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Evaluation

**Management response to the evaluation of UNDP support to
conflict-affected countries**

I. Introduction

1. In 2020, the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office completed an evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries. This evaluation was part of the office's workplan for 2018-2021, approved by the Executive Board. During its second regular session of 2019, the Board additionally requested an independent assessment of UNDP work in conflict-affected countries.¹ The evaluation covers the period 2014-2020,² which coincides with the organizational restructuring of the UNDP crisis response, including the creation of the Crisis Bureau in late 2018. It includes the previous and current UNDP strategic plans and coincides with the reforms of the United Nations development system and the repositioning of the United Nations peace and security pillar. The evaluation assessed the UNDP role in and contribution to crisis prevention, recovery, stabilization and transition to development in 34 conflict-affected countries.³ The executive summary of the evaluation is contained in document DP/2021/8.

2. UNDP welcomes the evaluation's recommendations, which will contribute to the development of a new corporate framework – development solutions for crisis and fragility (hereafter crisis and fragility framework) – incorporating crisis prevention and response strategies within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations sustaining peace framework, and informing the next UNDP strategic plan (2022-2025). UNDP will build on the areas that have been identified as strong, while responding to the areas in need of strengthening.

¹ Beyond conflict-affected countries, the evaluation also touches on prevention and fragility.

² However, the evaluation does not cover the UNDP response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in conflict-affected countries, as the pandemic had just commenced at the time of the assessment.

³ Conflict-affected is defined as "countries in armed conflict for over a year, whether due to internal or external factors that led to a disruption of peace; destruction; and loss of life."



II. Conflict and development programme context and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

3. The prominence of conflict, violent extremism and natural resource- and climate-related tensions was a cause for continued concern in the past decade, with overwhelming human, social and economic costs. Conflicts drive 80 per cent of all humanitarian needs and remain a major obstacle in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The World Bank estimates that by 2030, up to two thirds of the world's extreme poor could live in settings of fragility, conflict and violence.⁴ In 2020, fragile contexts were home to 23 per cent of the world's population and 76.5 per cent of those living in extreme poverty globally.⁵ These numbers emphasize that not only outbreaks of violent conflict, but underlying dimensions of socioeconomic, political and/or environmental conflict and instability, summarized under the term "fragility", are undermining development efforts.

4. Ten months into the global COVID-19 pandemic, there is strong evidence that the secondary social and economic impacts are disproportionately affecting fragile and conflict-affected contexts. According to World Bank figures, over 75 million people risk falling into extreme poverty in fragile contexts due to the impact of the pandemic. The risk of socioeconomic vulnerabilities is often higher among fragile and crisis-affected contexts due to pre-existing vulnerabilities, where COVID-19 is already having a destabilizing effect.

5. Inequality, marginalization and exclusion are key drivers of conflict. Therefore, addressing inequality is vital to achieving peace and improving human development in conflict-affected countries. Meaningful progress on sustainable development, particularly reducing poverty and promoting sustainable peace as envisaged in the Secretary-General's Sustaining Peace Agenda, requires simultaneously pursuing medium- to long-term development efforts alongside humanitarian action. Most conflict contexts include multiple crises such as movements of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), transborder diseases, climate-related events such as droughts and major or recurring natural disasters, and tensions over natural resources and environment, in addition to regional disparities, poverty, weak governance systems, structural vulnerabilities and underdevelopment. The number of forcibly displaced people reached a historic high of 79.5 million in 2019, creating an unprecedented displacement crisis.⁶ Conflicts and political instability have contributed to the upsurge in the number of refugees and IDPs in many regions. The unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is already having a direct bearing on these conflict-vulnerable areas of the world and could further exacerbate this already precarious situation in 2021.

6. Studies show that climate change is a threat multiplier to peace and security, and local climate changes are strongly linked to the continuation of existing conflicts⁷ and exacerbation of new ones as migration from drought-affected regions to urban areas can further increase tensions and culminate in violence. Given the multidimensionality of climate risks and their interaction with conflict drivers, the need for integrated solutions for prevention is more important than ever.

7. This is also true for efforts to prevent violent extremism, for which the drivers and root causes are specific to each locality, demanding responses to be risk-informed, evidence-based and implemented through local stakeholders, including civil society, faith-based organizations and peacebuilders. This preventive approach to addressing violent extremism, rooted in sustainable development and human rights, tackles underlying vulnerabilities such as poverty, inequality and exclusion, which can drive people towards violent extremist narratives and behaviours.

8. Over the last decade, the important role of youth in national and international policymaking and peacebuilding has been increasingly acknowledged.⁷ With 1.5 billion young people aged 15-24 today, the role that youth can play as key actors in the prevention and resolution of conflicts is widely acknowledged and reinforced by multiple Security Council resolutions, yet it has not been adequately emphasized or resourced in government and donor interventions.⁸

⁴ World Bank, October 2020, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview>

⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "States of Fragility 2020"

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/states-of-fragility-fa5a6770-en.htm>

⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>

⁷ For example, "The Missing Peace on Youth, Peace and Security", 2018, <https://www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy>

⁸ Including Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020), which underlined the vital role of youth in building peace and expanding the agenda.

9. Likewise, while there has been broad recognition of the critical importance of addressing women's participation in peace and development, significant gaps remain. It has been two decades since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), followed by resolution 2122 (2013), to ensure women's participation in peace and security efforts, yet their participation in peace processes continues to be low.

III. UNDP support to conflict-affected countries

10. UNDP supports all 57 countries and territories identified in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) "States of Fragility 2020" report (including the 34 countries covered in this evaluation) in their efforts towards conflict prevention, recovery, stabilization and transition to development. A 2019 preliminary portfolio analysis revealed that UNDP spent over \$2.3 billion delivering support to fragile contexts (54 per cent of the nearly \$4.3 billion spent globally) in 2019. At least half of the UNDP budget of \$6 billion in 2020 was similarly dedicated to its work in fragile contexts.

11. During the two strategic plan periods considered in the evaluation,⁹ UNDP has supported interrelated prevention and mitigation, response and recovery, and peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in a diverse range of conflict and post-conflict contexts.

12. UNDP focuses on consolidating peace and inclusive governance in post-conflict countries, in order to accelerate the return to sustainable development pathways. This builds on UNDP support provided during the early recovery and stabilization phases. In addition to country-focused stabilization interventions, UNDP has supported regional stabilization (e.g., in the Sahel) to accelerate the return of displaced people to their communities by providing basic social services and economic opportunities. In this context, UNDP supports the strengthening of core government functions to reinforce the capacities of local institutions to support peacebuilding efforts.

13. The Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 outlined UNDP support to peacebuilding and State-building primarily under three outcomes: strengthening governance systems (outcome 2), gender equality and women's empowerment (outcome 4) and resilience (outcome 5). UNDP focused on strengthening key governance institutions needed to peacefully navigate countries away from potential conflict and ensure that durable societal transformations occur, namely through building capacities for conflict prevention and management; facilitation, dialogue and consensus-building; and conflict analysis and assessments.

14. Under the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, "building resilience to crises and shocks to safeguard development gains" is one of the three development settings for the work of UNDP.¹⁰ The focus is on mitigating conflict as well as creating an enabling environment for sustainable development. Through this emphasis on resilience-building, UNDP is supporting a range of initiatives in conflict-affected countries that are intended to contribute to peace, economic revitalization and inclusive governance. UNDP engagement in each of the phases of recovery and stabilization, transition to development and prevention of conflict and peacebuilding are linked to the broader objective of resilience building and sustainable development. The strategic plan 2022-2025 will be an opportunity to recalibrate the UNDP approach in an increasingly fragile world and will be informed by the recommendations of this evaluation and the cross-cutting lessons of the UNDP COVID-19 response and recovery support.

15. On the ground, in its role as integrator of the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP supports the United Nations system and United Nations country teams to develop multidimensional development approaches to address issues ranging from climate crisis and pandemics to rising inequalities and protracted conflict. In conflict contexts, UNDP work contributes to multiple Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty reduction (Goal 1), decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), gender equality (Goal 5), reduce inequality (Goal 10), sustainable communities (Goal 11), and peaceful, just and inclusive societies (Goal 16). UNDP recognizes that climate action (Goal

⁹ UNDP Strategic Plans, 2014-17 and 2018-2021.

¹⁰ UNDP defines resilience-building as a "transformative process of strengthening the capacity of people, communities, institutions, and countries to prevent, anticipate, absorb, respond to and recover from crises" and focuses on "capacities to address root causes of conflict, reduce disaster risk, mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts, recover from crisis, and build sustainable peace." Programmes, therefore, support countries and communities to better manage conflicts, prepare for major shocks, recover in their aftermath and integrate risk management into their development planning and investment decisions.

13) will be critical to increase climate resilience and reduce food insecurity, a factor in conflict prevention in many countries. Enabling partnerships (Goal 17) is critical in conflict-affected countries to promote resilience and linkages within the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.

16. In order to strengthen its support to crisis- and conflict-affected countries and drive its vision, priorities and coherence for crisis prevention, response and recovery, UNDP established a dedicated Crisis Bureau in late 2018, as part of the Global Policy Network. The Crisis Bureau is strengthening and better articulating the ability of UNDP to address root causes and drivers of conflict, supporting conflict-affected countries to overcome development deficits and reduce vulnerabilities, and prioritizing improved alignment and coherence of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts and actors.

17. Building on the mandate of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, the Crisis Bureau has consolidated the UNDP crisis-related policy and programme offers and approaches, streamlined technical support to country offices and ensured that steps were taken to deepen engagements beyond immediate response-related programming towards a more substantive role in prevention and building resilience. Tools, strategies and communities of practice in key areas of crisis prevention, response and recovery have been created to strengthen country programme responses, including managing United Nations transitions, which includes strengthening the capacities, technical know-how, tools and financial resources of country offices in crisis contexts.

18. In conflict contexts, UNDP promotes an integrated approach which encompasses conflict prevention, climate security, social cohesion and peacebuilding while remaining informed by in-depth analyses of local root causes and drivers of conflict, including violent extremism and radicalization. Within the framework of the new UNDP prevention policy and programme offer, new programmatic guidance on topics such as insider mediation and social cohesion has been finalized.

19. UNDP has continued to strengthen its offer on prevention of violent extremism through a growing research base including: large-scale studies such as “Journey to Extremism in Africa and Invisible Women: Gendered Dimensions of Return, Reintegration and Rehabilitation” and “Frontlines: Young people at the forefront of preventing and responding to violent extremism”; toolkits on risk management and impact measurement for prevention of violent extremism; and innovative efforts to meet challenging and dynamic contexts. UNDP and partners have created new guidance on the use of behavioural science for prevention of violent extremism programming based on country office best practices (e.g., Pakistan, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Yemen).

20. UNDP additionally provides an integrated platform for rule of law, community security and human rights support in the United Nations system with a focus on crisis and fragility. The UNDP Global Programme on Strengthening the Rule of Law and Human Rights for Sustaining Peace and Fostering Development provides integrated assistance to national partners in over 40 contexts to build resilient communities supported by just and inclusive institutions. UNDP has provided guidance and toolkits on rule of law, security and human rights-related implications of COVID-19 at country level for UNDP and United Nations country teams.

21. UNDP has prioritized the youth, peace and security agenda,¹¹ including in conflict-affected contexts (e.g., Sierra Leone, Central America, Western Balkans, Mali and Madagascar). UNDP supports capacity development and internal capacities on youth, co-leading the development of the first United Nations handbook on youth, peace and security programming,¹² and co-hosting the first United Nations learning forum on youth, peace and security with UNDP country offices, political missions and other stakeholders. As a thought leader, UNDP hosted consultations with 4,000+ young peacebuilders in all five regions as part of the development of the Security Council-mandated progress study on youth, peace and security.

22. UNDP has prioritized its gender equality and women’s empowerment work in crisis and fragile contexts in recent years, including support for women’s leadership roles in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. UNDP has revamped its gender equality and prevention tools with the launch of a new gender and recovery toolkit in 2019, which provides concrete guidance on how to successfully mainstream gender equality considerations in crisis contexts.

¹¹ Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020).

¹² With support from the Government of Sweden/Folke Bernadotte Academy;
<https://www.youth4peace.info/ypshandbook>

23. UNDP, as the administrative host of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, is the main United Nations administrative agent for pooled funding instruments in conflict-affected countries. The evaluation of UNDP inter-agency pooled financing services conducted in August 2018 concluded, inter alia, that the office “is highly regarded by donors and participating organizations for its strong fund design and administration capability” and is “recognized by most donors and participating organizations as the preferred choice for administrative agent”.

24. UNDP has increased its engagement and support for inter-agency pooled funding mechanisms, for example through the Peacebuilding Fund and across conflict-affected countries where UNDP is actively engaged in inter-agency pooled funds and joint programmes (e.g., Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan and many others). In each of these, UNDP has been a major recipient of funding to implement projects within a wider joint government-United Nations strategy. In addition, UNDP plays a key role in the leadership of strategic and governance bodies such as steering committees and/or fund secretariats in many country-level funds and joint programmes.

25. The consolidation of the diverse range of UNDP crisis prevention, response and recovery offers has been an important step forward, but concerted efforts and resources are required to position this work at the global, regional and country levels, and to translate these strategies and tools into practice across the decentralized nature of UNDP operations. The new crisis and fragility framework will help consolidate the strategic direction of UNDP in crisis and fragile contexts, including implementation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, and ensure it is fit to address a range of crisis and fragility issues.

IV. Findings and conclusions of the evaluation

26. UNDP welcomes the evaluation. Its findings will inform the organization’s future work in crisis and fragile contexts, including the development of its crisis and fragility framework, and provide key inputs into the next strategic plan (2022-2025). As a learning and knowledge-based organization, UNDP places high value on opportunities to reflect on and evolve its policies and programmes to meet the changing needs of its programme countries.

27. UNDP appreciates the evaluation’s positive findings on the extent to which UNDP responded to key priorities in conflict-affected countries, demonstrating the value of its support in enabling peace and accelerating development. UNDP management notes key conclusions in this regard, that:

(a) In conflict-affected countries, UNDP has made important contributions to stabilize, build and strengthen institutions, as well as enabling processes for inclusive governance, strengthening the rule of law and peacebuilding. UNDP responded to a wide diversity of contexts and complex challenges with effective interventions supporting national and international partners, filling critical gaps across the spectrum of recovery and stabilization, facilitating core government functions, restoring services and providing temporary employment and livelihoods, and strengthening its partnerships across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus;

(b) UNDP has made significant contributions to stabilization efforts, to lay the groundwork for peacebuilding and help prevent the reoccurrence of violence and restore key services in high-risk environments. While UNDP played an important role in establishing large-scale stabilization facilities, more focus is needed to anchor these efforts in local institutional processes and peace initiatives;

(c) The creation of the Crisis Bureau in late 2018 provided a much-needed anchor for UNDP support in conflict-affected countries, policy coherence, partnership development, strengthening of programmes, and repositioning UNDP following the delinking of the resident coordinator system.

28. UNDP management would like to highlight the following points:

(a) For most of the period covered by the evaluation, UNDP did not have a dedicated Crisis Bureau but rather only a small Crisis Response Unit with limited resources, staffing and mandate. With the creation of the Crisis Bureau as part of the Global Policy Network in late 2018, UNDP has invested in developing the strong corporate policies, guidance, leadership and support that the evaluation pointed out are needed to guide UNDP work in conflict-affected countries;

(b) UNDP notes that the evaluation does not adequately capture the operational dimensions of its crisis response capacity and performance in conflict-affected countries and other contexts. The immediate UNDP crisis response has been guided by best practice standard operating procedures (SOPs), which were revised regularly to reflect emerging trends, new insights and sharper procedures and formed the backbone for a predictable and well-managed immediate crisis-response. Similarly, the UNDP pool of trained Surge Advisers and consultants was expanded, and mobilization/deployment procedures were continuously improved, ensuring that the right people were in the right place at the right time. The strength of UNDP Surge capacity was impressively demonstrated during the COVID-19 crisis response in 2020 with over 800 successful deployments, including virtual deployments.

29. UNDP takes careful note of the findings, conclusions and recommendations that identified where greater focus and resources are needed in conflict-affected countries. In response to the recommendations provided by the evaluation, UNDP makes the following points.

30. UNDP takes note of **recommendation 1**, which calls for a corporate policy to support the Secretary-General's call for a coordinated and integrated approach to sustainable peace and demonstrate the global leadership of UNDP in facilitating and promoting the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach. UNDP will address this in the upcoming crisis and fragility framework, focusing its work in fragile contexts to drive the Decade of Action in line with its comparative advantage, and based on a fit-for-purpose business model in these high-risk, complex operating environments with upgraded programming models and solutions for nexus implementation at country and local levels. In addition, UNDP global leadership role on the nexus will be strengthened in specific platforms such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the OECD International Network on Conflict and Fragility. UNDP, together with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, continues to co-chair the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration, to promote collaboration and implementation of the nexus approach at the country level.

31. UNDP acknowledges **recommendation 2**, which suggests prioritizing support to conflict prevention at the global and country levels across three areas: prevention of violent extremism; multidimensional risk, especially as it relates to the interlinked dimensions of climate and conflict; and early warning. The new UNDP prevention offer will address these areas of focus, as well as risk-informed development, targeted prevention approaches and mainstreaming conflict sensitivity and social cohesion throughout the work of the organization. UNDP will strengthen existing partnerships with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and the Peacebuilding Support Office and promote the provision of integrated solutions to fast-changing contexts, and seek to expand partnerships within the wide range of humanitarian-development-peace nexus actors to encourage and facilitate a pivot towards prevention.

32. UNDP recognizes the opportunities to further strengthen the links in the offer on prevention of violent extremism, by ensuring that it can respond to early warning triggers in a more agile way. UNDP recognizes and actively supports the inclusion and engagement of youth in the development of national action plans and other policy frameworks. A 2020 stocktaking review of the UNDP programme identified that 50 per cent of country initiatives prioritized engagement of women and young people, including allocating them a leadership role in designing and delivering project activities and investing in their potential to shape the national conversation on prevention of violent extremism.

33. UNDP welcomes **recommendation 3**, which encourages organization-wide policy coherence to address inconsistent conceptual and programmatic responses across regions, including the need to prioritize long-term engagement backed by technical expertise, enhanced coordination between regional bureaux and the Crisis Bureau and accountability of country offices to implement corporate strategies and guidance. In 2019, UNDP realigned its policy and programme support functions under the new Global Policy Network to enable the mobilization of cross-practice, cross-bureau and multidisciplinary expertise globally to provide more effective responses to the complex development challenges that conflict-affected countries face in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and responding to crisis in an integrated and coherent manner. The upcoming crisis and fragility framework will further address policy coherence in prevention, response and protracted situations.

34. UNDP takes note of **recommendation 4**, to expand and replicate conflict-sensitive longer-term employment and livelihood opportunities and policy engagement to derisk inclusive growth. Special focus will be given to identify catalytic interventions and sound market assessment mechanisms in

order to improve resilience, as a strategy to reduce shocks in productive activities, develop self-reliance as a driver for stability and support efforts related to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and gender equality and women's empowerment.

35. UNDP supports **recommendation 5**, to continue promoting the importance of long-term governance interventions at the national and local levels as central to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, building on decades of thought leadership and programmatic experience in this area, and reflecting the positive level of recognition noted in the 2020 UNDP partnership survey.¹³ In so doing, UNDP notes that its capacity to engage in long-term interventions is often constrained by short-term funding and project cycles, reiterating the critical need for long-term programmatic funding, as well as regular resources funding to enable continuity and predictability of programmatic engagements. Moreover, UNDP interventions on the ground are guided by national development plans and government-specific needs, by United Nations country-level programme frameworks, and supported by context analysis and theories of change.

36. UNDP management particularly notes that the positioning of UNDP in relation to its core governance functions work is evidence-based, developed with strong partnerships (including with the World Bank) that set out clear focus areas of work for UNDP in relation to other United Nations and multilateral actors. Throughout the evaluation process, UNDP has provided evidence of engagement, thought leadership and expertise, including through research, policy and guidance on governance work in conflict/fragile settings, lessons learned and reports of country support, and through relevant interviews. It is important to note how wide-ranging this agenda is and to note the efforts UNDP makes at country and headquarters levels to work with different partners to jointly achieve impactful development results in complex environments. UNDP management recognizes and appreciates the different roles that different development actors play within this space and sees the strengths and advantages that multiple actors bring. Owing to its sustained presence before, during and post conflict that is often singular in nature, UNDP continues to be a key partner of choice in many conflict countries for governance reforms, dialogue processes, service delivery and strengthening accountability.

37. UNDP will continue to support countries in developing accountable, responsive institutions at national and local levels, focused on deepening social contracts, and to support the creation of governance systems of the future, including through digitalization and social innovations, reflecting the shifting domain of governance work in fragile and non-fragile settings alike. Special focus will be given to understanding multi-level governance systems and continuing to examine how UNDP can strengthen the social contract in a comprehensive manner. UNDP has already recognized the need for a more integrated governance offer that addresses the broader functioning of governance systems, including complex issues such as addressing public trust and the challenge of information pollution, which can have particularly devastating consequences in fragile contexts.

38. UNDP is therefore undertaking broader reviews of its governance work, including its local governance offer, building on previous frameworks and experience. UNDP has begun elevating the work on prevention, including the role of institutions both internally through consultations as well as externally through supporting discussions in the Peacebuilding Commission. UNDP continues to take a lead role in this area through its partnerships with other United Nations entities, including the Global Partnership on Rule of Law and Local Governance with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). UNDP electoral support is likewise implemented in close coordination with other parts of the United Nations system, and targeted to aspects identified within the DPPA-led needs assessment missions.

39. UNDP underscores the significance of rule of law, security and human rights programming in conflict-affected situations. Strengthening the rule of law and people-centred security, and promoting human rights, are cornerstones of UNDP work to achieve structural transformation for sustainable human development and build resilience to prevent and withstand shocks. In crisis-affected settings, this work is essential to mitigate the root causes of violent conflict and prevent human rights violations. UNDP anchors key partnerships to support these efforts, including co-leading the Global Focal Point

¹³ Sixty-one per cent of participants rated the UNDP contribution to governance as "above average" or "a great deal," with a further 28 per cent rating it "about an average amount."

for Rule of Law for the United Nations system, providing an integrated and coherent system response and working as an integrator in the United Nations system.

40. UNDP takes note of **recommendation 6**, to scale up its response in the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions. Addressing the multidimensional nature of multiple crises in the Sahel region, and taking a nexus approach, UNDP has operationalized a Level 3 crisis response, bringing unified corporate attention and resources to identify significant investments to strengthen its programmatic capacities in the region as well as the operational capacities of the relevant country offices and the Dakar Subregional Hub. Moreover, UNDP has strengthened the implementation capacity of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and developed three flagship programmes in the areas of governance, energy and youth empowerment. Building on a well-designed governance offer in the Sahel, UNDP continues to play a convening role and provides thought leadership with key stakeholders, including partners and donors, and is seeking to strengthen engagement notably with the Alliance for the Sahel.

41. A regional prevention offer has also been developed, which significantly increases the capacity of the Dakar Subregional Hub to undertake analysis, establish a crisis risk dashboard, anticipate early warning triggers, provide preventive quick support and response to country offices and develop a medium-term strategic approach for the region. In the Horn of Africa, the newly established Resilience Hub in Nairobi is undertaking regular analyses to improve cross-border programming. The agility of UNDP crisis-response mechanisms has been instrumental in bringing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus into focus and fostering lasting partnerships.

42. UNDP acknowledges **recommendation 7**, to consolidate stabilization programmes aligned with the UNDP value proposition and anchored in longer-term peace and development efforts. Since 2017, informed by the expanding work on stabilization in Iraq and Libya, UNDP has undertaken several processes to elevate the lessons learned from these countries into organization-wide practice. In 2018, a literature review in the UNDP Arab States region resulted in programmatic guidance which contributed to a consolidated policy and programmatic understanding of the UNDP comparative advantage in stabilization work. New generations of stabilization programming in the Lake Chad basin, the Liptako-Gourma region of the Sahel and other related contexts like Yemen have made use of this programmatic guidance and office-to-office and region-to-region support within the political and operational parameters of each country.

43. UNDP welcomes **recommendation 8**, to continue to strengthen its partnerships at the global level, including with the United Nations system, international financial institutions (IFIs) and donors. This includes repositioning UNDP in the aftermath of United Nations reforms in a leadership role in important areas such as conflict prevention, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and recovery; strengthening partnerships to share tools and capacities in areas of mutual interest; working together on key transformative issues on the ground; and informing better joined-up programme planning and design by United Nations country teams, through the Common Country Analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. Through the Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, UNDP will further enhance its support to cross-pillar and United Nations system-wide collaboration on conflict prevention. In partnership with the Peacebuilding Fund, UNDP is strengthening financing flows to conflict prevention and peacebuilding priorities. UNDP is also investing in strengthening its engagement with IFIs on post-crisis assessments (e.g., recovery and peacebuilding assessments, post-disaster needs assessments) which can be used to inform post-crisis recovery frameworks. A COVID-19 recovery needs assessment, based on the post-disaster needs assessment methodology, has been developed and piloted in several countries with the World Bank and the European Union.

44. UNDP takes note of **recommendation 9**, to prioritize private sector engagement, investment and development as integral to economic revitalization, inclusive growth and service delivery in line with its private sector strategy and new livelihoods and economic recovery policy and programmatic offer, with a focus on inclusive business and markets. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, UNDP will prioritize partnerships with other United Nations agencies and IFIs to design and finance conflict-sensitive programmes to: (a) help restore market functions quickly; (b) support the creation of a basic enabling environment for businesses and value chains; (c) build the resilience of the private sector against shocks and design innovative private sector finance solutions to reduce risk; and (d) engage the local private sector in crisis prevention, preparedness, response and recovery efforts. These programmes and strategies will be coordinated with ongoing conflict prevention and peacebuilding

efforts and will focus on gender-transformative interventions and inclusive processes for youth, women and other marginalized populations.

45. UNDP agrees with **recommendation 10**, to prioritize support for gender equality and women's empowerment to enable gender-inclusive prevention, response and peace solutions; better address the drivers of gender inequality; improve the effectiveness of gender-responsive and gender-transformative interventions; and implement the recommendations in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). UNDP management wishes to clarify that it has taken deliberate steps to mainstream gender throughout its programmatic responses in conflict-affected countries (and broader portfolio) as evidenced by the steady increase in gender mainstreaming reported in the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 and the 2019 annual report on the gender equality strategy, while nonetheless acknowledging that capacities need to be scaled up. The new UNDP gender and crisis engagement facility, to be launched in early 2021, will directly address this recommendation.

V. Future UNDP support to conflict-affected countries

46. UNDP is currently finalizing several new policy and programmatic offers aligned to the evaluation findings, which will strengthen UNDP work in conflict-affected countries and contribute to the development of the next strategic plan. This includes the crisis and fragility framework, along with new offers on prevention, risk-informed development and integrated governance. UNDP will also roll out new approaches on the humanitarian-develop-peace nexus, livelihoods and early recovery, stabilization and peacebuilding, private sector engagement, coordinated regional responses and stronger support to the agendas for gender equality and women's empowerment and women, peace and security through the establishment of a dedicated gender and crisis engagement facility.

47. UNDP operational response systems are being enhanced and expanded to ensure that UNDP is "fit for fragility". New cadres of experienced crisis professionals are currently being identified, trained, nurtured and networked through the Global Policy Network and the UNDP Surge Academy. Specific modalities for operational support to country offices' delivery in critical areas such as procurement, human resources and information technology are being supported by the Surge Delivery Lab, integrating and clustering business processes to support multiple conflict-affected countries. The UNDP crisis SOPs will be updated to effectively guide UNDP actions in an increasing range of situations including protracted crises.

48. UNDP support to crisis-affected countries will target the secondary, multidimensional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, aligned with the UNDP COVID-19 response offer 2.0, "Beyond Recovery: Towards 2030", to leave no one behind.

49. The new UNDP crisis and fragility framework will bring these complementary policy and programmatic initiatives together to guide the strategies, operations and programmes for UNDP work in crisis and fragile contexts. The framework will explore major risks and opportunities for transformative change, linking the "what" – UNDP's technical offers in the areas of prevention, peacebuilding, governance, rule of law, human rights, human mobility and recovery, disaster risk reduction and gender – with the "how" to ensure that UNDP is fit for purpose in these difficult operating environments. The framework will enhance UNDP engagement in relevant global policy and advocacy platforms and initiatives, highlight areas of focus to deliver specialized support in crisis and fragile contexts, and support more joined-up and demand-driven support in these contexts.

Annex. Evaluation recommendations and UNDP management response

Recommendation 1. UNDP needs a well-focused corporate policy that responds to the Secretary-General's call for a coordinated and integrated approach to sustainable peace. UNDP should demonstrate global leadership in facilitating and promoting the humanitarian-development-peace nexus agenda.

Management response:

UNDP accepts the recommendation and is developing a crisis and fragility framework which will align crisis prevention and response strategies with the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Sustaining Peace Agenda, and guide the strategies, programmes and operations for UNDP work in crisis/fragile contexts.

UNDP will enhance its learning to deliver on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in practice and channel this into upgraded nexus approaches, spanning both its programmatic role in terms of development effectiveness and delivering results, and its integrator role, globally and in country.

UNDP will leverage existing global joint programming engagements with the United Nations Secretariat, including the Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention and its extended capacity provided by peace and development advisers, the Global Focal Point on the Rule of Law and the United Nations Transitions Project, among others, to support the resident coordinator system to ensure cross-pillar coherence and promote joint analysis, planning and programming towards collective nexus outcomes.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Develop crisis and fragility framework	June 2021	Crisis Bureau/Crisis and Fragility Policy and Engagement Team (CFPET)		Initiated
1.2 Systematize corporate learning and good practices on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; translate into practical policy and programme solutions for country-level application, and into strengthened global policy advocacy and leadership through relevant forums	End 2021	Crisis Bureau/CFPET		Initiated

Recommendation 2. UNDP should prioritize support to conflict prevention at the global and country levels. It should develop its prevention offer with a focus on facilitating long-term structural change and a generational transformation agenda in conflict-affected countries. UNDP should identify areas where there will be a sustained long-term focus and as part of the prevention offer, address the interlinked dimensions of climate and conflict.

Management response:

UNDP accepts the recommendation and is developing a new prevention offer that covers multiple time frames: short-term, focusing on early warning and early preventive action; medium-term, focusing on building infrastructure for peace and capacities for dialogue, mediation and consensus-building; and long-term, addressing underlying and root developmental causes of conflict, including climate change, which require prioritization in UNDP country programmes. The offer will factor in risk-informed development and integrated approaches in complex crisis environments. Aligned to this, UNDP will develop a new methodology to assess its prevention impact.

<p>As part of this prevention offer and strengthening links between early warning and early action, the work of UNDP on monitoring crisis risks will build on the organization's data strategy and related efforts to strengthen data collection, data literacy and data/evidence-based analysis and programming for scaled-up prevention work. It will feed into internal decision-making support mechanisms for regular horizon scanning to inform early prevention action, both within UNDP and at an inter-agency level through relevant forums (e.g., Inter-Agency Standing Committee and United Nations prevention architecture).</p> <p>UNDP will further strengthen the links between its new prevention offer and prevention of violent extremism and the inclusion and engagement of youth in line with Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security across the five pillars.</p>				
2.1 Prevention offer finalized and rolled out in 30 countries, including development of impact measurement methodology on prevention and peacebuilding	Offer by December 2021; country roll-out by 2023	Crisis Bureau/ Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Responsive Institutions (CPPRI)		Initiated
2.2 Institutionalize horizon-scanning mechanism to regularly analyse emerging risks for internal decision-making processes, resource allocation and inter-agency mechanisms; analysis based on roll-out of the crisis risk dashboard tool in at least 30 of the 57 fragile States to support data-driven contextual analysis and development of related guidance	December 2021	Crisis Bureau/CFPET, CPPRI		Initiated
2.3 Review of UNDP youth and prevention of violent extremism portfolios, building on stocktaking review, to ensure and promote enhanced coherence and alignment	December 2021	Crisis Bureau/ CPPRI, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) Governance		
<p>Recommendation 3. UNDP management should ensure organization-wide policy coherence to address inconsistent conceptual and programmatic responses across regions. UNDP should address constraints that are limiting its substantive and long-term engagement in core areas of support.</p>				
<p>Management response:</p> <p>UNDP accepts the recommendation noting it has designed the Global Policy Network (GPN) to bring together all UNDP bureaux to ensure coherence across its policy and programmatic approaches, and that globally distributed capacity and expertise are fully leveraged to achieve organizational objectives.</p> <p>UNDP is preparing its crisis and fragility framework, which will guide its programmes and support to crisis-affected and fragile contexts, including: UNDP focus areas (identifying major risks and opportunities for transformative change in fragile contexts); UNDP actions (linking to its technical offers in areas such as prevention, peacebuilding, governance, rule of law and human rights, disaster risk reduction, human mobility and recovery); and ways of working (to ensure that UNDP is fit for purpose in complex and difficult operating environments). The framework will be accompanied by a new generation of global programmes on priority themes to provide tested and coherent signature solutions to country offices.</p> <p>At the same time, UNDP is ensuring that it is “fit for fragility”, demonstrating sufficient agility and adaptability to operate in crisis and fragile environments. Revised and upgraded policies, procedures and capacities include: (a) Surge rosters and academy, which enable the right people with the right skills to be in the right place at the right time; (b) ensuring that TRAC3 funding is effectively invested in prevention, early recovery, nexus partnerships and protracted situations; (c) SOPs for crises enable UNDP to use the most agile institutional mechanisms and procedures to respond in a fully coordinated way across its country offices and bureaux; (d) the Surge Delivery Lab supports country offices in crisis situations with additional capacity, analytics and agile solutions in critical areas of delivery and operations; and</p>				

(e) the Surge digital assessments facilitate country offices to quickly conduct damage, impact and other assessments, collecting critical primary data and translating it into actionable information to support decision-making by managers and partners.				
3.1 Launch of crisis and fragility framework	June 2021	Crisis Bureau/CFPET		Initiated
3.2 Launch next-generation crisis-related global programmes on priority themes, including prevention, rule of law, recovery and risk reduction	2021	Crisis Bureau		Initiated
3.3 Revised SOPs and upgraded Surge deployment, delivery support and assessment mechanisms	December 2021	Crisis Bureau/Country Support Management Team , Bureau of Management		Initiated
Recommendation 4. UNDP should emphasize medium- to long-term livelihood and employment support. It should take measures to put holistic employment and livelihood options into practice, for wider use and replication in conflict and post-conflict contexts.				
Management response:				
UNDP accepts the recommendation and will develop improved context and systems analysis to identify new options for sustainability of livelihoods and economic recovery in conflict and post-conflict settings to reduce economic instability, poverty and conflicts over time in fragile contexts. UNDP will identify common success elements from existing livelihoods and market-oriented initiatives and enhance support to country offices to strengthen integrated programming, better linking livelihoods/economic revitalization support, social cohesion, environmental management and governance, within the lenses of poverty reduction and the Sustainable Development Goals. These evidence-based frameworks will be incorporated in the revision of the UNDP guide on livelihoods and economic recovery in conflict and post-conflict settings.				
4.1 Develop upgraded and gender-sensitive framework for livelihoods and economic recovery in fragile settings	December 2021	Crisis Bureau/Recovery Solutions and Human Mobility (RSHM)		Initiated
4.2 Develop and roll out guidance on mainstreaming market and demand analysis in the design and implementation of livelihoods and employment support in conflict and post-conflict settings	December 2021	Crisis Bureau/RSHM		Initiated
4.3 Targeted policy and programme support to country offices' research and documentation of lessons learned and effective strategies to link short-term livelihoods programming to medium- and long-term poverty reduction outcomes, including access to finance and debt-coping strategies, adaptive social protection and other poverty alleviation approaches in fragile contexts	December 2021	Crisis Bureau/RSHM		

Recommendation 5. UNDP should make long-term governance interventions central to its agenda of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. UNDP governance programmes should invest in new public administration models, with emphasis on planning and analysis, digital technologies and private sector engagement.

Management response: UNDP accepts the recommendation and will continue to support countries in developing accountable, responsive institutions at national and local levels focused on deepening social contracts, and support the creation of governance systems of the future, including through digitalization and social innovations, reflecting the shifting domain of governance work in fragile and non-fragile settings alike. Special focus will be given to understanding multi-level governance systems and continuing to examine how UNDP can strengthen the social contract in a comprehensive manner. UNDP has recognized the need for a more integrated governance offer that addresses the broader functioning of governance systems, including in managing complexity and multidimensional risk.

UNDP is undertaking broader reviews of its governance work, including its local governance offer, building on previous frameworks, lessons and evidence. UNDP has also embarked on a research agenda to continue to offer thought leadership as well as practical guidance in this area. Likewise, UNDP has started a process of elevating the work on prevention and peacebuilding including the role of governance institutions. UNDP continues its lead role in this area through partnerships across the United Nations system, including the peacebuilding architecture, the Global Focal Point for Rule of Law arrangement and MOUs incorporating governance priorities with UNHCR, UNICEF and UN-Habitat.

5.1 Reimagined governance offer articulated along with the next strategic plan, including evidence-based directions for longer-term governance interventions to accelerate peacebuilding and prevention	2022	GPN: BPPS/Governance, Crisis Bureau/CPPRI, Rule of Law, Security and Human Rights team (ROLSHR)		Initiated
5.2 Renewed local governance offer to provide fresh evidence-based and innovative options for local-level action to deliver sustainable development to people, including those most at risk in current and future crises.	December 2021	Crisis Bureau/CPPRI, BPPS/Governance		Initiated
5.3 With the DPPA Electoral Assistance Division, review funding mechanisms for electoral support to mitigate short-termism in this area.	December 2021	BPPS/Governance		

Recommendation 6. The Sahel programme is considerably underfunded. UNDP should demonstrate the urgency and intensity of the response that the Sahel and Horn of Africa situations demand. It should recognize the unique challenges faced by the Sahel and prioritize the regional programme to galvanize support. It should also prioritize partnerships for a coordinated and collective response.

Management response:

UNDP accepts the recommendation, noting that the UNDP initiative on regenerating the Central Sahel is underpinned by three programmatic offers on governance, energy and youth empowerment, and will strengthen the coordination and delivery of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Building on this offer, UNDP will continue to play a convening role with stakeholders, including donors, in mobilizing resources to address the multidimensional crises in the region. The Sahel offer is accompanied by a workplan for partner engagement, communications and resource mobilization.

Likewise, through the UNDP corporate Level 3 response in the Sahel, significant investments are underway to strengthen UNDP capacities in the region, in order to scale up delivery and impact. In late 2020, UNDP adopted a similar approach in the Horn of Africa, which will be further elaborated in 2021 and beyond.

6.1 Finalization and implementation of partner engagement, communications and resource mobilization plan for the Sahel offer, including high-level strategic dialogues, Member State and inter-agency briefings	December 2021	Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA), Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy (BERA), Crisis Bureau		Initiated
6.2 Development and deepening of regional approach to the Horn of Africa	December 2021	RBA, Regional Bureau for Arab States, Crisis Bureau		Initiated
Recommendation 7. Stabilization programmes need further consolidation. Merely focusing on infrastructure rehabilitation and building will not produce the desired outcomes unless combined with the capacity development of local institutions and peace initiatives. Building on lessons from ongoing stabilization programmes, UNDP should anchor future programmes within a peace and development framework.				
Management response: UNDP accepts the recommendation, acknowledging that stabilization programmes are by necessity context-specific, while informed by good practices from other countries and learning at global level. UNDP will continue to engage in dedicated learning and knowledge development based on its extensive stabilization engagements on the ground, including on links between stabilization and peacebuilding approaches, and strengthening the capacities of UNDP country offices to support these processes within a longer-term peacebuilding and development lens.				
7.1 Prepare UNDP guidance and principles on stabilization, based on learning and evidence review, focused on anchoring programmes within a peace and development framework	December 2021	Crisis Bureau		Initiated
7.2 Undertake research on stabilization in areas such as links to security sector reform and service delivery in areas of limited state presence	December 2021	Crisis Bureau/ROLSHR/CPPRI		Initiated
Recommendation 8. UNDP should further improve collaboration with United Nations agencies, the World Bank and bilateral donors for contributions to long-term outcomes in conflict-affected countries.				
Management response: UNDP accepts the recommendation noting that partnerships for delivering on humanitarian-development-peace nexus commitments with the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the World Food Programme have been strengthened and are showing potential for synergies and complementarities, with shared advocacy work, tools and field support packages. Other partnerships will also be reviewed for synergies in pursuit of shared humanitarian, development and peace objectives. The flagship joint UNDP-DPPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention deploys peace and development advisors in 60 countries to provide the resident coordinator with cross-pillar coordination and coherence through provision of analytics and planned responses. Included in this engagement is a strong collaboration with IFIs in different settings, including through joint analysis/assessments and dialogue with governments and national counterparts, particularly in fragile and conflict settings.				

8.1 Undertake review of partnerships in crisis/fragile contexts, to ensure partnerships are sufficient and fit for purpose following the delinking of the resident coordinator system from UNDP; identify gaps and opportunities	End 2021	Crisis Bureau/CFPET, BERA, regional bureaux		
8.2 Ensure continued engagement with United Nations system-wide review of integration and implement its recommendations in order to strengthen collaboration with the United Nations peace and security pillar	End 2021	Crisis Bureau/CFPET, BERA		Initiated
8.3 Build on existing partnerships with IFIs (including tripartite partnership with the World Bank and European Union on post-crisis recovery efforts), to identify thematic initiatives in key areas of prevention and response, leveraging the UNDP comparative advantage	End 2021	Crisis Bureau/CFPET, BERA		
Recommendation 9. UNDP should make private sector engagement integral to its economic revitalization, inclusive growth and service delivery support. UNDP should accelerate the pace and scale of its engagement, with context-specific tools and interventions.				
Management response: UNDP accepts the recommendation and agrees on the need to further prioritize private sector engagement, investment and development as integral to economic revitalization, inclusive growth and service delivery, aligned to its private sector strategy and livelihoods and economic recovery policy and programmatic offer, and with a focus on inclusive business and market development approaches. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, UNDP will strengthen partnerships with United Nations entities and IFIs to design finance strategies and programmes that are conflict-sensitive, complement ongoing peacebuilding efforts, focus on gender-transformative interventions and are inclusive of youth, women and other marginalized populations.				
9.1 Establish corporate practice area and offer on private sector development and engagement in fragile and conflict-affected countries to support regional bureaux and country offices in their private sector engagement, including tools and guidance on inclusive market development, financing and risk management	End 2021	Crisis Bureau/RSHM, BPPS/Istanbul International Centre for Private Sector in Development		
Recommendation 10. UNDP should prioritize support to gender equality and women's empowerment for enabling gender-inclusive prevention, response and peace solutions				
Management response: UNDP accepts the recommendation and will launch a gender and crisis Engagement Facility in 2021, informed by the relevant findings and recommendations from the evaluation, to serve as a one-stop-shop to consolidate, coordinate, communicate and bring coherence to UNDP support to gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile and crisis-affected countries.				

UNDP will prioritize gender considerations in crisis contexts by ensuring: increased deployment of gender-related technical and programmatic capacities on the ground in crisis-affected countries; allocation of the 15 per cent target of TRAC3 for gender-dedicated programme activities; and developing a specific Gender Seal certification track for county offices in crisis settings. UNDP will specifically develop its programmatic offer and sectoral strategies to enhance women's productive capacities and livelihoods in crisis contexts.

UNDP will continue to deliver its partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), implementing the crisis section of the 2018 MOU between UNDP and UN-Women, and through new gender-responsive conflict analysis initiatives to contribute to country-level planning processes and identify priorities for joint programming in crisis/fragile contexts.

10.1 Creation of gender and crisis engagement facility	March 2021	Crisis Bureau/CFPET, BPPS/Gender team		Initiated
10.2 In coordination with regional bureaux, launch Gender Seal track for crisis countries	December 2021	BPPS/Gender, Crisis Bureau/CFPET		Initiated
10.3 Development of a sectoral strategy on economic recovery with transformative gender equality outcomes	December 2021	BPPS/Gender /Inclusive Growth, Crisis Bureau/CFPET		