](#)).

70. A delegation asked whether the initiative had been implemented in countries other than developing countries or addressed the issues of migrants and refugees in developed countries and the bullying of foreign children in school, which led to dropout. The Director of Evaluation responded that the initiative concentrated mainly on countries in crisis and low-income, low-middle-income and upper-middle-income countries. One third of out-of-school children were located in countries in crisis, so the evaluation had provided good scope to consider the appropriate support for the

issue. The Director, Programme Division, added that, depending on the country context, refugees had been included in the data and analysis, and that their inclusion had influenced the policy recommendations. He added that it would be good practice to systematically include refugees.

71. The delegation inquired as to how much of the decrease in the number of out-of-school children could be attributed solely to UNICEF activities. The Director of Evaluation responded that the evaluation had not attempted to attribute the progress made to the initiative alone, since it did not cover all the activities on out-of-school children. Governments had also worked with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Global Partnership for Education, partnerships that had also influenced planning and budget allocation. However, the initiative continued to influence the debate on out-of-school children.

72. The delegation expressed concern that the evaluation did not touch on substantive elements, such as looking at the role of UNICEF partners or Government. Further, management did not respond to the recommendation on the allocation of resources and an effective monitoring and evaluation system to allow for more systematic assessment of the initiative. The delegation asked what actions UNICEF planned in these areas, including national data gathering. The Director, Programme Division, responded that the evaluation's purpose had been to study the methodology of the Out-of-School Children Initiative, with UNICEF providing technical assistance, including training, and Governments providing the resources for implementation. A positive result was that several countries had continued to use the methodology after their initial engagement with UNICEF and other partners.

73. A group of delegations expressed its appreciation for the collaborative effort of UNICEF and its partners on the initiative, whose relevance was obvious, with 34 per cent of girls and 29 per cent of boys either not attending school or having dropped out. The evaluation also confirmed the strong correlation between the adequacy of resources and tangible outputs.

74. The group commended the evaluation's inclusion of data on secondary education and its emphasis on the importance of the entire basic education cycle, the right to education and the importance of inclusiveness and the role of Governments as duty-bearers. At the same time, the evaluation highlighted serious gaps between policies and strategies, on one hand, and implementation and a lack of sustainability, on the other. It expected UNICEF and partners to address the ad hoc nature of the implementation and to take measures to secure sustainable financing to reach the most vulnerable children. The Director, Programme Division, reiterated the focused scope of the evaluation and raised a point about the centrality of domestic resources to finance education. The findings would influence the new education strategy under development, including regarding issues of access, equity and educational quality.

75. The group commented that the evaluation showed the need to improve systems for gathering data on out-of-school children and to analyse further the barriers to inclusion. It encouraged UNICEF, partners and national education authorities to increase their efforts to build sustainable national education systems, including education management information systems.

76. A delegation looked forward to seeing more gender-based analysis in evaluation reports, in accordance with the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF. The Director, Programme Division, responded that the profiles generated through the initiative's studies were disaggregated by gender, wealth, quintile, location and other dimensions, such as disability. The analysis focused on key barriers, including gender-related issues, such as early marriage, gender-based violence, violence in and out of school

and around school and cultural norms. These were central to the strategies being developed to get children back into school.

**Independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and management response**

77. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, the Director, Evaluation Office, presented the independent panel review report (executive summary: [E/ICEF/2019/5](#)) followed by the Director, Programme Division, who presented the management response ([E/ICEF/2019/6](#)).

78. During the general statements, several delegations, including a cross-regional group of 45 Member States, expressed appreciation for the strategy and the firm stance of UNICEF on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. A delegation called on the organization to continue to develop mechanisms and strategies to strengthen protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and said that it was important to report periodically on actions taken.

79. Several delegations recognized the efforts of the Executive Director both within UNICEF and in her role as the IASC Principals' Champion on sexual exploitation and abuse.

80. A group of delegations reiterated the importance of addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and of developing a coherent approach to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse across the system. The group commended UNICEF for commissioning the independent review and for being at the forefront within the United Nations system to support change. In the light of progress made, the group welcomed the continued commitment to move forward.

81. The group supported the recommendations and proposed actions and the management response, notably the whole-of-organization approach. It also welcomed the focus on the country-level implementation of strategies; supported a rights-based approach to tackling sexual exploitation and abuse; sought leadership on organizational culture change; and noted the shared commitment to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse. It also requested improvement in the timeliness and quality of reporting. The group looked forward to receiving the report of the Independent Task Force on workplace gender discrimination and harassment. It also encouraged UNICEF to invite the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the Victims' Rights Advocate to be part of the substantive discussion on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment scheduled for the annual session of the Board.

82. A delegation asked when the results of the 2018 Global Staff Survey would be available and whether UNICEF intended to incorporate that data into the annual reporting on sexual exploitation and abuse. It also suggested that the 2017 survey serve as a baseline. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, responded that there had been several different surveys, within both UNICEF and the larger United Nations system, which together provided a good baseline. UNICEF would consider the results of all the relevant surveys and present them at the annual session in the context of the agenda item on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

83. A delegation noted that continued momentum on this work was critical to its success; urged UNICEF to incorporate protection from sexual exploitation and abuse into the UNICEF risk-management systems; voiced concern about the impact of allegations on the work of the United Nations; and asked that particular attention be paid to children and other vulnerable groups.

84. A delegation asked what had been done to involve national authorities in the investigations carried out on the ground and to improve accountability. The Director, Programme Division, said that there had been several instances in which the national authorities had acted to address cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, and UNICEF and other United Nations agencies had provided support to the national justice system and police authorities.

85. A delegation asked how UNICEF would balance its efforts in humanitarian and non-humanitarian situations. The Director, Programme Division, said that the strategy that UNICEF had adopted covered all contexts, but that it had focused first on humanitarian settings, where urgency was greatest.

86. A delegation asked about expectations of the proposed IASC pledging event on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and gender-based violence. The Director, Programme Division, said that action on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse would not be successful if gender-based violence was not looked at more broadly. The Director urged the Executive Board members to support the pledging event as well as the measures IASC had committed to take forward in all major emergencies (safe and accessible reporting channels; quality assistance for survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse; and enhanced accountability, including child-friendly investigations) and to hold agencies accountable to these measures.

87. The Director, Evaluation Office, said that to enable proper action at the country level, management accountability at all levels of UNICEF was required. He added that a uniform application of measures across United Nations agencies at the country level was important, and that it was necessary for the Regional Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator to prioritize the issue.

88. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, said that the zero-tolerance approach of the Executive Director signalled a culture change at the highest level of the organization to everyone at UNICEF.

89. The Executive Director assured Board members of her personal commitment to the issue and said that they could help with their advocacy, generosity and ideas and by sustaining the interest on the issue.

90. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/5 (see annex II).

## **E. UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017 and report of the Board of Auditors, and management response**

91. The Executive Board had before it the UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017 and report of the Board of Auditors ([A/73/5/Add.3](#)), the addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors contained in its reports for the year ended 31 December 2017 on the United Nations funds and programmes ([A/73/353/Add.1](#)), the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions ([A/73/430](#)) and the UNICEF management response to the report of the United Nations Board of Auditors ([E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.2](#)).

92. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, the report of the Board of Auditors was presented by the Director of External Audit (India) and Chair, Audit Operations Committee of the United Nations Board of Auditors. The Comptroller then presented the financial report and audited financial statements and provided a response to the report of the Board of Auditors.

93. The representative of the Board of Auditors reported that UNICEF had obtained a clean, unqualified audit opinion, and that the overall conclusion had been that, in recent years, the organization had taken steps to strengthen financial and managerial control over its operations. At the same time, weaknesses had been identified in some areas.

94. A group of delegations commended UNICEF for again having received an unqualified audit opinion and for providing a comprehensive management response, as requested in 2018. It urged UNICEF to address outstanding recommendations and the organizational weaknesses identified. It also asked UNICEF to provide more information on the revised procedures on the harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT) and how they would strengthen the internal control and monitoring system. The group also requested further information on progress to recover funds lost to fraud by implementing partners.

95. The group was encouraged to hear that UNICEF would develop policies related to travel management, although it also noted the need for further enhancement of the Virtual Integrated System of Information (VISION) platform. The group noted that the Board of Auditors had pointed to a continued need for engagement with National Committees to bring down the retention levels of funds raised to 25 per cent or less and to bring contribution rates up; encouraged UNICEF to ensure the requisite approval processes when engaging former staff members as consultants; and hoped to see a decrease in delays in the claiming of value-added tax refunds by country offices.

96. A delegation asked about the reporting of multiyear funding agreements in the expense reports. The Comptroller said that expenses appeared in the year that implementation took place and directed the delegation to the donor reports.

97. The Comptroller noted that the recommendation regarding HACT had been taken in good faith and that UNICEF had prepared a revised guidance note regarding micro-assessment. He acknowledged that the retention levels of funds raised varied among the National Committees, with some exceeding the target and others remaining below the target, and assured the Board that this was being addressed. He said that recovery from fraud committed by implementing partners was a challenge and that UNICEF was participating in an inter-agency approach to training implementing partners on anti-fraud measures.

98. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/6 (see annex II).

## **F. Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2019 workplan and proposed budget**

99. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, introduced the workplan and budget ([E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.1](#)), followed by a presentation by the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division.

100. A delegation applauded the leadership of UNICEF in private fundraising and a group of delegations welcomed the strong results. The group asked for clarification about other resources emergency (ORE) funds, which were expected to decline. The Director responded that emergency funds were unpredictable, and that UNICEF estimated projections for ORE conservatively. As an example, UNICEF outperformed its predictions in 2018 for emergency funds, even though there was no major media-driven emergency.

101. The group emphasized the importance of concrete and measurable indicators and evidence-based monitoring and requested that UNICEF report against the six outcomes and their subgoals at the second regular session of 2019.

102. Noting that the Division had merged partnership functions into one global team and was placing staff closer to markets, the group highlighted the risk, elaborated in the report, of the dilution of fundraising priorities. The group proposed an additional risk, namely that the new structure might lose the current focus on non-financial engagement with the private sector. The Director responded that there was an increased emphasis on producing results for children through non-financial engagement with the private and business sectors. He clarified that the posts, mostly within the Child Rights and Business and Programme Coordination teams, were moving from Geneva to country and regional offices and National Committees for that very reason. This would embed private partnerships and fundraising throughout the organization to increase effectiveness globally.

103. The group of delegations asked how the normative mandate and core business of UNICEF to build the capacity of Governments would be ensured in shared-value partnerships with business. It also asked how UNICEF would incentivize National Committees and field offices towards this goal, and whether it had developed a monitoring framework to assess relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. Another delegation asked how UNICEF was working with Governments to regulate the private sector. The Director responded that this was the first time that UNICEF had asked the National Committees to work so closely with the private sector in a way that was not exclusively about fundraising. UNICEF would incentivize by finding ways to produce better, faster results for children through working with the private sector, and that was what the field offices were doing.

104. The group noted that it was vital for UNICEF to follow up closely with the National Committees to ensure that they met their targets for contributions to UNICEF. A delegation asked to what extent the National Committees had been consulted in the design of the Private Fundraising and Partnerships workplan and budget. The Director responded that the division held monthly meetings with the Standing Group of National Committees.

105. The group encouraged UNICEF to monitor the growth in investment funds closely and looked forward to the review of the impact in 2021, as requested in decision 2018/4. It also commended the approach of using a small portion of the investment funds to test innovative funding techniques.

106. Several delegations asked for clarification on the return-on-investment ratio of three-to-one, and how the National Committees figured into that. Another delegation asked whether UNICEF requested a lower return from the National Committees than from country offices. The Director responded that the majority of investment funds went to the National Committees and that UNICEF measured a return of three to one as a minimum requirement over 36 months. If they were given \$1 million, they would have to raise at least \$3 million by the end of year three. However, the investment funds raised under this system involved discrete projects, and the National Committees raised more than that from their public. He affirmed that the three-to-one ratio applied equally to National Committees, but that the returns in country offices tended to be higher, as they were in new markets and the Committees tended to be in saturated markets. He clarified that the portfolio was blended; for example, in 2017, 30 per cent of investment funds went to country offices, 66 per cent to National Committees and 4 per cent to headquarters.

107. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/7 (see annex II).



**G. Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system**

108. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, the Deputy Director, Public Partnerships Division, presented the update.

109. Several delegations and a non-governmental organization welcomed the commitment of UNICEF to the principles of the reform of the United Nations development system and commended the organization for propelling the reform forward. Delegations emphasized that the ultimate goal of the reform was to collectively deliver better on the ground and they reaffirmed their commitment to the reform process and the importance of working together to that end.

110. Several delegations underlined the importance of a coherent approach and increased collaboration across the United Nations system. A group of delegations expressed appreciation for the early financial contribution of UNICEF under the expanded global cost-sharing arrangement, while a delegation welcomed the plans to scale up pooled funding and joint programmes. The Deputy Director noted that UNICEF was working with its sister agencies to make sure that the new generation of pooled funds was strategic, not ad hoc.

111. A delegation welcomed the signing by UNICEF, as one of six initial organizations, of a memorandum of understanding on the mutual recognition of policies and practices. Another delegation requested that the next update on the implementation of resolution 72/279 address whether the memorandum necessitated adjustments in the organization's financial or audit regulations.

112. A group of delegations saw the reform as an opportunity to strengthen the collective results focus of the United Nations development system, raising the level of ambition beyond that set out in the common chapter of the strategic plans of the New York-based funds and programmes. The group encouraged UNICEF to take the agreed reforms into consideration in the midterm review of UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and requested that UNICEF provide a tentative plan and timeline for adjustments at the 2019 annual session. The Deputy Director acknowledged that the midterm review of the Strategic Plan would be a good time to take stock.

113. To foster greater coherence and impact at the country level, the group of delegations asked UNICEF to operationalize the reporting provisions of resolution 72/279 and encouraged the organization to work in multi-stakeholder partnerships and support non-resident agencies. Another delegation emphasized the importance of multi-country offices and the larger regional dimension in fostering collaboration and coherence and looked forward to discussing the issue at the joint meeting of the Boards. A delegation asked about the geographical balance in recruitment for the resident coordinator system and the implementation of country-level partnerships. The Deputy Director said that the United Nations Development Coordination Office was working towards gender and geographical balance in the pool of resident coordinators and that reporting to the resident coordinators was currently being discussed as part of the new management and accountability framework. She pointed out that a primary accountability of country representatives lay with the respective agency headquarters, as stipulated in the resolution. She agreed that there was an opportunity to draw on the expertise of non-resident agencies in the reconfiguration of country offices, particularly relating to the environmental and economic pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals.



114. The group of delegations recognized the steps that UNICEF was taking in its planning, financing and reporting, while also requesting that it engage in the ongoing funding dialogues, including regarding the cost-recovery framework, to arrive at a focused and ambitious funding compact. Several delegations applauded the efficiency gains that UNICEF had achieved, while a delegation announced a multi-year core funding pledge for UNICEF and other funds and programmes. The Deputy Director noted that UNICEF had been actively engaged in the shaping of the funding compact with specific targets. She supported the Secretary-General's call for more predictable and flexible funding and welcomed the multi-year pledge. Regarding cost recovery, she added that UNICEF continued to look for the members' support on the harmonized approaches, taking into account current market realities and the imperative of keeping UNICEF competitive as it expanded its partnerships.

115. A delegation asked if the proposed changes in the financial tracking system were part of a broader inter-agency effort. The Deputy Director responded that UNICEF was working with the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office on the financial reporting systems, especially regarding improvements in the tracking systems to allow for the better attribution of pooled donor contributions.

116. The group recalled that resolution [72/279](#) established the UNDAF as the main planning instrument at the country level and, along with other delegations, emphasized the importance of aligning the country programme document cycle with that of the UNDAF. The Deputy Director reported that UNICEF was looking forward to finalizing the guidance on the UNDAF with its sister agencies. The organization anticipated a strategic and results-focused UNDAF, providing both normative and operational guidance, that would help the country teams to better support national Governments to deliver results on the ground. She expected the country-level accountability framework to underscore the mutual accountabilities of resident coordinators and country team representatives. In response to an intervention by a delegation regarding access to national Governments, the Deputy Director clarified that, while meetings with Heads of State/Government would be coordinated with resident coordinators, it was important that agencies retain direct access to national ministries and other government counterparts.

117. A delegation said that, to contribute to the new generation of country teams, UNICEF must be willing to analyse its own presence around the world, and it requested further information on the approach. The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, responded that UNICEF was waiting for further details on the criteria for country presence from the United Nations. However, in the Sustainable Development Goals era and in light of the universal mandate that the Board had affirmed for UNICEF, the issue was not whether to have a presence but rather what form that presence should take, a discussion that UNICEF would undertake jointly with other agencies.

118. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, elaborated on the ways in which the reform was reshaping business operations, including regarding common premises, procurement, back offices and service centres, in the service of programme delivery. She took note of the requests for further information to be reported at the annual session of 2019 and on future occasions.

## **H. Oral update on the work of the National Committees for UNICEF**

119. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, introduced the update on the work of the National Committees of UNICEF. She noted their important financial contribution – 87 per cent of private funding raised – as well as the significant advocacy role they played vis-à-vis Governments with regard to the well-being of children.

120. The President and Chief Executive Officer of UNICEF Canada and Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees presented the work of the National Committees worldwide.

121. Delegations thanked the National Committees for their global work and noted the important role they played as major contributors to UNICEF and as advocates for children's rights around the world. A delegation said that she valued the occasion to learn more about the important work of the Committees. It made her proud, as a pledge donor, to hear what they were doing and would welcome regular updates.

122. A delegation highlighted the role of the National Committees in communication and advocacy and noted the importance of countries and National Committees engaging positively together to present a strong public face for UNICEF and to frame its work, in light of the challenging political climate for official development assistance.

123. A delegation commented that no new National Committees had been created in the previous ten years, and he wondered about plans to form National Committees in newly high-income countries. The Chair of the Standing Group responded that, while the question regarded management, he could say that the Standing Group would be happy to expand the number of National Committees.

124. A delegation asked how members of the Board could support the National Committees. The Chair of the Standing Group suggested better coordination of Governments with the National Committees, particularly in the field of official development assistance. Collaboration with specific parts of Government, such as the trade or social affairs ministry, on targeted issues could also be effective. In addition, when a Government expressed its confidence in UNICEF and in international development, people were more likely to donate. Finally, more creativity and flexibility were needed when working with the private sector, so that non-financial results for children were recognized.

125. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, noted that there were country offices in some emerging markets, and that there was a choice to be made as to whether fundraising activities should be carried out by the country office or a National Committee or both. She explained that UNICEF and a group of volunteers working with the National Committees would be meeting soon to discuss new strategies and ways of working together, including exploring successful models for different markets, and that the forthcoming strategy would be shared.

## **I. Other matters**

### **Provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2019**

126. The provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2019 was presented by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

## **J. Adoption of draft decisions**

127. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2019/1 through 2019/8 (see annex II).

## **K. Closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board**

128. The Executive Director said that she was looking forward to working with the Executive Board members over the coming year, which would also mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF would move from advocating for those rights to realizing them through concrete opportunities and solutions for children and young people.

129. She noted the spirit of collaboration and harmonization, with agreement on eight decisions, and said that this set a good example for all the United Nations entities for how the system could become more collaborative and effective. She especially appreciated the ideas and advice of the Executive Board members, who would continue to make the Board more effective and strategic, while providing a strong and vital oversight function, including on the UNICEF approach to the United Nations reform process. UNICEF would be well guided in this by the decision on General Assembly resolution 72/279 as well as by the Board's guidance for improvement in the working methods of the Board, in close consultation with the Boards of the other agencies on common issues, while always keeping intact the unique characteristics and focus of the UNICEF Board.

130. UNICEF looked forward to hearing more on the progress of the core group discussions at the joint meeting of the Boards in May and to the discussions at the annual session. She appreciated the discussions on the country programme document for Niger and on the UNICEF HIV/AIDS strategy as well as the thoughts of the Board on the fundraising work with the private sector. Building bridges with the private sector was very important, including the collaboration with the National Committees, which was fundamental. She thanked the Board for its attention to the evaluations on out-of-school children and protection from sexual abuse and exploitation, and for their support of the continuation of the efforts in both areas. That work went to the heart of the commitment of UNICEF to protect children and young people.

131. She expressed her thanks to all those who had supported the session, from the conference services staff to the Board members themselves.

132. The President said that it had been a great honour to lead the session. The members had covered much ground, but all of it had had a single purpose: to develop ever more effective, innovative and sustainable strategies to promote and protect the rights of children everywhere, especially the most disadvantaged. The President had been impressed by the willingness of the delegates to seek agreement, putting aside differences for the higher goal of serving children well.

133. He noted the decisions that had been adopted, including those on the working methods and on the implementation of resolution 72/279, both of which would foster harmonization and collaboration among the funds and programmes in the service of effectiveness and efficiency and would support the broader United Nations reform and, ultimately, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. More and better coordination at the country level was crucial from the perspective of the United Nations and Governments. He also noted that UNICEF hoped to continue to have direct access to Governments at all levels to achieve successful planning and programming.

134. The President mentioned the anticipated updates on the work of the core group on working methods and said that, while the Board embraced collaboration with the other Boards, it would remain mindful that an independent Board could best empower UNICEF to fulfil its specific mandate.

135. The President mentioned some of the issues addressed during the session, including the challenges that remained in the battle against HIV/AIDS. Noting the two evaluations presented during the session, he highlighted that independent evaluation was the best gauge of performance and the most useful tool for targeted learning and improvement.

136. The President expressed his commitment to work closely with the Board in the year to come to face the immense challenges that lay ahead, especially to intensify efforts to become more collaborative, strategic and effective in support of the United Nations reform. Ultimately, success would be judged on how faithfully the promises of UNICEF to the children of the world were fulfilled.

137. He noted that Ms. Shanelle Hall, Deputy Executive Director, Field Results, and Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye, Deputy Executive Director, Management, would be leaving UNICEF, and he thanked them for their service. He also thanked all those who had contributed to making the session a success and expressed appreciation to the Executive Director, her senior management team and the directors and regional directors for their participation and decisive responses to the many questions posed to them.

138. He looked forward to follow-up on the issues raised during the session so that the Board was well on its way when it reconvened in June.

**Part two**  
**Annual session of 2019**

**Held at United Nations Headquarters from**  
**11 to 13 June 2019**

## **I. Organization of the session**

### **A. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF**

139. The President of the Executive Board and Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, opened the annual session of the Executive Board noting that it was his first and that he looked forward to the spirit of collaboration within the Board.

140. He noted the significance of 2019 for UNICEF as it was the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a milestone that was also a priority for his Government. It was a unique opportunity to take stock of progress made hitherto and to consider how to move forward to reach those furthest behind.

141. He commented that 2019 was also a key moment in the repositioning of the United Nations development system. The Board had a responsibility to embrace the change necessary to implement this reform, to enhance system-wide coordination, to avoid duplication, to ensure effectiveness and efficiency and to ease the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

142. The President was heartened by the collaboration with other United Nations agencies and partners that he saw in the field during the joint field visit to Colombia and appreciated the opportunity to see the work of UNICEF where it counts most.

143. The President said UNICEF had a unique role due to its dual humanitarian and development mandate and should view this as a continuum: from humanitarian interventions come development actions.

144. He mentioned Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 which calls to end all forms of violence against children. He considered the protection of the girl child to be particularly pertinent. He recalled the recent conference in Oslo on Ending Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Crises [23–24 May 2019] where he had addressed the need to recognize a collective responsibility.

145. The President thanked the Executive Director, Ms. Henrietta H. Fore, for her zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse. He noted that at the joint meeting of the Boards all the agencies committed to eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse. They also affirmed the right of all staff to work in an environment free from all forms of harassment and abuse, where values and ethical conduct are respected and there was zero tolerance for all forms of misconduct in the workplace.

146. He underlined the importance of leaving no child behind and reaching the most vulnerable, allowing all children to reach their potential. He believed that the future of childhood would guide efforts to achieve this. He considered that investing early in inclusive and equitable quality education, measuring outcomes and exploring innovation and new technologies was the way forward.

147. The President concluded by emphasizing the importance of partnerships and his hope that new and strengthened partnerships would be forged in the future.

148. The Executive Director commenced her address by noting that UNICEF could be proud of the results achieved and which would be presented in her annual report for 2018, the first since the start of the new UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021.

149. She thanked the Member States for their generous support and vision, which have permitted the progress and potential reached for children and young people.

150. She reminded members of the Executive Board that there is still work to be done and noted particularly the issues of child mortality, child obesity and anaemia, open defecation, child marriage and conflict.

151. On the question of humanitarian action, the Executive Director looked forward to hearing feedback from Board members on the work of UNICEF in complex and fast-moving environments.

152. She also looked forward to discussing the organization's progress in the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. She noted that UNICEF staff members were engaged across a range of areas to drive change, including a new Management and Accountability Framework at the country level. The organization was also striving to achieve coherence with its sister agencies on country strategies and to better align them with the Sustainable Development Goals. The revitalized resident coordinator system was a critical element of this drive.

153. The Executive Director recognized that there was a need for predictable and sustainable funding. The organization had doubled its global cost share for 2019 and was now operationalizing the 1 per cent levy. UNICEF was also actively seeking efficiencies and savings in its operations. Furthermore, through strategic procurement the organization was able to generate savings to put towards programming for children. She highlighted that this would not be possible without donor support, especially through stable, flexible, multi-year and unrestricted regular resources.

154. UNICEF had recommitted to its core values of care, respect, integrity, trust and accountability in 2018 and the organization was taking steps to strengthen the trust of its staff members. In particular, this included efforts to create and maintain a respectful and inclusive work environment free from sexual harassment and abuse, workplace discrimination and abuse of authority. The Executive Director had personally commissioned a report from an independent task force on workplace gender-discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority.

155. The Executive Director noted that UNICEF would continue to rely on the Executive Board for its vision and stewardship moving forward.

156. She concluded that 2019 was an important year for the cause of UNICEF and marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, an opportunity not only to look back at what had been achieved but also to look forward to what will be accomplished in the future.

## **B. Adoption of the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work**

157. The Executive Board adopted the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work ([E/ICEF/2019/9](#)) for the session.

158. In accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that credentials had been submitted by 27 observer delegations, including one intergovernmental organization, five non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and five UNICEF National Committees.

## **C. Working methods**

159. The President introduced agenda item 3, working methods, and opened the floor for discussion.

160. There were no comments from the delegations.
161. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/9 (see annex II).

## II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

### A. Annual report for 2018 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

#### UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

162. The President introduced the annual report for 2018 of the Executive Director of UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2019/10](#)) and the UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit ([E/ICEF/2019/11](#)).

163. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director (Partnerships), the Director of the Division of Data, Research and Policy presented details on results achieved in 2018.

164. Delegations thanked the Executive Director of UNICEF for her vision and leadership and expressed appreciation for UNICEF staff members, branded by some delegations as ‘superheroes’, and their work promoting and protecting the rights of children. Delegations commended UNICEF on the achievements described in the annual report and for its ongoing commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They noted that the report was the first since the implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and showed remarkable progress. The report and its indicators also demonstrated that there are still challenges ahead. A delegation saw the midterm review as an opportunity for thorough review and asked for further elaboration on the added value of working together when reporting on the common chapter. The Executive Director confirmed that the organization would focus on those areas that had proved challenging.

165. Delegations commented on financing issues and the importance of predictable funding. Some delegations were concerned about financing gaps and looked towards innovative financing. Several delegations mentioned that they had entered multi-year partnerships with UNICEF and encouraged other Member States to do the same. A delegation encouraged UNICEF to explore joint financing programming and systematically joining efforts with international financial institutions. The Executive Director thought these ideas interesting and appreciated the call for more creative solutions on financing.

166. Delegations welcomed the commitment of UNICEF to the Secretary-General’s reform process, in particular the lead role the organization was taking and the Executive Director’s personal investment. They appreciated the alignment of UNICEF with the principles set out in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. They encouraged UNICEF to further develop coherence with its sister agencies and to continue building stronger, more effective country teams including through the new Management and Accountability Framework. A delegation recalled that there was shared responsibility for success of the reform and that the Member States had a role to play. The Executive Director pledged that UNICEF would contribute to the system-wide coherence at the country level. UNICEF would continue to focus efforts on the reform of the United Nations development system and to do so in cooperation with its sister agencies.

167. Delegations took note of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, commenting that this milestone should be used both as an



opportunity to renew support for its implementation and as a reminder to reach the most vulnerable. Within this context a delegation asked UNICEF to support the strengthening of normative work, a human rights-based approach and increased attention to gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, children with disabilities, minority children and violence against children in all its forms.

168. Delegations commended the actions of UNICEF, and in particular the leadership of the Executive Director, for the multiple measures taken to strengthen the organization's response to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, workplace gender discrimination and abuse of authority. They urged the organization to continue setting an example and looked forward to future discussions.

169. Several delegations highlighted the critical importance of integrating gender equality in programming and analysis. Equal access to education was of particular concern. The Executive Director concurred that there are indeed gender stereotypes and UNICEF is working against them.

170. Delegations noted the work of UNICEF in the field in programme sectors while highlighting the importance of a multisystem approach, working horizontally and vertically across sectors and regions, citing South-South cooperation in particular. Several delegations singled out access to and quality of education as a priority. In a rapidly changing world, education systems need to keep up and use the new technologies available to find innovative solutions to prepare children for the changing world and job market. Generation Unlimited was highlighted as a good example.

171. Delegations supported the work of UNICEF in humanitarian crises and a holistic approach to this work, including the link between humanitarian and development action. The Executive Director agreed that it was both important to address an immediate emergency while at the same time to focus on development in the longer term.

172. Several delegations noted that protecting the world's children must include tackling climate change and suggested mainstreaming climate-resilient programming and strengthening communities' resilience to extreme weather events and their consequences.

173. Several delegations supported the "leaving no one behind" agenda. Other delegations emphasized the importance of including persons with disabilities, one of which encouraged efforts to improve the availability of disaggregated data to enhance policy development.

174. Several delegations commended the leading work of UNICEF on engagement with the private and business sectors on creating new partnerships that are truly collaborative and on innovative financing. A delegation urged the organization to share this expertise with other agencies. The Executive Director said that cooperation with the private sector and shared partnerships were indeed important and that UNICEF would explore how to impart its experiences.

175. The acting chair of the Standing Group of National Committees joined Member States in applauding the results reported in the Executive Director's annual report. It also noted that progress has been uneven and there is still much to be done. National Committees had had a fruitful relationship with the Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division working on transparency, efficiency and optimizing financial results.

176. The representative of the NGO Committee on UNICEF recognized the efforts of UNICEF but was concerned that there is still much progress to be made on reaching the most vulnerable. The representative urged both UNICEF and Member States to work more closely with civil society. Similarly, the representative of the ChildFund

Alliance recognized that more can be done by acting together than alone and encouraged UNICEF to capitalize on its commitment to ending violence against children.

177. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/10 (see annex II).

## **B. Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action**

178. The Vice-President introduced the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action (E/ICEF/2019/12).

179. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director (Programmes), the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes provided a summary of the report and the Permanent Observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross to the United Nations made a presentation.

180. Delegations acknowledged the achievements of UNICEF in humanitarian action as outlined in the report and saluted the bravery and commitment of UNICEF staff.

181. A group of delegations noted that humanitarian access must extend to partners, including their security, and that adherence to humanitarian principles was important. The Director agreed that it was necessary to transfer capacities, management and security to partners and not just risk. The Permanent Observer said that humanitarian access remained a problem and security risks were still a daunting challenge for humanitarian action.

182. The group highlighted the challenge of acquiring data and evidence and encouraged UNICEF to use innovative approaches, make the necessary long-term investments and work with national and international partners to address data challenges. The Director concurred that data evidence is essential and mentioned a new section in the Office of Emergency Programmes on humanitarian evidence and learning.

183. The group of delegations would welcome a greater focus on the organization's collaborative work in humanitarian action. The Director said that the cluster system was an important element in coordination but that it faced challenges of funding, limiting the ability to attract the right calibre of personnel. The Permanent Observer agreed that partnerships were important and noted that the Red Cross looked to UNICEF to learn how to establish effective partnerships.

184. The delegations called upon UNICEF to address the dilemmas and shortfalls linked to the balancing of coverage, quality and equity.

185. Finally, while the group welcomed improvements to the report it noted that it was not yet fully aligned with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. The Director responded that the alignment did not appear clearly yet in this report but would in next year's annual report.

186. A delegation welcomed the role of UNICEF in the prevention and treatment of malnutrition and asked for tangible examples of improvements in effectiveness and efficiencies. Another delegation echoed this request. The Director mentioned a common protocol with the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization that would simplify processes and make reaching children in crises more efficient and less costly. The Deputy Executive Director added that innovation teams across UNICEF are also looking at ways to enhance work in humanitarian situations.

187. A delegation asked how UNICEF deals with earmarking of humanitarian funding and how the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse is addressed in humanitarian settings. The Director said that earmarked funding was difficult and

limiting because some crises and countries get more attention than others and a lack of flexible funding meant that a whole sector could be overlooked. Flexible funding would allow UNICEF to react quickly to humanitarian situations and to be more equitable. He noted that Executive Director Fore held the role of Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principals' Champion on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and abuse and that the organization had had a positive impact on support to child victims across the system.

188. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/11 (see annex II).

### **C. Annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021**

189. The President introduced the annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 ([E/ICEF/2019/13](#)).

190. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director (Programmes), the Principal Adviser, Gender and Development, presented the report.

191. A delegation noted that it is important to continue to stress positive socialization of gender to eradicate discriminatory practices. It stressed that the fight against violence should continue to be a priority for UNICEF and that involving boys is crucial. The delegation concluded by urging the organization to continue to align its work with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international instruments, and to contribute to the discussions around the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace [4–15 September 1995; Beijing]. The Executive Director commented that UNICEF also needs to consider the perpetuation of stereotypes in its advocacy work, both in terms of boys and girls. The Principal Adviser agreed on the importance of positive gender socialization and looked forward to providing support in the celebrations to mark Beijing +25.

192. A group of delegations recognized the efforts of UNICEF to pursue gender equality. They encouraged efforts of gender-mainstreaming and welcomed the focus on gender analysis in programme planning cycles and the expansion of gender capacity at headquarters and regional levels while encouraging the organization to focus on this issue in country offices. The group noted with appreciation the commitment of UNICEF to the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women as well as the fostering of a gender-responsive workplace culture. The group of delegations noted with concern that the gender-responsive monitoring system remained weak and encouraged UNICEF to continue to tackle data issues.

193. The group commented on targeted priorities to empower adolescent girls, underlining that girls with disabilities are often left furthest behind, girls continue to be marginalized in education and gender integration to improve HIV-prevention among girls is slow. A stronger emphasis on sexual and reproductive health and rights would be welcomed. Finally, the group encouraged UNICEF to elaborate more on institutional and system strengthening and the development of multisectoral and gender-responsive plans and underlined the importance of engaging men in caregiving and the redistribution of the care burden.

194. The Deputy Executive Director acknowledged that UNICEF needed to continue to strengthen gender capacity across the organization, including in the field, especially in data disaggregation. UNICEF would be working with its sister agencies to this end.

195. A delegation congratulated UNICEF for its institutional and strategic emphasis on gender equality. It reiterated shared priorities such as empowering women and girls, combating violence against women and children and promoting women's roles in decision-making. The delegation encouraged UNICEF to also focus these efforts in the field to achieve its mandate more effectively. Finally, the delegation applauded UNICEF for leading by example in terms of gender parity in the workplace. The Principal Adviser noted that UNICEF appreciated ongoing cooperation with Member States to improve partnerships to further these processes, as well as collaborations with the private sector.

196. The President asked about the implementation of gender parity beyond the level of senior management. The Principal Adviser responded that UNICEF still has much work to do to achieve gender parity across the organization and there is close cooperation with the Division of Human Resources and Regional Directors to achieve this.

## **D. UNICEF programme cooperation**

### **(a) Country programme documents**

197. The President informed the Executive Board that, in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme document would be considered and approved on a no-objection basis. Delegations had been invited to share their comments on the country and programme document for Congo (E/ICEF/2019/P/L.3). The draft document was posted on the Executive Board website for comment from 18 March to 5 April 2019. The final country programme document was made available on the Executive Board website in English six weeks in advance of the session and in the relevant languages four weeks in advance. Further discussion was to be held only if at least five members of the Board had informed the secretariat in writing that they wished to bring a country programme to the Board for further discussion. The secretariat had received no such requests.

#### **West and Central Africa**

198. The Regional Director presented the country programme for Congo. She noted significant progress for children in recent years while highlighting that there were still areas that needed improvement. The country programme responds to the country context and will mix strategies to accelerate results. UNICEF will promote learning and sharing of best practices within the subregion and beyond by collaborating with the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union. UNICEF will coordinate with other United Nations agencies, in particular with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in the context of the common chapter of the respective strategic plans. She concluded by noting that the country programme will be implemented in concert with the Government, members of the United Nations country team, technical and financial partners, civil society, and children and adolescents.

199. The representative of the Congo thanked the Regional Director and the country team for their work during the preparatory process and drafting of the country programme document, which is the result of a participatory process in close cooperation with the Government of the Congo and including all national stakeholders, and is in line with the National Development Plan, 2018–2022. He assured Member States that every effort would be made for full national ownership of the programme with a view to its effective implementation for the well-being of children.

200. A delegation asked to what extent the country programme document was aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework in the light of the current reform of the United Nations development system. The Regional Director responded that the UNICEF country office works very closely with the rest of the United Nations country team and the entire country programme is part of the United Nations Development Assistant Framework and all the outcome objectives contribute to the Framework. The reform will allow for further consolidation and integration of efforts.

201. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/12 (see annex II).

**(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes**

202. The President stated that, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2009/11, the Executive Board had been informed of the two-month extension of the country programme for Mali and the first one-year extension of the country programme for Tunisia, both approved by the Executive Director.

203. The Executive Board was requested to approve a one-year extension of the country programme for Yemen, following two previous one-year extensions and a previous two-year extension.

204. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/13 (see annex II).

**E. Evaluation reports and management responses**

205. The Vice-President introduced two evaluation documents: the annual report for 2018 on the evaluation function in UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2019/14](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2019/15](#)), and the executive summary of the evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies ([E/ICEF/2019/16](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2019/17](#)).

**Annual report for 2018 on the evaluation function in UNICEF, and management response**

206. The Director, Evaluation Office, presented the report followed by a presentation of the management response by the Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management. The Executive Director drew the attention of the Executive Board to the pioneering of real-time evaluations by the Evaluation Office, which will be a useful management tool going forward.

207. A group of delegations welcomed the concrete steps taken by management to implement the revised evaluation policy throughout the organization and encouraged UNICEF to continue its efforts and report back to the Executive Board. The group noted with appreciation that the evaluation uptake is contributing to positive change and that UNICEF has taken concrete steps to improve the quality of evaluations. It welcomed the addition of regional evaluation advisers and the increase in financial resources and expected UNICEF to reach the 1 per cent target by the end of 2019.

208. The delegations were concerned by a downward trend in a couple of regions in relation to the geographical coverage of evaluations as well as the increase in management responses not yet commenced that could ultimately have a long-term impact on the overall quality of UNICEF programmes. The Director, Evaluation Office said that issues related to the humanitarian context had hampered evaluation coverage in certain regions but that the Office was working with regional directors to address the constraints. He informed the Executive Board that a mechanism had been introduced to provide more frequent feedback in terms of management response to evaluations, including a recently introduced new software that helps managers to

track their responses. The Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management concurred that better tracking tools would allow the monitoring of implementation and recommendations on a timelier basis. She added that for evaluations delivered at the end of 2018 the management actions were not yet apparent in the 2018 statistics but that the recommendations were in fact being implemented in 2019.

209. The group of delegations welcomed the strengthening of capacity in the Evaluation Office to incorporate a gender perspective in all evaluations and encouraged continued efforts for all evaluation staff to complete appropriate gender-based analysis training and to work with gender specialists to build their capacity. The delegations would welcome an update on progress in the next annual report on the evaluation function, including statistics on the extent to which evaluators had been trained and had incorporated a gender-based analysis into their evaluations and reports. The Director, Evaluation Office said the Office would continue to improve gender-based analysis and that training would be introduced in the near future. He noted that this improvement went hand in hand with gender-based analysis in programming.

210. The delegations appreciated the efforts of UNICEF to strengthen internal knowledge management and emphasized the importance of an effective system that uses evaluation results to inform programming decisions and improve organizational learning.

211. The group concluded by encouraging UNICEF to further support system-wide evaluation mechanisms in concert with its sister agencies.

212. A delegation requested an overview of both geographic and thematic coverage against programme funding. The Director, Evaluation Office, thanked the delegation for this idea and proposed to develop a table showing the two elements.

#### **Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies, and management response**

213. The Director, Evaluation Office, presented the report followed by a presentation of the management response by the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes.

214. A group of delegations welcomed the evaluation, its findings and recommendations and expressed appreciation that UNICEF had been recognized for its organizational courage and tenacity in sustaining its work in complex humanitarian emergencies.

215. The group also raised some concerns. It noted that there were variable levels of understanding of humanitarian principles among staff and partners and that these principles were not routinely used as a framework for decision-making. Hence, there was a need to strengthen capacity on the practical use of humanitarian principles. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, concurred that the understanding of humanitarian principles was crucial and there was a need to mainstream neutrality, impartiality and training on how to conduct humanitarian assistance.

216. The group of delegations commented on the challenge of inadequate data collection and disaggregation of data and its effect on calculating coverage in relation to need. The evaluation had highlighted the inconsistency in how UNICEF determines vulnerabilities. As well as sex- and age-disaggregated data, delegations would like to see other vulnerability factors such as disability routinely included. The group would like to learn more on how targeting will be improved to reach those who are least accessible and most in need. The delegations were concerned that coverage was prioritized over equity and urged UNICEF to ensure a balanced approach.

217. The delegations asked to see a structured approach from the organization to accountability to affected populations that would mainstream beneficiary feedback into project planning and implementation. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes noted that the situation is changing thanks to attempts to lead a more systematic approach across the humanitarian system on accountability to affected populations.

218. The group encouraged UNICEF to actively support local and national partner organizations. The group concluded by recognizing that some issues raised in the evaluation had been addressed by the current Strategic Plan and that some required parallel action by partners, but it was essential that the challenges and dilemmas raised continue to be reported and discussed in a transparent manner.

219. A delegation asked for more clarity on the unmet needs not included in humanitarian targets. The delegation understood that there were constraints to the breadth of targets, including funding constraints. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, informed the Executive Board that the Office was mainstreaming a new needs assessment system that would provide numbers more systematically and including the actual needs and not only those that could be addressed given the capacity available. He noted that UNICEF should be able to find a better balance between the two, and that the issue is an inter-agency one that should be addressed with partners.

220. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/14 (see annex II).

## **F. Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2018**

221. The Principal Adviser, Ethics presented the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2018 ([E/ICEF/2019/18](#)). Following the presentation, the Deputy Executive Director, (Management) a.i. introduced the management response to the report ([E/ICEF/2019/19](#)), which was then presented by the Director, Division of Human Resources.

222. A group of delegations commended the work done by the Ethics Office in 2018 and noted that the more than doubling in requests for services reflected the success of its outreach initiatives that have increased its accessibility and visibility. The delegations welcomed the Office's focus on delivering training and raising awareness on ethical leadership issues, as well as the inclusion of ethical competency as a separate criterion in the organization's overall competency framework by 2020.

223. While the group was happy to learn that relevant stakeholders within UNICEF consult the Office regularly on questions of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, it asked for more information on how and on which topics the Ethics Office was consulted, and how the Office actively participated in the processes. The Principal Adviser noted that the Ethics Office was working closely with the Senior Coordinator, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Workplace Abuse and establishing a division of labour based on function with regard to these processes. In particular, the Ethics Office promoted standards and raised awareness. The Deputy Executive Director a.i. noted that a Senior Coordinator, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Workplace Abuse had been recruited. The organization would work to ensuring that the coordination and advisory functions supported the implementation side of the organization.

224. The group of delegations referred to a request from the Executive Board in 2018 to establish a policy articulating standards for consultation with the Ethics Office in matters of policy support. It wondered whether the Office considered this request to be adequately covered. The Principal Adviser said that there was a mechanism in



place for this process and it had been working better in practice in 2018 and she considered that the request had been met.

225. The Deputy Executive Director a.i. emphasized that various policies were interrelated and there was a need for complementarity.

226. The group considered the revision to the UNICEF whistleblower protection policy to be an important milestone. The delegations would like UNICEF to monitor closely whether there are other factors accounting for the increase in reported cases.

227. The delegations asked the Ethics Office to conduct an assessment of resources and report whether the financial and staff resources were adequate to fulfil its mandate. The Principal Adviser reported that such an assessment was ongoing.

228. The group concluded by thanking UNICEF for providing a management response and encouraging the Ethics Office to provide actionable and concrete recommendations in its annual report.

229. A group of delegations asked whether the Ethics Office deemed the Child Safeguarding Unit to be adequately resourced. The Principal Adviser commented that child safeguarding standards needed to be coordinated and that some strengthening of the unit would be helpful.

230. A delegation requested the Ethics Office to elaborate on how it viewed its independence in the light of a review by the Joint Inspection Unit requesting that executive heads ensure the independence of the head of ethics within their organizations. The Principal Adviser considered that the main elements affording functional independence for the head of the UNICEF Ethics Office were in place and that UNICEF senior management supported the Ethics Office in UNICEF having a strong and independent function. The Principal Adviser also advocated for consistency in the terms of reference and appointment among all of the heads of independent offices, both within UNICEF and system-wide, to further enhance functional independence.

231. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/15 (see annex II).

## **G. Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2018 annual report to the Executive Board, and management response**

### **UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2018 annual report**

232. The Vice-President introduced the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2018 annual report to the Executive Board ([E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.3](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.4](#)). Also before the Board for its information was the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2018 annual report.

233. The Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations a.i. presented the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2018 annual report to the Executive Board. This was followed by the presentation of the management response by the Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management. The Chair of the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee provided comments from the Committee's perspective.

234. A group of delegations and another delegation voiced concern over the vacancies in the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations during 2018. They urged UNICEF to ensure that the Office is adequately resourced in relation to its mandate and the increase in the number of investigations. The Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations a.i. responded that significant progress had been made in filling the vacancies. He added that the Office would need more resources given the exponential increase in the number of cases.



235. The group of delegations was concerned about the continuously low number of allegations related to fraud. The Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations a.i. said that the Office had focused primarily on cases related to sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based harassment and abuse of authority, which may have accounted for the low number. The Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management said that UNICEF was addressing the low number through the anti-fraud training and the promotion of a speak up culture.

236. The group urged UNICEF to keep sensitive information related to cases on a need-to-know basis. The Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations a.i. stated that he shared this opinion and that the organization made efforts to do so. The Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management mentioned that it is a dilemma to be as transparent as possible while also being mindful of oversharing details that could compromise a case.

237. The delegations welcomed progress regarding recovery of funds lost due to fraud on account to staff but noted the lack of progress regarding recovery of funds for implementing partners. They urged UNICEF management to take appropriate action in this regard. They would also like UNICEF to give priority to addressing the most recurrent audit issues in the country offices. The Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, noted that the largest number of fraud cases are generally committed through implementing partners and it was important to identify the lessons learned from these cases.

238. A delegation was concerned about the number of cases carried over from the previous year and noted the importance of key performance indicators in measuring achievements.

239. A delegation commended the use of risk-based methodology in audits and stated that this could also be better reflected in the reporting to the Board to convey more clearly the weaknesses identified during the audits that were considered more serious and whether they were systemic or localized. The Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations a.i. stated that this would be considered.

240. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/16 (see annex II).

## **H. Update on policies and processes of UNICEF on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment**

241. After introductory remarks by the Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director (Management) a.i., two members of the independent panel that undertook a review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and the Assistant Secretary-General and Victims' Rights Advocate for the United Nations made presentations, followed by an update by the UNICEF Senior Coordinator, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Workplace Abuse.

242. A group of delegations thanked the Executive Director for championing action to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and also thanked the guest speakers. The group welcomed the whole-of-organization strategy and requested an update on its implementation at the 2020 annual session.

243. The group welcomed the focus on the strengthening of accountability at all levels, prevention and deterrence as well as gender equality.

244. The delegations supported efforts to strengthen whistle-blower protection and encourage a speak up culture, encouraged UNICEF to further strengthen community-based reporting mechanisms and welcomed efforts to improve reporting on sexual

exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment allegations and encouraged that they be aligned to the extent possible.

245. The group welcomed efforts in the context of survivor-centred responses and encouraged UNICEF to continue working with the Office of the Victims' Right Advocate. The group also encouraged UNICEF and partners to work effectively at the country level for victims and survivors. The Victims' Rights Advocate considered that both prevention and response should be victim-centred. She noted that victims wanted clear reporting pathways, provision of assistance and protection and facilitation of their right to justice, all of which required system-wide coordination and cooperation with partners.

246. The group supported the strengthening of the UNICEF investigative function and requested the organization to develop proposals with other funds and programmes to pool investigative resources. The group also supported efforts to better manage risks related to implementing partners.

247. Finally, the group noted three requirements for the whole-of-organization strategy to be effective: sufficient and sustainable resources, an effective monitoring and evaluation framework, and consistency and alignment with system-wide approaches.

248. A delegation asked for more transparency on reported incidents and how coordination between in-house key functions would be achieved. A member of the independent panel agreed that the different functions needed to work together to avoid duplication and overlap and that such cooperation had already started. The Senior Coordinator replied that UNICEF is working on increasing coherence in its internal approach and systems.

249. The President commended the Executive Director's work as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principals' Champion on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and abuse, lauded her courage in launching a speak up culture and thanked her for introducing a zero-tolerance culture. He noted with appreciation the five points of the whole-of-organization strategy.

250. A delegation posed a question on the scale of investments needed to tackle these issues properly, asked which concrete actions would improve the capacity of investigative units and what the specific barriers were to a speak up culture. A member of the independent panel recognized that it was difficult to gauge the scale of required investments, noting that some investments had been made but that there were still some unknown factors. The Senior Coordinator complemented this response by pointing out that there were still critical gaps. The panel member acknowledged that investments in investigations and in training had been made to improve the capacity of the investigative units. She said the most common barrier to a speak up culture was fear and lack of trust. The Senior Coordinator added that the complexities of working in a multicultural organization also played a role.

251. A delegation suggested setting up a thematic fund to address the gap in resourcing, asked where accountability lay at the country level and for some examples on the type of targets that would be set. The Deputy Executive Director (Programmes) welcomed the idea of the thematic fund and suggested that UNICEF would follow up with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. He confirmed that the humanitarian coordinator was accountable at the country level. The Executive Director added that the organization's aim to have a focal point in each programme country could be considered as a target.

252. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/17 (see annex II).

**I. Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system**

253. The Vice-President introduced the update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#).

254. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director (Partnerships), the Director of the Public Partnerships Division presented the update.

255. Delegations commended the UNICEF commitment to the process of the repositioning of the United Nations development system and the steps taken to its implementation. Several delegations asked for good examples of how it is being implemented and the conditions giving rise to success. The Deputy Executive Director (Programmes) mentioned the confidence United Nations agencies had in the new resident coordinator system as the resident coordinator was independent and looked after the interests of the whole system rather than an individual agency. The Director said that success was achieved when responsibilities were correctly interpreted, mutual accountability existed and there was clear leadership.

256. A group of delegations took note of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and appreciated the efforts of UNICEF to align its country programme documents accordingly. Another delegation reminded UNICEF of the importance of coordinating and consulting with programme countries. The Executive Director said that it was important to consider how to cooperate with local partners as well as with national Governments and other agencies. The Deputy Executive Director (Programmes) agreed that cooperation frameworks should be aligned with national plans and with partners in programme countries. He said that the UNICEF country programmes would be aligned with the respective cooperation framework and in some cases the organization would take the lead in the design of the framework as the largest stakeholder.

257. The group encouraged UNICEF to make progress on reviewing accountability and reporting frameworks to ensure alignment with the new Management and Accountability Framework. It appreciated efforts to ensure the resident coordinator's participation in performance assessments of country representatives. A delegation asked for further details on how this would work in practice. The Director clarified that the role of the resident coordinator in performance assessment was to comment on the performance of the country representative and team on work related to the United Nations country team.

258. The group took note of the system-wide strategic document and emphasized the leaving no one behind agenda as well as the consistent application of human rights-based approaches, gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and climate change mainstreaming. The group invited UNICEF to present its plans on the systematic application of the leaving no one behind agenda. The Director noted that UNICEF had and would continue to support this process and recalled the Executive Office of the Secretary-General was taking the lead. She further noted that UNICEF wanted to ensure that the normative agenda was not forgotten in the process of reform.

259. The delegations welcomed the adoption of the funding compact and looked forward to hearing a report from UNICEF about the follow-up to its commitments under the compact.

260. The group recalled the Secretary-General's proposal to develop clear system-wide guidance and principles on working in partnerships. The Deputy Executive Director (Partnerships) noted the importance of partnerships at the country level and that UNICEF had a leadership role to play. She said the shape of partnerships was shifting to a multi-stakeholder approach with platforms rather than between just two partners.

261. A delegation called on the full implementation of the 1 per cent levy, while recognizing its complexity. Another delegation highlighted that the levy would disincentivize tightly earmarked projects.

262. A delegation asked UNICEF to elaborate on efficiency gains and how messaging on the merit and importance of the reform was conveyed to country and regional levels. The Deputy Executive Director a.i. (Management) gave clear examples of efficiencies gained, citing in particular common premises and the Mutual Recognition Framework. She also noted that UNICEF is part of the Business Innovations Group. The Director commented that there was a regular information flow from headquarters to the regional and country levels and that it was important to have a compelling narrative linked to results.

263. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/18 (see annex II).

## **J. Address by the Chairperson of the UNICEF Global Staff Association**

264. The President introduced the address by the Chairperson of the UNICEF Global Staff Association.

265. The Chairperson commenced her address by thanking the Member States for their appreciation of UNICEF staff members.

266. She noted that the main issue over the past year had been addressing all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, misconduct and abuse of authority in the workplace. She was proud that UNICEF had taken strong steps to address the problem and to strengthen policies and practices to prevent such behaviour. She believed that organizational culture change was a challenging task that required the support of all staff and sustained efforts over a longer period.

267. The Chairperson highlighted the following gains for staff: flexible work arrangements, stretch assignments, commitment to the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on Duty of Care, and the benefits of a special fund for climate change and accessibility to offices for persons with disabilities.

268. Human resource reform has resulted in increased efforts to collaborate with the Global Staff Association in the issuance or revision of policies. However, the Chairperson felt that the transparency of the recruitment process had been called into question by the discontinuation of the Central Review Body, which had previously reviewed recruitment recommendations before selections were made.

269. On managed mobility and rotation, the Chairperson expressed that a number of staff had ended up not being placed or had been separated from the organization due to their having to compete for positions along with other internal and external applicants. She called upon the Executive Director to decide that all vacant position be first filled by staff on rotation before being advertised.

270. She informed the Board that staff were anxious about the potential loss of jobs because of the United Nations reform process and called upon management to safeguard the well-being of staff.

271. The Chairperson stressed the importance of building on the strong partnership between the Staff Association and management at all levels of the organization. She concluded by saying that it would be her final address to the Board and that she believed the Global Staff Association to be grossly understaffed.

272. On behalf of the Executive Board, the President thanked all UNICEF staff members and expressed his appreciation for their dedication and professionalism. He said that the Board would strive to improve their working conditions and reduce the gap between those working at headquarters and those in the field.

273. A delegation further praised the high level of professionalism of staff and took note of the Chairperson's concerns on the mobility and rotation exercise and the disparity between the emoluments and benefits received by national and international staff members.

274. On behalf of a group, a delegation commented that the most important resource of UNICEF was its people. The delegation also referred to a sense of responsibility towards the well-being of staff and asked the Chairperson how the organization had addressed the mental health of its staff.

275. The Chairperson responded that UNICEF and the United Nations take the issue of mental health very seriously. She recalled a survey on the mental health of all United Nations staff in 2015 that showed high stress levels in the workplace. UNICEF is committed to implementing all seven recommendations that the United Nations System Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy has made to improve the mental health of staff members.

## **K. Other matters**

### **Provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2019**

276. The provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2019 was presented by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

277. The President proposed that in the future the provisional list of agenda items for the following session be defined as its own agenda item to demonstrate the importance that the Board attached to the next session.

## **L. Adoption of draft decisions**

278. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2019/9, 2019/10, 2019/11, 2019/12, 2019/13, 2019/14, 2019/15, 2019/16, 2019/17 and 2019/18 (see annex II).

## **M. UNICEF Staff Team Awards and closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board**

279. The Executive Director announced the winners of the 2019 Staff Team Awards which recognized the efforts of UNICEF staff around the world. The awards went to four teams: the Somalia Country Office; the Zalingei suboffice, UNICEF Sudan; the Thailand Country Office; and the Papua New Guinea Country Office.

280. The President joined the Executive Director in congratulating those who received the awards.

281. He commenced his closing remarks with a review of the three days of discussion during the session.

282. He went on to remark that an underlying theme of the session had been partnerships in action confirming that UNICEF is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in partnership with many actors: Governments, civil society, business, academia, the United Nations family and children and young people.

283. He was proud of the leadership exhibited by UNICEF on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and workplace abuse. He noted the need for a collective approach across all agencies and partner organizations to ensure cohesive and effective responses. The Board had taken note that UNICEF requires additional resources to ensure that this work was embedded throughout its country programmes.

284. He encouraged Member States to come to the next session fully prepared to engage and better guide UNICEF in its work and to continue to examine its own work to gain efficiencies as outlined in the decision on working methods. He recognized the efforts and report of the Core Group on working methods and noted that further negotiations on areas of non-convergence required inclusiveness, participation and transparency. At the same time, the unique characteristics and mandate of each agency should be preserved, and one-size-fits-all approaches should be avoided. He urged Member States to adapt to the changes at hand.

285. The President concluded by reiterating the importance of the November commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

286. In closing, the Executive Director reiterated her appreciation for the Executive Board's guidance and oversight as well as its commitment to rendering its own operations more effective and efficient. She said presentations from UNICEF would be adjusted in keeping with the shorter length of interventions at this session. She committed to including more speakers from partners in future sessions.

287. The Executive Director noted that UNICEF remained committed to the reform of the United Nations development system and would continue to work closely with its sister agencies. She also noted that UNICEF would report on the additional costs of implementing the reform at the first regular session of 2020.

288. The Executive Director affirmed that UNICEF was fully engaged in addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse and remained committed to change at all levels of the organization. She welcomed the opportunity to update the Board on work in this area and said the organization would explore funding modalities to support its commitments, including consideration of the pooling of resources across United Nations agencies.

289. She concluded by thanking the Executive Board for welcoming the initiative to include children's voices at the second regular session, to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Part three**  
**Second regular session 2019**

**Held at United Nations Headquarters from**  
**11 to 13 September 2019**

## **I. Organization of the session**

### **A. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF**

290. The President called to order the session and introduced two young participants, Alexandria Villaseñor and Felipe Caetano, who would address the Executive Board in anticipation of the commemoration on 20 November of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Alexandria, 14 years old, was a high-school student in New York City and a committed climate activist. Felipe, 17 years old, was an upper-secondary-school student from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and an activist against child labour. The President gave the floor to the young participants.

291. Alexandria spoke about her commitment to fighting climate change. Following the experience of being sickened by smoke from wildfires in California fuelled by climate change, she realized that she needed to act. Inspired by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, she began a school strike, sitting in front of the United Nations every Friday to draw the world's attention to the urgency of addressing climate change to ensure her future and those of the young people all over the world. In the past year, she had helped to organize the first-ever global climate strike, which mobilized 1.6 million students in over 125 countries, a national climate strike and then second global climate strike, which mobilized 1.9 million students in over 150 countries. She said that she and other children would not stop until their futures were no longer at risk.

292. On 20 September 2019, the planet's youth would lead the largest climate strike ever known. Alexandria expected all those present to join. She highlighted article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognized that children had an inherent right to life. The parties to the Convention had committed to ensuring their survival and development. Those causing the planet to heat up, destroying ecosystems and the biosphere necessary for life, were violating her rights as a child and those of future generations. She asked those present to hold them accountable and to ensure a life-sustaining future by enforcing the rights of the child.

293. Felipe recounted that his childhood aspirations had been interrupted by child labour starting when he was 8 years old, waiting tables barefoot every weekend, under an intense sun. He had no right to play. Every Monday, he was exhausted when it was time to go to school.

294. In many places, he said, child labour was still seen as natural. He assumed that, had he kept working, he would have left school and perhaps would already be a father. He was thankful that, through UNICEF, he had learned about his rights, including the right to speak out, and that the organization, together with the Ministry of Public Labour and other institutions, had enabled him to leave work and focus on his education. He had decided to fight for other children to have the same opportunity and, with the help of the Ministry, had set up a committee to fight child labour in his state. Today there were committees in 16 Brazilian states with more than 700 leaders, as well as a national committee. He was battling for the 152 million in child labour around the world, the 263 million who were out of school, every girl and every boy whose rights were violated, every child whose voice could not be heard because of violence. Celebrating the Convention on the Rights of the Child, one of the greatest human rights milestones, should mean fighting harder so that more children could be free.

295. Felipe emphasized that child labour existed in every country of the world and, as those directly impacted, children and adolescents' engagement with the issue was a right, not a privilege. Adults should work to end child labour and, as part of that effort, should ensure, as the Convention guaranteed, children's right to participate in



social and political life by talking to them, providing them with an education and enabling them to engage as citizens. This was the only way to change the world.

296. The President thanked Alexandria and Felipe for their insightful and thought-provoking remarks and for holding the Board to its responsibilities to children worldwide. By listening to their concerns and expectations, the Board members could ensure that their decisions were grounded in the real world.

297. The President noted that today's world was very different from yesterday's. New realities meant new challenges for children: climate change and cyberbullying, for example. But longstanding challenges persisted: the suffering of children in conflict, violence against children, sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking, migration, forced displacement, hunger, poverty, social inequality, the protection of girls. For many children around the world, the basic and universal rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child had not been fulfilled. As the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention approached, the Member States needed to honour their commitments to the world's children and consider the responsibilities arising from new challenges.

298. He announced that his country was aligning itself fully and resolutely with the voluntary Global Pledge: For Every Child, Every Right launched by the Group of Friends of Children and the Sustainable Development Goals.

299. The President noted the unique role of UNICEF in its dual humanitarian and development mandate, whose fulfilment depended upon adequate and flexible funding and effective partnerships.

300. Such partnerships would be a theme of the session. The presence of children demonstrated the importance of partnering with the next generation. A special focus session on business partnerships would explore how to move beyond resource mobilization to protect and foster the rights of children and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The session would also inaugurate a thematic, more strategic approach to presenting country programme documents (CPDs), including highlighting partnerships with Governments, civil society, United Nations system entities and other stakeholders.

301. The Executive Director thanked the young people for attending the session and the Executive Board members for bringing them. She told Alexandria and Felipe that their voices were compelling and would move the adults to action. She also thanked the President and the Board for their work.

302. The thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was an opportunity to celebrate progress, but also to focus the world's attention on what must still be accomplished. The Executive Director highlighted the installation of blue UNICEF backpacks on the lawn of United Nations Headquarters in honour of the 3,758 children's lives lost in conflict over the year.

303. UNICEF programmes were critical for realizing children's rights and opening opportunities that changed lives. This was what Alexandria and Felipe were requesting. A roadmap of the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 would be presented, and the Executive Director was counting on the Board's vision and good stewardship.

304. UNICEF was strengthening programmes as well as partnerships. Partners were critical: from Governments to National Committees; from non-governmental organizations to civil society organizations; from international financial institutions to the private sector; to the sister agencies working with UNICEF to translate United Nations reform into results on the ground.

305. As General Assembly delegations arrived, UNICEF hoped to meet with them to discuss improving programmes through their ideas, products, services and platforms. Fundraising would be part of the discussion. Income was growing, but regular resources targets had so far not been met. The structured dialogue on financing would be an important discussion in this regard.

306. The Executive Director looked forward to the private fundraising and partnerships report to determine how to reach the organization's ambitious targets. Fundraising was just one avenue, however, as private sector partners also wanted to lend their ideas, products, innovations, market reach, research and development to improve the lives of children and young people. She noted the new organization-wide business-for-results approach, the subject of the special focus session, with UNICEF engaging more systematically with business in programming to benefit children at scale. Representatives of the Lego Group, Microsoft and Millicom, UNICEF partners, would discuss the ways in which their operations were improving children's lives and how UNICEF could collaborate with them to achieve more results together.

307. UNICEF was also seeking to strengthen organizational culture. She looked forward to discussing the findings of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority and the management response. UNICEF was united behind change and would be moving forward on measures to improve investigations and human resources mechanisms; train managers; support staff who came forward with allegations of misconduct; and design systems around the individual. She welcomed the Board's views on the issues. UNICEF was made up of its staff, who spared no effort to support children and communities worldwide, in development and humanitarian contexts alike. UNICEF needed to support them.

## **B. Adoption of the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work**

308. The Executive Board adopted the agenda, timetable and organization of work (E/ICEF/2019/21/Rev.1) for the session.

309. The Secretary of the Executive Board announced that 26 observer delegations, including one intergovernmental organization, nine non-governmental organizations and 11 National Committees for UNICEF, had submitted credentials, in accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure.

310. The President opened the floor for general statements. Delegations thanked the young participants, Alexandria and Felipe, for sharing their stories and aspirations. They welcomed the initiative by UNICEF to invite young people to the session, with one delegation expressing the hope that the practice would continue. A delegation gave its speaking slot to two children from its country; one said that she hoped to see all children live in peace, while the other remarked on the fact that the adults were listening to children. A delegation emphasized that it was essential to engage young people in the planning and implementation of UNICEF programmes.

311. Several delegations highlighted the upcoming thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Remarkable progress had been achieved since the Convention's signing, but challenges remained, including the disproportionate exposure of women and children to violence and vulnerabilities, and global imbalances in development, poverty, hunger, armed conflicts and natural disasters. Emerging threats to child rights included cyberbullying, bullying in schools, migration, youth unemployment and climate change.

312. A delegation urged countries to honour their commitments to uphold the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the necessary costs, while another called the Convention's anniversary an important moment to focus on the integration of the Goals with human rights.

313. Some delegations welcomed the increased focus in UNICEF on sustainable partnerships and its success in developing them, especially with the private sector and international financial institutions, including innovative public/private financing and the exchange of knowledge, skills and technology. A delegation said that the private sector was a key player in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals; private sector actors could embed child rights into their business models and enable innovation on the ground. The Executive Director noted that UNICEF could benefit from the suggestions of Member States on the issue.

314. A delegation called for a focus on technology-based solutions to minimize the digital divide between the children of developed and developing countries, so that no child fell behind in the fourth industrial revolution; UNICEF could play an important role in the development of relevant policies. The Executive Director highlighted the work UNICEF was doing to connect schools everywhere to the Internet, including through low earth orbit satellites.

315. Several delegations commended UNICEF for its fundraising achievements during 2018 and its strong financial position. A delegation expressed satisfaction with the growth of non-earmarked contributions, while another delegation urged continued efforts to mobilize such contributions while maintaining transparency regarding their use.

316. A delegation said that the United Nations development system reform would benefit from the greater role that UNICEF was taking in the preparation and implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and its work to mainstream children's issues in national planning and in the work of other United Nations entities.

317. Several delegations welcomed the roll-out of the new management and accountability framework at the country level, the efforts to align it with cooperation frameworks and its contribution to reform. A delegation emphasized the importance of continuing to seek cost savings, such as those achieved through the Global Shared Services Centre, to free up resources for programme activities.

318. A delegation called for UNICEF to continue to respect the ownership and leadership of programme countries and to address their needs and priority areas when formulating and implementing country programmes and the Strategic Plan so that benefits accrued to all children of developing countries.

319. Several delegations welcomed the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority, with one delegation expressing appreciation for the efforts of UNICEF to augment transparency and accountability and another delegation urging innovative solutions to persistent problems. A delegation looked forward to regular updates in 2020.

320. Several delegations spoke about the need to strengthen child protection, including by addressing systemic problems and harmful social norms at the national level. Regarding UNICEF work in low-income countries and fragile and humanitarian contexts, a delegation hoped that UNICEF would take on board the recommendations of the evaluation on strengthening child protection systems. The Executive Director expressed appreciation for the reference to systemic interventions around root causes and stressed their importance for effective work within the humanitarian-development continuum.

321. A delegation recognized the increased focus of UNICEF on the humanitarian-development nexus as well as its support for prevention and resilience-building in conflict-affected situations. Another delegation commended UNICEF for its efforts to carry out humanitarian activities in a non-politicized manner.

322. A delegation noted its concern over the detention and separation of migrant children as a violation of their human rights. The Executive Director said that UNICEF believed in the importance of looking at best practices, including ensuring that children could stay with their parents or a family member.

323. Several delegations emphasized the importance for sustainable development of fostering the empowerment and equality of women and girls, including girls' education, sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Two delegations emphasized their commitment to long-held agreements to shape a safe, secure and sustainable future for girls around the world. The Executive Director thanked the delegates for emphasizing the importance of women and girls and said that UNICEF would be paying attention to their comments in the development of programmes.

324. A delegation reaffirmed the importance of the deinstitutionalization of children with disabilities and those without parental care as well as of inclusive education. The Executive Director said that UNICEF recognized the importance of developing more services and technologies to help children with disabilities.

### **C. Proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2020**

325. The President introduced the proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2020 ([E/ICEF/2019/22](#)). The Secretary of the Executive Board said that the proposed programme of work had been prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau of the Executive Board and was presented to the Board for adoption at the current session according to standard procedure. The online version would be maintained on the Executive Board website and would reflect any additional items requested or endorsed by the Bureau. Any updates would also be reflected in the provisional list of agenda items for each of the three formal sessions in 2020.

326. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/19 (see annex II).

### **D. Working methods**

327. The President introduced the agenda item and opened the floor for comments.

328. A delegation expressed its appreciation for the proposals set out in the joint response by the secretariats of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on the working methods of the Executive Boards. Referring to the comments made by the President in his opening statement, the delegation, joined by another delegation, said that one of the most important issues concerned the discussions around the second regular session, and that more information was needed before progress could be made towards a potential decision in the future.

329. The President said that the secretariat was available to provide additional information on the reform of the working methods of the Board and the possible elimination of the second regular session.

330. The Secretary of the Executive Board noted that, in addition to the joint response and a joint informal briefing held on the subject, since 2017 the UNICEF Bureau and Board had been discussing ways to make the sessions more efficient and interactive. At the request of the Bureau in 2018, UNICEF had prepared an indicative programme of work, which had been updated and made available to the current Bureau at the request of the President. She pointed out that the length of each Board session had been decreasing since 2017, thanks to the efficiencies gained through the Board's decisions on working methods. The secretariat would provide any additional information requested by the Board.

331. The President noted that the discussions around eliminating the second regular session had been continuing for some time, including within the core group on the working methods of the Executive Boards. He urged the delegations to take a decision on the matter in the interest of efficiency, notably streamlining and cost savings, specifying that the agenda items normally considered at the second regular session would be moved to the first regular and annual sessions. The timing of the second regular session posed difficulties for some delegations. Eliminating that session would enable delegations and, more importantly, the staff of the secretariat to devote their energy to other issues that required attention. The Board was mandated to settle the problems put before it and each Board had the autonomy to make its own decisions. UNICEF, thanks to its leadership, was an efficient, dynamic, credible and financially self-sufficient agency, which, at the same time, wished to undertake reform so that it could meet the difficult challenges before it every day.

332. The Executive Director added that reorganizing the yearly calendar would enable more real-time discussions. UNICEF needed the Board's advice and support while issues were current. The informal briefings held during the year at the Board's request on a variety of subjects had demonstrated the benefit for UNICEF of more-timely counsel from the Board, as it enabled the organization to be more responsive in real time both to the Board and to world issues.

333. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/20 (see annex II).

## **II. Deliberations of the Executive Board**

### **A. UNICEF programme cooperation**

#### **(a) Country programme documents**

334. The President introduced the panellists who would discuss the country programme documents (CPDs) for Angola, Iraq, Liberia, Mexico and Sierra Leone ([E/ICEF/2019/P/L.5](#), [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.6](#), [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.7](#), [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.9](#) and [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.10](#)) according to a new thematic format. Following an introduction by the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, the Director, Programme Division, provided an overview of the UNICEF global child protection programme.

335. Mr. Kamil Ameen Hashim, Director General of the National Law Gazette and spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice, Iraq, joined the discussion via video link. The majority of children in Iraq had grown up amid armed conflict and crisis. In the current transition to recovery and sustainable development, investing in basic services was a top priority for the Government and, in cooperation with UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, it would continue to provide protection services to children, taking gender into account. In recent years, Iraq had developed and mainstreamed a national child protection policy into the sectoral workplans of several ministries. Steps had been taken to protect the rights of children in conflict with the law and to strengthen the national child protection system to prevent and respond to violence

against and the abuse and exploitation of children, including gender-based violence. Plans were under way to create a child protection directorate and to develop a new child justice policy.

336. In pre-recorded videotaped remarks, Ms. Cecilia Kitombe, Director of Communication and Advocacy of Action for Rural Development and Environment (ADRA), Angola, said that she was speaking to the Board as a young person to call attention to the priorities of Angolan girls and boys, and to enable their voices to be heard. Girls in particular faced many difficulties, with 35 per cent pregnant before the age of 19 years and one in four experiencing physical or sexual violence. Child protection, especially for girls, was therefore fundamental. Civil society organizations like ADRA, with their deep knowledge of communities' challenges and deprivations, were important allies in efforts to prevent and address children's rights violations and strong partners for upstream advocacy. They would work closely with UNICEF to achieve the country programme priorities. Efforts by the Government of Angola to promote community well-being were important, as were continued contributions from the international community to support national initiatives that guaranteed opportunities for youth participation and effective public programmes for young people, women and children.

337. Joining the discussion by video link, Mr. Sunil Saigal, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone, said that the Government had shown strong commitment to the protection of children, which was articulated in the Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019–2023 and incorporated into the country's new UNSDCF. The prioritization of child protection by the United Nations system in Sierra Leone was critical given the high levels of violence and harm. UNICEF would build on efforts to strengthen the social welfare and justice sectors; help to build the Government's institutional and human capacity to deliver quality, gender-sensitive services to prevent and respond to child protection issues; generate and manage child protection data; and help to increase research investments. In line with the common chapter of the strategic plans, UNICEF was positioned to carry out child protection work in specific areas in cooperation with UNFPA, UNDP and UN-Women.

338. Mr. Christian Skoog, UNICEF Representative in Mexico, stated that the country programme would focus on three main areas: improving protection mechanisms and multisectoral services that prevent, detect, refer and respond to violence against children and exploitation; ending the detention of migrant children and providing them with comprehensive protection; and deinstitutionalization and increased access of separated children to family- and community-based care options.

339. The representative of Sierra Leone underscored the role of UNICEF in facilitating robust engagement to accelerate results for children. He endorsed the CPD for Sierra Leone, which would increase access to universal health coverage, inclusive quality nutrition, education and child and social protection. The Government looked forward to greater collaboration with UNICEF with a view to the success of the Medium-Term National Development Plan.

340. The representative of Liberia said that UNICEF had been an important and strategic partner in the country's development process. The representative applauded the renewed emphasis within the country programme on community-based interventions, the focus on areas in which UNICEF would have the greatest impact and the nexus between prevention and resilience.

341. The representative of Angola acknowledged the partnership between UNICEF and the Government, extending special praise to UNICEF Angola. The country programme was fully aligned with national priorities and the Government's vision which, through its National Development Plan, was aimed at strengthening social

inclusion to make the country economically and socially stable, in accordance with the African Union Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

342. A delegation noted that climate change had received scant mention in the CPDs and encouraged UNICEF to examine its role in addressing its impacts, for example within the topic of emergency preparedness, already mentioned in several of the CPDs. The role of social and community work in child protection systems was another overlooked area. The delegation asked how UNICEF would approach child protection systems-strengthening in the fragile context of Iraq.

343. The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, said that climate change had been included in several CPDs, albeit not systematically. The midterm review of the Strategic Plan provided an opportunity to consider how best to reflect the issue in organizational plans. The Director, Programme Division, said that, while the family and community were the first line of defence against violence and abuse, it was important to use the child protection systems-strengthening approach to reinforce networks of social workers while reaching across different sectors to the other points of contact with children and families, such as community health workers and teachers. Regarding child protection systems in emergencies, the Director provided examples of UNICEF engagement, which varied from establishing a safety net and backup for existing government systems to strengthen national capacity, e.g., through the child protection management information system and the training of social workers, to working with non-governmental and faith-based organizations in a social contract with the State to provide services to address gender-based violence, mental health and psychosocial support.

344. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/21 (see annex II).

**(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes**

345. In accordance with Executive Board decision 2009/11, the Executive Board was informed of the two-month extension of the country programme for Paraguay; and of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Guatemala, Madagascar and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which were approved by the Executive Director ([E/ICEF/2019/P/L/11/Rev.1](#)).

346. The Executive Board was requested to approve the two-month extension of the country programmes for Cuba, following a previous one-year extension, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, following two one-year extensions; and the nine-month extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic, following two one-year extensions.

347. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic commended UNICEF on the excellent cooperation. The mandate of UNICEF was significant, particularly in the current phase, with internally displaced persons and refugees returning to the country. The Government had made efforts to guarantee education and enrol dropouts and looked forward to continued support to the education sector from UNICEF. The representative highlighted that children and other social groups in the Syrian Arab Republic were particularly impacted by the continuing conflict, which was denying thousands of children the right to an education.

348. Noting the expanded humanitarian situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, a delegation emphasized that the assistance of UNICEF was critical to meeting the humanitarian needs of women and children and urged it to ensure that it reached the intended recipients.

349. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/22 (see annex II).

## **B. Structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021**

350. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, introduced the report (E/ICEF/2019/27), followed by a joint presentation by the Director, Public Partnerships Division, and the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division.

351. A group of delegations welcomed the increase in contributions, especially regular resources, and contributions from the public sector. The new format of the report provided a good basis for deepened dialogue and enhanced discussion around increasing and improving the quality of flexible other resources. A delegation suggested positioning the structured funding dialogue as an interactive, process-oriented forum for analysing challenges and discussing solutions, to be held throughout the year.

352. The group expressed concern that, despite the increase, regular resources still represented only 23 per cent of total income. Unless intensified efforts were made, UNICEF risked missing the United Nations-wide goal of 30 per cent by 2023. The group urged UNICEF to address funding gaps and challenges in order to incentivize donors and optimize their funding decisions.

353. The group welcomed and encouraged UNICEF efforts to provide funding incentives by increasing the visibility of regular resources, while a delegation requested information on plans for 2020 to increase such visibility. The Director, Public Partnerships Division, responded that the amount and type of visibility, such as via social media, press releases and the annual results reports, were geared to the needs of individual donors. UNICEF would welcome ideas from the Board members for increasing visibility.

354. The group highlighted the need to report on the types of resources projected to fund various functions, for example, to show which Strategic Plan results had greater need for regular resources and whether UNICEF would be able to cover them. Information on thematic funding was also important. The percentage of thematic funding in the overall budget remained at 8 per cent, well below the 2018 milestone of 12 per cent and the 2021 target of 15 per cent. The group invited UNICEF to use the structured dialogue to discuss the reasons for this, its effect on the organization's business model and programming, and possible solutions. The group requested information in future reports on progress and challenges around the implementation of the funding compact and on innovative financing mechanisms, including their potential developmental impact in programme countries; positive impact on the mobilization of different types of resources; and legal basis, risks and transaction costs.

355. The Director, Public Partnerships Division, noted that challenges in increasing thematic funding were linked to structural issues for potential partners. UNICEF would be interested in working with Member States to find solutions. She highlighted the importance of multi-year funding, as it enabled partners obligated to give structurally earmarked funding, rather than regular resources, to reach their Grand Bargain commitments. Multi-year funding was also critical for activities related to the humanitarian-development nexus.

356. The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, noted that flexible, unearmarked funds enabled UNICEF to leverage not only domestic resources but also global funds, such as the Global Financing Facility in support of Every Woman, Every Child and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. With minimal resources, UNICEF was able to improve the quality of programmes by, for example, providing Governments with technical assistance in designing and submitting proposals to



access the global funds and then assisting them to implement the programmes the funds supported.

357. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/23 (see annex II).

### **C. Oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action**

358. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, presented the oral update.

359. In general statements delivered at the session's opening, one delegation expressed appreciation for the efforts of UNICEF to carry out humanitarian assistance in a non-politicized manner. A delegation encouraged the organization to continue its efforts to mobilize less-earmarked funds while maintaining transparency in their use.

360. A delegation stressed its cooperation with UNICEF through its institutions, which over the past two years had helped to rehabilitate more than 2,000 child soldiers in Yemen. Another delegation expressed its condolences to the Bahamas following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Dorian, and noted its support to the Government of the Bahamas to provide immediate relief through its work with the United Nations and its country's National Committee for UNICEF.

361. Following the presentation of the agenda item, a delegation enquired about the changes envisioned for the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and their expected benefits. Another delegation asked how UNICEF would act upon the issues raised in the evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies, presented at the annual session in 2019. Regarding that evaluation, another delegation asked how the revised Core Commitments would help UNICEF staff to strike a better balance between assisting the most people and reaching those in greatest need.

362. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, outlined the update to the Core Commitments, which had involved a highly consultative process within UNICEF and with external partners. The update would include greater detail on institutional accountabilities and enablers; cross-cutting commitments; renewed focus on gender and children with disabilities; a stronger focus on the humanitarian-development nexus; preparedness, particularly around natural disasters; and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. The update would be reflective of other recent organizational commitments and would be continuously and rigorously monitored. The benchmarks would be aimed at reflecting the quality and targeting of actions within the humanitarian response.

363. With regard to improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian programmes, a delegation asked how UNICEF would work with partners through the updated Core Commitments and asked about plans to address the feedback loop in accountability to affected populations. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, said that UNICEF was developing a new capacity-building initiative and seeking to work more closely with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other partners to make accountability to affected populations a part of humanitarian plans more broadly.

364. A delegation stated that UNICEF had continued to improve its reporting on humanitarian action, acknowledging the sections in the Core Commitments dedicated to gender and children with disabilities. The delegation asked how UNICEF planned to enhance the timeliness of its humanitarian response in view of the lack of non-earmarked funding and other constraints. The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, highlighted the importance of the question. To provide a timely response to the crisis in the Bahamas, for example, UNICEF had relied on its regular-resources-funded Emergency Programme Fund. Similarly, the organization was

facing funding challenges for its response to the Ebola crisis. Flexible funding, either humanitarian thematic or regular resources, would facilitate an immediate response.

## **D. Evaluation report and management response**

### **Strengthening child protection systems: evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programme performance, and management response**

365. The Director of Evaluation presented the evaluation report ([E/ICEF/2019/23](#)), followed by the Director, Programme Division, who presented the management response ([E/ICEF/2019/24](#)).

366. A group of delegations noted that UNICEF had the global mandate and convening power combined with tremendous reach to influence the global agenda for children. Protecting children required a multisectoral approach and the addressing of social norms that sustained violence against children. Working with Governments and communities to strengthen institutional child protection frameworks was necessary for the promotion and fulfilment of the rights of all children and should be at the heart of the work of UNICEF. The systems-strengthening approach had been shown to be the most effective way of tackling child protection challenges, ensuring greater sustainability and results for children.

367. The group expressed concern with the findings of the evaluation, including that conceptual clarity and monitoring and reporting on child protection systems-strengthening in UNICEF needed development. Despite these challenges, UNICEF had advanced the child protection systems agenda at the national level and raised awareness among national partners. However, progress had been uneven, with results strongest in middle-income countries and stark gaps in low-income, fragile and humanitarian contexts. UNICEF should address these gaps within the different levels of development of a child protection system.

368. The group welcomed the forthcoming paper on the child protection systems-strengthening approach and urged UNICEF to demonstrate how its approach would be responsive to the needs of the most marginalized girls and boys, including children with disabilities.

369. The group highlighted the finding that other United Nations entities considered it challenging to partner with UNICEF on child protection systems-strengthening. The group encouraged UNICEF to lead cooperation within the United Nations system to achieve sustainable child protection systems and mobilize global child protection actors to support systems-strengthening as a global public good. The group also noted the finding that UNICEF lacked partnerships around child protection systems-strengthening with key institutions working on governance issues, even though many of the limitations on child protection systems were linked to national governance challenges. The group encouraged UNICEF to enhance cooperation with such actors and to prioritize the most effective and sustainable interventions.

370. The group urged the Executive Board to support the work of UNICEF, including through long-term funding that did not focus on single child protection issues. Governments needed to develop functioning child protection systems in their respective countries and budget for them, in line with their international and regional human rights commitments.

371. The Director, Programme Division, agreed that multi-year funding focused on systems was important. UNICEF appreciated the support of donors for child protection thematic funding, which had enabled the work and had been allocated to child protection systems-strengthening. Regarding the development of a common understanding, it was important to recognize that child protection systems-

strengthening meant having a cadre of social workers and other relevant professionals engaging with parents and communities, in addition to mobilizing the health and education systems and their frontline workers to address violence against children. That was the approach that UNICEF was supporting with partners such as the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance and Save the Children. He agreed that it was important to look at broader governance issues as part of child protection systems-strengthening. He also took good note that UNICEF needed to improve its way of partnering with other entities.

372. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/24 (see annex II).

## **E. Report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority, and management response**

373. The President announced that the report, a summary ([E/ICEF/2019/25](#)) and the management response ([E/ICEF/2019/26](#)) were available on the Executive Board website. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, a.i. made introductory remarks, followed by the Independent Task Force Co-Chairs, Dr. Purnima Mane and Dr. Debrework Zewdie, who presented the report. Ms. Grace Speights, Partner, Morgan Lewis, then presented, via video link, the firm's report on sexual harassment investigations conducted by the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI). Next, Ms. Geeta Narayan, Principal Adviser, Organizational Culture, UNICEF, presented the management response to the report of the Independent Task Force, after which Dr. Lakshmi Narasimhan Balaji, Chair, a.i. of the UNICEF Global Staff Association, shared the Association's views.

374. Several delegations, including a group of delegations, welcomed the report of the Independent Task Force. A delegation expressed its appreciation for the leadership of the Executive Director in facing the problems squarely, while the group commended UNICEF for its transparency and its efforts to implement the recommendations for building a healthy organizational culture, namely, improving the working environment for staff and strengthening system-wide internal investigations and oversight.

375. The group of delegations as well as other delegations expressed concern over the findings of the Independent Task Force. The group noted the existence of workplace misconduct throughout the United Nations system; changing organizational culture was difficult, and real change management, backed by the long-term vision of UNICEF leadership, was needed.

376. The Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees emphasized the correlation between public trust in UNICEF and its results and the incompatibility of the report's findings with the organization's identity. Results were important, but so was achieving them with respect, competence, unbreakable ethics and fairness for all. He extended the National Committees' support to the Global Staff Association in its push for change. A delegation asserted that an improved working environment would also improve the delivery of results.

377. The group of delegations asked how progress would be monitored and evaluated; whether UNICEF would share lessons learned with other agencies; and how change would be implemented at the country level.

378. The Deputy Executive Director a.i. said that the Global Week of Reflection had enabled management to hear directly from country office staff, and that such exercises would continue. It was also important to share experience and take joint action at the United Nations country team level. The Principal Adviser said that her office was

working with the Division of Human Resources to revise the Global Staff Survey to monitor the impact of actions currently under way, with the next survey scheduled for early 2020, to allow time to gauge their impact, especially at the country level.

379. The group of delegations appreciated the efforts to improve the investigative function and emphasized that staff needed to be able to speak up at all times about misconduct. Staff required access to confidential, impartial and timely mechanisms for reporting, investigation, mediation and resolution. The Deputy Executive Director a.i. reported that UNICEF had introduced multiple reporting channels for staff, while acknowledging that the human resources and investigative systems needed to become more people-centric. Keeping staff informed about all these efforts was crucial and would be addressed through the new internal communications strategy.

380. Several delegations enquired about resources for implementing culture change, notably hiring a senior appointee for change-management; improving the investigative function, including outsourcing; and developing investigative capacity within offices beyond OIAI. The Deputy Executive Director a.i. said that, as UNICEF lacked the financial resources to cover all the necessary changes, it was important to prioritize and pool resources with other agencies and non-governmental organizations. UNICEF had also invested in strengthening its administrative law functions. Dr. Mane highlighted other recommended measures, including improving the people-management skills of supervisors.

381. A delegation referred to the Independent Task Force finding that staff perceived an alliance between OIAI and senior staff. While Ms. Speights said that no such alliance had been found by Morgan Lewis, Dr. Zewdie emphasized that even the perception of an alliance made staff afraid to report. This perception had led the Independent Task Force to suggest increasing reporting by outsourcing part of the investigative function. She explained that, typically, an agency such as UNICEF received 30 to 35 complaints yearly. However, between 2016 and 2017, only eight complaints had been received in UNICEF. This was not because UNICEF was unique; it was because of fear of retaliation and mistrust of the system.

382. A delegation asked Ms. Speights for her opinion regarding the Independent Task Force's recommendation on outsourcing the investigative function. She responded that, although the question had not been addressed in the Morgan Lewis report, she was of the view that it was a good recommendation. Outsourcing should be considered because, as a global organization, UNICEF had to handle investigations around the world, and it would be almost impossible to hire enough investigators for the task. The Director, OIAI, agreed that it was important to supplement the resources of OIAI through outsourcing, but it should be done in a manner that addressed both the need for an impartial and independent investigative process and the increase in the demand for services; the office had received the resources to do so. However, what was most crucial was that staff have confidence in internal functions. While UNICEF was increasing resources for OIAI and decentralizing the Office, the investigative function should be seen by staff as the last step in a conflict-resolution process, after all other avenues have been exhausted. Most important was to ensure a culture of respect; an understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours; and mechanisms for staff to raise concerns and choose the least intrusive path to resolution. The investigative function should be professional and efficient, and staff should understand its role, so that they even if they disagreed with an outcome, they respected the process.

383. A delegation asked whether supervisors were required to report misconduct within UNICEF. The Deputy Executive Director a.i. responded in the affirmative but noted that it was difficult to monitor that process. Internal discussions were under way to further support managers to address and report misconduct.

384. A delegation commented that many large organizations and Governments grappled with the same issues as UNICEF, and that an organization stood or fell based on its openness to change and doing what was right by its people. The delegation expressed confidence that UNICEF would set an example.

385. The Vice-President (Western European and Others Group-Canada), who was chairing and speaking on behalf of the President, said that it was essential for the Executive Board to work with UNICEF to improve its culture and to ensure that the changes took place. The Board was awaiting an update in 2020 on progress made. Additional resources would be required to sustain the fundamental changes that UNICEF was making, and both donors and UNICEF were encouraged to consider allocating additional resources to the systemic change process called for in the report as the organization undertook the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and integrated budget, 2018–2021.

386. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/25 (see annex II).

## **F. UNICEF Strategic Plan: updated financial estimates, 2019–2022**

387. Following an introduction by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, a.i. the Comptroller and Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, presented the updated financial estimates ([E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.5](#)).

388. In general statements, a delegation commended UNICEF on its fundraising achievement in 2019 and hoped that the organization would continue to solidify its private sector partnerships. Another delegation had been encouraged by the strong financial position of UNICEF, in particular the growth of non-earmarked contributions.

389. Following the presentation of the agenda item, a group of delegations congratulated UNICEF on its record public sector contributions and welcomed the increase in 2018 total income, which was mainly due to an 8 per cent increase in non-earmarked contributions. The increase in regular resources had been timely and critical for flexibility and long-term planning, and a sign of the commitment by some Member States to the ambition of the funding compact to further raise core resources across the system.

390. The group urged UNICEF to further improve reporting on how regular resources helped to address children’s most-pressing needs at the country level as well as the results achieved, especially in the least developed countries and “forgotten crises”. The group welcomed corresponding efforts by UNICEF to further incentivize core funding as well as optimize the visibility activities conducted in cooperation with donors. Results reporting should include, where feasible, information on past or existing goals as well as associated funding gaps per result area and where and how core resources had helped to fill those gaps.

391. The group welcomed the increase in multi-year contributions by some countries; it looked forward to receiving additional information on the total amount of multi-year funding agreements and how they were changing the work of the organization, with examples of the impact on results.

392. Regarding the organization’s optimistic overall growth rate projections, the group asked UNICEF to ensure that planning was based on reasonable projections. The group also requested the organization to monitor and minimize risks when reducing its yearly cash balances. The group asked how the acceleration of implementation, and hence expenditure, would be realized, and what UNICEF would consider to be a range of prudent cash reserves of other resources.

393. The Comptroller confirmed that UNICEF remained within a reasonable range in terms of regular resources reserves; it was making efforts to manage those funds so that they did not approach the reserve minimum, while at the same time avoiding the holding of excessive cash. The Comptroller explained that \$1.2 billion in earmarked funds (other resources) would be carried forward, allowing UNICEF to remain above the income projections for the next three years and help to accelerate the delivery of programmes and activities. UNICEF had significantly improved how it delivered programmes and accelerated their delivery. For example, systems and structures had been implemented to accelerate large cash transfer programmes in the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and other countries.

394. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/26 (see annex II).

## **G. Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2018**

395. Following an introduction by the Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, presented the report (E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.6).

396. A group of delegations commended UNICEF for the increase in regular resources, noting that they had largely originated from the National Committees for UNICEF. The group requested elaboration on the reasons for the decrease in revenue relative to the 2018 target, to what extent the restructuring of the Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division and the roll-out of the Private Sector Plan 2018–2021: IMPACT for Every Child had influenced revenue, and whether the 2019 target continued to be realistic. Noting the lower income, the group highlighted that expenses were below the approved budget and asked whether that reduction might contribute to lower-than-expected revenue, including in the medium term. UNICEF was encouraged to use the increase in special-purpose expenditure for private sector fundraising to achieve planned revenue targets for 2019 and the following years. The group asked whether the budget for private sector engagement would be expanded compared with 2018.

397. The group suggested that UNICEF further clarify and communicate its strategic approach for engagement with private sector actors, as guided by its mandate. A continued focus on engagement with small and medium-sized enterprises was of critical importance. The group requested UNICEF to include updates in future reports and to provide, in response to decision 2018/20, the result of its collaboration with other United Nations agencies regarding its non-financial engagement with the business sector.

398. The Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees expressed the Committees' pride in the record-breaking regular resources contributions to UNICEF in 2018. The Committees had also been responsible for 84 per cent of that year's total private sector revenue.

399. Aligning itself with the statement of the group of delegations, one delegation emphasized that its National Committee's advocacy and partnerships demonstrated the value of the global approach, which aligned with achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Another delegation requested information on the composition, time frame and status of the business-for-results initiative, as well as its linkages to small and medium-sized enterprises. Relevant information, including country-level resource and capacity needs and programme goals, should be reflected in future reports.

400. The Director explained that investment funds represented the largest percentage increase in the budget; these were expected to yield a return of 3 to 1 in the next 36

months. The lower-than-expected revenue was due to a decline in foundation funding; fewer media-driven rapid-onset emergencies; more inward-looking media, leading to a more inward-looking public; strict interpretations of the General Data Protection Regulation, particularly in the European Union; difficulties affecting performance in two National Committees; and exchange-rate issues in some markets.

401. The Director reported that UNICEF had significantly expanded its capacity for private sector engagement in 2018 and 2019, which was being mainstreamed throughout the organization with the roll-out of the business-for-results approach. Small and medium-sized enterprises were critical to the engagement strategy for country offices; such engagement was ongoing in many countries and was being strengthened through the new approach.

402. The Director provided examples of ongoing collaboration with other United Nations agencies, including providing support to the United Nations Strategic Partnerships Results Group; working with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the Universal Postal Union; and lending expertise to the Economic Commission for Europe. The roll-out of business for results would entail updating or reviewing all internal systems, including country and private sector assessments; refining job descriptions; and building staff capacity. All engagements would be based on the achievement of results for children.

403. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/27 (see annex II).

## **H. Cost recovery: joint review of the existing cost definitions and classifications of activities and associated costs**

404. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, a.i. introduced the joint review ([DP/FPA-ICEF-UNW/2019/1](#)).

405. A delegation expressed its appreciation for the efforts of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women to harmonize cost classifications, in line with the spirit of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). The delegation strongly encouraged the agencies to harmonize the classifications of 100 per cent of their income, and to complete that work by the first regular sessions of 2020.

406. The delegation stated that the UNICEF cost categories reflected key management priorities and helped the Member States to understand the organization's operations. Endorsing recommendations 1 and 2 of the report, the delegation requested UNICEF, working with the other New York-based agencies, to implement standardized terminology and formatting of integrated budget proposals and financial information in their annual reports and elsewhere, recognizing that not all categories and functional clusters would apply to each organization.

407. The delegation took note of recommendation 3, which proposed the creation of separate cost classification line items in the integrated resource plan to report on and obtain separate appropriations for independent activities, oversight and assurance as well as cost-sharing contributions to support the resident coordinators.

408. The delegation looked forward to continued engagement on the subject and underscored its appreciation for the agencies' collaboration. Their work could model best practices for the United Nations development system.

409. The Comptroller said that UNICEF would continue to work with its sister agencies to deliver on the decisions adopted and attach greater importance to work in the area.

410. The Executive Board adopted decision 2019/28 (see annex II).



**I. Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system**

411. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, provided an overview of the reform efforts under way in UNICEF. The Director, Public Partnerships Division, updated the Board on implementation at the headquarters level, followed by the Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, who described the implementation of the regional review and the UNICEF regional value proposition.

412. A group of delegations welcomed the steps taken by UNICEF since the annual session of 2019 to implement the reform of the United Nations development system, as part of the wider efforts of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. The group of delegations cited the completion of the guidance for the UNSDCF and the related guidance for common country assessments. The group commended UNICEF for proactively streamlining the planning of country-level documents with that of the UNSDCF processes. The group welcomed the follow-up by UNICEF on the commitments of the funding compact and encouraged all United Nations Sustainable Development Group parties to further strengthen their engagement to reach the funding compact targets. The group commended UNICEF for including the status of funding compact commitments in its report on the structured funding dialogue, which provided a good basis for annual reporting to the Board.

413. The group of delegations expressed concern about the different interpretations among the United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities regarding the definition of entity-specific commitments and how to report on them. An example was the target on the share of total development-related expenditures on joint activities, which UNDP reported on as a share of non-core resources only. The group noted that UNICEF, along with UN-Women, omitted this target in its reporting, and called on UNICEF to work with the other agencies towards a harmonized reporting framework for entity-specific funding compact commitments.

414. The group suggested that UNICEF schedule a review of follow-up to the funding compact during the second regular session and to include it, where relevant, as part of the structured funding dialogue. The reporting should include a reflection on entity-specific progress during the preceding year and, where targets were not met, outline the progress expected over the current year. Reporting should cover the collective commitments and the ways in which UNICEF was contributing to them.

415. The group asked when UNICEF would present an overview of and timetable for decisions required by the Board. The Director, Public Partnerships Division, responded that the organization was only two months into the funding compact, and that there was no need yet to take any decisions.

416. The Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees expressed its continuing concern over the 1 per cent levy and its potential to decrease funding by private entities.



**J. Report of the field visit to Turkey of the UNICEF Executive Board, 2 to 9 March 2019, and report of the joint field visit to Colombia by members of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP, 11 to 18 May 2019**

417. The report of the field visit to Turkey (UNICEF/2019/EB/8) was presented by H.E. Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations and Vice-President of the UNICEF Executive Board, on behalf of the delegation that visited the country.

418. The delegation said that Turkey faced some challenges relating to child poverty, child labour, child marriage, discrimination against women and girls and a lack of quality, inclusive education for children with disabilities. It also had the largest registered refugee population in the world. The delegation commended the Government for its efforts to welcome Syrian refugees and to expand national social protection programmes and education systems to include them. The delegation also appreciated the focus by the Government and UNICEF on social cohesion between the host and refugee populations.

419. The delegation called on the international community to support the work of the Government and UNICEF focused on the Syrian children and families living in Turkey. It recognized the critical importance of predictable, multi-year funding and maintaining a minimum level of core resources for planning and sustaining programmes.

420. The representative of Turkey expressed appreciation for the UNICEF country office and National Committee and for the visit by the Executive Board. Commenting on the report of the visit, the representative said that rather than refer to Syrians living in Turkey as refugees, the more accurate term would be “Syrians” or “Syrians under temporary protection”. She stated that any mentions in the report of religious and ethnic minorities in Turkey should be understood in reference to the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, where the scope of the term “minority” is limited to “Turkish citizens belonging to non-Muslim minorities”.

421. Turkey had first-hand experience of the impacts of the crisis in the region on disadvantaged groups, mainly refugee youth, older people, children and women. The Government had implemented social welfare programmes to improve the lives of children and was striving to introduce policies to protect them from isolation, discrimination and exploitation. Addressing these challenges revealed the need for a multilateral response and equitable and responsible burden-sharing within the international community.

422. The report of the joint field visit to Colombia (DP/FPA/OPS-ICEF-UNW-WFP/2019/CRP.1) was presented by H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations and President of the UNICEF Executive Board, on behalf of the delegation that visited the country.

423. The visit was timely, coming three years after the end of the armed conflict that had hampered the country’s development for half a century, and during a period in which the country was traversing a critical transition while seeking to build a sustainable future. It was also dealing with a migration crisis of enormous proportions, currently hosting more than one million migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

424. The delegation viewed many examples of impressive joint work. Among those in which UNICEF figured most prominently was a binational collaboration in Nariño between the Colombia and Ecuador country teams, supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, aimed at strengthening institutional capacities to protect children and

adolescents in cross-border areas from armed violence, such as forced recruitment, and to teach them self-protection skills. It was striking to witness the synergy created by the joining together of the various stakeholders, which included UNICEF, UN-Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Volunteers, civil society organizations and indigenous and Afrodescendent communities together with local and national government. In Meta, the delegation observed a joint programme of UNICEF, UNDP, UN-Women and the World Food Programme along with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and UNHCR to support the social and economic recovery of ex-combatants, including by identifying their skills so that they could be employed in development projects. The project was also engaging the community in its design and implementation, opening a pathway to peace by building trust and promoting social cohesion and reconciliation, all while ensuring that the community, especially children, had access to basic services and food security.

425. The delegation expressed appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations country team to reach the most excluded and vulnerable populations and offered recommendations for ways to optimize its work. It should continue to improve its ability to deliver as one; improve efforts to communicate with the Government to align programmes with national and local priorities; ensure a strong focus on long-term sustainability and national capacity development; continue its innovative programming approaches to address transboundary issues; outline opportunities for joint programming in the new UNSDCF; and develop a communications strategy to facilitate awareness-raising around the work and results of the United Nations.

426. The representative of Colombia emphasized the importance of the United Nations system in Colombia, stressing the work of UNICEF, and noted that the field visit had included meetings with numerous Colombian authorities. The Sustainable Development Goals were at the heart of the recently adopted national development plan, which would be implemented over the next four years. It would be crucial to ensure ongoing improvement in the cooperation carried out under the leadership of the resident coordinator as well as to ensure smoother dialogue with the country team by identifying areas in which the State required support. An inter-agency approach by the country team that focused on the comparative advantages of each agency would avoid the fragmentation of efforts and would better leverage existing resources. Sustainable capacity-building at the national and local levels was important as was the replication of best practices and results.

427. The country was firmly committed to the implementation of the peace agreement, which the work of the just-extended United Nations Verification Mission and the other United Nations agencies would facilitate. He mentioned that, although Colombia was hosting more than 1 million Venezuelans who had been forced to flee their own country, the international community had not risen to the challenge required of the situation for more than a year.

## **K. Update on the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021**

428. The Director, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, presented the update.

429. A delegation asked whether the midterm review would cover the contributions of UNICEF to the United Nations development system reform, in addition to assessing its implications for the work of the organization, and how UNICEF planned to address targets 16.1 and 16.2 of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which it considered core to the organization's work, but were underrepresented and

underreported. The delegation proposed a focus on those targets during the midterm review.

430. The Director confirmed that the analysis around the United Nations reform would be a dialogue, enabling a review of the implications of the reform on UNICEF and the United Nations development system and an exploration of where work at the country level could be deepened as the reinvigorated resident coordinator system provided additional capacity and opportunities for meaningful engagement.

## **L. Other matters**

431. No other matters were raised.

## **M. Provisional list of agenda items for the first regular session of 2020**

432. The President introduced the provisional list of agenda items for the first regular session of 2020. There were no comments.

## **N. Adoption of draft decisions**

433. The President announced that the Executive Board had before it 10 draft decisions (2019/19 through 2019/28), including on CPDs (Angola, Iraq, Liberia, Mexico and Sierra Leone).

434. The President commented that a lesson learned from the CPD review process was that full transparency should have been ensured, in line with the Executive Board's request that all Member State comments be available to Board members prior to formal consideration. He thanked the Board members for their understanding, flexibility and support during the review of that process and noted that, going forward, all comments would be posted on the Executive Board website so that all interested delegations could react to them before the CPD was considered approved on a no-objection basis.

435. The Executive Director noted that the CPDs were the foundation of the work of UNICEF for children around the globe. CPDs were developed on the basis of national plans and priorities under the leadership of national Governments and in consultation with the resident coordinator and other members of the United Nations country team as well as with other relevant stakeholders at the country level, and in complete alignment with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals. The CPDs were also developed in alignment with the UNSDCF and the United Nations development system reform. Executive Board decision 2014/1 stressed the important role of the Board in the review and approval of CPDs. UNICEF regretted the error that had resulted in some comments not being posted, impeding Member States from having full access to them. UNICEF was committed to full transparency and, going forward, would post all comments online.

436. The Executive Director reassured the Board that, for the CPDs it had before it, all programmes would be implemented as agreed between UNICEF and the host country. UNICEF recognized that the CPDs needed to fully reflect and reinforce the organization's commitment to ensuring that all children realized the rights agreed to in the Convention on the Rights of the Child 30 years before. She asked that all present recommit to the achievement of all rights for every girl, every boy, everywhere.

437. A group of delegations thanked the Executive Director for her leadership in ensuring that UNICEF delivered for children around the world and ensured their safe, stable and productive lives. Now, more than ever, UNICEF programmes promoting rights and services were important for tackling systemic problems and harmful social norms that led to violence against children. Promoting and protecting the rights of young girls and boys through education, comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services and rights were very important to delivering on the organization's mandate.

438. The group of delegations recognized that without such interventions four of the five areas of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 could not be realized: adolescent girls' health; menstrual health and hygiene; child marriage and early union; and gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. UNICEF should be able to address those at the country level to realize its goals as well as contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

439. The group of delegations confirmed its role, as members and observers of the Board, to support UNICEF in the delivery of its mandate as set out by the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in their entirety, while fully respecting the primacy of the role of the host Government in agreeing to the content of the country programme.

440. The group noted that, for the Board to provide effective oversight of CPDs, full transparency on substance and procedure was necessary, in accordance with decision 2014/1, and regretted that this had apparently not been the case with regard to all the session's CPDs. The group joined the consensus in the gaveling of those CPDs, but urged, moving forward, full respect of the provisions of decision 2014/1. The group counted on UNICEF to implement the Board's decisions promoting the transparency, accountability and trust called for in the funding compact. The group thanked the Executive Director for her stated commitment in that regard and reiterated that UNICEF had the group's support in delivering on its mandate.

441. A delegation expressed its admiration for the work of UNICEF and its staff on the ground. All over the world, children were rightly claiming more respect, more influence, more empowerment. There was a range of agreed strategic documents regarding the fundamental mission of UNICEF to promote the rights of every child, everywhere, and today, that mission was more critical than ever.

442. The delegation supported the message of the group of delegations. All individuals must have the right to decide over their own body, sexuality and reproduction. Sexual and reproductive health and rights involved fundamental issues of health and dignity. They were also human rights, and essential to achieving gender equality, economic and political empowerment, poverty reduction and social and economic development. The role of UNICEF in this agenda was crucial and the delegation welcomed the reassurances of the organization's unequivocal support for the relevant strategic documents, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 2030 Agenda.

443. The delegation expressed concern that the CPD approval process had not been carried out in accordance with previously decided procedures and that revisions had influenced the substance of a CPD. The delegation welcomed the updated CPD approval process; transparent, inclusive procedures were fundamental to its country's future joint endeavours with UNICEF.

444. The delegation appreciated the reassurances that projects would continue according to previously agreed plans. Words mattered, and CPDs laid the foundation for the priorities of UNICEF within the countries for the coming years. Given the

assurances provided by the Executive Director, the delegation did not oppose the adoption of the CPDs.

445. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2019/19 through 2019/28 (see annex II).

## **O. Closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board**

446. The Executive Director thanked the Board members, guests and corporate partners for their participation. She appreciated the stewardship of the President and the Bureau through a complex session and for the Board's commitment to making its operations more efficient and effective. Partnerships were critical, including partnering with the Board in a spirit of trust and transparency. Above all, UNICEF valued the Board's dedication to children. The decisions reached at the session reflected its commitment to UNICEF, its mission, its staff and its programming.

447. She thanked the Board for its endorsement of the CPDs. She highlighted the new thematic presentation format and took note of the Board's decision to continue seeking modifications to the preparation and discussion of the CPDs.

448. Looking towards the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, UNICEF appreciated the discussion around financing, including the Board's concern regarding the need to increase core resources and close funding gaps. UNICEF was committed to providing more information about its approach to innovative financing, cost-recovery and work with the private sector. Funding would always be central to the organization's partnerships with business, but it was also necessary to align products, services, platforms, research, expertise and market reach with the needs of children. To reach the Sustainable Development Goals, UNICEF had to go beyond "business as usual" to shape purposeful partnerships with business. Going beyond business as usual extended to the organization's work with its United Nations partners, including on system reform. UNICEF had spearheaded the operationalization of the funding compact and was committed to playing a similar leadership role in other areas.

449. The Executive Director appreciated the Board's support to UNICEF in its efforts to effect internal culture change. The organization would provide updates as it implemented the recommendations of the Independent Task Force and Morgan Lewis. As UNICEF continued to focus on results for children, it must also focus on results for its staff members.

450. The Executive Director thanked the Board for its initiatives to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She was moved by the passionate remarks of Alexandria and Felipe, as she was sure others were. They provided hope that the future was in good hands. But today, their future was in the adults' hands. She urged everyone to continue to share ideas, to strengthen programming and to draw new partners to the cause of children. She urged the Board members to visit the installation of backpacks on the lawn, a visceral reminder of the importance of supporting children in conflict and of the vital mission of UNICEF.

451. The President said that the session had been highly innovative and interactive. It had demonstrated the ways in which UNICEF effectively partnered with many others to produce meaningful and lasting results for children worldwide. The stirring remarks made by Alexandria and Felipe had been a call to collective action.

452. The new format for presenting the CPDs had facilitated greater understanding of the many partnerships required for the elaboration and implementation of successful country programmes. The contributions to the discussion from the Government of Iraq, the Angolan non-governmental organization ADRA and the

United Nations in Sierra Leone as well as from UNICEF Mexico had been most welcome.

453. During the special focus session on business for results, the discussion with industry leaders from the Lego Group, Microsoft and Millicom had provided insights into the ways in which partnerships with business could be further leveraged for children and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

454. The presentation of the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority had been appreciated. The presentation of the reports and videos of the field visits to Turkey and Colombia had provided another opportunity to learn about partnerships and challenges and was a reminder that discussions at Board sessions should be in tune with on-the-ground realities.

455. Continuing to improve its working methods had been identified as a priority for the Board, particularly the focus on solidifying efforts to streamline the formal sessions each year. Another priority would be facilitating a smooth handover to the incoming Bureau for 2020. The President suggested that the Board lend its support and guidance to UNICEF as it strengthened its processes related to the review and commenting period for the CPDs. He reminded participants that politics should be kept out of the boardroom, and that the sole objective during the sessions should be to ensure that UNICEF was sufficiently guided, funded and focused to achieve optimal results for children.

456. The President thanked the other members of the Bureau as well as the Executive Director and her senior management team. He welcomed Mr. Fayaz King, the new Deputy Executive Director for Field Results and Innovation. He thanked the facilitators of the draft decisions for their tireless efforts to achieve compromise and consensus as well as the UNICEF experts, the Member States and the experts from two countries who had worked as bridge-builders during the negotiation process. He expressed gratitude to the meeting organizers, especially for going the extra mile to include external participation, and for those who worked behind the scene to ensure a smooth session. He also expressed appreciation to the Secretary of the Executive Board and the staff of her office.

457. The President congratulated the Board members for the successful session and wished them the best as they returned to their capitals. He had been humbled and honoured to serve as President in 2019. Being a member of the Bureau, chairing the Board and serving UNICEF and children around the world had been a wonderful experience. UNICEF was more than an agency: it was its women, its men, its dedication, its sacrifices and its commitment, whether in New York, Colombia or Copenhagen. He congratulated the Executive Director on the high level of motivation of the UNICEF staff and their dedication and readiness to go wherever needed to serve children worldwide.

## Annex I

### Special focus session on business for results

1. The panellists were Mr. Jørgen Vig Knudstorp, Executive Chairman of the Lego Group; Ms. Kate Behncken, Vice President and Lead of Microsoft Philanthropies; and Mr. Mauricio Ramos, Chief Executive Officer of Millicom. The moderator was Ms. Camilla Viken, Executive Director of the Norwegian National Committee for UNICEF.
2. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, introduced the panellists. She hoped that ideas would emerge for unleashing the power of business and improving partnerships for better results for children.
3. The panellists said that UNICEF helped them to better understand the communities in which they operated so that they could adapt their offerings and empower those communities. The real power of business was unleashed when addressing issues, such as children's rights, on which UNICEF was an expert.
4. A shared vision and common goals achieved through the right modalities, such as core business assets, created win-win partnerships. Such partnerships strategically leveraged each partner's strengths, moved beyond philanthropy and benefitted from a long-term, collaborative relationship based on trust.
5. UNICEF was one of the most credible partners, yet it could accelerate results by reducing protocols, encouraging agility in its hierarchical systems and being more daring when approaching business on children's needs. These were essential, along with transparency and agreeing upfront on system-level issues.
6. In response to questions from the President of the UNICEF Executive Board, panellists said that UNICEF projects could serve as blueprints for industries and other United Nations agencies. The organization could improve its effectiveness by scaling up proven solutions rather than repeatedly reinventing the wheel.
7. Panellists shared examples of ways in which their core businesses were supporting UNICEF programmes in emergencies and stressed that measuring impact required clear goals and key performance indicators.
8. The UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia commented on local work that UNICEF was undertaking with small and medium-sized enterprises, highlighting that the Bangladeshi garment sector was prioritized given their large footprint and opportunity for large-scale solutions. Measuring results helped businesses to register increases in productivity and efficiency while improving children's lives. The panellists encouraged UNICEF to leverage large corporations' supply chains, which consisted mainly of small and medium-sized enterprises.
9. The panellists suggested that UNICEF help corporations to engage with vendors by assessing policies and codes of conduct and working to influence government regulations.
10. In response to a question as to whether basic needs should be prioritized over technology, the panellists reiterated that businesses should leverage their core assets and that rapidly changing community needs often involved digital services.
11. The Deputy Executive Director sought advice on fundraising with partners and public criticism of the association of UNICEF with business. Panellists emphasized the importance of measuring return on investment and focusing on achieving results for children.

12. The Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships, asked if partners could bring industries together despite competition, to which panellists offered that solutions built with UNICEF were accessible to others.

13. The Executive Director asked how UNICEF could leverage scale and innovation, which were essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The panellists responded that when collaborating with start-ups the availability of the right solutions should be prioritized over business size.

14. The panellists urged UNICEF to focus on the wave that was coming, not the one that had passed; to emphasize early childhood development, as it was essential for social cohesion; and to evaluate if UNICEF was equipped to work with small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups.



## Annex II

### Decisions adopted by the Executive Board in 2019

#### First regular session

2019/1

##### Working methods

###### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the rules of procedure of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme (WFP);

2. *Recalls* decision 2018/14 on the working methods of the Executive Board, in which the Bureau of UNICEF, in collaboration with the Bureaux of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP, was asked to launch a joint consultative process with the Member States starting at the first regular session of 2019;

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

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

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

*First regular session  
6 February 2019*

2019/2

##### Country programme documents

###### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* that the country programme document for Niger ([E/ICEF/2019/P/L.1](#)), including the aggregate indicative budget, was made available to Member States for their comments and input from 12 to 30 November 2018, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme document for Niger ([E/ICEF/2019/P/L.1](#)), including the aggregate indicative budget.

*First regular session  
6 February 2019*

**2019/3**  
**Extensions of ongoing country programmes**

*The Executive Board*

*Approves* the two-year extensions of the country programmes for Afghanistan and the Comoros and the one-year extension of the country programme for South Africa, following a previous 15-month extension, as presented in the table in document [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.2](#).

*First regular session*  
*6 February 2019*

**2019/4**  
**UNICEF programme cooperation**

*The Executive Board*

*Encourages* UNICEF to increase conformity between country programme cycles and United Nations Development Assistance Framework cycles through the active use of country programme extensions.

*First regular session*  
*6 February 2019*

**2019/5**  
**Evaluation reports and management responses**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the formative evaluation of the Out-Of-School Children Initiative and its executive summary ([E/ICEF/2019/3](#)), and takes note of its findings, conclusions and recommendations;
2. *Takes note* of the management response ([E/ICEF/2019/4](#)), including proposed actions to improve performance and strengthen policy guidance and programming;
3. *Requests* management to provide responses to all aspects of the recommendations of the formative evaluation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative, including by providing concrete implementing actions for recommendations related to the provision of adequate resources, harnessing the expertise and capabilities of Out-of-School Children Initiative technical partners and cooperating with government officials;
4. *Takes note with appreciation* of the independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and its executive summary ([E/ICEF/2019/5](#)), including its findings, conclusions and recommendations;
5. *Welcomes* the management response ([E/ICEF/2019/6](#)), including actions to strengthen policies and guidance on global leadership, an organization-wide response, country-level implementation, child rights and community engagement, and organizational culture change;
6. *Requests* UNICEF, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2018/2, to provide an update on the implementation of recommendations set out in these evaluation reports and agreed to in management responses as part of the annual report on the evaluation function in UNICEF at the annual session of 2020.

*First regular session*  
*6 February 2019*

**2019/6**  
**UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017 and report of the Board of Auditors**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Board of Auditors for the financial period that ended on 31 December 2017 ([A/73/5/Add.3](#)) as well as recommendations from prior years and welcomes the provision this year for the first time of a separate management response to that report;

2. *Notes* the unqualified audit opinion for 2017 issued by the United Nations Board of Auditors for UNICEF;

3. *Also notes* the findings of the Board of Auditors that UNICEF has, in recent years, taken steps to strengthen financial and managerial control over its operations;

4. *Requests* UNICEF to ensure the full implementation of all outstanding and current recommendations of the Board of Auditors and related recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in a prompt and timely manner;

5. *Encourages* UNICEF to strengthen efforts to tackle areas of recurring audit recommendations and to effectively address the root causes of the problems highlighted by the Board of Auditors;

6. *Recalls* its decision 2018/3 and requests UNICEF to present an analysis of reported cases of fraud or presumptive fraud, of underlying causes and of the potential for increasing the recovery of losses related to such fraud at the 2019 annual session.

*First regular session*  
*6 February 2019*

**2019/7**  
**Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2019 workplan and proposed budget**

**A. Private Fundraising and Partnerships budgeted expenses for the 2019 fiscal year (special purpose)**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Approves* for the fiscal year 2019 (1 January to 31 December) budgeted special purpose expenses of \$245.4 million, as detailed in the table below:

(Millions of United States dollars)

Investment fund costs funded by special purpose regular resources	115.0
Other private sector fundraising costs funded by special purpose regular resources	66.5
<b>Total private sector fundraising and partnerships costs funded by special purpose regular resources</b>	<b>181.5</b>
<b>Private sector fundraising and partnerships costs funded by special purpose other resources</b>	<b>63.9</b>
<b>Total special purpose expenses</b>	<b>245.4</b>

2. *Authorizes* UNICEF

(a) To incur expenses, as summarized in column II of table 3 of document [E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.1](#), and to decrease or increase expenses up to the levels indicated

in columns I and III of the same table, should the apparent revenue from fundraising decrease or increase to the levels indicated in columns I and III;

(b) To redeploy resources between the various regular resources budget lines (as detailed in paragraph 1, above), up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the amounts approved;

(c) To spend an additional amount between Executive Board sessions, when necessary, up to the amount caused by currency fluctuations, to implement the 2019 approved workplan;

3. *Encourages* the Executive Director to identify and respond to new market opportunities, should they arise, between Executive Board sessions and to notify the Board accordingly;

4. *Requests* UNICEF to include in its report on key expected results for 2019 a set of measurable indicators and targets for the six outcomes and their respective outputs at the second regular session of 2019, as part of the Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2018.

## **B. Budgeted revenue for the year 2019**

### *The Executive Board*

*Notes* that, for the period 1 January to 31 December 2019, Private Fundraising and Partnerships revenue is budgeted at \$1.8 billion, as shown in column II of table 3 of document [E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.1](#).

## **C. Policy issues**

### *The Executive Board*

1. *Approves* the allocation of investment funds amounting to \$115 million for 2019;

2. *Also approves* an interim one-month allocation for January 2020 of \$18.2 million (or 10 per cent of the special purpose regular resources allocation of \$181.5 million), to be absorbed in the annual Private Fundraising and Partnerships budget for 2020.

*First regular session  
6 February 2019*

## **2019/8**

### **Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Welcomes* the update provided by UNICEF on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) of 31 May 2018 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system;

2. *Recognizes* the continuing contributions of UNICEF in operationalizing resolution [72/279](#) and requests it, in line with General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) of 21 December 2016 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, resolution [72/279](#) and the Secretary-General's implementation plan, to continue to support and contribute to the

full implementation of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including a matrixed, dual-reporting model, with United Nations country team members accountable and reporting to their respective entities on individual mandates, and periodically reporting to the resident coordinator on their individual activities;

3. *Calls on* UNICEF to provide written, harmonized agency-specific information to the Executive Board at its annual session of 2019 on the implementation of resolution [72/279](#), based on the information previously provided during informal consultations;

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

5. *Welcomes* the efforts undertaken by UNICEF to operationalize its Strategic Plan while implementing resolution [72/279](#);

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

7. *Welcomes* the strong commitment of UNICEF, as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, to redeploy its efficiency gains from United Nations development system reform for development activities, including coordination, and requests UNICEF to contribute to the Secretary-General's report on the cost-savings and efficiency gains and their redeployments and to update the Executive Board through existing reporting mechanisms;

8. *Also welcomes* the steps already taken by UNICEF to support the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including the transfer of its 2019 cost-sharing contribution to the United Nations Development Coordination Office.

*First regular session  
6 February 2019*

## **Annual session**

### **2019/9**

#### **Working methods**

##### *The Executive Board*

1. *Reaffirms* the rules of procedure of the Executive Board of UNICEF;
2. *Welcomes* the written account of the core group of Member States that led the joint consultative process with Member States, in an open, transparent and inclusive manner, with a view to examining the efficiency and quality of its current sessions, as well as the functions of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards in line with decisions 2019/1 and 2018/14;
3. *Recognizes* the technical support provided by the secretariats of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UNICEF, the

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Boards to the core group and notes the annex to the written account as prepared by the secretariats;

4. *Stresses* that the overarching principles of the discussion on working methods of the Executive Boards are the preservation of executive guidance and oversight of agencies; avoidance of duplication with the function of the Economic and Social Council operational activities segment and the respective Executive Boards; and respect for the different mandates and characteristics of each agency, fund, programme and entity;

5. *Requests* UNICEF, in collaboration with UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP, to organize joint informal briefings/consultations and strongly encourages that they be scheduled within socially acceptable hours to allow the WFP Executive Board to participate from Rome;

6. *Also requests* the secretariat of the UNICEF Executive Board, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP, to present initial proposals to improve the working methods of the joint meeting of the Boards, including an optimal timing for convening the joint meeting of the Boards, for consideration by Member States at the second regular session of 2019, mindful that the joint meeting of the Boards does not have decision-making authority and of the need to avoid duplication and overlap with the functions of the Economic and Social Council operational activities segment;

7. *Further requests* that the secretariat propose different alternatives for adjusting the date of the second regular session, mindful that it does not overlap with the other schedules, for consideration by the Executive Board at the second regular session of 2019;

8. *Requests* that an informal meeting of the Presidents of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP, at no cost to the organizations, be held on a regular basis for enhanced harmonization of common issues, and for increased coordination among agencies, funds, programmes and entities and the respective Executive Boards, while bearing in mind that, according to the rules of procedure of the Executive Boards, the Presidents remain under the authority of the respective Executive Boards and do not have the authority to make decisions on any substantive matters, and that the outcome of the meetings be shared with the wider membership;

9. *Affirms* the need to elect the Bureau members early on to minimize leadership gaps and enhance the efficient functioning of the Presidency and Executive Board at large;

10. *Recommends* that, for continuity and smooth transition between outgoing and incoming Bureaux, whenever appropriate and consistent with the relevant rules of procedure, regional groups could consider taking appropriate measures so that one of the Vice-Chairs/Vice-Presidents of the Bureau can take on the Chair/Presidency and could be effective in that capacity in the following year;

11. *Notes* the need for flexibility on chairing the informal meetings of the Executive Board from the President of the Bureau or one of the Vice-Presidents;

12. *Requests* that the secretariat, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS and UN-Women, continue convening consecutive formal sessions of the Executive Boards in order to avoid gaps between the formal sessions of the various Executive Boards;

13. *Also requests* that the secretariat present practical proposals for improving the efficiency of the sessions of the Executive Board, including by reviewing the

agenda items and the Board's efficient consideration of these, for deliberation and consideration by the Executive Board at the second regular session of 2019;

14. *Further requests* that the Executive Board, with the support of the secretariat, make its sessions interactive, while securing the time slot for group and national statements as appropriate and necessary;

15. *Requests* that, while encouraging interactive discussions, any format for enhanced interaction with the heads of the agencies should contain follow-up actions within existing mechanisms;

16. *Encourages* the heads of agencies, funds, programmes and entities participating in Board sessions to provide the full texts of their statements or opening remarks (presentation) online in advance and deliver shorter statements at the Executive Board sessions. The statements and presentations should be concise in highlighting the main issues, evidenced-based and action-oriented in addressing the challenges;

17. *Strongly encourages* the President to enforce implementation of time limits for statements;

18. *Affirms* the participation of diverse stakeholders in Executive Board sessions with full respect of the relevant clauses in the rules of procedure and based on the agreement of the Executive Board, recalls decision 2018/14, paragraph 11, and reaffirms the importance of giving due consideration to gender parity in the composition of panelists participating in the Executive Board;

19. *Requests* the Bureau to decide the destination of field visits two years in advance, while allowing the flexibility to change host countries if circumstances dictated, in order to give host countries as well as agencies as much time as possible to prepare for the visits;

20. *Also requests* the Bureau, assisted by the secretariat, to consult with the Bureaux of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP to coordinate for the selection of field visits and to propose harmonized criteria for individual field visits, for evaluation by the Board at the first regular session of 2020;

21. *Further requests* the secretariat of UNICEF to circulate proposed draft decisions to the wider membership at least four weeks prior to each session, at the discretion of the Bureau, and reiterates its strong encouragement to Member States to provide their comments on draft decisions, to the extent possible, prior to the start of the session, with a view to starting substantive consultations on the draft decisions on the first day of negotiations, without pre-empting bringing in additional proposals during negotiations;

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

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

24. *Reiterates* the request that the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNICEF regularly update the joint online calendar of all Board meetings in real time so as to avoid overlap of schedules with other funds and programmes as well as major

official meetings, including the Economic and Social Council operational activities segment.

*Annual session  
13 June 2019*

## **2019/10**

### **Annual report for 2018 of the Executive Director of UNICEF**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the annual report for 2018 of the Executive Director of UNICEF, including the report on the implementation of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021; the report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR); the report on the implementation of the common chapter; and the data companion and scorecard;
2. *Requests* UNICEF to include in future reporting to the Executive Board on the implementation of the QCPR the milestones and targets set out for each reported QCPR indicator;
3. *Decides* to transmit the above-mentioned reports to the Economic and Social Council, along with a summary of the comments and guidance of the Executive Board.

*Annual session  
13 June 2019*

## **2019/11**

### **Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action ([E/ICEF/2019/12](#));
2. *Welcomes* the continued increase in dialogue between the UNICEF secretariat and the Executive Board on the critical work of UNICEF in humanitarian action, including through improvements to the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action and more geographic diversity;
3. *Recalls* its decision 2018/9 and urges UNICEF to include reporting on the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action in subsequent annual reports on humanitarian action;
4. *Requests* UNICEF to include information on the revision process of the Core Commitments for Children, including a time plan, in the oral update on humanitarian action at the second regular session of 2019.

*Annual session  
13 June 2019*

## **2019/12**

### **Country programme documents**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* that the country programme document for the Congo ([E/ICEF/2019/P/L.3](#)), including the aggregate indicative budget, was made available to Member States for their comments and input from 18 March to 5 April 2019, in



accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme document for the Congo ([E/ICEF/2019/P/L.3](#)), including the aggregate indicative budget.

*Annual session*  
*11 June 2019*

## **2019/13**

### **Extensions of ongoing country programmes**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the two-month extension of the country programme for Mali and the first one-year extension of the country programme for Tunisia, which were approved by the Executive Director and are presented in table 1 of document [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.4](#);

2. *Approves* the one-year extension of the country programme for Yemen, following two previous one-year extensions and a previous two-year extension, as presented in table 2 of document [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.4](#).

*Annual session*  
*13 June 2019*

## **2019/14**

### **Evaluation reports and management responses**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the annual report for 2018 on the evaluation function in UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2019/14](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2019/15](#)), and welcomes the timely implementation of the revised evaluation policy;

2. *Welcomes* that UNICEF had the highest number of evaluations since 2012, and takes note with appreciation of the addition of three senior evaluation specialists at the regional level and the increase in spending on evaluation to 0.8 per cent of total programme expenditure in 2018, and requests UNICEF to reach the target of 1 per cent by the end of 2019, in accordance with its decision [2018/10](#);

3. *Also welcomes* the continued coordination of the Evaluation Office within the United Nations development system and the good progress on the evaluation of UNICEF activities, but notes with concern a reduction in the evaluation rate in some regions and the substantial increase in management-response actions that are not yet started, and requests UNICEF to address these issues and report back to the Executive Board at the annual session of 2020;

4. *Further welcomes* the summary of corporate evaluations, evaluability assessments, syntheses and reviews completed in 2018 and requests UNICEF to hold an informal briefing on the evaluation on innovation on the margins of the second regular session of 2019 and to present the report and its management response at the first regular session of 2020;

5. *Requests* the Evaluation Office to demonstrate progress in building its capacity to undertake gender-based analysis in evaluations and include this analysis in summary reports to the Executive Board;

6. *Takes note* of the evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex humanitarian emergencies, its executive summary (E/ICEF/2019/16) and its management response (E/ICEF/2019/17);

7. *Requests* UNICEF to develop structured approaches to accountability towards affected populations and to country-level dialogue with implementing partners about humanitarian principles;

8. *Encourages* all country offices in complex humanitarian emergencies to make use of vulnerability analysis clearly identifying the girls and boys most in need;

9. *Requests* UNICEF to demonstrate progress towards resolving the dilemma of how to balance coverage and equity in complex humanitarian emergencies in the annual report for 2019 on the evaluation function in UNICEF, which will be presented to the Executive Board at its annual session in 2020.

*Annual session  
13 June 2019*

## **2019/15**

### **Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2018, and management response**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2018 (E/ICEF/2019/18) and its management response (E/ICEF/2019/19);

2. *Appreciates* the increased activities of the Ethics Office in providing advice and guidance to staff and management on ethical issues, and welcomes the proactive role of the Principal Adviser, Ethics, in promoting ethical standards system-wide and within UNICEF;

3. *Requests* UNICEF to fully implement the UNICEF-related recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in its review of whistle-blower policies and practices in United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2018/4) and requests the Ethics Office to report on progress at the annual session of 2020;

4. *Recalls* its decision 2018/11 and requests UNICEF to share a summary of the results and recommendations of the Global Staff Survey 2017 with the Executive Board, and to share a similar summary of the upcoming Global Staff Survey 2019 with the Board at its annual session of 2020;

5. *Recalls* its decision 2018/11 and takes note of the Ethics Office's notable increase in activities and requests UNICEF and the Ethics Office to conduct an assessment of the level of resources provided to the Office, with a view to fulfilling its mandate, and requests the Office to present the results to the Executive Board at its annual session of 2020.

*Annual session  
13 June 2019*

## **2019/16**

### **Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2018 annual report to the Executive Board, and management response**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2018 annual report to the Executive Board (E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.3) and its management response (E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.4) and the report of the Audit Advisory Committee and

welcomes the overall opinion of the adequacy and effectiveness of the organization's framework of governance, risk management and control;

2. *Welcomes* the reporting against key performance indicators related to the work of the Office;

3. *Also welcomes* the inclusion in the 2018 annual report to the Executive Board of more-detailed analysis of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries and sexual harassment in the workplace, in accordance with its mandate, including allegations, investigations and actions taken;

4. *Further welcomes* the establishment of the Child Safeguarding Unit within the Office of the Executive Director of UNICEF;

5. *Takes note* of the significant increase in allegations regarding sexual exploitation and abuse, harassment and abuse of authority;

6. *Encourages* UNICEF management, in its reporting on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, to further enhance transparency on the total number of initial reports and on how the actions to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse ensure a victim-centred approach and are aligned with United Nations system-wide efforts;

7. *Acknowledges* the high implementation rate of audit recommendations and takes note of management's development of action plans to address the most-significant risk areas related to programme management, risk management, accountability, supply, logistics and asset management and safety and security;

8. *Notes with concern* the challenge to recover funds from implementing partners;

9. *Encourages* UNICEF to strengthen the systematic prevention and detection of and response to fraud and misconduct in all its forms in accordance with the UNICEF Anti-Fraud Strategy, taking note with concern of the low number of allegations related to fraud;

10. *Welcomes* the recommendation to UNICEF management to simplify the policy architecture for the better understanding of and compliance with organizational policies and manuals by staff;

11. *Requests* the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations to fill all existing vacancies and requests UNICEF to ensure that the Office is adequately resourced.

*Annual session  
13 June 2019*

## **2019/17**

### **Update on policies and processes of UNICEF on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Recalls* its decisions 2018/8 and 2019/5, and takes note with appreciation of the zero-tolerance approach of the Executive Director to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, within the organization and system-wide, and welcomes the updates presented at this annual session in this regard;

2. *Requests* that UNICEF present the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority and its management response at the second regular session of the Executive Board in 2019;

3. *Takes note with appreciation* of the UNICEF strategy to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries and sexual harassment, including actions for victim support, reporting, accountability and partnerships, and stresses the need for adequate resources; and requests that UNICEF present an update on the implementation of the strategy at the annual session of 2020.

*Annual session  
13 June 2019*

## **2019/18**

### **Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system**

#### *The Executive Board*

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

2. *Requests* UNICEF to work towards adequately sequencing entity-specific country programme documents so that the individual programmes derive directly from the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (now renamed United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework), which is to be prepared and finalized in full consultation and agreement with national Governments and is the most important planning document of the United Nations development system at the country level; and requests UNICEF to provide an update at the next session of the Executive Board on adjustments required;

3. *Also requests* UNICEF to provide, for information at the next session of the Executive Board, a detailed mapping of its regional assets and capacities, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 72/279 and mindful of ongoing discussions on the revamping of the regional approach of the United Nations development system;

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

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

6. *Also requests* UNICEF to continue to support the efforts of the Secretary-General to develop a tracking system to monitor efficiency gains;

7. *Welcomes* that UNICEF contributed its doubled contributions to the resident coordinator cost-sharing, and calls on UNICEF to implement the 1 per cent levy, as applicable, as per the operational guidance for implementing the coordination

levy (12 March 2019) issued by the United Nations Development Coordination Office;

8. *Recalls* its decision 2018/15 and notes that the agency-administered option for collecting the coordination levy adds administrative tasks to UNICEF and requires adjustments to agency administrative processes, and requests UNICEF to provide information on the adjustments and to promptly report to the Executive Board on any additional transaction and administrative costs associated with the administration of the levy, within existing reporting;

9. *Also recalls* the importance of funding predictability and urges Member States in a position to do so to prioritize regular resources and multi-year pledges;

10. *Encourages* UNICEF, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to place special emphasis on the implementation of their respective strategic plans, including the common chapter on joint programming, in accordance with their respective mandates and comparative and collaborative advantages, and to report at the annual session in 2020, including through the midterm reviews of their respective strategic plans, where and how the inter-agency process among the United Nations funds and programmes has led to greater efficiencies and effectiveness.

*Annual session  
13 June 2019*

## **Second regular session**

**2019/19**

### **Proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2020**

*The Executive Board*

*Adopts* the programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2020 as a flexible framework subject to revisions as appropriate in the course of the year.

Joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP  
(29 May 2020)<sup>1</sup>

*First regular session*  
11–13 February 2020

*Annual session*  
29 June–2 July 2020

*Second regular session*  
8–11 September 2020

**Organizational and procedural matters**

Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Executive Board (D) (14 January 2020)<sup>1</sup>

Working methods (D)

**Programme and policy matters**

UNICEF programme cooperation: Country programme documents (D)

Extensions of ongoing country programmes (D)

Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to recommendations and decisions of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Programme Coordinating Board meetings (I)

Update on UNICEF humanitarian action (I)

Extension and expansion of the Vaccine Independence Initiative and its revolving fund (D)

Update on the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (D)

**Evaluation, audit and oversight matters**

Evaluation of innovation in UNICEF work, and management response (D)

Update on the implementation of the recommendations made in the independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse; the Morgan Lewis report on sexual harassment investigations conducted by the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations;

**Organizational and procedural matters**

Report on the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and annual report for 2019 of the Executive Director of UNICEF (D)

UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit<sup>2</sup> (I)

Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action (D)

Annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 (I)

UNICEF programme cooperation: Country programme documents (D)

Extensions of ongoing country programmes (D)

**Evaluation, audit and oversight matters**

Annual report for 2019 on the evaluation function in UNICEF, and management response (D)

Evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, and management response (D)

Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2019, and management response (D)

Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2019 annual report to

**Organizational and procedural matters**

Proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2021 (D)

**Programme and policy matters**

UNICEF programme cooperation: Country programme documents (D)

Extensions of ongoing country programmes (D)

Structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (D)

Oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action (I)

**Evaluation, audit and oversight matters**

Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to education in humanitarian situations, and management response (D)

Oral update on UNICEF research activities and priorities in this regard (I)

<sup>1</sup> This date is tentative.

<sup>2</sup> The report is considered under the agenda item, “Report on the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and annual report for 2019 of the Executive Director of UNICEF”.

and the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority (*I*)

the Executive Board, and management response (*D*)

UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2019 annual report (*I*)

Update on the implementation of the recommendations made in the independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse; the Morgan Lewis report on sexual harassment investigations conducted by the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations; and the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority (*D*)

**Resource, financial and budgetary matters**

UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2018 and report of the Board of Auditors, and management response (*D*)

Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2020 workplan and proposed budget (*D*)

Joint preliminary comprehensive proposal on the cost-recovery policy (*I*)

Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (*I*)

**Resource, financial and budgetary matters**

Midterm review of the UNICEF integrated budget, 2018–2021 (*D*)

Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (*I*)

**Resource, financial and budgetary matters**

UNICEF Strategic Plan: updated financial estimates, 2020–2023 (*D*)

Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2019 (*D*)

Joint comprehensive proposal on the cost-recovery policy (*D*)

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<b>Other matters</b>	<b>Other matters</b>	<b>Other matters</b>
Provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2020 ( <i>I</i> )	Address by the Chairperson of the UNICEF Global Staff Association  Provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2020 ( <i>I</i> )	Reports of the field visit of the Executive Board of UNICEF and the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Woman and WFP ( <i>I</i> )  Provisional list of agenda items for the first regular session of 2021 ( <i>I</i> )

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*Note: (D) — For decision:* The secretariat prepares documentation on the agenda item. The Executive Board is expected to discuss and adopt a decision under the agenda item.

*(I) — For information:* The secretariat prepares documentation for information. The Executive Board may opt to take a decision under the agenda item.

*Second regular session  
13 September 2019*

## **2019/20 Working methods**

### *The Executive Board*

1. *Welcomes* the joint response prepared by the secretariats of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women);

2. *Emphasizes* the importance of coherence, collaboration and coordination in the work of the Executive Boards of the funds and programmes, while reaffirming the authority of each Board to adopt decisions at its own discretion;

3. *Requests* the secretariat of UNICEF, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS and UN-Women, to present to the Executive Board for deliberation and consideration at the first regular session of 2020 an example of an annual programme of work, including informal briefings, for each of the three options presented in the joint response, with corresponding explanatory narratives on the envisaged changes and their expected effect on Board oversight, effectiveness and efficiency, as well as further elaboration on the listed issues of joint relevance and interest to all Boards.

*Second regular session  
13 September 2019*

## **2019/21 Country programme documents**

### *The Executive Board*

1. *Reaffirms* Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Takes note* that the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Angola, Iraq, Liberia, Mexico and Sierra Leone ([E/ICEF/2019/P/L.5](#), [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.6](#), [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.7](#), [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.9](#) and [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.10](#)) were made available to Member States for their comments and input from 18 June to 8 July 2019;



3. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Angola, Iraq, Liberia, Mexico and Sierra Leone ([E/ICEF/2019/P/L.5](#), [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.6](#), [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.7](#), [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.9](#) and [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.10](#)).

*Second regular session  
13 September 2019*

## **2019/22**

### **Extensions of ongoing country programmes**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the two-month extension of the country programme for Paraguay, and the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Guatemala, Madagascar and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which were approved by the Executive Director and are presented in table 1 of document [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.11/Rev.1](#);

2. *Approves* the two-month extensions of the country programmes for Cuba, following a previous one-year extension, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, following two one-year extensions; and the nine-month extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic, following two previous one-year extensions, as presented in table 2 of document [E/ICEF/2019/P/L.11/Rev.1](#).

*Second regular session  
13 September 2019*

## **2019/23**

### **Structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 ([E/ICEF/2019/27](#)) and welcomes the improvement made to the format of the report;

2. *Requests* UNICEF to present more information on the innovative financing mechanisms mentioned in the report;

3. *Welcomes* steps taken by UNICEF, in collaboration with United Nations development system entities and Member States, to follow up on the commitments of the funding compact, and encourages UNICEF to continue dialogue with all United Nations development system entities and Member States to jointly make progress towards compliance with their mutual and interdependent funding compact commitments;

4. *Requests* UNICEF, as part of its reports on structured funding dialogues, to present harmonized annual reporting on the implementation of its entity-specific commitments and contribution to the collective commitments of the funding compact, including adding annual milestones, examples of country-level impact and a forward-looking narrative outlining intended progress for those milestones not yet realized, ahead of the second regular session of 2020 of the UNICEF Executive Board;

5. *Recalling* its decision 2018/15, requests UNICEF to further review the format and content of the report on the structured funding dialogue with a view to aligning resources, including programmatic, with expected results as set out in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, taking into account annual information on regular and other resources and financial gaps and projections as they relate to specific organizational or programmatic objectives and results as well as proposed

solutions, and to present, by the first regular session of 2020, options on improving the quality of the structured funding dialogues, both informal briefings throughout the year and the formal dialogue at the second regular session.

*Second regular session  
13 September 2019*

## **2019/24**

### **Evaluation report and management response**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Welcomes* the evaluation report on strengthening child protection systems: evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programme performance, its executive summary ([E/ICEF/2019/23](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2019/24](#));
2. *Requests* UNICEF to take the evaluation's recommendations forward, including to prioritize the interventions found to be the most effective and sustainable, and to consider the different levels of development of a child protection system within countries;
3. *Looks forward* to the forthcoming paper on the organization's child protection systems-strengthening approach, and requests UNICEF to clarify its conceptual approach throughout the organization;
4. *Encourages* UNICEF to look into ways to measure how the development of a systems-based approach helps to reduce individual child protection issues, as part of its child protection systems-strengthening approach paper;
5. *Also encourages* UNICEF to improve its multisectoral collaboration with national Governments, relevant United Nations entities and other relevant institutions, in accordance with their respective mandates, in order to strengthen child protection systems at the country level;
6. *Requests* UNICEF to provide the Executive Board with regular updates on its work in child protection systems-strengthening.

*Second regular session  
13 September 2019*

## **2019/25**

### **Report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority, and management response**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority, its summary ([E/ICEF/2019/25](#)) and its management response ([E/ICEF/2019/26](#));
2. *Takes note with appreciation* of the Morgan Lewis report on sexual harassment investigations conducted by the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations;
3. *Requests* UNICEF to implement the recommendations of the report of the Independent Task Force, including the implementation of a thorough and structured change-management process and organizational culture change, with clear responsibilities, and further requests UNICEF to provide to the Executive Board regular updates on corresponding progress;

4. *Encourages* UNICEF to work towards the eradication of all forms of workplace gender discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority, with a particular emphasis on addressing the underlying causes as well as on bridging perceived institutional divides between UNICEF staff groups;

5. *Also encourages* UNICEF to ensure that action taken in response to the report of the Independent Task Force reinforces and complements action taken as part of its response to the independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

*Second regular session  
13 September 2019*

## **2019/26**

### **UNICEF Strategic Plan: updated financial estimates, 2019–2022**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the planned financial estimates for the period 2019–2022, contained in document [E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.5](#), as a flexible framework for supporting UNICEF programmes;

2. *Approves* the integrated resources framework of planned financial estimates for the period 2019–2022, and also approves the preparation of country programme expenditure submissions to the Executive Board of up to \$1.38 billion from regular resources in 2020, subject to the availability of resources and the continued validity of the planned financial estimates;

3. *Requests* UNICEF to provide annual updates to the Executive Board on the progress of funding its reserves for staff liabilities.

*Second regular session  
13 September 2019*

## **2019/27**

### **Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2018**

#### *The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2018 ([E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.6](#));

2. *Recognizes* the funding model of UNICEF, which relies on significant contributions from the private sector;

3. *Encourages* UNICEF to continue to monitor and analyse closely the reasons behind the shortfalls in private sector fundraising in 2018 and to inform on effective remedial measures where feasible;

4. *Also encourages* UNICEF to review the private sector revenue growth expectations for the remainder of the Private Sector Plan 2018–2021 ahead of the elaboration of the Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2020 workplan and proposed budget, to be presented at the first regular session of 2020;

5. *Requests* UNICEF to provide, in the Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2019, to be presented at the second regular session of 2020, the result of its collaboration with the other United Nations agencies in engaging with the private sector.

*Second regular session  
13 September 2019*

2019/28

**Cost recovery: joint review of the existing cost definitions and classifications of activities and associated costs**

*The Executive Board*

1. *Takes note* of the analysis contained in the document entitled “Joint review of the existing cost definitions and classifications of activities and associated costs” (DP/FPA-ICEF-UNW/2019/1);

2. *Reiterates* its decision 2018/21 and paragraph 35 of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system;

3. *Endorses* recommendations 1 and 2 for further alignment contained in the present report for application effective in their integrated budgets, beginning in 2022, and requests UNICEF, working with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to implement standardized terminology and formatting of integrated budget proposals and financial information in its annual report, recognizing that, while all cost categories and functional clusters will be shown, not all will apply to each organization;

4. *Takes note* of recommendation 3, which proposes the creation of separate cost classification line items in the integrated resources plan, to report on and obtain separate appropriations for independent oversight and assurance activities, as well as resident coordinator cost-sharing contributions, and welcomes additional information on this at the first regular session of 2020 to enable further analysis prior to the potential adoption of this recommendation.

*Second regular session  
13 September 2019*

## Annex III

### **Report of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP held on 31 May 2019**

#### **I. MORNING SESSION: OPENING**

1. The President of the Executive Board of WFP opened the joint meeting of the Executive Boards (JMB) on 31 May 2019, welcoming the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, participants from the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP, and the principals of the six United Nations agencies. He encouraged all present to reflect on the ultimate goal of the United Nations reform: to improve how the funds and agencies served people on the ground, whether through greater efficiency, increased coherence or innovative thinking. In this respect, the recent joint field visit of the Executive Boards to Colombia had been particularly valuable, giving participants insight into what it meant for the United Nations to work jointly, coherently and in partnership with the government.

2. In her opening address, the Deputy Secretary-General noted that reform efforts were well under way and recognized contributions from each of the heads of agency present. She was encouraged by discussions at the recent High-Level Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, which had been the first joint opportunity to reflect on progress made since the adoption of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#), exactly one year previously. Among the highlights from the session, the Deputy Secretary-General described the broad recognition of the implementation of all reform mandates; the documentation drawn up to support reform processes, such as the management accountability framework; the high expectations of Member States, particularly in areas such as the reporting of efficiency gains and oversight; and the commitment to engage in dialogue with Member States on how to strengthen regional assets and country offices.

3. She urged Executive Board members to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the reform as they explored the topics on the agenda for the JMB. She noted that Member State guidance would be crucial on many issues related to the reform, such as the design of reporting systems and country progress systems; entity-specific discussions on the funding compact; support for sustainable cost contributions for the resident coordinator system and the 1 percent levy; and recruitment of the best candidates for the resident coordinator posts. In closing, on behalf of the Secretary-General, she acknowledged the huge workload faced by the Executive Boards in the run-up to the General Assembly meeting in September. She encouraged all present to continue the momentum towards achieving Agenda 2030, working together to meet the aspirations of people around the world.

4. In his remarks, the Executive Director of WFP characterized the JMB as a valuable opportunity for all present to inspire each other towards making the United Nations the best it could be. He underscored the importance of removing silos as part of the reform process, noting that many silos could be traced back to stipulations imposed by the Member States themselves, and he called on everyone to engage in open, honest communication in order to allow the funds and programmes to work together as effectively as possible. He urged participants not to lose sight of the biggest global challenges, such as ending conflict and wars, while they examined opportunities to improve collaboration between the various Executive Boards. In closing, he pointed out the power of employing easily understood, jargon-free language when talking about the multiple positive impacts of the work carried out by

the United Nations, noting that direct, effective communication was the route towards unlocking increased funding for this vital work.

## II. MORNING SESSION: TOPIC 1

### **Working methods of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP**

5. The President of the Executive Board of UNICEF presented the first topic, observing that considerable work had been done to improve and streamline the work of the Executive Boards over the past few years. As a recent example of this progress, the Core Group of Member States on working methods of the Executive Boards had been founded in January 2019 in response to the decisions on working methods adopted by the respective Executive Boards at their 2018 second regular sessions. The group was tasked with leading the joint consultative process with Member States to examine the efficiency and quality of the current Executive Board sessions as well as the functions of the JMB. The President thanked the Coordinator of the Core Group, the Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, and all participating Member States and Secretariats for their constructive engagement in the group.

6. The President reminded the joint meeting that the overarching objective of the discussions of the Core Group was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the working methods of the JMB and their respective governing bodies while preserving their executive guidance and oversight without duplicating the functions of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) operational activities for development segment and the respective Executive Boards. The President highlighted that the Core Group recognized that improvements in the working methods had to be made respecting the different mandates and characteristics of each agency. In the written account of its work, the Core Group recommended several actions that could be taken by each Board immediately, all of which UNICEF had indicated its readiness to support, or was already taking action on: making the Executive Board sessions more interactive; increasing gender parity in the composition of panellists participating in Executive Board sessions; and institutionalizing the meeting of the Presidents of the Boards for enhanced harmonization of common issues and strengthened coordination among the agencies.

7. The President noted that improving the working methods did not mean taking a ‘one size fits all’ approach, and he emphasized that each agency and Executive Board should strive to make individual progress towards improving their working methods wherever they could.

8. The President affirmed that the Executive Board of UNICEF was fully engaged in the process to advance its working methods and enjoyed the full support of the Executive Director of UNICEF in its efforts. Nonetheless, he noted, there was still work to be done. He highlighted the lack of an effective mechanism for taking decisions on matters that concerned all the Executive Boards. Such issues were discussed and decided by each Executive Board individually, which resulted in duplication and fragmentation. He called on Member States to revisit proposals on how the Boards could handle joint matters without delegating decision-making power or affecting the autonomy and independence of the Boards. He noted that joint action could be discussed and agreed collectively, while decisions could continue to be adopted individually by each Board. Issues that would benefit from such treatment included cost recovery, the common chapter of strategic plans, implementation of the repositioning of the United Nations development system and working methods. These

were examples of joint issues that should be addressed in concert with the Executive Boards in order to promote inter-agency efficiency and collaboration.

9. In closing, the President emphasized that the working methods of the Boards were a means to an end, and not an end in themselves. He underlined the need to work together, noting that Board members and the secretariats needed to do their part. The President observed that it was important to avoid the Boards becoming entangled in the minutiae that should be handled by the secretariats, allowing them instead to focus on the strategic issues that could help to advance the common and individual agendas of each Board while recognizing and respecting the unique mandates and characteristics of each agency. Finally, the President noted that the process to improve working methods was now well under way; the work ultimately sought to ensure that working methods fully supported the achievement of Agenda 2030; and better working methods would bring efficiencies for the Boards and gains for all, collectively and individually.

10. The Coordinator of the Core Group presented the written account, highlighting the main findings and recommendations related to discussions on the working methods of the JMB; the working methods of the respective governing bodies; and rules, documentation and decision making. He emphasized that throughout the discussions, the Core Group had recognized that any changes to working methods had to respect the mandates and particular characteristics of each agency.

11. The written account divided the Core Group findings into areas of convergence and areas of non-convergence. The Coordinator highlighted eight areas of convergence, including joint informal briefings on topics for the JMB, the institutionalization of the Presidents' meeting, increased long-term planning of the joint field visits, and the drawing up of an overview table to compare the rules of procedure of the respective Executive Boards. Among the areas of non-convergence, he cited three proposals: elevating the JMB to a decision-making body, introducing one-day special meetings to approve country documents (thereby reducing the workload for Board sessions) and harmonizing the structure of the rules of procedure of the four Boards.

12. The Core Group recommended that each Board consider how to act on the areas of convergence identified in the written account, including by incorporating them into decisions on working methods. As Member States currently held diverse positions regarding the areas of non-convergence, these could be revisited at a later date to explore potential ways forward. The Coordinator also noted that the Core Group had prepared a draft template for decisions reflecting joint informal discussions at the JMB. The template could be used as a basis for negotiation and adoption of decisions at each respective Executive Board session taking place immediately after the JMB.

13. The Member States expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Core Group, echoing the need to respect the individual mandates and characteristics of the Executive Boards and to ensure that any changes made did not dilute the oversight function of the Member States. Several delegations observed that changes should focus on areas identified as problematic in order to avoid altering working methods that were already efficient. One Member State noted that discussions should include all United Nations Member States, not just those on the Executive Boards, and suggested that ECOSOC might therefore represent a more suitable forum in which to address these issues. The delegation also voiced concern over the proposal to increase the number of Board sessions held annually. Member States agreed with the proposal to focus initially on the areas of convergence and to leave those of non-convergence for future discussions.

14. The President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS reassured the Member States that the Presidents of the Board would take swift action on the findings

of the Core Group, not least on the proposal to hold the meeting of the Presidents more regularly. The recent joint field trip to Colombia, which had brought together all four Presidents, proved how productive it was for the Presidents to work closely on issues of common concern. He also highlighted issues raised at the recent ECOSOC operational activities for development segment, which addressed aligning system-wide and entity-level governance for improved accountability. These issues merited Board attention and included the link between ECOSOC and the Executive Boards and the need to shift from an individual agency approach to an integrated approach that would allow agencies to work smoothly together at the country level. There was also a call for building on best practice related to the common chapter and look at common text for other issues.

15. In response to the comments from Member States, the Coordinator of the Core Group agreed that there should be an emphasis on avoiding duplication and overlap in all changes to working methods. He noted that in general the Core Group was not in favour of increasing the number of Board sessions and had agreed that it would be the prerogative of each Executive Board to fix the number of sessions held each year. While he was not in a position to comment on the proposal to use ECOSOC as a forum to discuss working methods, he did appreciate the agreement among the Member States that the current focus should be on the areas of convergence.

16. The President of the Executive Board of WFP shared the perspective of the WFP membership on efforts to improve working methods. While WFP was unconditionally committed to improving its working methods and supported the joint consultative process, as confirmed by a decision taken by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2019, the WFP membership felt that they were underrepresented in the discussions, which they perceived as being focused on resolving challenges faced by the New York Boards. Many of the proposals put forward to improve working methods were not clearly relevant to WFP because of its humanitarian mandate, its different operational governance and oversight needs, and its dual parentage with ECOSOC and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. WFP's institutional environment differed from that of the New York based agencies, and its calendar was synchronized with that of the other Rome-based agencies. The agency also faced very particular challenges – such as a multiplication of needs and resources over the past few years due to a rising number of conflicts and food emergencies around the world. In the context of these challenges, the WFP membership was very happy with the way the Executive Board was currently managed and there was little perceived need for deep reform or convergence with other Boards. The President stressed that WFP and its Executive Bureau in no way sought to impede the process to improve working methods and would actively contribute whenever they meaningfully could, but he noted that there was a need to reassess the view that WFP should be treated as if it were a New York based organization to be treated equally with other New York based funds and programmes.

17. In his closing remarks, the President of the Executive Board of UNICEF noted that just as the broader United Nations reform effort sought to create agencies better placed to serve those in need, the respective Executive Boards also needed to know how to adapt to contribute to this goal. He urged the Boards to act on the areas of convergence, mindful that these were recommendations, not decisions, and that no changes were being imposed. At UNICEF, work was already under way on the areas where UNICEF could improve how it operated, from increasing the attention paid to gender parity to examining how to optimize the use of Board session time.

18. He agreed with Member States that it would take time to address the areas of non-convergence and that respect for mandates should underpin all efforts to improve working methods. Nonetheless, he described coordination between agencies as paramount and said that it was imperative to break down silos and other barriers to



effective collaboration in the field. New working cultures were needed to achieve this, both within the respective agencies and within the Member States themselves, who should encourage reform in their own institutions. Change would take time, but it was necessary to adapt in order to respond to the challenges faced by people in need around the world.

### **III. MORNING SESSION: TOPIC 2**

#### **Harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination, and sexual exploitation and abuse**

19. In her opening remarks, the President of the Executive Board of UN-Women described the discussions at the JMB as a reaffirmation of the commitment of all participating Executive Boards to ending sexual abuse and to engaging in the cultural change needed to create a world free from abusive behaviour.

20. The Executive Director of UNICEF thanked the members of the Executive Boards for their engagement and support and reaffirmed UNICEF's commitment to ending sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), sexual harassment and all forms of discrimination, abuse of power and harassment in the workplace. She emphasized the trust placed in the agencies – by beneficiaries, staff members and partner organizations alike – that they would provide safe programmes and a respectful environment with no place for harassment or abuse of any kind.

21. UNICEF had taken several steps to strengthen its internal systems to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse. UNICEF was also taking action to improve its workplace culture, introducing simpler reporting mechanisms and strengthening investigations. All allegations of SEA involving UNICEF staff, contractors or personnel of implementing partners were systematically reported to the United Nations Special Coordinator for SEA. The Executive Director had commissioned an independent report into UNICEF's internal culture, and a new strategy was being drawn up to address workplace issues. She noted that while similar efforts were under way within agencies, a collective approach was needed across all agencies and partner organizations to ensure cohesive and effective response to these issues at the country level.

22. In her capacity as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Champion on SEA and Sexual Harassment, the Executive Director was heartened to see the level of commitment and engagement across the agencies to work together on these issues, including the dedication of human and financial resources to support accelerated action on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) at the country level. Efforts were under way to share common data on SEA and sexual harassment, and to improve investigation capacities.

23. In terms of PSEA within communities, the agencies were working together to strengthen reporting mechanisms, improve support to survivors and increase accountability across the United Nations system. A new plan adopted by IASC in December sought to accelerate efforts to strengthen PSEA focusing on safe and accessible reporting mechanisms; support for SEA survivors, to help them reintegrate into their communities; and better accountability and investigations. Nonetheless, challenges remained as there was massive underreporting of SEA among communities and of harassment and abuse of power within the agencies themselves. Response services were still uneven and there were large gaps in ensuring criminal accountability for those who committed these acts.

24. The Executive Director of UN-Women emphasized the vital role of senior leadership in changing organizational culture and instilling zero tolerance for SEA, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination. Organizations had to take a victim-centred approach, protect whistle-blowers and exercise due process in a timely way. She noted that in many cases, investigations in United Nations bodies were lengthy, particularly in comparison to other organizations where an issue could be concluded within a week of the allegation. In general, it was important for the United Nations to look to trends in the outside world in order to tap into best practice that could improve the effectiveness of its response to these issues.

25. UN-Women sought to place women's experience at the heart of all work to combat sexual harassment, ensuring that system-wide processes were in place and best practice was shared. To this end, the organization had appointed an Executive Coordinator and Spokesperson on Sexual Harassment and Discrimination, who worked with all United Nations agencies. UN-Women was also active in the Spotlight Initiative and in the taskforce set up by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to address sexual harassment. The organization worked with the private sector, academia and civil society on initiatives to prevent and tackle sexual harassment.

26. Last year, the United Nations System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment was endorsed by the High-Level Committee on Management and subsequently by the CEB. The adoption and implementation of the policy was being monitored. A recent workplace survey across the United Nations had revealed worrying trends in the incidence and nature of sexual harassment within the system and showed a strong correlation between sexual harassment, exclusion and incivility. Workplaces characterized by incivility created a fertile ground for abuse of power, bullying, racism and other forms of harassment and discrimination.

27. The Executive Director thanked the governments of Israel, Kenya, France and the Netherlands for their proactive approach in setting up a new Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment. In addition to efforts to prevent sexual harassment within UN-Women itself, the organization also held regular capacity-building sessions for gender focal points from other United Nations agencies. Other activities included the development of the recently launched enabling environment guidelines, and work to prepare a victims' rights charter on sexual harassment. In conclusion, the Executive Director underlined the importance of fostering a safe environment for junior and subordinate staff and contractors to report any issues related to harassment or abuse. Specifically addressing the Member States, she invited them to consider the issue of diplomatic immunity to evaluate whether it was a privilege they wished to retain while demanding different levels of behaviour from the United Nations agencies.

28. Member States reaffirmed their support for the work carried out by all the agencies to tackle SEA and sexual harassment. Several offered to share best practices distilled from experience within their own institutions. Member States identified investigative capacity as a key issue, acknowledging the difficulty in accessing investigators specialized in cases of SEA and sexual harassment. One delegation proposed introducing a pool of investigators that could be drawn upon by the different agencies, which could also increase the impartiality of investigations.

29. Regarding country-level coordination, one Member State requested more information on the role of the resident coordinators and the country teams. The delegation also asked for more details on how agencies were tracking their progress, how the Clearcheck database was being implemented, and how Member States could best support efforts to prevent and respond to SEA and sexual harassment. Another Member State sought clarity on how the various agencies were sharing their expertise.

30. The Executive Director of UNICEF thanked the Member States for their support. Regarding the issue of investigators, she described the difficulty in accessing those with the right skills, adding that it was particularly hard to find women investigators. UNICEF had recently expanded their number of investigators from 10 to 17, which would make a positive difference. However, she thought the pool idea should be explored, noting it would need to expand and contract according to agency needs. UNICEF had begun considering a fast-track approach to investigations of different types and the Executive Director encouraged the Executive Boards to give agencies the authority to introduce such an approach, even potentially piloting a one-week procedure for certain cases.

31. The Executive Director echoed the words of her counterpart in UN-Women regarding the obstacle presented by diplomatic immunity, which prevented bringing perpetrators to justice. Member State engagement was needed to overcome this issue. In response to questions about monitoring progress, she noted that as part of the IASC proposal for accelerated PSEA action at the country level, a monitoring framework had been developed to benchmark progress against the three priority areas of reporting, access to services and investigations. Member States could certainly contribute with financial support, also to ensure that victims of SEA in the communities where United Nations agencies worked had access to the right support to safeguard their mental health and facilitate their reintegration into society. There were insufficient resources to sustain access to services for SEA survivors based on their individual needs.

32. The Executive Director also noted the value of national campaigns to eradicate the social acceptance of violence within relationships – another potential way in which Member States could contribute to the elimination of SEA and sexual harassment.

33. In her response, the Executive Director of UN-Women thanked the Member States for highlighting the issue of cultural change, and she welcomed all efforts to share best practice. Regarding country-level coordination, she noted that the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women required all agencies to facilitate cultural change as part of their work to embed gender equality in their work at the country level. However, she welcomed the suggestion to explore how the resident coordinators could contribute to coordination on these issues. In terms of support from the Member States, she noted the need for greater investment in investigative capacity and for policy harmonization between the United Nations agencies and Member States. Coupled with a better use of technology, these efforts would contribute to preventing the movement of perpetrators between organizations, as well as strengthening the climate of zero tolerance. In closing, she mentioned a new initiative by the Government of New Zealand to use taxpayers' money to compensate victims of SEA and sexual harassment; it would be interesting to see whether such an approach would give institutions greater incentive to prevent misconduct.

34. The President of the Executive Board of UNICEF strongly condemned any instance of SEA in United Nations operations. He felt that efforts to respond to SEA should be prioritized in terms of securing funding and removing technical barriers such as in the recruitment of investigators. He suggested ECOSOC as the forum for addressing these obstacles and called on the other Presidents of the Board to support these efforts. He supported the idea of common solutions, such as a common database for sharing best practices, a shared pool of investigators and common evaluation and response frameworks. He was personally in favour of lifting diplomatic immunity and believed many countries would hold the same position in response to reports of SEA. He agreed that the timescale of investigations needed to be reduced, noting that the Government of Morocco had established the best practice of including a police officer

with its troops, enabling investigations to commence immediately upon the report of misconduct.

35. The President of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS raised the issue of collaboration over victim support, noting that support should be provided regardless of the agencies involved. He asked whether this flexible approach was in place to allow, for instance, victims to receive support through UNFPA even if that particular agency was not involved in the incident.

36. The Executive Director of UNICEF welcomed the clear commitment to addressing SEA and sexual harassment. She suggested that the goal of starting an investigation immediately upon receiving a report could be something the agencies could work towards in the long term but would require additional resources. Regarding coordination mechanisms, she pointed to the IASC, which included non-governmental organizations and all agencies working in the humanitarian sphere. A protocol on assistance to victims of SEA was being finalized; it would be critical to secure resources for its implementation at the country level.

37. The Executive Director of WFP shared his views on the issues of SEA and sexual harassment. He echoed the call for senior leadership to embed a culture of zero tolerance and foster a sense of trust among staff and contractors. WFP had seen an increase in reports of harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination over the past six months, which revealed an increased level of confidence in the organization's ability to handle cases effectively. Anonymous staff surveys had also given insight into potential problem areas, and WFP had recently increased the level of resources dedicated to investigations by USD 4 million. A joint WFP management/Executive Board working group had been established to gather best practice from Member States and response times for handling reports of harassment or abuse had been reduced. The organization would continue to work on eradicating misconduct in every way it could.

38. In her remarks, the Executive Director of UNFPA noted that tangible progress had been made in tackling SEA and sexual harassment. At UNFPA, this work included the drawing up of a PSEA accountability policy, improved outreach initiatives and the introduction of a global PSEA focal point system. In 2019, the organization was taking steps to improve communication with at-risk groups, to encourage bystanders to take action and to increase access to and trust in reporting mechanisms, particularly in remote locations. The organization was taking a holistic approach, working together with its partner organizations and striving to achieve a workplace free from any kind of abuse.

39. In its capacity as the lead coordinating agency in the area of gender-based violence, UNFPA was conducting a global mapping to establish how gender-based violence referral mechanisms were being used, when available. In terms of future challenges, she highlighted the need to improve victim support and to strengthen the accountability of implementing partners. There should be a focus on designing practical tools to deliver assurance, particularly in humanitarian settings. In closing, she affirmed the commitment of UNFPA to changing its organizational culture, creating a safe environment for everyone to voice concerns and engaging in open, transparent communication on the progress it made towards achieving these goals.

40. The Executive Director of UN-Women gave her closing remarks, noting that her agency hoped to take full advantage of the discussions to devise recommendations for consideration by the end of the day. Regarding coordination, she pointed to the system-wide taskforce and the network of gender focal points that worked together. Much remained to be done, such as harmonizing the 20 investigative bodies within the United Nations, particularly with a view to removing the burden of proof on the claimant. The Executive Director highlighted the coordination between UN-Women

and Member States, through police forces around the world. The organization was examining the issue of police training, with the ambition of introducing gender sensitivity into every police force in the world. She also noted the need to invest in changing social norms related to male behaviour, affirming that everyone had a role to play in eradicating SEA and sexual harassment.

41. The Administrator of UNDP expressed his alignment with the comments made by his counterparts, noting the clear sense of responsibility and commitment present throughout the discussions. He observed that the increase in reporting was not a sign of increased incidence but rather of the greater credibility of the agencies. He noted the challenges involved in expediting cases, as an increase in the number of investigators had to be matched by an increase in the lawyers available to examine cases. He called for increased investment, at least in the short term, to allow the agencies to clear the backlog of cases that were now coming forward.

42. The President of the Executive Board of UN-Women brought the discussions to a close, highlighting the following points: the underlying issue of power inequalities and their role in perpetuating harassment and abuse; the importance of cultural change; the role of Member States; diplomatic immunity; the need for increased investment and capacity building for investigators; the harmonization of policies and standards; and the importance of collaboration and the sharing of best practices.

#### **IV. AFTERNOON SESSION: TOPIC 3**

##### **Implementation of United Nations development system reform, and innovative financing for the Sustainable Development Goals**

43. In his introduction, the President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS noted the timeliness of the topic, given the ECOSOC meeting of the previous week, which had addressed follow-up actions to the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the General Assembly resolution on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. Financing was a key element of this.

44. He observed that thus far, discussion on the reform had focused on setting up new institutions and the new resident coordinator system, with the ultimate aim of improving how results were delivered on the ground. In this regard, the recent joint trip to Colombia had offered valuable insight into what was happening at the field level. While there was general appreciation of the importance of the reform process, the President noted that the United Nations country team in Colombia did not yet have access to the road maps and guidance needed to implement change. He suggested that greater engagement with those in the field could help them to better reflect the content of New York-level discussions in their operations.

45. Moving to the subject of innovative financing for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the President noted an abundance of interesting ideas, such as strengthening partnerships with the private sector, implementing the common United Nations development system due diligence approach, exploring further use of the SDG Joint Fund, and generating system-wide lessons learned and best practice. He asserted that the private sector should not be seen simply as a source of income to fill in funding gaps. Instead, the United Nations should use its convening power to redirect private-sector resources to achieve the SDGs; examples of this approach could be found in the SDG Impact fund of UNDP and the Social Impact Investment Initiative of UNOPS.

46. The Administrator of UNDP traced the connection between the United Nations development system reform and innovative financing, noting that beyond the drive to

create new coordination mechanisms, the reform also sought to facilitate new ways of thinking together to achieve Agenda 2030 and prepare for the future. The unprecedented levels of investment required to do this should be seen as investing the wealth of today into the economy of the future, which was described by the 17 SDGs. This connection was clear in Secretary-General's road map for financing the 2030 Agenda, which examined the alignment of global financial resources and economic policies for the 2030 Agenda; sustainable financing strategies at the regional and country levels; and new technologies and digitalization.

47. At UNDP, a number of task teams had been set up to explore financing the 2030 Agenda. It was clear there needed to be a focus on new sources of funding such as green bonds, blended finance instruments and the sukuk bonds found in Islamic finance. The United Nations was in a position to help governments reduce risk and create mature domestic markets in order to attract investment. The reform represented a vital opportunity to bring together different capabilities within the United Nations family to develop a more contemporary set of inputs for countries seeking to make private financing part of their strategy to achieve the SDGs – an approach that was different from privatization.

48. In her remarks, the Executive Director of UNOPS emphasized that innovation was key to successful reform. She noted that official development aid was far from sufficient to achieve the SDGs; the shortfall of USD 6 trillion would have to come from the private sector. It was clear that development depended on the active, responsible participation of the private sector and it was imperative that the United Nations found ways to support this.

49. At UNOPS, the Social Impact Investing Initiative sought to address this challenge, focusing on three areas of sustainable infrastructure: affordable housing, renewable energy and health infrastructure. The result was an innovative platform supporting partnership between governments, UNOPS and private partners. Agreements had already been signed with governments in Kenya, Ghana and India to finance the construction of affordable housing, while in Mexico, the initiative was coinvesting in a project to revitalize a 22-mW wind farm to deliver low-cost, renewable energy to 50,000 people in underserved communities. The projects would also generate thousands of local jobs by using local supply chains and local contractors and would support technology transfer.

50. In conclusion, the Executive Director emphasized that the focus should not be on the scale of these current projects but rather on the establishment of a successful funding model. The initiative worked by partnering with the private sector, taking a share of the financial risks and going to market together. The United Nations system needed to embrace partnerships with the private sector to tap into investment and new and better technologies.

51. Member States welcomed the discussion on reform and financing, describing it as both timely and useful. Several delegations thought the topics would require further examination in the future, potentially even at the next JMB. One Member State asked how the new resident coordinator system could support agency innovation, emphasizing that private sector collaboration could be a valuable source of expertise as well as financing. Other questions related to the main challenges faced by the agencies when seeking to work with the private sector and how Member States could help, and how the United Nations reform process was impacting the core funding of the agencies and whether innovative funding could help offset any reduction in this funding.

52. In response, the Executive Director of UNOPS noted that the business model of UNOPS represented an advantage in working with the private sector. As the agency did not receive core funding but was simply paid for services rendered, it had a

structure that private-sector entities could relate to. A lot of procurement involved buying goods and services from the private sector, facilitating an exchange of technology and expertise. In terms of lessons learned, it was important to bear in mind that the private sector was looking for financial sustainability, ahead of social and environmental sustainability. The time to market was another important factor, particularly for small and medium sized companies.

53. On the subject of the resident coordinators, the Administrator of UNDP said they had a role to play in engaging with governments to establish the degree to which they wished to work with the United Nations on different aspects of financing. The resident coordinators should also ensure that during the country assessments and the development of the cooperation framework, the question of financing was an integral part of the offer of the United Nations development system and the United Nations country team. The resident coordinators could also tap into the expertise of agencies that were not resident in their respective country. The Administrator emphasized that the resident coordinators did not replace the capacities and roles of the programmes and funds, noting that the agencies and Member States needed to learn to work within the new system to avoid duplication.

54. He agreed that the private sector also had much to offer in terms of expertise, citing the example of digital financial technology. Contrary to what could perhaps be imagined, some of the most advanced uses of this type of technology were to be found in developing countries, as the regulatory inertia in established economies often hampered innovation.

55. He identified a number of challenges faced by the United Nations in seeking to work with the private sector, some of which arose from the United Nations' fiduciary integrity and its occasionally antiquated systems. UNDP was working on improving 152 business processes, which in many cases meant changing the guidance on how to engage with the private sector and creating new legal instruments and platforms to support this type of collaboration.

56. In terms of the impact of United Nations reform on core funding, he estimated the effect on UNDP would amount to USD 25 million, generated by the doubling of the contribution and the 1 percent levy. This shortfall could not easily be made up through innovative financing alone.

57. In closing, he warned that it was unrealistic to think that private organizations were keen to fund United Nations work. While there were opportunities to collaborate where interests coincided, it was unlikely that the private sector would become an alternative source of financing for the United Nations.

58. In her remarks, the Deputy Executive Director (Management) of UNFPA described a costing and impact estimation initiative under way in her agency, which examined the financial investment needed to achieve the three transformative results of UNFPA: ending preventable maternal death; ending unmet need for family planning; and ending gender-based violence and all harmful practices. The initiative also supported efforts to fill the financing gap of USD 2.5 trillion per year needed to achieve the SDGs in developing countries, and it facilitated the establishment of new partnerships and the strengthening of existing ones. Highlighting examples of the work, the Deputy Executive Director mentioned an exercise by UNFPA Ukraine to calculate the economic cost of violence against women and a costing and gap analysis for achieving the transformative results conducted by UNFPA El Salvador.

59. In terms of private sector partnership, she described an initiative with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, with support from McKinsey, which sought to develop a guarantee mechanism for the sexual and

reproductive health commodity procurement capacity of UNFPA. The fund was also working with the Islamic Development Bank on insurance in Cameroon and with the ministries of health and finance in Guatemala on a scheme to use taxes collected on the sale of alcohol to replenish a revolving fund used for emergency procurement.

60. In her remarks, the Executive Director of UNICEF reported that her agency had been co-chairing the public–private partnership section (the Strategic Partnerships Results Group) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, which had set up a common due diligence screening system and was facilitating efforts to modernize and streamline United Nations rules, as well as acting as a platform for agencies to share their expertise and experience. She suggested that resident coordinators could tap into host country companies, helping to overcome the system-wide problem of a lack of suppliers to the United Nations in the Global South. Following on from comments by the UNDP Administrator, the Executive Director agreed that public–private partnerships helped to reduce risk for governments, but she also noted the scope for finding completely private solutions to challenges faced by governments and United Nations agencies, for example, in emergency situations when a mobile phone operator might be the entity best placed to trace people who had been left homeless by a natural disaster. In response to a question about core funding, she noted the difficulties associated with earmarked funding. She referred to the UNICEF project *Conceptos Plásticos* as an example of an innovative way of working: the project used plastic waste collected by communities and transformed it into bricks that could be used to build schools.

61. Noting that both UNDP and UNICEF received generous support from Member States for innovation, she saw the potential to graduate from the current network of innovation labs to a more collaborative approach between the two agencies, whereby UNDP could be the lead in searching for and identifying innovations and UNICEF could play a role in developing and scaling up solutions. She stressed that innovation was being sought in all areas but that innovative financing could not help the agencies with their basic core financing.

62. The Executive Director of UN-Women underscored the importance of addressing the regulatory measures within the United Nations that made it impossible to attract innovative financing. An example of these challenges included accessing funding from companies who sought tax benefits when they donated; in such cases, donations often passed through intermediaries, who took a big cut of the money. Companies were also unhappy with this system, preferring to be associated directly with UN-Women. The Executive Director observed that for investment in gender equality, there appeared to be a psychological barrier that prevented Member States from donating above a certain threshold, which therefore restricted the progress that could be made. This was in contrast to the rhetoric in favour of gender equality, which was much stronger than the financial backing it received.

63. As an example of positive private-sector partnership, the Executive Director described the *Unstereotype Alliance*, a platform for the marketing departments of private companies to access and implement a programme designed by UN-Women to combat stereotypes in advertising campaigns with a view to shaping a more inclusive culture for the future. She noted that as the United Nations could never dream of having the resources of major multinationals, the approach was to ask these companies to implement change themselves, with UN-Women adopting the role of Ombudsman to check they were following up on their commitments. The initiative was reinforced by *Cannes Lions*, which was using the standards set by UN-Women for acceptable unstereotyped advertising as one of their criteria for selecting award-winning campaigns. The initiative therefore extended the influence of the work of UN-Women far beyond what it could achieve alone.



64. The President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS brought the topic to a close, expressing his hope that the agencies could build upon the discussion to strengthen partnerships with non-state partners, especially the private sector, and to share best practices. He paraphrased the Secretary-General, observing that the resources were already out there to achieve Agenda 2030, it was a question of joining the dots.

## V. AFTERNOON SESSION: CLOSING

65. Bringing deliberations to a close, the President of WFP gave the floor to the Executive Director of UN-Women, who gave a follow-up on the discussions of the morning session regarding the potential fast-tracking of investigations and a speedier settlement of reports of SEA and sexual harassment. She called on the other agencies to support UN-Women by asking their respective heads of investigations to come together to define a costed inter-agency proposal to improve the investigative function, ensure timelier investigations, pool their resources and elaborate on the standards for a victim-centred approach, including ensuring there was support and protection for victims against any type of retaliation, particularly at the country level, acknowledging that services, especially for SEA survivors remained limited. UN-Women also called for United Nations support in harnessing the resident coordinator system and the country teams to implement a coordinated inter-agency response to SEA and sexual harassment at the country level.

66. The President of the Executive Board of WFP thanked all present for their active participation in the discussions, recalling that in all deliberations, it was vital to remember the needs and priorities of the people served by the respective agencies. He observed that the United Nations was on the brink of a new era, with new infrastructure that could better respond to global challenges. He called on all present to embrace the opportunity presented by the United Nations reform, working together and listening to governments and people on the ground in order to make it a success.

## VI. JOINT STATEMENT FOLLOWING THE JOINT MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARDS OF UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-WOMEN AND WFP HELD ON 31 MAY 2019

- Following the closing of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP held on 31 May 2019, the Principals of the agencies welcomed Member States' ongoing attention and support to ending sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment.
- In order to truly implement “zero tolerance” for SEA and sexual harassment and to embed victim-centred approaches, the Organizations are committed to focusing on the following:
  1. **Strengthening investigation and accountability functions** by exploring options for ensuring speedy and robust investigations with victim-focused communications, procedures and guidelines; greater coordination and consistency across investigation teams; and commensurate and speedy internal accountability mechanisms.
  2. **Strengthening victim-centred approaches throughout the entire process** by ensuring ease of access for those who have experienced SEA and sexual harassment to high quality and timely support, including in

relation to investigations and access to justice. Services for those who have experienced SEA, in particular, are scarce. Confidential services for those who have experienced sexual harassment are also limited.

3. **Systematically embedding efforts to eliminate SEA and sexual harassment/workplace abuse into the Resident Coordinators' agenda** by leveraging the role of the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations country teams, thus ensuring the coordinated implementation of prevention and response activities as well as adjustment to local contexts and cultures.
  4. **Ensuring continued discussion and coordination on these issues** among the United Nations Representatives of Investigations (UN-RIS), as well as through the Office of Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to SEA, the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate and other appropriate avenues.
- We reaffirm our strong commitment to improving this work as discussed at the Board and to consulting with other agencies on how to further strengthen inter-agency coordination on this agenda. We stand ready to work on joint detailed costed proposals on the above issues. We estimate that USD 40 million<sup>3</sup> will be needed over the coming two years to take this work forward collectively, with the bulk of the investment to be made into victim-focused work on (a) prevention, (b) ensuring the availability of services for victims and (c) strengthening investigation capacities as well as strengthening a victim-centred approach in existing policies, processes and procedures. We count on Member States to make sure resources are made available to deliver on these collective priorities.
  - We welcome steps taken by Member States in response to General Assembly resolutions on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission, and we will provide support to strengthen the efforts of Member States to ensure accountability for all forms of sexual misconduct – including those that may amount to criminal acts – by Member States taking all appropriate measures including by establishing jurisdiction over crimes committed by their nationals while serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission while simultaneously respecting due process; cooperating with each other in the exchange of information while respecting privacy and confidentiality; and facilitating the conduct of investigations in compliance with applicable procedures.

<sup>3</sup> UNOPS needs no further resources for investigations.