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Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2019

(5 and 6 February 2019)*

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I. Organization of the session

A. Election of officers of the Executive Board

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

23. A delegation hoped that, while taking forward the reform, UNICEF would continue to implement the Strategic Plan and the country programmes. The delegation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

D. Working methods

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

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

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

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

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

41. A group of delegations welcomed the leadership of UNICEF on HIV prevention among young people, including its focus on data on adolescent and young key populations, and commended UNICEF for its prevention efforts aimed at reaching those furthest behind, including through programmes in humanitarian settings and work on gender-based violence, given its impact on HIV infection rates. At the same time, the group expressed concern about the rates of infection in children, including

mother-to-child transmission, and among adolescents and young people, with one delegation highlighting the gaps in antiretroviral treatment (ART).

42. Several delegations supported programming around the basic services of young people's health, well-being, sexual and reproductive health and gender equality to improve outcomes for adolescent girls and young women. A delegation expressed concern about the increased hindrance of such services as well as an increase in stereotyping and stigmatization, especially regarding girls and adolescents. The group of delegations also highlighted stigma and discrimination as key barriers in the AIDS response and welcomed the work that UNICEF was doing in this area, especially in health-care settings, to ensure that needed services were accessible, particularly to adolescents.

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

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

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

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

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

bring AIDS out of isolation were needed, e.g., connecting prevention with social protection, as well as a focus on country-specific responses.

48. A delegation noted the important discussion that had taken place at the forty-third Programme Coordinating Board meeting on the report of the Independent Expert Panel on prevention of and response to harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and abuse of power at the UNAIDS secretariat. The delegation expressed its expectation that all the organizations with which it worked would operate to the highest standards, and it looked forward to the special session of the Programme Coordinating Board, to be held in March 2019, and to subsequent actions towards a strong response to the Panel's findings.

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

B. Update on UNICEF humanitarian action

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

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

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

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

54. A delegation noted the importance of the work of UNICEF in humanitarian response and development. It advised that UNICEF should avoid politicizing its work and remain a neutral actor, using verifiable and reliable information. The delegation

commended the use of risk-informed programming, the involvement of local populations and the focus on emergency preparedness.

55. A delegation expressed its appreciation for the work of UNICEF in crises and asked how it used its presence to shape national priorities. A delegation asked for further information on the emergency preparedness platform, while another asked if the new UNDAF would improve humanitarian and development programming. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, responded that the preparedness approach was aligned with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) preparedness and emergency response. To develop high-quality preparedness plans, UNICEF engaged with the local partners, incorporating their assessments and delegating the responsibility for quality control to the regional offices and headquarters. Regarding the new UNDAF, he added that the commitment to leave no one behind could result in an UNDAF that was more sensitive to inclusion and more effective at addressing the populations most in need. Over time, the approach would likely reduce the humanitarian needs and protection concerns.

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

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

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

C. UNICEF programme cooperation

(a) Country programme documents

West and Central Africa

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes

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

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

D. Evaluation reports and management responses

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

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

70. A delegation asked whether the initiative had been implemented in countries other than developing countries or addressed the issues of migrants and refugees in developed countries and the bullying of foreign children in school, which led to dropout. The Director of Evaluation responded that the initiative concentrated mainly on countries in crisis and low-income, low-middle-income and upper-middle-income countries. One third of out-of-school children were located in countries in crisis, so the evaluation had provided good scope to consider the appropriate support for the issue. The Director, Programme Division, added that, depending on the country context, refugees had been included in the data and analysis, and that their inclusion had influenced the policy recommendations. He added that it would be good practice to systematically include refugees.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

100. A delegation applauded the leadership of UNICEF in private fundraising and a group of delegations welcomed the strong results. The group asked for clarification about other resources emergency (ORE) funds, which were expected to decline. The Director responded that emergency funds were unpredictable, and that UNICEF estimated projections for ORE conservatively. As an example, UNICEF outperformed

its predictions in 2018 for emergency funds, even though there was no major media-driven emergency.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

119. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, introduced the update on the work of the National Committees of UNICEF. She noted their important financial contribution – 87 per cent of private funding raised – as well as the significant

advocacy role they played vis-à-vis Governments with regard to the well-being of children.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I. Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2019

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

J. Adoption of draft decisions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Annex

Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2019

2019/1

Working methods

The Executive Board

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

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

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

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

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

*First regular session
6 February 2019*

2019/2

Country programme documents

The Executive Board

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

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

*First regular session
6 February 2019*

2019/3
Extensions of ongoing country programmes

The Executive Board

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

First regular session
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2019/4
UNICEF programme cooperation

The Executive Board

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

First regular session
6 February 2019

2019/5
Evaluation reports and management responses

The Executive Board

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

First regular session
6 February 2019

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

The Executive Board

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

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

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

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

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

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

First regular session
6 February 2019

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

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

The Executive Board

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

(Millions of United States dollars)

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

2. *Authorizes* UNICEF

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

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

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

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

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

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

B. Budgeted revenue for the year 2019

The Executive Board

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

C. Policy issues

The Executive Board

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

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

*First regular session
6 February 2019*

2019/8

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

The Executive Board

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

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

matrixed, dual-reporting model, with United Nations country team members accountable and reporting to their respective entities on individual mandates, and periodically reporting to the resident coordinator on their individual activities;

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

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

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

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

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

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

*First regular session
6 February 2019*