

INFORMATION NOTE

Update on implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system

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for every child



UNICEF Executive Board
Annual session 2023

1. Introduction

This information note is presented to the Executive Board pursuant to its decision [2018/15](#), in which UNICEF was requested to provide regular updates to the Board on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). The information note also includes updates on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [76/4](#) on the review of the resident coordinator (RC) system, in the context of General Assembly resolution [75/233](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR), and addresses the requests contained in Executive Board decision [2022/16](#) adopted at the annual session of 2022.

Since 2019, UNICEF has submitted nine information notes, striving to provide relevant and comprehensive updates to the Executive Board, in full support of its oversight function over the implementation of the reform. The information note is generally aligned with the substantial elements contained in the checklist on the implementation of the United Nations development system (UNDS) reform. The checklist, issued in December 2022, was developed by the Deputy Secretary-General and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO), in consultation with United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, to facilitate the oversight of the implementation of the repositioning of the UNDS by their respective governing bodies. UNICEF looks forward to engaging with the Executive Board at the annual session of 2023 on the operationalization of the checklist and its streamlining into existing reporting.

In its fourth year of implementation (2019–2022), the reform is now mainstreamed into the policies and operations of UNICEF and entities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG). Regular progress updates on the implementation of the reform are provided annually not only through this information note, but also through UNICEF statutory reporting mechanisms, harmonized across agencies, such as the annual report of the Executive Director, its annex on the implementation of the QCPR, and its data companion and scorecard; the report on the UNICEF

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Management Accountability Framework implemented
- New UNSDG Communications Guidelines widely shared, including via webinar
- Launch of new Country Programme Management Package, including Procedure on humanitarian, development and peace nexus
- UNICEF transferred \$8.1 million in UNSDG cost-sharing and \$10.5 million in levy payments in 2022
- Six UNICEF staff in a resident coordinator role
- 87 per cent of UNICEF country offices engaged in joint programmes
- UNICEF engaged in and co-chaired opportunity/issue-based coalitions across all regions
- Launch of third UNICEF survey on UNDS reform

Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, its Integrated Results and Resources Framework; and the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

The reform has led to the repositioning of the UNDS with the reinvigorated RC system at its heart, and its focus is now increasingly on reform consolidation and a visible shift to impact and scale of results. The present information note provides an overview of efforts by UNICEF regarding the repositioning process since the last update to the Executive Board at the annual session of 2022. It includes updates from the UNICEF survey to country representatives, details on support to the UNDS reform and system-wide support to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as how UNICEF is delivering results in a repositioned UNDS.

2. Survey of UNICEF country offices

For the third consecutive year, UNICEF carried out a survey among its country representatives to collect inputs on the status of implementation of the UNDS reform. The survey, submitted in consultation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), reached its highest response rate yet of 82 per cent. The survey findings show that UNDS reform is increasingly in a consolidation phase. The new RC system is by now well established, and the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) is being used by country representatives and RCs to navigate their recalibrated relationship in many areas. These include the development of new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs or Cooperation Frameworks); the roll-out of Business Operations Strategies; and the engagement with Government, civil society, and donor partners at country level.

Among the key highlights, UNICEF country representatives reported increased collaboration within United Nations country teams (UNCTs), leading to better, collective UNDS support to the achievement of national development results and the Sustainable Development Goals. The survey also demonstrated the active engagement of UNICEF in driving coherence processes forward and in carving out opportunities to advance child-related Goals.

The survey responses highlighted a strengthened RC function, with an increase in the ability of resident coordinator offices (RCOs) to support and extend services to UNICEF and UNCT members. For example, 65 per cent of country representatives recognized an increase in the ability of RCs to identify and access joint and pooled funding opportunities, up from 31 per cent in 2021. Additionally, 58 per cent of respondents indicated an increase in the ability of RCOs to facilitate inter-agency work, promote collaboration between agencies, as well as facilitate annual results reporting to the host Government.

The Cooperation Framework is a centre-piece of the reform. UNICEF has been increasingly active in these processes, co-chairing UNSDCF results groups and providing substantial support to UNCTs and RCOs. For instance, in 2022, 93 per cent of respondents were very engaged in the design of new Cooperation Frameworks (up from 65 per cent in 2021 and 36 per cent in 2020), and 88 per cent were very engaged in the preparation of the new Common Country Assessment (up from 81 per cent in 2021 and 41 per cent in 2020). UNICEF representatives also recognized the key role played by RCs in the UNSDCF processes, expressing satisfaction with the role of RCs in promoting (a) a coordinated engagement with the Government; (b) the participation of all UNCT members; and (c) agencies' alignment with the UNSDCF. Importantly, 97 per cent of country representatives confirmed that the RC consulted with the UNCT prior to the sign-off of the Cooperation Framework and that the alignment of country programmes documents (CPDs) with the new UNSDCF was attested by an RC letter.

Furthermore, UNICEF internal capacities increased in several areas: 74 per cent of representatives reported country offices having the necessary capacity to engage in joint and pooled funding

mechanisms, up from 59 per cent in 2021, and 70 per cent saw adequate capacity in Sustainable Development Goal financing discussions and initiatives, up from 33 per cent in 2021.

Notwithstanding these important progresses, four years since the reform roll-out, the measurable impact on children is not yet evident. Leveraging the reform to drive better results for children is an area of opportunity for UNICEF, as the organization remains fully committed to the repositioning of the RC system and to ultimately offering better, more joined-up support to Governments in their pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

UNDS reform: success stories from the field

In **Argentina**, UNICEF led the **joint programme on early childhood and integrated care system** in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNDP, under the coordination of the RC. The programme contributed to the design and implementation of comprehensive early childhood care policies with a gender perspective, providing technical assistance, generating timely evidence to improve decision-making, providing innovative responses for vulnerable populations, and contributing capacity-building activities to improve the competencies of care service workers and their working conditions. The RC coordinated the shared priorities among agencies, linked to the Sustainable Development Goals and the national agenda, and worked collaboratively on the design of the programmatic and financial proposal.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UNICEF led with ILO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Volunteers office, a joint programme on **Reimagine Education**, coordinated by the RCO and financed by the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. Strong coordination among agencies enabled the joint programme to result in the development of a national framework in information and communications technology standards and teacher training. The RCO coordinated the joint programme proposals and the visibility plan, while agencies took the lead in organizing the events. Overall, this joint programme significantly contributed to bringing major reform in the education sector in the country.

In **Cambodia**, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) worked with the RC as well as the Government, private sector, and civil society to build **the Cambodia Futures Lab**, a cross-sectoral collaboration framework to support the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic recovery efforts and accelerate the 2030 Agenda. The UNDS reform helped establish a safe open space between the UNCT and other stakeholders, including younger generation leaders, to discuss and define the transformations needed to achieve these goals.

In **Guinea**, the joint programme on **Sustainable Development Goal financing and the implementation of the national decentralization policy** strategically supported the Government and decentralized actors at municipality level to align local planning and budgeting for the Sustainable Development Goals. The Joint SDG Fund enabled the necessary evidence to be provided to support advocacy, build the capacities of national actors, monitor the implementation of activities aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and children's rights. The RCO, UNICEF, the United Nations Capital Development Fund and UNDP supported the Government in developing and sharing with all municipalities a Sustainable Development Goals-sensitive planning and budgeting results framework for the preparation of their local development plan as well as for their annual investment programme.

3. Support to the consolidation of the United Nations development system reform

A. Management Accountability Framework

A foundational piece of the reform, the MAF provides a structure for consistent approaches across members of the UNSDG in adherence with the General Assembly resolution on the repositioning of the UNDS.

After the endorsement and circulation of the revised MAF to regional and country offices by the Office of the Executive Director in 2021, UNICEF rolled out region-specific MAF webinars in the first quarter of 2022. UNICEF also held dedicated sessions on the MAF and on UNDS reform more broadly in a number of Regional Management Team meetings in 2022 and 2023, at the request of the regional offices. Moreover, UNICEF started developing a suite of internal communication products in an effort to increase knowledge and capacity in country offices on the provisions of the MAF, which will be shared by mid-2023.

UNICEF supports the UNSDG Principals' decision to review the MAF at regular intervals to address new and persistent issues of the reform implementation. The next revision, expected in 2023, will allow the integration of lessons learned, including from the recommendations of the system-wide evaluation on the derivation of Cooperation Frameworks and country programme instruments, and make any necessary adjustments. It will be important to ensure that the MAF continues to clearly reflect the guiding principles of mutual accountability at all levels and collective decision-making through the UNSDG.

B. Communications strategy

Over the course of 2021 and 2022, UNICEF worked jointly with DCO and other United Nations agencies to draft the United Nations Communications Guidelines, which were finalized in early 2022 and widely disseminated, including to regional and country offices. The package included guidelines for UNCT communications on the Sustainable Development Goals¹ as well as for the communications and advocacy strategy for the Cooperation Framework,² and best practices for United Nations advocacy to promote implementation of the 2030 Agenda.³

Following the internal dissemination of the communication package, UNICEF continued supporting regional and country offices to clarify and implement the new guidelines. UNICEF also contributed to a webinar, led by the United Nations Department of Global Communications on strengthening advocacy strategies as part of the UNSDCF development process. UNICEF introduced its advocacy strategy approach, which aims at accelerating progress to realize the Sustainable Development Goals, and facilitated a panel discussion with UNCT members on best practices for advocating together, following the whole of United Nations approach for a whole of society engagement.

C. Humanitarian-development-peace nexus

Recognizing the need for better integration of humanitarian and development programming and resilient community systems, UNICEF prioritized an operational change strategy on risk-informed humanitarian and development nexus programming and adopted peacebuilding as a cross-cutting commitment in its Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. Protracted crises, climate change, fragility and conflict

¹ Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/communicating-together-guidelines-unct-communications-sdgs>.

² Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/guidelines-communications-and-advocacy-strategy-cooperation-framework>.

³ Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/fulfilling-promise-best-practices-un-advocacy-promote-implementation-2030-agenda>.

are threatening children’s rights, and resilient, equitable and inclusive communities are necessary to ensure more sustainable development outcomes for children. To this end, as of April 2023, UNICEF was finalizing a new peacebuilding framework, which articulates the organization’s ambition and commitment to deliver better results for children in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, contributing to the broader United Nations system’s efforts towards sustaining peace.

In 2022, under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force 4 on Humanitarian-Development Collaboration and Linkages to Peace, UNICEF engaged in developing sector- and cluster-specific practical guidance to strengthen humanitarian-development-peace collaboration. UNICEF also supported efforts to identify opportunities and challenges facing humanitarian organizations in the delivery of basic services in fragile settings.

Under the United Nations-Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Dialogue to implement the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, UNICEF helped to identify challenges and opportunities for improved financing across the nexus. UNICEF also took part in a survey on the mapping of nexus capacities and a discussion on how to bring these together at the country level. UNICEF will continue its engagement in the Nexus Academy, including through co-developing a new governance structure for the Academy, starting in 2023.

Internally, in 2022 UNICEF revised its procedure on the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, aligning it with the conclusions of the 2020 QCPR, the priorities of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. The procedure, which aims to support the achievement of sustainable results and build resilience in fragile settings, provides instructions to UNICEF offices on how to systematically improve the coherence and complementarity between humanitarian action, support to sustainable development, and approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

As part of the management response to the formative evaluation of UNICEF work to link humanitarian and development programming completed in 2021, UNICEF launched its new Country Programme Planning guidance in 2022, which directs country offices to consider humanitarian, development and peacebuilding aspects when developing new CPDs, including in their analysis, theories of change, results and resource plans.

UNICEF worked with Governments and the humanitarian community to increase understanding of the risks that children face and subsequently prepare for effective responses to these risks. To this end, UNICEF is piloting the Child Risk Data initiative in Antigua and Barbuda, Cambodia, Kenya and Somalia, which aims to innovate and develop new ways of leveraging child risk data to inform preparedness, prioritization and decision-making, underpinned by a strong equity lens. UNICEF is also working both internally and with Central Emergency Response Fund partners to embed anticipatory action as part of good programming practices, linked to preparedness, early action and response.

Humanitarian-development-peace nexus: examples from country offices

In **Chad**, as part of the operationalization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, UNICEF initiated consultations to support system resilience to the climate crisis, through the definition of shock-responsive standards for the construction of classrooms. UNICEF advocated with the Government to reconsider its vision of distance learning beyond crises to strengthen the overall resilience of the education system. Furthermore, UNICEF contributed to peacebuilding through strengthening social cohesion, by implementing community engagement actions to combat violence in schools.

In **Libya**, UNICEF built partnerships with United Nations agencies (ILO, UNDP, WFP) international stakeholders, international non-governmental organizations and local partners to promote a child-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection system that can function both in emergencies and development contexts. UNICEF engagement with the Cash and Market Working Group further strengthened dialogue on social protection policy from a child perspective. Partnerships with both humanitarian and development partners also supported a nexus approach and linkages between cash transfer projects and the national social protection system. Moreover, UNICEF finalized the design and started the implementation of an integrated cash for education programme.

In **Mozambique**, with the launch of the new CPD in February 2022, UNICEF presented its new programmatic approach focused on synergies and convergences, particularly in line with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus agenda. Considering the critical situation and the protracted nature of the crisis, UNICEF developed the Community Recovery and Resilience Plan: a child-focused approach to the North (2022–2024), to better articulate the humanitarian-development nexus and programmatic approach, while connecting it to the CPD and humanitarian activities. The Plan also aligned with two Government initiatives: the Reconstruction Plan for Cabo Delgado and the Government’s Strategy for Resilience and Integrated Development in the North.

D. Alignment of country programme documents with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks

At the end of 2022, UNICEF issued the new Country Programme Procedure and Planning guidance, further steering country offices towards ensuring that CPDs clearly indicate how programmes contribute to the agreed results areas of the UNSDCFs and thereby to the achievement of shared outcomes. This will effectively demonstrate and position the strategic intent, value add and comparative advantage of UNICEF. UNICEF country offices will continue to seek confirmation from the RCs on alignment at key stages of strategic planning, and will ensure that the RCs attest to the alignment of the CPDs with the UNSDCFs by a letter.

The new guidance provides additional dedicated support to country teams to improve the development of country programmes through (a) more coordinated support by the entire UNDS to Governments in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals; (b) integrated humanitarian, development and peace nexus considerations in country planning; (c) inclusion of all UN reform requirements, including guidance on derivation of CPDs from UNSDCFs; (d) increased tailoring of programmes to country context; and (e) common and standardized planning methodology, helping country offices to design aspirational and transformational country programmes.

The guidance encourages offices to review and adapt their plans at least on an annual basis, as required. Importantly, it promotes the proactive collaboration with national counterparts and all relevant stakeholders. UNICEF shared the new guidance with the regional and country offices developing their country programmes in 2023 and 2024 and provided additional resources on its internal Programme Policy and Procedure site, the PPPX platform, a one-stop shop on knowledge management for UNICEF programming.

UNICEF, in coordination with DCO, continued to ensure that country programmes, relevant UNSDCFs and/or outcome matrixes were made available for Member States to review on the dedicated UNSDG website⁴ when draft CPDs were presented for consideration to the Executive Board. While the alignment of CPDs with UNSDCFs is now a consolidated process, in 2022 some challenges persisted with regard to timelines: according to 33 per cent of UNICEF country

⁴ See <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/unct-key-documents>.

representatives who responded to the UNDS reform survey, the Cooperation Framework processes led to delays in the development or finalization of the CPDs. UNICEF is engaged with DCO and other United Nations partners to address issues and delays emanating from the Cooperation Framework development timelines and processes.

On the configuration exercise, which aims to align the United Nations presence to priorities in the Cooperation Framework, 52 per cent of UNICEF country representatives declared in the survey that the exercise had been either finalized or was in progress, while it had not started or did not apply for the other 48 per cent. All country representatives involved in the exercise declared that they were engaged in the configuration discussions.

E. Reporting through UN INFO

UNICEF and DCO continued working closely together at the technical level, under their working group, to evaluate and establish the data requirements and alignment between the UNICEF internal results assessment module and UN INFO. This work builds on several country case studies that were undertaken to assess alignment between country programme results frameworks and joint workplans. UNICEF leadership in the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) also helped to ensure the alignment of data. As the IATI Governing Board focal point for institutional arrangements, UNICEF facilitated the transition of the initiative to new hosting arrangements that include technical provision for adjusting the data standard to better suit United Nations data interoperability requirements. In collaboration with DCO, UNICEF contributed to the development of a minimum indicator framework, minimum checklist for interoperability, and recommendations for optimized data flows between agency systems and UN INFO.

Progress is ongoing thanks to collaborative cooperation among agencies; however, it is crucial for IATI standards for programme data interoperability to be fully and widely adopted. Only then will agencies' dual reporting burden decrease. Further coherence is also needed for reporting requirements across humanitarian and development systems.

F. Funding the resident coordinator system

In accordance with the agreed funding arrangements for the resident coordinator system, in 2022 UNICEF transferred \$8.1 million in UNSDG cost-sharing for 2022 and was the first UNSDG member to transfer the same amount for 2023, hence contributing to the ability of DCO to sustainably commit funding for development coordination.

In addition, UNICEF transferred \$10.5 million in coordination levy payments in 2022, exceeding for the first time the cost-sharing arrangements. As of April 2023, UNICEF has transferred a total of \$27.8 million in levy payments since the levy was implemented in 2019. While UNICEF remains fully supportive of the existing arrangements to fund the development coordination function, as it currently stands the administration of the coordination levy by UNICEF has had an adverse impact on the grant amounts negotiated with donors. As it emerged from the survey on UNDS reform, only 7 per cent of the respondents declared that donors agreed to add the levy amount in addition to the total grant amount. Representatives noted that more efforts were needed from the RCs and RCOs at country level to effectively support the socialization of the 1 per cent levy with the donor community. Moreover, administering the levy on behalf of donors continued to have additional administrative costs for UNICEF in terms of staff time dedicated to negotiating, registering, transferring and tracking the levy contributions.

The sustainability of funding for the RC system remains a concern for UNICEF and the UNDS. As indicated above, UNICEF fulfilled its cost-sharing provisions in a timely manner and hopes that Member States will sustain and increase their voluntary contributions to DCO. A strong, fully funded

RC system is in the interest of the whole UNDS, and more importantly a necessary condition for the reform to be successful and sustainable.

G. Inter-agency mobility

In 2022, UNICEF recommended five additional staff members to the RC and humanitarian coordinator (HC) talent pipeline, and three staff members passed the resident coordinator assessment and were placed in the resident coordinator pool. As of April 2023, six RCs were from UNICEF, representing 5.3 per cent of all RCs; 11 UNICEF staff members were in the RC pool and ready to be selected as RCs, representing 6.7 per cent of the total RC pool; and seven UNICEF staff members were in the RC/HC talent pipeline, waiting to be assessed, and representing 5.4 per cent of the pipeline members.

Following the update of the UNICEF inter-organization mobility policy in December 2021, a noticeable increase in staff mobility took place, providing staff with more opportunities to broaden their skill sets, build relationships with colleagues in other organizations, and advance their careers within the wider system. In 2022, a total of 188 inter-organization moves took place, indicating a significant shift in staff exchanges between UNICEF and other United Nations entities. Out of these, 115 were released from UNICEF to other United Nations entities and 73 staff members joined UNICEF from other organizations.

4. System-wide support to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

A. Implementing the reform in the context of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and the 2020 QCPR

The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 was designed as the first of two sequential plans in a strategic approach for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. UNICEF, together with key United Nations partners, identified several common and complementary indicators contributing to inter-agency processes, tracking system-wide changes and clarifying how entities, including UNICEF, are achieving results in a coherent manner, including in response to the QCPR. The Strategic Plan implicitly recognizes a shared struggle in accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the need to operationalize and accelerate the existing mandates in the QCPR and live up to the tone and vision of the Secretary-General's report, *Our Common Agenda*.

B. Active engagement in the United Nations Sustainable Development Group

The UNSDG remains the most important inter-agency forum to maximize the impact of UNDS operational work on sustainable development, particularly at the country level. The Group provides an open space for capacity strengthening and knowledge exchange across the system on integrated approaches to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as for taking action on complex development challenges.

In 2022, UNICEF continued to be an active member of the **UNSDG task force on performance appraisal**. It actively engaged its country representatives to provide feedback on the RCs' behavioural competencies through the online feedback tool created by DCO. The dual reporting line was clearly stated in the UNICEF representatives' job description, which recognizes the RCs' roles and responsibilities, the representatives' accountability to the RCs, as well as their responsibility to actively engage in the UNCT. Furthermore, UNICEF representatives were asked to include a specific indicator related to the UNCT results in their performance appraisal workplan.

In 2022, 87 per cent of country representatives who responded to the UNDS reform survey provided feedback on the RCs' performance appraisal (up from 34 per cent in 2020 and 67 per cent in 2021), and 56 per cent of RCs provided feedback to UNICEF country representatives (up from 35 per cent in 2020 and 47 per cent in 2021). Moreover, most UNICEF country representatives (78 per cent) reported that their performance appraisal included a key result area linked to contribution to the collective UNCT results. UNICEF senior management is committed to ensuring behavioural change towards the achievement of 100 per cent feedback rates. To this end, the UNICEF Director of Human Resources shared specific guidance with regional offices in relation to the launch of the 2022 Resident Coordinator Feedback Tool, encouraging full participation.

UNICEF is also actively working to ensure that every RC has an opportunity to provide UNICEF regional directors with specific input on skill sets and leadership profiles, as relevant in each country context, ahead of the selection and deployment of new UNICEF country representatives, as required by the MAF.

UNICEF continued to play a leading role in the roll-out of operational aspects of the United Nations development system reform by co-chairing the **UNSDG Business Innovations Group (BIG)** and the **task team on efficiency impact reporting**. Through active participation in various forums such as the **Business Operations Strategy** task force and reference group, UNICEF advocated for, and contributed to the establishment and roll-out of, simplified supplementary guidance that will support the annual review of Business Operations Strategy data going forward. In addition, UNICEF advanced stronger relationships with other agencies through joint United Nations tenders for procurement, where UNICEF is the lead agency for vaccines, cold-chain equipment and installation, educational items, long-lasting insecticidal nets, nutritional treatment and water, sanitation and hygiene items. Internally, UNICEF promoted operational efficiency and a culture of continuous learning and improvement across the organization.

In 2022, UNICEF set up a project management office at headquarters to support implementation efforts of the **Common Back Office** initiative across country offices. In addition, it took on the lead agency role in several countries to coordinate efforts with DCO and sister agencies to streamline the implementation process. As a member of the Common Back Office task force, UNICEF provided guidance on the methodology used in data collection, bidding and the proposal evaluation process. UNICEF further supported the roll-out of the "right to first proposal" for agencies that were already providing common premises to sister agencies as a measure to shorten the bidding process and accelerate the roll-out of the initiative for the first phase of countries. For example, UNICEF and the United Nations Office for Project Services were jointly awarded the right of first proposal to provide Common Back Office services to other agencies in Jordan. In Senegal, as of April 2023, the RC was in the final stages of signing a memorandum of agreement with the Government, which would authorize UNICEF to manage the United Nations House under the Common Premises initiative.

UNICEF established guidelines and mechanisms that contributed to the achievement of the United Nations target of 50 per cent of **Common Premises** by 2021. Although the 2022 target of 55 per cent could not be reached due to the worldwide disruption in the supply chain as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF achieved 53 per cent of Common Premises, which was higher than the 30 per cent attained by the United Nations system. The close-to-target performance of UNICEF was made possible by reaching out and co-locating with other United Nations agencies, bringing some agencies into UNICEF facilities, and engaging in new constructions with other agencies. This was also complemented by the establishment of a Capital Assets Fund mechanism to support construction/renovation initiatives. UNICEF also developed a new Premises Management System to capture more information on premises occupation, costing, and sharing of space, and inform decisions in premises management and Common Back Office. UNICEF is targeting to achieve 60 per cent of Common Premises at the end of the current quadrennium (2022–2025).

UNICEF was among the first three agencies that provided guidance for the implementation of the **mutual recognition** principle across its offices and was selected to share the best practice with other agencies through the **inter-agency task force on mutual recognition**. Among other initiatives, UNICEF actively participated in the United Nations Humanitarian Booking Hub, the largest portal for field services offered to the humanitarian community that was recognized by the High-Level Committee on Management of the Chief Executives Board as an inter-agency mutual recognition milestone. UNICEF worked with an already established network of Mutual Recognition Champions to address issues related to the operationalization of this initiative. The network continued engaging with headquarters divisions to address issues raised by offices and identify best practices to be shared with sister agencies. UNICEF supported the further roll-out of mutual recognition and included an indicator (E2.1) in the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 to measure inclusion of the mutual recognition principle in policy frameworks. Moreover, at inter-agency level, UNICEF led the work on the advancement of mutual recognition within the UNSDG BIG and actively engaged in related discussion within the High-Level Committee on Management, with a focus on practical applicability of the principle.

UNICEF has been **reporting efficiencies** internally since 2018 and the process for tracking efficiencies continues to be strengthened. The third annual UNICEF efficiency report for 2022 delivered efficiency savings from ongoing initiatives plus new initiatives launched over the course of the year, totalling \$65.6 million. UNICEF delivered improved efficiencies through a variety of initiatives. For example: (a) Supply Division achieved a total of 30,600 hours of time savings by using global long-term agreements resulting in less processing time at country and regional level, thanks to the effort of the centralized headquarters procurement team; (b) the UNICEF Global Shared Services Centre introduced a range of initiatives, such as automation and process simplification, which led to increased efficiencies in processes and services for UNICEF as a global organization; and (c) UNICEF jointly negotiated, together with UNDP and the United Nations Department of Operational Support, airfare discounts directly with major airlines.

5. Delivering results in the United Nations development system

A. Update on the regional review

UNICEF actively supported the transformation of the regional architecture of the United Nations, initiated by the Secretary-General under the regional review, focused on five key areas: regional collaborative platforms (RCPs); knowledge management hubs; transparency and results-based management; data and statistics; and regional efficiency initiatives through common back offices. UNICEF sees clear value in RCPs as unified regional coordination mechanisms. UNICEF has already taken on a lead role in a number of issue-based coalitions (IBCs) as an opportunity to mainstream children’s rights across regions and to lend support to the overall acceleration of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. UNICEF regional offices support to the regional repositioning

UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO) and UNICEF South Asia (ROSA) Regional Offices

EAPRO and ROSA are represented in the Asia-Pacific regional coordination mechanism. The Asia-Pacific RCP revised its structure from five to four coalitions. UNICEF participated in three of them (raising ambitions on climate actions, building resilience and promoting human rights, and gender equality and women’s empowerment) and co-chaired the one on inclusive economic growth and COVID-19 recovery together with UNDP. This IBC supported UNCTs in providing analyses and advocacy for scaled-up, inclusive policies for recovery and development planning. This IBC also organized a regional dialogue on “Converging crises and safeguarding human development priorities”, which took stock of the convergent crises in the Asia-Pacific region and their implications

for human development. UNICEF continued its active participation in the peer support group mechanism, providing guidance and quality assurance support for UNSDCFs, as well as the working group on Sustainable Development Goal data and statistics. UNICEF also continued to provide support to the Asia-Pacific Knowledge Management Hub.

UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa (ESARO) and UNICEF West and Central Africa (WCARO) Regional Offices

In 2022, ESARO and WCARO continued to participate in opportunity- and issue-based coalitions (OIBCs) under the Africa RCP. The prominent concern was the lack of progress made towards the Goals across the continent, particularly on climate change and peace and justice issues in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2022, five OIBCs were established. UNICEF continued to contribute to OIBC 1, data and statistical systems, with a focus on strengthening RCO capacities on data analysis. UNICEF was also a key contributor to OIBC 3, on youth and women's empowerment, and supported national consultations to transform education and country vision statements.

UNICEF, together with the African Union Commission, UNESCO, WFP and the European Union, successfully co-organized a high-level side event during the Transforming Education Summit in September 2022, which resulted in a declaration with country-by-country commitments to Transform Education in Africa. Going forward, it will be important to ensure alignment between the OIBC's priorities with those of the African Union as well as increased youth engagement. On OIBC 4, new technologies and digital transitions, UNICEF continued to contribute at advisory, policy and expertise levels to support UNCTs' development and acceleration of digital strategies and digital transformation. On OIBC 5, climate action, the region contributed to two assessments and a compilation of good practices on climate adaptation in Africa as well as the midterm review of the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction, among other initiatives.

UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO)

ECARO continued to engage in seven IBCs and co-chaired three of them. UNICEF actively contributed and engaged in the RCP knowledge platform by bringing clear purpose as well as creating a shared value proposition. UNICEF actively engaged in the digital transformation group, which developed a toolbox with guidelines, frameworks and tools supporting the UNDS delivery of digital transformation in Europe and Central Asia. In June 2022, the Conference of European Statisticians adopted the guidance developed by the task force on statistics about children. The recommendations of the guidance were further discussed at the 2022 Transformative Monitoring for Enhanced Equity network meeting and will be followed up in an expert meeting in 2024.

UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO)

LACRO co-chaired two IBCs on human mobility and crime and violence and engaged in three coalitions on climate change, financing for development, and equitable growth. The IBC on human mobility regularly updated data on the complex dynamic of movements in the region to support RCOs and UNCTs' evidence-based actions. The IBC worked in coordination with the United Nations Regional Network on Migration for Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen the involvement of Governments, civil society and other stakeholders with participation in the International Migration Review Forum that supported follow-up on the Global Compact for Migration.

The IBC on crime and violence produced two policy briefs on human trafficking and smuggling of migrants to support UNCTs and RCOs in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Together with the IBC on governance and institutions, an online laboratory was created to facilitate access to knowledge on the prevention of and responses to corruption, organized crime and other related topics affecting the region.

The IBC on governance and institutions, together with the working group on Sustainable Development Goal data and the working group on gender, organized a regional presentation of the

statistical framework for measuring gender-related killing of women and girls (femicide), with the aim to disseminate its content for the development of UNCT products in the region. UNICEF was also active in jointly strengthening regional capacities on data and statistics, as well as in the partnerships and communications working group.

UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO)

MENARO continued to co-convene two IBCs: one on adolescents and youth with UNFPA and one on social protection with ILO. The Regional Office also continued to engage in five other key IBCs in the Arab States: climate and environment, gender justice and equality, humanitarian-development-peace nexus, migration, and quality social services.

Under the IBC for adolescents and youth, UNICEF co-organized, in collaboration with ILO, UNDP and UNFPA, a regional high-level meeting on young people’s learning, skilling, social inclusion and transition to decent work, which took place in May 2022. The meeting resulted in recommendations to the United Nations Secretary-General’s Transforming Education Summit held in September 2022. UNICEF also played an important role in drafting the regional youth peace and security strategy and the capacity development programme on social protection rolled out in Jordan, the State of Palestine and Tunisia. The programme, called Transform-MENA, drew from strong collaboration with the Transform⁵ initiative in Africa and aimed to build social protection capacity among policymakers and practitioners in the region. This IBC also provided thought leadership on financing and social protection by promoting dialogue with international partners, including international financial institutions.

A dedicated task force co-led by UNICEF and WFP provided guidance on linkages between humanitarian cash programming and shock-responsive social protection systems. Moreover, UNICEF actively contributed to advancing the regional Manara knowledge hub. Manara, or “lighthouse” in Arabic, is a comprehensive platform for accessing knowledge, information and data issued by the United Nations and its partners to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. To date, UNICEF has contributed an estimated 9,000 analytical knowledge products focused on the region, as shown on the platform.⁶

C. Multi-country offices and Small Island Developing States

UNICEF continued to make progress towards supporting multi-country offices (MCOs) and small island developing States (SIDS), per the commitments outlined in the 2019 MCO review.

In the Eastern Caribbean, UNICEF co-chaired the Sustainable Development Goals programme team for United Nations Barbados/Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, which was instrumental in facilitating the development of 10 country implementation plans.

In the Pacific region, UNICEF co-chaired the Cooperation Framework task force in support of the development of guidance notes for the joint country action plans, in alignment with the MCO review commitment to support the development of country implementation and joint country action plans. The UNICEF Pacific MCO continued to receive a high level of regular resources, amounting to approximately \$11.6 million in 2022. These were used to effectively support the Pacific Islands in their programmes, as well as for emergency preparedness and response. To harmonize its country coverage of the Pacific, UNICEF worked to better align its presence in the region with the three RCOs. Collective programmatic results under the leadership of the RC in the Pacific were achieved, including a joint programme between UNICEF, UNDP and ILO to strengthen the institutional capacity of key stakeholders to develop and deliver shock-responsive social protection systems in Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

⁵ See <https://transformsp.org>.

⁶ See <https://manara.as-rcp.org/home>.

Across all MCOs in 2022, UNICEF continued its efforts around strengthening national capacities on data collection for evidence-based policymaking. For instance, UNICEF supported the ongoing design of Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), providing information on children and analysis of systems for data strengthening in support of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and SIDS, with the aim to accelerate development in these contexts. The MICS have been used widely for advocacy and policymaking, and served as the basis for the Cooperation Frameworks.

UNICEF was actively involved in the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in New York in 2022 and in Doha in 2023, with representation at the Assistant Secretary-General level. UNICEF co-hosted the side event on “Unleashing the power of youth: supporting youth-led climate action in LDCs”. The session promoted an intergenerational dialogue between young people, Member States, United Nations entities and development partners on the climate change agenda in least developed countries.

D. Joint programmes and Joint SDG Fund

In 2022, 111 (87 per cent) UNICEF country offices delivered programmes in partnership with United Nations organizations to scale up key results for children, surpassing the 2022 milestone and 2025 target of 85 per cent, with a total expenditure of \$500 million. In collaboration with other United Nations agencies, UNICEF increasingly delivered on its cross-cutting priorities and programmatic Goal Areas.

UNICEF played a critical role in the revision of the UNSDG Guidance Note on a New Generation of Joint Programmes by providing its experience on a wide range of joint programmes, designed and implemented in partnership with 31 United Nations agencies across different regions and countries. The note highlighted the centrality of the UNSDCF, leading UNCTs in support of national priorities with clear programme and process cycles, as well as an accountability structure for improved coordination between the RCO and UNCT members.

UNICEF also contributed to the assessment – led by the UNSDG Fiduciary Management Oversight Group – of the application of common management features of the Funding Compact, improving survey design and priorities. As a consequence, the quality of data measuring the corresponding QCPR indicator increased, and the application of the common management features in all United Nations pooled funds was encouraged.

UNICEF provided strategic guidance on programme priorities, governance issues and resource mobilization to various United Nations global pooled funds (e.g.: Human Rights Mainstreaming Multi-Donor Trust Fund, Joint SDG Fund, Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund) in support of their continued funding contribution as well as an expansion of the donor base.

UNICEF started addressing the recommendations contained in its assessment on joint United Nations interventions conducted in 2021, which highlighted the necessity to address existing challenges at the country office level in measuring the increased impact of joint programmes on children. Addressing these challenges would facilitate the recognition of donors contributing to joint United Nations engagements. The assessment also recommended that United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, increase efficiencies by addressing gaps in the interoperability of systems and processes, at both the programme and operational levels.

E. System-wide evaluation

In 2022, UNICEF continued supporting the system-wide evaluation efforts of the UNDS reform. UNICEF participated in the advisory group on the thematic global evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goal financing enabling environment portfolio of the Joint SDG Fund. UNICEF also analysed contributions to the Joint SDG Fund as a key informant of the scoping

exercise, and supported quality assurance and technical input to the various stages of the evaluation, including drafting the management response to the evaluation recommendations. The evaluation contributed to shaping the governance structure of the Joint SDG Fund. It also helped to map out potential priority areas for the Joint SDG Fund that ensured alignment with UNSDCF outcomes and the Sustainable Development Goal accelerators, such as the prioritization of country-led initiatives.

In 2023, UNICEF looks forward to constructively engaging in the system-wide evaluation on good practices and opportunities for improvement on derivation and alignment of UNCT configuration by the independent system-wide evaluation office.

F. Our Common Agenda

The *Our Common Agenda* report represents the Secretary-General's vision for the future of global cooperation and a reinvigorated, inclusive, networked and effective multilateralism. It is anchored in a wider transformation that would move the UNDS reform towards a renewed United Nations organization able to offer system-wide solutions to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In 2022, UNICEF agreed to co-lead on five proposals from *Our Common Agenda* that are critical to its mandate, namely: violence against women and girls; the Transforming Education Summit; the development of a global vaccination plan; youth and decent jobs; and legal identity. In addition, UNICEF is playing a collaborator role on 13 additional proposals. Work on these proposals advanced and was taken forward with partners at the global, regional and country levels. Following the Transforming Education Summit in 2022, UNICEF and UNESCO, along with the RCs and partners, continued to support countries to ensure that the national statements of commitment made ahead of and during the Summit were translated into government actions at scale. On legal identity, UNICEF, jointly with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and UNDP, co-chaired the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda Task Force. Along with WHO and partners, UNICEF advanced the global vaccination plan through the updated COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) strategy and implementation of the Immunization Agenda 2030. Finally, UNICEF worked alongside DESA and ILO to develop a recovery barometer to boost decent jobs for youth, track career paths and labour market outcomes of young people through 2025 and beyond.

UNICEF is actively engaged in the development of *Our Common Agenda* policy briefs, which will inform the 2023 United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – also known as the SDG Summit – and the 2024 Summit of the Future, in particular on the Declaration on Future Generations; establishment of an emergency platform; meaningful youth engagement; Beyond GDP; the Global Digital Compact; international financial architecture; and UN 2.0.

6. Conclusion

Going forward, UNICEF will continue to be fully committed to enhancing the effectiveness and coherence of the United Nations development system and actively engage in coherence and reform processes. UNICEF stands ready to contribute to the UNSDG discussion on the 2023 review of the MAF with evidence-based suggestions from the annual survey on UNDS reform, and looks forward to supporting the system-wide evaluation for improvement on derivation and alignment of UNCT configuration.

In 2023, the UNDS, together with Member States, will need to discuss the funding of the RC system. The Operational Activities for Development Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council in May will provide an opportunity for the entire system to constructively deliberate and identify sustainable solutions. UNICEF remains committed to supporting these discussions, as a fully funded RC system is a foundational requirement of reform.

Internally, UNICEF will prepare the fourth iteration of its annual survey among UNICEF representatives on UNDS reform. The findings will continue to inform the constructive engagement of UNICEF with DCO and other agencies on the implementation of reform, as well as high-quality and comprehensive reporting to the Executive Board, facilitating its oversight function on the implementation of reform.

The SDG Summit of 2023 marks the midpoint to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and represents a key opportunity for UNICEF and the UNDS to advocate for accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. UNICEF is working closely with the Group of Friends of Children and the Sustainable Development Goals to support their advocacy for the inclusion of children's rights in the political declaration. Looking ahead to 2024, the Summit of the Future will aim to reinvigorate global action, reaffirm multilateral cooperation, and generate new momentum towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. UNICEF is already engaging in the preparations for both events, in the context of *Our Common Agenda* and within broader UNSDG contributions.

Lastly, UNICEF will continue to focus on providing high-quality support to Governments in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda, while promoting integrated programmatic action at country level in ever closer cooperation with other agencies.
