



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

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Organizational matters

Report on the annual session of 2020, 22 to 23 June 2020

I. Organizational matters

1. The annual session of 2020 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) was held virtually via the Zoom platform, from 22 to 23 June 2020.
2. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session ([UNW/2020/L.3/Rev.1](#)), and approved the report of its first regular session held on 14 February 2020 ([UNW/2020/1](#)). The Executive Board also approved the provisional agenda and workplan for the second regular session of 2020, to be held from 15 to 16 September 2020.
3. The Executive Board adopted four decisions (2020/3, 2020/4, 2020/5 and 2020/6) as contained in the annex to the present report.

II. Election

4. As the first point of order, the Executive Board elected by acclamation, Enkhbold Vorshilov, Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations, as Vice President, representing the Asia–Pacific Group, following the conclusion of his predecessor, Sukhbold Sukhee’s tour of duty in New York earlier this year.

III. Opening statements

5. The President of the Executive Board, Jukka Salovaara (Finland), conveyed appreciation on behalf of the Executive Board for the work of Sukhbold Sukhee during his tenure as Vice-President and congratulated the newly elected Vice-President, Enkhbold Vorshilov.
6. He noted that, as a landmark year for gender equality, 2020 began with high expectations in an entirely different context, in light of the COVID-19 global pandemic. In this regard however, it was heartening to witness the unwavering commitment of UN-Women, which has shown flexibility in exercising its tripartite



mandate at this defining moment for the United Nations. As mentioned at the recent Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards, the United Nations is expected to be at its best, with effective and efficient coordination. He noted that the need to focus on already marginalized groups is more important than ever, underlining the likely impact on public finances around the world, which will also impact the reforms of the United Nations Development System.

7. Full recovery from the crisis should pave the way to a world that is more resilient to future crises. He emphasized that women are among those most affected by the pandemic and will play an instrumental role in recovery in communities around the world. For this reason, it is critical that all response efforts place a strategic emphasis on women and girls to obtain concrete and sustainable results.

8. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, thanked the President and the Bureau for their exceptional support for the mandate of UN-Women, highlighting, as examples, the hosting of the first UN-Women Partner Roundtable by Finland and the chairing of the joint townhall of the Executive Boards on the system-wide COVID-19 response on 21 April, with the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General and the Director-General of the World Health Organization. She also recognized the increased financial support of the Government of Finland, making it the Entity's top donor at present.

9. Addressing recent events in the United States and elsewhere, which have highlighted the need to end inequality and discrimination, she stressed it was all the more important for efforts in this regard to remain central to the work of the United Nations, particularly in protecting the gains made by women and girls, which are currently under threat. She stressed that the goals of UN-Women are highly relevant to everyone fighting to end injustices, including racial injustice and homophobia. She pledged the Entity's commitment to tackle racism, both inside and outside the United Nations, with renewed effort.

10. Noting that the resulting process of self-reflection, both inside and outside the United Nations, is healthy and rightfully uncomfortable, she stressed that UN-Women intended to remain engaged, since it is in this discomfort that change takes place and where the diversity needed for the future to be built comes from.

11. She restated plans for major events and anniversaries this year, noting that the global focus on protecting people from COVID-19 required the Commission on the Status of Women to be scaled back and the Generation Equality Forum to be delayed. However, Generation Equality preparations have resumed and the leaders of the Action Coalitions have been announced. Engagement in anticipation of 2021 has also grown, with more than 660 million people connected on social media, with a focus on their contributions to the Forum.

12. She invited Member States to join the celebration – in the context of the “new normal” – of the upcoming 10-year anniversary of the establishment of UN-Women by United Nations General Assembly resolution [64/289](#) on 2 July 2010, taking the opportunity to reaffirm commitment to the vision on which the Entity was founded.

13. Turning more directly to the COVID-19 pandemic, she noted that it had affected health systems, widened socioeconomic gaps and in some cases caused shifts in strategic and funding priorities, all of which has disproportionately affected women and girls. In response, UN-Women has focused its efforts explicitly on violence

against women, the economic impacts, women's leadership, gender data, the burden of care and the dangers of the digital divide.

14. Member States were informed that the Entity has also worked to produce policy briefs on the issues that frame the key areas of action, issuing recommendations that have provided valuable leadership and coalesced action within and outside the United Nations. UN-Women led the writing of the Secretary-General's Policy Brief on the impact of COVID-19 on women, with inputs from multiple agencies, and provided gender-analytical insights to support the United Nations framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19.

15. Conveying her appreciation of Member States' direct support to the UN-Women Global Programme on COVID-19 and the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund, the head of the Entity thanked all partners who made early payments and increased contributions to the regular resources of UN-Women this year.

16. As an example, she highlighted the fact that in partnership with the European Union – United Nations (EU–UN) Spotlight Initiative, the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women had already allocated US\$ 9 million for immediate support to women's organizations in sub-Saharan Africa, with a primary focus on institutional response, risk mitigation and recovery.

17. UN-Women also sought engagement with new partners, such as international financial institutions, to influence their lending to countries for the recovery, allowing funds to better target women and girls.

18. It was noteworthy that the pandemic had a major impact on violence against women and girls and service provision. To better understand this phenomenon, UN-Women undertook rapid assessments in 49 countries across five regions. Findings revealed an increase in calls to helplines and reports of violence against women to police and health centres. Shelters were running at full capacity, and service providers were struggling to maintain services due to demand. Survivors of violence against women have limited access to information and social, health, legal and protection services. As a result, UN-Women has focused efforts on ensuring violence against women forms part of national policy responses, guaranteeing access to essential services, supporting data collection on the extent and impact of COVID-19 on gender-based violence and providing direct support to women's civil society organizations. Citing several country examples, the head of the Entity noted that UN-Women had begun to carry out advocacy to ensure these services were declared "essential services" during and beyond the fight against COVID-19.

19. Touching on the economic impact of the pandemic, it was stressed that the World Bank has warned the pandemic could cause up to 100 million people to fall into extreme poverty, the majority of which are likely to be women. Economic recovery will not be possible without sizeable additional fiscal stimulus packages, not only for large industries but also for the smaller businesses, in which women tend to be concentrated. This has implications for women insofar as it determines the spending available for investing in gender equality.

20. UN-Women had found that by early May at least 120 countries had put in place a fiscal response to COVID-19, with the total value of all responses around US\$ 8 trillion. An initial review of these packages indicated that few, if any, were designed taking gender into account.

21. Other areas of intervention included social protection, food insecurity, the lack of infrastructure (which means women are denied access to critical services) and the leadership and participation of women. The Entity plans to continue working on expanding direct support to women's organizations, through the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, the EU–UN Spotlight Initiative and the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, adapting to the new realities that constrain many of the women's movements active in this space.

22. The importance of data collection and analysis was also stressed, since it forms part of the UN-Women pledge to support governments in the United Nations Development System and other stakeholders in order to understand and address the gender impact of the crisis. This involved partnership with the World Health Organization to produce and publish the most comprehensive sex-disaggregated data available on the health impact of COVID-19. The Women Count data hub provides the first such data for 125 countries.

23. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted that the Entity's strategic United Nations system coordination mandate remained critical to an integrated, system-wide response, with UN-Women providing leadership and coordination support on gender analysis. She also praised the 350 Gender Focal Points engaged by UN-Women to push for gender parity and foster an enabling environment across the United Nations system. She took the opportunity to thank the international Gender Champions for their collaboration and congratulated them on their fifth anniversary. She announced that UN-Women is developing field-specific enabling environment guidelines to help increase the representation of women and intensify efforts to reach parity.

24. On the midterm review of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, the head of UN-Women noted that the Entity was largely on track. Good performance has been achieved for 72 per cent of the strategic plan indicators. Significant results have been achieved in the last two years in the areas of legislative reform, humanitarian services for women and girls and gender-responsive disaster plans (although in this latter case an improved arrangement with the Inter-agency Standing Committee would allow the Entity to be more effective). There was also a focus on a number of other areas: decent work for women; embedding change in social norms, attitudes and behaviour in national plans and curricula to address violence against women and improve protocols for quality services for survivors of violence; and influencing peace processes in partnership with civil society.

25. At the same time, some areas were noted as underperforming and would need renewed efforts to meet the 2021 targets and deliver replicable and scalable results, avoiding the pitfalls of funding fragmentation.

26. Turning to the financial position of UN-Women, the Executive Director stated that in 2019 UN-Women saw its largest-ever total revenue of US\$ 527.4 million, with contributions from 106 governments, and thanked Member States on behalf of women and girls around the world. The 15 largest government contributors in 2019 were: the European Commission, Sweden, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Finland, Switzerland, Japan, Denmark, Canada, Australia, the United States of America, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and the United Arab Emirates. However, there remains a gap in funding: "Other resources" exceeded the integrated budget endorsed by the Executive Board by US\$ 117.4 million. There also

remains a shortfall in regular resources of US \$57 million (28.5 per cent of budgeted projections).

27. The change in this balance (from 55 per cent in 2011 to 29 per cent in 2019) is of serious concern. It is the first time in the history of UN-Women that regular resources fell below the Funding Compact threshold of 30 per cent. It was stressed that the Entity's sustainability and ability to deliver high-quality and timely support depended on a healthy balance between core and non-core resources.

28. Voluntary contributions in 2019 totalled US\$ 500.4 million. This comprised US\$ 143 million in regular resources (a reduction of US\$ 7 million from 2018) and US\$ 357.4 million in other resources (an increase of US\$ 122.2 million from 2018). Non-core resources were significantly boosted by the EU–UN Spotlight Initiative, with UN-Women receiving around US\$ 60 million.

29. Progress in diversifying the funding base continued, with a special focus on private sector partnerships, as well as strengthened partnerships with other United Nations agencies. In 2019, revenue from private sector partners grew by 31 per cent to US\$ 32.8 million, while revenue from inter-agency funding arrangements increased by 44 per cent, to US\$ 72.4 million.

30. It was mentioned that in 2019, UN-Women achieved its ninth unqualified audit since its inception. The Executive Director thanked the team that worked to ensure this result.

31. Before concluding her statement, the Executive Director informed the Board of the death of the UN-Women Representative at the Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean, Mrs. M. Alison McLean, paying tribute and praising her dedication and commitment to the mandate of the Entity as demonstrated through her work.

IV. Annual Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, including the midterm review

32. The annual report of the head of the Entity on progress made on the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, including its midterm review, was jointly presented by the Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, UN System Coordination and Programme Results and the Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships. The report outlined the results achieved by the Entity in the first two years of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, reflecting on progress, challenges and opportunities, and the potential implications of the changing development context, including the 25-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action, the reforms of the United Nations system and the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

33. UN-Women achieved positive results overall in 2019, the second year of its strategic plan. The Entity supported 122 countries and territories, including high-income countries. It achieved good performance for 72 per cent of all assessable strategic plan indicators, including 74 per cent of development results milestones at the output level. At the midpoint of the strategic plan, the midterm review revealed strong performance going into the last two years of implementation, with minor

adjustments proposed to a subset of indicators to enhance measurability, recalibrate levels of ambition and make reporting more rigorous.

34. Overall, the midterm review confirmed the relevance and effectiveness of the strategic plan. It identified the need to strengthen programmatic focus, including by creating standardized products and approaches, and better leverage United Nations system coordination and partnerships, particularly in the next strategic plan.

35. The key findings of the midterm review will feed into the next strategic plan for the period 2022–2025 and address the following key principles: 1) strategic recalibration of programmatic focus in response to new political, economic and social challenges, including increased fragility, increased use of digital technologies and increasing inequalities (as it also relates to the COVID-19 pandemic); 2) the aim to strengthen the position of UN-Women, as a knowledge-based organization recognized as a “go-to” institution for gender equality, by strengthening its headquarters and field linkages and creating a matrixed and globally networked Entity with an enhanced organizational structure; and 3) The aim of UN-Women to lead the way in key transformative results on gender equality, which could be achieved by standardizing products and services to enhance quality assurance and portfolio coherence. The COVID-19 response was cited as an example, with the Entity embarking on a strategic reprioritization, including a business impact assessment, to ascertain where changes were required.

36. Member States thanked the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her comprehensive remarks and some took the opportunity to reiterate support for the role of UN-Women in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment around the world.

37. A delegation paid special tribute to women playing a major role in the COVID-19 response (approximately 70 per cent of the front-line health and social workers worldwide) and shouldering a major share of unpaid care work. While one speaker pledged to support UN-Women in the reprioritization of its programmes to achieve maximum impact as the needs of women and girls evolved in response to the pandemic, another delegation expressed its appreciation for the dedication of UN-Women in light of the current crisis, referring to the Entity as an exemplary partner. It also cautioned that progress made should not be allowed to fall back in the face of COVID-19.

38. Member States also stressed the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls, which has exacerbated existing inequalities, and the importance of including a gender-responsive approach to crisis response and recovery. Some speakers highlighted national policy responses to address the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, including in fiscal stimulus packages. The importance of flexible, predictable and sustainable sources of financing, including through broadening the donor base, was also emphasized, particularly in the context of the pandemic.

39. Several delegations looked forward to a more concerted effort to ensure a coordinated response in providing a gender-responsive approach to addressing gender-based and domestic violence, the trafficking of girls, poverty, hunger, job losses for women, sexual exploitation, child marriages and teenage pregnancies. They noted that no one agency could respond alone to the pandemic and called on everyone involved to scale up and reaffirm their sustained commitments to responding immediately to deprivations through a stronger gender-responsive lens.

40. Several delegations were pleased to note the efforts of UN-Women on staff well-being and stressed the need for this practice to continue beyond the pandemic to foster a productive working environment. They commended the resilience and unwavering commitment of United Nations staff who continue to assist vulnerable populations. Upholding commitments and international standards were cited as key for preventing and addressing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. While welcoming the work already being done, the delegations emphasized the importance of timely analysis and communication on emerging risks during the pandemic and actions to address issues of concern, including the reporting of allegations.

41. It is hoped that UN-Women would leverage its tripartite mandate of normative support, United Nations coordination and operational activities to achieve system-wide results on gender equality across the Sustainable Development Goals, including through the multi-sectoral response to COVID-19.

42. Several delegations expressed the view that the pandemic required an immediate and significant shift in the operations of agencies and would continue to require joint efforts to provide the resources for response and recovery. Effective, conflict-sensitive reprogramming from agencies, based on shared assessments of risks and needs, as well as prioritization in consultation with donors and programme countries, will be essential to ensure populations in need are targeted through agency responses and limited resources are effectively deployed. They noted that the United Nations response to COVID-19 served as a litmus test for United Nations Development System reform and encouraged joint proposals through well-coordinated funding mechanisms and called on UN-Women to continue providing updates on its efforts on the COVID-19 response to the Executive Board.

43. One Member State raised the need to take into account lessons learned so far from COVID-19 to be better prepared for any similar crises in the future. An example of a lesson learned is that addressing the health crisis and the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, especially with respect to women and girls, requires system-wide approaches, closer collaboration among relevant United Nations agencies and stronger partnerships at the regional and international levels.

44. Delegations commended the enhanced efforts by UN-Women to respond to the crisis as well as progress implementing its strategic plan, as highlighted in its midterm review. A number of speakers also emphasized the critical role of UN-Women at the country level as part of United Nations Country Teams and in its support to Resident Coordinators towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, while urging system-wide coherence and joint efforts.

45. UN-Women was urged to keep up with Funding Compact commitments, emphasizing the need for in-depth discussions on reflecting these commitments in the midterm review and commending the Entity for nearly reaching the 2019 target for programme expenditure from joint programmes. The work of UN-Women on gender mainstreaming in pooled funds was also recognized. The Entity was urged to nominate strong candidates for the Resident Coordinator post.

46. Delegations expressed concern regarding the declining budget of UN-Women and urged other Member States and UN-Women to find best practices to make funding and multi-year commitments more flexible and predictable, which would help achieve the expected outcomes, especially in times of crises. Japan highlighted its commitment of US\$4.5 million to four UN-Women regional projects to prevent

infection and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, while the United States of America announced a contribution of US\$10 million to UN-Women for the 2020 fiscal year to be allocated to women's economic empowerment, the prevention and elimination of violence against women, and women, peace and security. The European Union mentioned its commitment of €15 million to ensure direct and flexible support to women's grass-roots organizations via the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

47. On the Common Chapter of the strategic plan, some delegations reminded attendees that it provides a structure to allow the four United Nations Funds and Programmes to adopt an integrated approach for contributions to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which is key to the success of the United Nations Development system reform. They noted that the Common Chapter must be considered within the broader context of the reform and that it was regarded as a pilot. They expressed the expectation that Funds and Programmes would show leadership and implement the Common Chapter as an example for the entire United Nations Development System.

48. UN-Women was commended for its central role in positioning gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels in the United Nations system, especially in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Member States welcomed the fact that UN-Women added the "Fraction of UN Country Teams that have conducted a gender scorecard in the past year" as a metric in its own strategic plan. They were encouraged by the strong performance of UN-Women on providing gender parity advice and technical assistance to other United Nations entities, and further commended the Entity for raising its level of ambition.

V. Policy and programme

A. Sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

49. In response to Executive Board decision 2018/3, in April 2019 UN-Women contracted the consultancy firm Deloitte to conduct an independent and victim-centred evaluation of its policies and procedures for tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The objective of this exercise was to identify areas of good practice and provide recommendations to strengthen the response by UN-Women in both areas. In the assessment report and corresponding management response presented to the Executive Board at its 2019 annual session, UN-Women welcomed all the observations, accepted all the recommendations and committed to implement fully existing responses or develop new corporate responses for each item.

50. The Executive Director updated the Executive Board on the implementation of recommendations in the independent victim-centred review of the Entity's policies and procedures and the related management response. She reaffirmed the commitment of UN-Women to implement the remaining recommendations from the review and underlined the Entity's zero-tolerance approach to any form of misconduct. Among many initiatives, she mentioned the updated policy on prevention, the establishment of local action plans in all duty stations and a pilot initiative on respectful workplace facilitators.

51. Several speakers welcomed the efforts of the Entity to address sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. They commended the system-wide leadership and change of UN-Women on this issue and stressed that it must set an example to follow for other United Nations entities. They expressed their appreciation for the review of the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Discrimination and Abuse of Authority policy and were pleased to see specific reporting requirements for the Regional Directors and Heads of Office. They stated that it would be important to ensure there was a clear monitoring and accountability framework with key performance indicators and targets to measure the impact of new initiatives. They also welcomed the active role of UN-Women in the review of the United Nations Secretary-General bulletin revision in 2003 and recognized the importance of ensuring this document was updated.

52. A delegation called on UN-Women to conduct analysis and communication during the pandemic on emerging risks, and to address issues of concern. On prevention and communication, Member States welcomed the progress made, including the Team and Leadership Culture Assessment, and urged senior management to provide an update on the results of this assessment, including key areas for improvement in the action plan, alongside any feedback and next steps on the Respectful Workplace Facilitator pilot programme, as soon as possible, preferably at the next meeting of the Executive Board. UN-Women was urged to maximize efficiency by pooling its capacity-building efforts with other United Nations entities, donors and non-governmental organizations and to provide more transparency on reporting on allegations and action taken.

53. UN-Women was also encouraged to ensure a balance between maintaining confidentiality and properly addressing allegations. It was felt that UN-Women should not lose momentum on the progress made on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment during COVID-19. The Entity should ensure that the e-learning training sessions used to replace regular training were more creative, dynamic and scenario-based. One speaker requested further information on the progress of UN-Women on sharing these experiences and lessons learned within the United Nations and with partners and Member States. Another delegation expressed interest in learning how UN-Women was adjusting its capacity-building training during the pandemic.

54. One Member State stressed the importance of focusing attention on the other pandemic of gender-based violence that is currently taking place and emphasized that UN-Women must ensure funding for this area, pay adequate attention to long-term programmatic planning on this issue and increase institutional capacity to address root causes.

55. On the internal audit, further information was requested on how UN-Women was working to ensure adequate partner implementation and on the actions taken at the regional and local levels in cases where there were no national provisions addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

VI. Audit and investigations

56. The Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Service (IEAS) of UN-Women presented the annual report on internal audit activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019 to the Executive Board. This report also provided a summary of investigation activities carried out by the Office of Internal Oversight

Services (OIOS) of the United Nations for UN-Women during this period. As requested by the Executive Board in its decision UNW/2015/4, and in relation to internal audit activities, this report included: (a) an opinion, based on the scope of the work undertaken, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Entity's framework of governance, risk management and control; (b) a concise summary of work and the criteria that support the opinion; (c) a statement of conformance with the internal audit standards; and (d) a view on whether resourcing of the function was appropriate, sufficient and effectively deployed to achieve the desired internal audit and investigation coverage. The report also provided an update on the status of the management implementation of internal audit recommendations.

57. Based on internal audit work performed in 2019, the overall opinion of the Internal Audit Service (IAS) was that no significant weaknesses were identified in the Entity's governance, risk management and control processes that would seriously compromise the achievement of the strategic and operational objectives of UN-Women.

58. Regarding following up on internal audit recommendations, 99 per cent of recommendations made before 2019 have been implemented. As of 10 April 2020, the management had already addressed 50 per cent of the recommendations issued during 2019 and was taking action on the remaining outstanding recommendations. There were only three long-term outstanding audit recommendations (made before 2019), all of which were medium priority. These recommendations related to establishing corporate guidance on monitoring and quality assurance of data and information to be included in quarterly monitoring reports, improving donor contact coordination and protocols, and testing a disaster recovery plan in one country office. In all cases, the management had committed to action and IAS was monitoring implementation.

59. Regarding the caseload of investigations, in 2019 OIOS registered 52 allegations for UN-Women, compared to 36 for 2018. In 2019, the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations, the previous provider of investigation services to UN-Women, also completed work on one outstanding allegation.

60. Several initiatives related to investigations were outlined and a report of the Executive Director was issued setting out disciplinary measures and other actions taken in response to misconduct and wrongdoing by UN-Women staff members, other personnel or third parties and cases of possible criminal behaviour for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019 in accordance with UN-Women Legal Policy for Addressing Non-Compliance with United Nations Standards of Conduct.

61. The Chair of the Advisory Committee on Oversight (ACO) presented the report of the Audit Advisory Committee as at 31 December 2019. The ACO report served two purposes. The first was to address the oversight functions available to UN-Women and how risks to achieving the objectives of the Entity were identified. The ACO expressed the opinion that while there was room for improvement, these functions served the Entity well. The second purpose of the report was to allow the key risks identified in the oversight mechanisms to be addressed to guarantee continuity of the important work of UN-Women and the best use of its resources. The ACO noted some of its recommendations and provided feedback at each of its meetings on the risks.

62. In summary, the 2019 report found that the overall effectiveness of UN-Women would be enhanced by paying attention to the internal governance processes that provide staff and managers with clarity on their responsibilities and how they fit into

corporate goals. The ACO was encouraged by some of the steps taken to position UN-Women to establish robust internal processes for the first and second lines of defence. However, a number of studies, audits and evaluations show gaps in understanding this way of working and key elements were not completed, such as identifying business owners or clear management ownership of corporate risk. The ACO recommended that clear goals for completion of assurance maps and the related statements of internal control be established for 2020.

63. The Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships presented the management response to the internal audit recommendations. UN-Women welcomed the IAS annual opinion and the eighth ACO report. It expressed its appreciation to the distinguished members of the Committee for their support and dedication to the Entity's mandate.

VII. Evaluation

64. The Director of IEAS presented the report on the evaluation function of UN-Women for 2019 and the revised evaluation policy of UN-Women. The report summarized the performance of the UN-Women evaluation function for corporate and decentralized evaluations. It provided an overview of measures taken to strengthen the contribution of UN-Women to United Nations system-wide coordination and national capacity-building for gender-responsive evaluation. The 2020 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) was also outlined. The report covered two corporate thematic evaluations, one joint corporate evaluation activity, a meta-synthesis of UN-Women evaluations and the first IES-led pilot country portfolio evaluation. In 2019, UN-Women completed four regional and five country portfolio evaluations and IES provided technical assistance for 26 decentralized evaluations. IES promoted a culture of evaluation in UN-Women through the Global Evaluation Oversight System and advocated gender-responsive evaluation in the United Nations Evaluation Group, as well as globally with national partners.

65. The revised evaluation policy of UN-Women was developed in accordance with Executive Board decision 2016/2 and is the result of an external review drawing on recent assessments of the evaluation function and consultations with stakeholders. The policy is informed by General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and by the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021, and is aligned with the 2016 norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group. It outlined the context for an updated evaluation policy, the purpose of the policy, evaluation principles and procedures; set out roles and responsibilities; presented quality assurance principles; described contributions to the system-wide evaluation for gender equality and empowerment of women, and provisions for evaluation capacity-building; highlighted financial resource requirements; and concluded with a note on the review of the policy going forward.

66. The Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships responded on behalf of the UN-Women management. UN-Women remains fully committed to further strengthening the quality, coverage and use of both corporate and decentralized evaluations in close collaboration with the IEAS.

67. Several Member States welcomed the alignment of the new evaluation policy with those of United Nations Funds and Programmes, taking into account the

changing context of the United Nations Development System reform and internal change management and emphasizing that the allocation of sufficient resources is crucial. UN-Women was encouraged to aim for the upper end of the range of 2–3 per cent of programme expenditure. Noting a drop in some key performance indicators (KPIs), delegations urged UN-Women to build capacity at the country level to ensure a high-quality evaluation function at all levels. UN-Women was advised to continue IES-led country portfolio evaluations to focus more on strategic evaluations and higher-level results and to continue strengthening the response to evaluations and the implementation of key insights. Member States mentioned that they would appreciate a more detailed analysis on each KPI per region, since this would allow the Executive Board to see the bigger picture of the evaluation culture within UN-Women. They supported the strengthened focus on “use of evaluation” and the link to knowledge management, since the first results in the annual report suggest this approach is bearing fruit. Additional information in the annual report on decentralized evaluations in this area was welcomed. To fully grasp the impact of these strengthened efforts, delegations agreed with the ACO that it would be interesting to learn how the different reporting systems work together to provide an overall picture of the uses of evaluation findings for programme improvement or management accountability.

68. A speaker emphasized that some terminology of the revised evaluation policy was not sufficiently aligned with the strategic plan, expressing interest for an updated version of the policy to be shared with the Executive Board at its second regular session in September 2020.

VIII. Closing

69. The Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships, joined by the Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, UN System Coordination and Programme Results, delivered the closing remarks on behalf of the head of the Entity. She thanked the President of the Executive Board for leading the first virtual annual session, the Vice-Presidents for their contributions and the delegations for their active engagement and invaluable support that enable the implementation of the UN-Women mandate.

70. She expressed her appreciation for the guidance and comments received, including on progress implementing the strategic plan as highlighted in the midterm review, reiterating the Entity’s full commitment to the implementation of the Funding Compact. She reiterated the need for a better balance between core funds and non-core funds to enable the Entity to deliver on the full potential of its mandate and she sought the support of Member States in addressing the decline in core contributions to ensure predictability and avoid strategic fragmentation. While noting that some of the financial concerns associated with this imbalance were addressed in 2019, she took the opportunity to thank all Member States who contributed and pledged to continue to diversify the funding base and seek innovative partnerships, including innovative financing.

71. Responding to several of the points raised by delegations, she alluded to the importance of gender-disaggregated data, which is essential for an adequate response to COVID-19. She noted that UN-Women would remain focused on this area, working with other United Nations agencies, including through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund,

with whom the Women Count gender data platform would soon be launched, an example of how efforts are being pooled across the system to aggregate data.

72. It was mentioned that despite the scale of the challenges this year, UN-Women has endeavoured to maintain the momentum on the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and is looking forward to the continued support and collaboration of Member States, including through participation in the Generation Equality Action Coalitions.

73. In closing, the President of the Executive Board thanked it for a productive and enlightening annual session. He praised the session as another example of how the United Nations could seamlessly adapt to conduct its business via a virtual platform. He acknowledged the dedication of his fellow Bureau Members, especially for their guidance and leadership in facilitating another successful conclusion, which would hopefully provide efficient and effective guidance to UN-Women towards the end of its current strategic plan and as it begins to look to the new cycle in seeking to ensure a better world for all, with women and girls at the centre.

74. The meeting was then adjourned.

Annex I

Decisions adopted at the annual session of 2020

2020/3

Annual Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, including the midterm review of the Strategic Plan

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, and further notes UN-Women’s strong performance to date in meeting its annual targets;
2. *Encourages* UN-Women to take into account lessons learned from two years of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021, as well as from its previous strategic plans and takes note with appreciation of the proposed adjustments and the identified areas of improvement as identified in the midterm review of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021;
3. *Urges* UN-Women to improve progress towards achieving the partially met outputs of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and *requests* UN-Women to analyse and assess the targets set for the outputs of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, especially those which have consistently been over-achieved, and present the findings to the Executive Board in the context of consultations on the Strategic Plan 2022–2025;
4. *Requests* that UN-Women in accordance with its mandate, start preparations early for the next strategic plan, 2022–2025, in full consultation with the Executive Board, taking into account the lessons learned from the midterm review, the joint report on the evaluability assessment of the common chapter dated 30 March 2020, the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system ([A/RES/71/243](#)), the outcome of the 2020 QCPR, and further *requests* that UN-Women present a roadmap at the second regular session 2020 for consultations planned in the preparation of the next strategic plan, 2022–2025;
5. *Commends* UN-Women on effectively leveraging its mandate as a composite entity in assisting Member States, upon their request, and in ensuring coherence, consistency and coordination between the normative and operational aspects of its work; and reaffirms the important role of UN-Women in leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and women’s empowerment and on gender mainstreaming across the United Nations System;
6. *Takes note with appreciation* of the strong commitment of UN-Women to the United Nations development system reform and encourages UN-Women to continue to work closely with United Nations funds, programmes, and entities under the leadership of resident coordinators and in collaboration with United Nations country

teams, stakeholders and other development partners to support country efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework;

7. *Takes note with appreciation* of UN-Women's efforts to meet its commitments on the Funding Compact and improve the quality of funding and joint results, and encourages UN-Women to continue to leverage the Funding Compact and pooled financing mechanisms to strengthen inter-agency collaboration, and *requests* that UN-Women continue the practice of providing an update in the context of the structured dialogue on financing, prior to the second regular session 2020, on how the outcomes of the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, relate to the effective implementation of the Funding Compact in the remaining period of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;

8. *Requests* that UN-Women, while taking into account its own priorities, accelerate its efforts to implement the common chapter, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, including by developing the necessary tracking framework within the respective integrated results and resources frameworks of their current strategic plans, following the recommendations of the joint report on the evaluability assessment of the common chapter dated 30 March 2020 and in the context of the repositioning of the United Nations development system, as laid out in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#), and also *requests* that UN-Women present a joint update on progress to the Executive Board at the second regular session 2020;

9. *Takes note* of UN-Women's ongoing internal change management and strategic adjustments, and *requests* UN-Women to continue to improve its organizational effectiveness, sustainability of results and accountability, and, in this regard, to address the challenges weakening its results-based management and to enhance inter-agency cooperation and system-wide partnerships, and to keep the executive Board updated on the status of its internal reform processes, aimed at enabling the Entity to deliver better results, including at country level;

10. *Calls for* UN-Women to ensure delivery of the objectives of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, in the context of COVID-19 and to continue to work as part of a coordinated international response, with a focus on supporting programme countries;

11. *Acknowledges* the increase in UN-Women's other resources, encourages countries in a position to do so, to increase their contributions, especially to regular resources;

12. *Notes* UN-Women's joint efforts, including on eradication of poverty, addressing climate change, improving adolescent and maternal health, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, ensuring greater availability and use of disaggregated data for sustainable development, development and development work which can contribute to peace-building and sustaining peace, and *requests* UN-Women to report to the Executive Board, in its annual report, on its operational and programming targets and corresponding efforts and results, including on making its programmes and operations consistent with its commitments on the mentioned issues;

13. *Decides* to transmit the report to the Economic and Social Council.

23 June 2020

2020/4**Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2019***The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the report on the evaluation function of UN-Women in 2019, and the programme of work and budget for 2020 for the Independent Evaluation Services;
2. *Takes note with appreciation* of the steps taken by UN-Women to maintain an independent, credible and useful evaluation function and its contribution to system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts and national evaluation capacity development;
3. *Notes* the progress made in implementing the decision 2019/5 and *requests* UN-Women to continue its efforts in order to fully implement this decision with a specific focus on key performance indicators which can be further improved;
4. *Takes note* with appreciation of the inclusion of the additional information on decentralised evaluations, *requests* UN-Women to continue the gender-responsive evaluations of country programmes, in order to improve programming at country level, and to continue using evaluation findings and recommendations in policies, strategies and programming;
5. *Encourages* UN-Women to continue including analysis on each of the nine key performance indicators, on both global and regional level, in the annual report on the Evaluation function;
6. *Takes note* of the submission of the revised Evaluation Policy, *requests* UN-Women to bring the language of the revised Evaluation Policy in line with that of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and submit it for endorsement by the Executive Board at the Second Regular session 2020;
7. *Encourages* UN-Women to strive to reach the 3% top bracket of the range for the financial allocation of the total UN-Women programme budget to the evaluation function; and *requests* UN-Women to continue working to safeguard the independence of the Independent Evaluation Service and ensuring evaluation expertise in the Advisory Committee on Oversight (ACO);
8. *Takes note* of the findings and conclusions of the joint report on the evaluability assessment of the common chapter to the strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women dated 30 March 2020, and in this regard *requests* UN-Women management to consult with the Independent Evaluation Service in their efforts to implement the common chapter of the Strategic Plans, 2018–2021;
9. *Requests* that IES continues to seek opportunities with other United Nations agencies to conduct further joint evaluations, and independent system-wide evaluations in line with General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on repositioning the United Nations Development System;

23 June 2020

2020/5
Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note* of the annual report of the internal audit service and investigation activities and the related management response and expresses its continuing support for strengthening the capacity of Internal Audit Service;
2. *Takes note* of the Advisory Committee on Oversight's report for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019; and encourages UN-Women to consider the Advisory Committee on Oversight's recommendations;
3. *Encourages* UN-Women management in its continuous efforts to further strengthen its second line of defence, including on accountability for key processes highlighted in the report and the establishment of a Statement of Internal Controls;
4. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to allocate sufficient resources to ensure a satisfactory number of internal audits and sufficient capacity for investigations each year as well as to enable sufficient resources to support the functions of the IEAS Director as the responsible official in UN-Women for interactions with OIOS on investigation findings;
5. *Requests* UN-Women to address areas of recurring issues and the high number of audit recommendations related to managing implementing partners, project/programme management, travel management, risk management, structure and capacity, and procurement, including by ensuring the availability of high-competent staff and relevant control mechanisms in order to manage these areas of recurring concern;
6. *Takes note with appreciation* the transparency on the status of investigations and the actions taken, including the Report of the Executive Director of UN-Women on disciplinary measures and other actions taken in response to misconduct and wrongdoing by UN-Women staff members, other personnel or third parties and cases of possible criminal behavior 1 January – 31 December 2019, and *requests* the Executive Director of UN-Women to continue efforts in this regard.

23 June 2020

2020/6
UN-Women policies and procedures to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the update provided on the implementation of recommendations contained in the independent victim-centred review of UN-Women's policies and procedures on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and as noted in the related management response;
2. *Encourages* UN-Women to continue to take action to ensure a joint, system-wide coherent approach to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual

harassment, while leveraging its mandate, including during the COVID-19 response and recovery;

3. *Requests* UN-Women to provide an update on how UN-Women is preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in its policies, procedures and operations including an update and analysis on emerging sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment risks, and actions taken to address issues of concern, including support to victims and survivors, during the COVID-19 response and recovery, within existing reporting lines including at the Second Regular Session 2020;

23 June 2020
