



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

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Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Organizational matters

Report on the first regular session 2024, 12 to 13 February 2024¹

I. Election of the Bureau

1. On 10 January 2024, the Executive Board held elections for Bureau members of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for 2024. The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations, H.E. Ms. Markova Concepción Jaramillo (representing the Latin American and Caribbean States), was elected President of the Executive Board. The Vice-Presidents were elected from the following regional groups: (a) Asia-Pacific States: H.E. Mr. Jonibek Ismoil Hikmat, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations; (b) Western European and Other States: H.E. Mr. Andreas Von Uexküll, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations; (c) African States: H.E. Ms. Halley Christine Yapi Bah, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations; and (d) Eastern European States: Ms. Joanna Sylwia Skoczek, Minister Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations.

2. The outgoing Vice-President, H.E. Mr. Maurizio Massari, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations (representing the Western European States), congratulated the incoming President and Vice-Presidents and thanked the Executive Board and his fellow Bureau members who served during his tenure: H.E. Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations (representing the Eastern European States); H.E. Ms. Leonor Zalabata Torres, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations (representing the Latin American and Caribbean States); H.E. Mr. Suriya Chindawongse, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations (representing the Asia-Pacific States); and Ms. Nelly Banaken Elel, First Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cameroon to the United Nations (representing African States).

¹ Note: This document was processed in its entirety by UN-Women.



II. Organizational matters

3. The first regular session 2024 of the Executive Board was held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 12 to 13 February 2024. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the first regular session (UNW/2024/L.1/Rev.1) and approved the report on its second regular session 2023 held from 12 to 13 September 2023 (UNW/2023/9). The Executive Board approved the provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session 2024 to be held from 18 to 20 June 2024 (UNW/2024/CRP.1/Rev.1) and adopted the annual workplan for 2024 (UNW/2024/L.2).

4. The Executive Board adopted one decision: Decision 2024/1 – Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2022 and Report of the Board of Auditors, which is contained in the annex to the present report.

III. Opening statements

5. The newly elected President of the Executive Board opened the session by stressing the Bureau's continued commitment to strengthening the effectiveness of the Executive Board's oversight function for improved governance while building on the hard work of the previous Bureaux. She also outlined the different reports and briefings to be presented during the first regular session, and the decision to be negotiated.

6. In her opening statement, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director congratulated the newly elected President and Bureau and thanked last year's President and Vice-Presidents. She introduced the newly appointed Deputy Executive Directors, Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda and Ms. Kirsi Madi, and extended her appreciation to Ms. Sarah Hendriks and Mr. Moez Doraid for serving as Deputy Executive Directors in the interim. She thanked all members of the UN-Women family for their service and continued dedication, passion and commitment to UN-Women's mandate and work.

7. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted that local and global crises continue to exact their toll on women and girls and highlighted their courage and strength. She stressed that UN-Women will continue to work with and for all women everywhere for peace, development, justice and a life free from all forms of violence. She saluted all those who risk and even lose their lives in the pursuit of gender equality and upholding the rights of women and girls in the most difficult circumstances. Beyond crises, the Head of UN-Women highlighted increasing polarization, democratic recession and shrinking civic space that combine to create political and social environments in which norms of gender equality and women's empowerment that were previously considered unquestionable are challenged. She added that halfway to the 2030 deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), no indicators for the gender equality goal have been "met or almost met". The Head of the Entity reiterated that UN-Women will always be on the side of women and girls and that collectively we must ensure that women's rights are at the forefront of our agenda and the 75 electoral processes happening globally this year. She recalled that this year's International Women's Day and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) both focus on investing in women as the best way to accelerate progress and achieve gender equality, and she called on all Member States and stakeholders to make progress on this crucial issue and to reach concrete and progressive agreed conclusions that reflect the crucial need for financing gender equality, women's empowerment and women's organizations.

8. While sharing examples of results achieved by UN-Women in 2023, the Head of the Entity highlighted a joint programme with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) that changed the lives of women migrant workers in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam, driving the development of 84 new laws, policies and strategies on labour and ending violence against women, expanding the rights of over 35 million people across the eight countries. She shared that UN-Women stepped up in humanitarian crises, including through bringing its crucial knowledge to the humanitarian response – for example through gender alerts that highlighted the differentiated needs of women and girls experiencing conflict and amplified their requests – or supporting women conflict mediators in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, the State of Palestine, Sudan and Uganda. She noted that UN-Women is currently leading or co-leading gender and humanitarian action groups in 90 per cent of settings where they are active, and is delivering lifesaving services to women and girls in 33 crisis settings. She further added that she is particularly proud of UN-Women's role at the country level in ending violence against women through the Spotlight Initiative, which has directly supported local women's organizations through 24 country programmes and six regional programmes, while strengthening national budgets to be more gender-responsive across 18 countries. The Head of the Entity said that this year, one of the key priorities for the organization, together with its partners, is to advance the localization of Generation Equality in order to enable a greater focus on achieving and measuring country-level results. This focus responds and contributes to her priority of pivoting to the field approach. Regarding initiatives with the private sector, she highlighted accomplishments in relation to the Women's Empowerment Principles and the Unstereotype Alliance.

9. Discussing the current financial situation, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director shared that, based on preliminary figures, UN-Women increased both its expenditure and revenue in 2023. She highlighted that the Entity saw growth in regular resources and she recognized the confidence and trust that these contributions represent, while noting the responsibility to use these resources efficiently and wisely and the need to communicate effectively on their impact. She added that the financial outlook for 2024 for UN-Women is, as with the rest of the United Nations system, less bright and shared that this means that UN-Women will be able to reach fewer women and girls at a time when they need it the most. Agreeing with the meta-synthesis on UN-Women's advocacy and communications to be discussed at the session, she noted that UN-Women is working on and investing in strengthening communications capacity across the organization and doing so in a joined-up manner. In closing, the Head of the Entity reiterated that, in an increasingly polarized world, UN-Women remains on the side of all women and girls and continues to carry out its mandate while remaining true to the principles of the United Nations and working in close collaboration with the Executive Board and all stakeholders, including Member States and civil society.

10. After opening the floor, numerous delegations thanked the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her remarks and her leadership during multiple and complex global crises. Delegations congratulated the President and Vice-Presidents on their election and expressed gratitude to the outgoing Bureau for their stewardship of the Executive Board in 2023. Member States further warmly welcomed the newly appointed Deputy Executive Directors, Ms. Gumbonzvanda and Ms. Madi. Several speakers reiterated their support for UN-Women's triple mandate and its pivot to the field approach. A number of Member States stressed the importance of predictable and flexible funding and encouraged UN-Women to continue mobilizing adequate resources to accelerate the implementation of the UN-Women

Strategic Plan 2022–2025, including through broadening its donor base. A group of States further welcomed the strengthening of internal processes, such as through the Risk Management Committee and the Budget Allocation Committee, and asked UN-Women to keep the Executive Board updated on financial management and to provide a breakdown of how apparently excess reserves have been allocated to projects and initiatives. In a joint statement, 32 Member States underscored their belief that Generation Equality significantly contributes to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the SDGs, and thus UN-Women’s Strategic Plan, and reiterated their support for UN-Women as convener of Generation Equality. Other speakers invited UN-Women to share its reflections on the review by the Joint Inspection Unit of the governance and oversight 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 UN-Women. Another delegation underscored the importance of implementing the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025 within its intergovernmentally agreed mandate and carrying out activities on the ground solely upon the request and with consent of the relevant State. Finally, numerous delegations welcomed this year’s priority theme of the CSW and underscored the importance of upcoming intergovernmental processes such as the Summit of the Future and Beijing+30 to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

IV. Audit matters

11. In her opening remarks for this item, the Deputy Executive Director welcomed and appreciated the collaborative efforts between the United Nations Board of Auditors (hereafter Board of Auditors) and UN-Women. She shared that the twelfth consecutive unqualified audit opinion maintains the Entity’s track record of clean opinions since its inception. The Deputy Executive Director recognized the significant contribution of the Board of Auditors to the strengthening of organizational effectiveness and efficiency at UN-Women, and added that the Entity has accelerated its business transformation as a core element in driving implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025. She highlighted UN-Women’s achievement of having no long-outstanding recommendations for the third year in a row, as well as having strengthened vital oversight processes across global operations reaching various regions and countries in 2023.

12. The Board of Auditors Representative and the Director of External Audit of the Republic of Chile presented the report of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2022 ([A/78/5/Add.12](#)). In the opinion of the Board of Auditors, the financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of UN-Women as at 31 December 2022 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year ended on that date, in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). The Board of Auditors identified scope for improvement in areas including strategic planning, programme management, procurement management, private sector partnership and information and communication technology (ICT), for which it issued 18 recommendations, all of which were accepted by UN-Women. Regarding follow-up of previous recommendations, the Board of Auditors noted that of the 27 outstanding previous recommendations, 70 per cent were fully implemented and 30 per cent were under implementation. The Board of Auditors acknowledged UN-Women’s efforts to implement long-standing recommendations and the solid commitment of the Entity to managing the recommendations arising from the audit process. The Board of Auditors mentioned that no recommendations from prior to 2020 are pending.

13. The Deputy Director of Financial Management introduced the financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2022 (A/78/5/Add.12), with total revenue of \$671 million. Total expenses were \$540 million and the Entity recorded an accounting surplus of \$130.8 million for the year ended 31 December 2022, compared with \$151 million in 2021. This accounting surplus represents contractual funds available to UN-Women's programmatic activities in future years. On revenue by funding type, it was noted that regular resources increased by \$13 million or 6.5 per cent, attributable mainly to the signing of six multi-year agreements in 2022, with other resources decreasing by \$23 million. The Entity's operational activities are funded mainly through voluntary contributions, comprising regular resources of 33 per cent and other resources of 64 per cent. Assessed contributions amount to just over 1 per cent of resources in 2022 and contribute to the normative support functions of UN-Women. On donor types, UN-Women's revenue is sourced mostly from Governments and intergovernmental agencies, followed by multilaterals then foundations, the private sector and national committees. The Entity's total assets increased by 10 per cent to \$1.3 billion, exceeding total liabilities of \$134.1 million and resulting in total net assets/equity of \$1.1 billion.

14. The Director of the Strategy, Planning, Resources and Effectiveness Division gave an update on UN-Women's implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, as well as the resulting impact. She highlighted that 8 of the 18 new recommendations from the 2022 audit cycle were identified as high priority and fell within the areas of strategic planning, programme management, and private sector partnerships. She shared UN-Women's aim to surpass the 70 per cent implementation rate for new recommendations reported for prior years. The Director summarized some key achievements linked to the implementation of audit recommendations against the five output areas that focus on organizational effectiveness and efficiency in the Strategic Plan 2022–2025. She underscored that UN-Women is fully committed to implementing all Board of Auditors recommendations, as the Entity recognizes their importance in enhancing its operations and, ultimately, in delivering on the objectives in its Strategic Plan.

15. Delegations welcomed the twelfth consecutive unqualified audit opinion and UN-Women's efforts to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors. Delegations thanked the Board of Auditors for their report. A joint statement delivered on behalf of a group of countries expressed their appreciation for the updates on the status of implementation of recommendations and efforts to harmonize the response across funds and programmes. The joint statement further welcomed the steps taken to improve forward-looking and efficient budget management and requested continued updates. The high-priority recommendation regarding weaknesses in the implementation of the UN-Women strategic plan was noted by the group of countries and concern was expressed on funds that were not allocated to, or tracked against, the SDGs. The group of countries noted that the ongoing implementation of the new enterprise resource planning system, Quantum, will hopefully provide a better linkage between financing, planning and reporting on results towards the SDGs. UN-Women was encouraged to adhere to the recommendations to strengthen the support given to country offices in order to enable them to implement concrete actions that foster environmental sustainability. The joint statement stressed the importance of regular follow-up on internal control systems and training of both UN-Women staff and programme partners to enable them to understand and fulfil all deliverables in the programme cycle. A subsequent speaker encouraged UN-Women to focus its efforts on closing outstanding recommendations from 2021 as soon as possible. Another delegation noted that transparency in financial issues directly impacts the quality of UN-Women's triple mandate and commended the efforts made to further strengthen

mechanisms for the effective and efficient use of resources, and the accountability shown in how funds received are spent. A different Member State requested that UN-Women elaborate on the improvements to the Results Management System that are planned to allow tracking of results and resources, including against SDG indicators, and asked whether the full roll-out of Quantum might further support or improve this. They also requested more details on the country office strategic note pilot procedure and how Member States can support this. The same speaker expressed that engaging more systematically with UN-Women on risk management would allow the Executive Board to fulfil its oversight function more effectively and enquired on how the implementation of the Board of Auditors' recommendations has contributed to the Entity's risk management processes.

16. In response, the Director of the Management and Administration Division informed delegations that UN-Women has developed a UN-Women Environmental Sustainability Policy, as well as Social and Environmental Standards Procedures, which were promulgated in December 2023 and address internal operational and external programmatic aspects of environmental matters. On strategic note pilots at the country level, he highlighted that funding of the notes provides high-quality funding for UN-Women programming that enhances the Entity's ability to ensure impact at the country level. The Director of the Strategy, Planning, Resources and Effectiveness Division shared that UN-Women has finalized the mapping between the Entity's integrated results and resources framework and the SDGs. This will allow UN-Women to report all yearly financial contributions against each of the SDGs. The Director further shared that as part of the next phase of UN-Women's Quantum Plus project, the Entity is looking at further strengthening the results-based management system and ensuring linkages with Quantum so as to have robust monitoring of UN-Women's contributions to specific SDG indicators. On monitoring of implementing partners, UN-Women has an updated procedure for the selection of programme partners which has clear guidelines on risk-based capacity assessment. On remaining recommendations from 2021, the Director said that three of the eight recommendations have been closed or submitted for closure and five are under implementation and on course to be implemented within the expected period. On transparency, delegations were assured that UN-Women will continue to invest in its transparency portal and that Phase 3 of the portal which is under way in 2024 will give the Entity enhanced ability to track both the achievements of results and the expenditure of resources against planned resources. This will enable direct funding at the strategic notes level. On the due diligence process for engaging the private sector, the Director shared that UN-Women has a new policy and procedure that was promulgated in November 2023 and that sets out clear roles and responsibilities for all partners involved in the due diligence process. On enterprise risk management, she highlighted that the Entity has implemented Board of Auditors and internal audit recommendations in this area, including both risk assessment and risk validation processes. On strategic notes, the Director assured delegations that they are aligned with the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. She shared that direct strategic note funding is appreciated. In closing, the Deputy Executive Director underscored that a priority for the Entity now is ensuring that all new policies, procedures and strategies are socialized across the Entity and implemented.

V. Evaluation

17. The Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services presented the meta-synthesis of UN-Women's contribution to communication and advocacy work ([UNW/2024/CRP.2](#)). The meta-synthesis was conducted to summarize trends,

identify enablers, understand challenges and highlight promising practices around UN-Women's communication and advocacy work. On key findings, the meta-synthesis highlighted that campaigns have contributed to changes in attitudes and behaviours, shifted narratives towards the empowerment of women and provided important entry points for discussion on sensitive topics. UN-Women's convening role and its capacity to mobilize at all levels through partnerships was also noted as a key finding. The Director shared some common enabling factors; these include strategic partnerships, adaptive approaches, engaging influential leaders and influencers, creating multi-stakeholder partnerships and strategically leveraging social will. She also shared recurring challenges around the need for more coherent approaches and alignment with wider programmatic theories of change. Challenges related to localization and the need for better monitoring practices were also identified. The Director informed delegations of eight suggestions to sustain and strengthen UN-Women's advocacy and communication efforts. She concluded by underscoring the importance of sustaining focus on awareness-raising campaigns and social mobilization to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.

18. The Director of the Strategic Partnerships Division provided UN-Women's management perspective on the meta-synthesis. He highlighted five areas of focus for the Entity. The first was that UN-Women wants to continue to evolve its strategy for communication and advocacy and is situating this in the context of the Midterm Review. The second area was around capacity-building, particularly at the regional level, while the third area referenced was on coherence across the organization. The fourth and fifth areas highlighted were on results reporting and localization. The Director highlighted that communications and advocacy heavily depend on un earmarked core resources and as such stressed the importance of UN-Women's ability to maintain a healthy ratio between core and non-core resources.

19. Delegations thanked the Independent Evaluation Service for the report and welcomed UN-Women's commitment to implementing its recommendations, including the development of an updated communications strategy this year. A delegation speaking on behalf of a group countries noted the importance of close cooperation with local actors, including civil society organizations, and emphasized that advocacy campaigns must be tailored to local contexts and pay attention to accessibility for vulnerable groups. In this regard, the Entity's commitment to strengthening the regional networks of communications specialists and focal points was welcomed. The group of countries further emphasized the importance of engaging men and boys in awareness-raising initiatives as partners in gender equality. They also highlighted the need to strengthen monitoring practices for better assessment of the effectiveness of advocacy and communications activities. UN-Women was asked to explain how it is drawing on lessons learned from other United Nations entities to inform the design of tools and resources for monitoring and evaluation of advocacy activities. Another Member State underscored the importance of a coherent communication strategy on gender equality for the entire United Nations development system. They further asked about UN-Women's strategy to counter false information and intimidating campaigns against the Entity and its mandate in the context of the pushback on gender equality, as well as about how national committees can effectively support a global communication strategy. Another delegation thanked UN-Women for highlighting the need for flexible and long-term funding for campaigns. They noted that communications in a digital hyperconnected world is fast-paced, which offers challenges and opportunities alike. They further noted that increased politicization poses challenges. They highlighted the importance of a coherent corporate approach as well as strengthened capacities at all levels, especially at the country level, and requested that UN-Women elaborate on the changes and new approaches that will be implemented as part of the Midterm Review.

20. In response, the Director of the Strategic Partnerships Division shared information about UN-Women's collaboration with a research company to administer a 20-country survey titled Gender Equality Attitudes Study (GEAS). He highlighted some of the study's findings on social norms and attitudes on gender equality. On engaging men and boys, the Director shared information on some initiatives related to the HeForShe movement, including a campaign called Respectfully Disruptive. On lessons learned from other entities, he shared that UN-Women is very active within the UN Communications Group and will strengthen efforts to share lessons learned. The Director stated that UN-Women is working with partners across the United Nations system on strategies to counter false information, while noting that there are numerous challenges and more work to be done in this area. On national committees, he highlighted that capacities vary at each national committee and that the Entity is trying to involve the committees in corporate communications to ensure coherence. He summarized that the Midterm Review will address all recommendations from the report, starting with priority issues around coherence, localization, getting capacity right, digital-first and communication of results. The Director of the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division shared information on the Entity's advancement of a new framework based on a shifted narrative inside UN-Women towards transforming patriarchal masculinities. As an example of UN-Women's work to drive United Nations system-wide coherence, the Director mentioned that a new system-wide framework on care will be launched during CSW68. She further stated that UN-Women has been at the helm of the Deputy Secretary-General's task force on the gender review and that a draft implementation plan, called the Clara Plan, is expected to be shared soon. On pushback against gender equality, the Director highlighted UN-Women's work with partners on an evolving push forward for a gender equality strategy that has important communications and advocacy components. She concluded by reminding delegations of the important lessons learned and results from the UNITE campaign.

VI. Policy and programme matters

21. In her introductory remarks during the briefing on UN-Women's operational response in Africa, the Deputy Executive Director informed delegations that the two regional offices in Africa have set out ambitious targets across several impact areas in support of continental and national priorities, as well as in support of the SDGs. She highlighted UN-Women's contribution to key areas; these include African women's equal participation in leadership and decision-making, ending violence against women and girls, humanitarian action, economic empowerment, and women, peace and security. She emphasized the importance of UN-Women's work in Africa in the current context of several elections across the continent, increased conflicts, the climate crisis, the rising cost of living, a looming debt repayment crisis, and the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement. In his presentation, UN-Women's Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa and Regional Director a.i. for Western and Central Africa informed delegations that, given the current context on the continent, humanitarian action and women, peace and security-related work are taking greater precedence. He detailed key results achieved in the last few years in the areas of economic empowerment, including climate-smart agriculture, gender budgeting, gender procurement and bridging the digital gap. He also shared an example of the Entity's partnership with international financial institutions (IFIs). Beyond economic empowerment, the Director shared that almost all African countries now have a second or third generation National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325. Additionally, the capacity of United Nations country teams to integrate gender into their Development Cooperation Frameworks has been reinforced. On organizational effectiveness and efficiency, there has been

increased investment in audit readiness, fiscal accountability and control frameworks, and risk management. Looking ahead, the Director shared that more investments will be made in innovation, inclusion and partnerships, scale, humanitarian response, and global coherence.

22. After opening the floor, one Member State expressed concern on the many complex challenges impacting the empowerment of women, young girls, and children and noted that this requires great accountability and commitment from all stakeholders. A representative speaking on behalf of several countries underscored their continued support for UN-Women's programmatic work on women's economic empowerment and stressed that UN-Women has a crucial role in promoting women's political participation and in supporting the African Union Election Observation Mission's work during the upcoming national elections. The group of countries acknowledged the results achieved in tackling gender-based violence and welcomed the Women Count programme and its contribution to the development of policies and programmes in the region. They enquired about key programmatic elements to increase UN-Women's economic empowerment work across the continent and about how impact is measured. They further enquired about lessons learned from the joint European Union and United Nations Spotlight Initiative, and about how UN-Women works with UNFPA to ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights are integrated into the Entity's economic empowerment work. Another representative speaking in a national capacity requested more information on the way forward to increase women's participation in mediation negotiations during peace processes and in political leadership. They also noted the need for further synergies and cooperation between the Peacebuilding Commission and UN-Women. A different delegation welcomed the locally led initiatives under the Generation Equality Forum and expressed interest in hearing more updates on the formulation of a subregional road map for implementing regional commitments to achieve universal access to women's sexual and reproductive rights by 2030. The delegation also welcomed the advancement of discussions to establish a regional Generation Equality Committee and national technical committees and teams. Another Member State encouraged continuous collaboration towards locally led development and the creation of relevant and impactful relationships with humanitarian actors across the regions. They also welcomed UN-Women's efforts on the expanded production of sex-disaggregated data to strengthen evidence and dialogue. The delegation requested further details on how UN-Women is advancing data-gathering efforts on key populations, as well as more information on the Entity's work with young women and girls in Africa, and specifically on their engagement in peace processes. Another representative requested feedback on how they can help strengthen implementation at the country level and more elaboration on UN-Women's work with local women's organizations and the feminist movement in Africa. A different delegation enquired about how UN-Women can leverage partnerships within the United Nations development system and with IFIs to advance achievement of results. They also requested more information on UN-Women's activities around the climate and gender nexus.

23. In response, the Regional Director acknowledged the Spotlight Initiative as a landmark programme across the globe with key achievements in Africa around policy development, the engagement of non-traditional actors and the development of knowledge products. On work around sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence in Africa, he emphasized that dialogue with Governments has been a key tool for advancement. The Director shared that climate adaptation is a key part of the Entity's work on women's economic empowerment. He also shared that there is a lot of data on women's political leadership in certain countries, but more needs to be done across the continent to truly reflect the current data in individual countries. On engagement with civil society, the Director highlighted that UN-Women

is usually the link with civil society actors in United Nations country teams and that work is under way to engage with more women at the grass-roots level to ensure their initiatives can be reflected at the policy level. On data, he informed delegations that, through technical and capacity-building support, partnerships at the country level ensure that Member States mainstream a gender perspective in data collections. On partnerships with IFIs, the Director highlighted efforts to create instruments that are changing the narratives on women's economic empowerment. The Director of the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division shared examples of the various activities that UN-Women is undertaking in terms of transforming care and domestic work, promoting gender-responsive procurement and supporting climate-resilient agriculture. She also shared information about a joint programme with Rome-based agencies on rural women's economic empowerment. She highlighted the role of UN-Women as the secretariat of the Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund in strengthening young women's roles as peacebuilders and mediators, as well as the Entity's direct support to the capacity-building of local organizations on the ground in Africa. She underscored the Women Count programme as an important mechanism for ensuring that local organizations are part of advancing and generating data. Building on the previous responses, the Deputy Executive Director highlighted five points. The first was on the importance of linking the normative, coordination and operational work of UN-Women and demonstrating the comparative advantage of the Entity in these areas. The second and third points focused on the issues of ownership and control of productive assets by African women and the commitment to ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy as part of the fight against gender-based violence. The final points highlighted were on the importance of the technical support provided to Member States around institutional capacity-building to support policy and legal reform, and the leveraging of domestic resources for gender-responsive budgeting. The Deputy Executive Director concluded by emphasizing the importance of collaborating with women's organizations and other local actors in humanitarian response.

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

24. In her opening remarks, the Deputy Executive Director presented key updates on the implementation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Programme Coordinating Board recommendations. She shared statistics that demonstrate progress made on tackling HIV/AIDS, but noted that progress is uneven and detailed how HIV/AIDS is still very much present and continues to impact women and girls disproportionately. Discussing the financial shortfall, she underscored that meaningful support to countries is only possible with a fully funded UNAIDS Joint Programme. She welcomed the adoption of the 2024–2025 UNAIDS Workplan and the MOPAN Assessment of the UNAIDS Secretariat. She went on to share examples of UN-Women's contributions to the HIV response across several countries, such as highlighting UN-Women's role as a convener of the Global Partnership for Action to Eliminate all Forms of HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination in Tanzania, which supports women's movements to repeal discriminatory HIV-related laws. She concluded by noting that CSW68, with its priority theme that focuses on addressing poverty of women and girls in all their diversity, provides a strategic opportunity to reaffirm the Entity's resolve to end inequalities and empower women and girls in the context of HIV as it secures their rights.

25. The Deputy Executive Director of the Programme Branch of UNAIDS commended UN-Women on its impactful contribution to UNAIDS and recognized the

Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her strong commitment to the programme. She emphasized UN-Women's instrumental role in strengthening the gender-responsive approach and highlighted progress made through the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS while sharing positive results for women and girls achieved. She identified the upcoming session of the CSW and the Summit of the Future as opportunities to strengthen cooperation on HIV/AIDS and make progress towards achieving SDG target 3.3.

26. A joint statement delivered on behalf of 19 countries commended UN-Women for its contribution to UNAIDS, welcomed gains made in the fight against HIV/AIDS and noted the continued need to focus efforts on delivering for women and girls in the context of HIV/AIDS. The group also welcomed UN-Women's continuous efforts to bring gender-responsive and human-rights-based perspectives to the global action on HIV and AIDS, and highlighted six important results achieved by UN-Women in the Joint Programme. The group called on UN-Women to: (1) expand and deepen its partnerships, particularly with affected communities; (2) continue safeguarding HIV-specialized staff in light of declining HIV financing and; (3) continue leveraging its triple mandate to drive efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of HIV/AIDS. The statement further underscored the importance of the UNAIDS Secretariat being adequately resourced to deliver on its mandate on HIV. Speaking in a national capacity, one delegation underscored the need for inter-agency coordination, as well as with strategic partners, to maximize the impact of interventions both within the country and across the region. Another speaker commended UN-Women's efforts thus far in the fight against HIV and AIDS and expressed the need to scale up the successful strategies to address gender inequality as a driver of HIV/AIDS. Another delegation similarly called for adequate resourcing of the response to the AIDS epidemic and stressed the need for all efforts to accurately reflect the data and the required policy changes without stigma and discrimination.

27. In her response, the Deputy Executive Director underscored the importance of collaboration and partnership across the Joint Programme in order to deliver for women and girls in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The Director of the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division detailed the actions that UN-Women has taken to support collaboration and coordination in the Joint Programme. She went on to mention the efforts that UN-Women has taken in partnership with Member States and others to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and leave no one behind. The Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS reiterated UN-Women's critical role in the Joint Programme's partnership and stressed the importance of continuing to use disaggregated data to better understand the context and the communities where infections continue to spread.

VIII. Field visit

28. Speaking on behalf of the joint field visit delegation, Minister Counsellor of Italy, Mr. Marco Romiti, reported on the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, the World Food Programme (WFP) and UN-Women to Senegal from 2 to 6 October 2023. He explained that the purpose of the field visit was to observe and evaluate the United Nations system in Senegal in the context of national and regional priorities. The delegation expressed its deepest gratitude to the Government of Senegal, the United Nations country team and the Resident Coordinator for their hospitality and for facilitating the extensive visit.

29. The delegation found the work of the United Nations system in Senegal to align with national objectives and be very much appreciated by the Government of Senegal.

The Government of Senegal interacted with the delegation at the highest level, reaffirming both its satisfaction with the work of the United Nations and its support for multilateralism. The delegation visited several joint United Nations projects, as well as projects by UN-Women. The delegation observed how UN-Women works within the country on issues such as female empowerment and violence against women, noting the positive impact of the Entity. As part of lessons learned for future field visits, the delegate suggested that the delegation be more involved in preparations for the visit and interact more with direct beneficiaries of projects in the field.

30. One Member State speaking in its national capacity commended the organization of the field visit and thanked all those involved. The speaker went on to note the value of field visits as important ways to observe the true value of United Nations programmes.

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

31. In her statement, the Second Vice-Chair of the UN-Women Staff Council conveyed concern about the crisis in the Middle East and the large loss of life of United Nations personnel in Gaza, while emphasizing the importance of being able to work in a safe manner. She mentioned that the Staff Council has raised concerns about UN-Women's pivot to the field approach and its impact on personnel's family lives and personal circumstances. She went on to state that the Staff Council is ready to bridge communication between executive leadership and personnel, and noted that involving personnel early in the process can ensure a smooth transition. The Second Vice-Chair went on to highlight the importance of career development within UN-Women. She suggested a joint effort by management and human resources to create a comprehensive career growth strategy to position UN-Women as a leader in productive employment and decent work. She noted the ability of UN-Women staff to meet and surpass expectations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, while recognizing the culture of trust and support at UN-Women. She noted with concern the issue of personnel representation at UN-Women, recognizing that staff contracts account for 36 per cent of the workforce at UN-Women. She stated that the Staff Council has introduced associate membership for non-staff personnel at headquarters and country offices, but that there continue to be gaps regarding representation rights. The Second Vice-Chair went on to note the Staff Council's successful elections in 2023, which welcomed five new representatives from UNDP and UNOPS. She underscored the commitment of the Staff Council to protecting personnel rights and working conditions through the United Nations International Civil Servants Federation (UNISERV) and by establishing a Global Forum of Staff Representatives. In closing, she thanked UN-Women's executive leadership team and the human resources division for their support.

32. In her response, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director expressed her sincere appreciation for the work of the Staff Council in fostering a healthy workplace at UN-Women. The Head of the Entity reiterated the concern felt by the Staff Council over the loss of lives of United Nations personnel in the Middle East and the commitment to ensuring the safety of all such personnel. She stated that management will continue to engage with personnel to review lessons learned and the experiences of other agencies in pivoting to the field approach. The Head of the Entity stated that there is ongoing work with UNDP about the possibility of implementing a new contract modality to replace many existing affiliate contracts. She recognized that the relative size of UN-Women in relation to other entities and agencies may limit the

number of regular positions available, but stated that she would work to ensure that contract modalities are used for the appropriate purpose. She expressed appreciation for the Staff Council's work on career development opportunities and stated that she will build on these initiatives. She went on to express confidence in UN-Women's flexible work policy that aligns with the United Nations Common System to allow personnel to balance work and personal responsibilities. In closing, she thanked the Staff Council for their contributions and for their work in helping UN-Women achieve its goals.

33. A joint statement delivered on behalf of 31 Member States thanked the Staff Council for their perspectives. They emphasized the importance of having a safe work environment, while recognizing the challenges in ensuring this across a global work environment, often in fragile conditions. The group encouraged all United Nations entities and agencies to ensure that the workplace is free from all forms of discrimination, mistreatment and exploitation, noting the importance of transparency, accountability and inclusive leadership in accomplishing this. The group enquired how the Staff Council is partnering with other Staff Councils to expand collaboration and to achieve joint goals. The group also enquired how the Staff Council itself works to contribute to a more inclusive and safe organizational culture within UN-Women and whether the Staff Council advocates for more equal working conditions among the whole workforce, regardless of the contract modalities. The group also enquired whether the Staff Council feels supported in its role by UN-Women and other agencies, and how the UN-Women Executive Board can support the Staff Council. In closing, the group expressed hope to see collective action in 2024 to achieve the SDGs and stated the need to empower the United Nations workforce to help achieve this.

34. Responding to the comments of Member States, the Second Vice-Chair of the Staff Council stated that as a member of UNISERV, the Staff Council can participate in discussions of staff organizations from across the United Nations Common System. The Second Vice-Chair went on to mention that within UN-Women, the Staff Council works with many groups and councils and the Gender Parity Focal Point to ensure an inclusive work environment. She went on to state that the Staff Council recognizes that the pivot to the field approach is a complicated process and emphasized the need to include staff as much as possible in the process. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director reiterated her appreciation for the work of the Staff Council, as well as her commitment to fully including staff in all decisions relating to them. The Director of Human Resources stated in his response that UN-Women works with the Staff Council through the Policy Procedures and Guidance Policy, which allows the Staff Council to be included in the decision-making processes of UN-Women leadership. The Deputy Executive Director informed Member States that in her new role, she is working on workforce planning and career development to foster a nurturing workplace with a diverse workforce. In closing, she thanked UN-Women personnel for their work and commitment in overcoming many challenges.

X. Closing

35. In her closing statement, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the Executive Board President for her attentive leadership of the first regular session. She thanked the Vice-Presidents for their leadership and effective coordination within their regional groups and recognized the facilitation of the negotiations by the Permanent Mission of Sweden. She also recognized the presence and active participation by the Minister for Women, Family and Children from Côte d'Ivoire at the first regular session and thanked the Vice-President and Deputy Permanent Representative from Côte d'Ivoire for expertly chairing one of the plenary

sessions. The Head of the Entity also thanked the Board of Auditors and the Staff Council for their continued support and positive collaboration. She expressed her appreciation to all UN-Women colleagues, including her two deputies for their very first Board session, and the Executive Board Secretary and his team for their contributions to make the first regular session flawless. She also thanked all delegates for all their efforts and the constructive dialogues over the past two days.

36. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted that no country has achieved gender equality, although 2030 is just a few years away. She appreciated that the Executive Board understands the urgency that this implies and highlighted the importance of redoubling efforts to achieve gender equality, including at the upcoming session of the CSW. As CSW68 will address regional financial architecture, financing and poverty, she requested that delegations firmly place women's rights on the international financial agenda. The Head of the Entity further expressed appreciation for Member States' focus on the General Assembly, the Summit of the Future and Beijing+30, noting she was encouraged by bold commitments in their remarks to the Board.

37. Regarding UN-Women's work in Africa, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director reiterated her commitment to continued investment in the Entity's country and regional offices and remaining close to the people it serves. She stressed that UN-Women will do so at the heart of the UN system, while carrying out its coordination role in order to influence, support and align with the work of sister agencies. She stressed that this work will continue to be done in partnership with young people and civil society.

38. With regard to the twelfth consecutive unqualified audit opinion on UN-Women's financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2022, the Head of the Entity highlighted that this is the third year in a row with no long-outstanding recommendations for the Board of Auditors and committed to continue to strive to achieve operational improvement and excellence. She committed to continue ensuring investment in UN-Women's communications and advocacy work and pledged to strengthen communications capacity for the field in order to ensure localized communications and advocacy approaches, while demonstrating the impact of communications and advocacy efforts at all levels and taking full advantage of coherence to maximize UN-Women's impact with limited resources. The Head of the Entity underscored UN-Women's strong commitment to telling success stories and highlighting positives. In closing, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked delegations for their continued support and confidence in UN-Women. She added that UN-Women serves to fulfil the rights of every woman and girl, everywhere.

39. In her closing remarks, the Executive Board President conveyed her appreciation for the interactive and rich discussions on each agenda item. She congratulated the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director, the Deputy Executive Directors, as well as all other briefers from the Secretariat, for their hard work and their efforts to ensure the high quality of deliberations. She also thanked the Vice-Presidents for their valuable assistance and the Permanent Mission of Sweden for their facilitation of the decision during the first regular session. She further thanked the Executive Board Secretary and his team for their support during the first regular session and expressed appreciation for her entire team from the Permanent Mission of Panama for assisting her in preparing and organizing the session. She then thanked the various speakers for their contributions and reiterated the Executive Board's commitment to achieving gender equality and its determination to continue to combat all forms of discrimination in order to achieve a more peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world in which women and girls can fully enjoy their rights.

40. The session was then adjourned.

Annex I**Decisions adopted at the first regular session of 2024****2024/1****Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2022 and Report of the Board of Auditors***The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the report of the UN Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2022;
2. *Takes note with appreciation* of the twelfth consecutive unqualified audit opinion issued by the Board of Auditors on the financial statements of UN-Women for the year ended 31 December 2022;
3. *Takes note* of the management response of UN-Women to the report of the UN Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2022;
4. *Encourages* UN-Women to continue implementation of the recommendations of the report in a timely manner;
5. *Supports* the steady progress made by UN-Women in implementing the audit recommendations of the Board of Auditors and appreciates UN-Women's efforts in having no long outstanding recommendations for the third year in a row;
6. *Acknowledges* the observations and recommendations on risk management and decides to include, at the First Regular Session 2025, an agenda item for decision on risk management, and requests UN-Women to provide under this agenda item, an update on the continuous work to improve the system of enterprise risk management and critical risks of strategic importance;
7. *Takes note* of the ongoing work to improve forward looking and efficient budget management and requests a briefing in this regard in advance of the First Regular Session 2025;
8. *Requests* that for presentations of reports from the Board of Auditors to the Executive Board, a representative from the Board of Auditors continue to be available for questions from the Executive Board.

13 February 2024