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UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025

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Executive summary

A planetary emergency and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have depleted the world's natural and human resources and changed the landscape of development. Up to 1 billion people could be living in extreme poverty by 2030 unless the world seizes this opportunity for a decisive push towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

UNDP works with countries to expand people's choices for a fairer, sustainable future, to build the world envisioned by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with planet and people in balance. The challenge of the next four years is to accelerate and scale up development results significantly, bringing the Goals back within reach. Towards that end, UNDP will support change in three directions:

- Structural transformation, particularly green, inclusive and digital transitions;
- Leaving no one behind, a rights-based approach centred on human agency and human development;
- Building resilience to respond to systemic uncertainty and risk.

These are huge, whole-of-society puzzles that require collective efforts and integrated approaches. UNDP offers a unique network of global reach and local presence, sectoral expertise and trusted partnerships to help solve these puzzles. In the next four years, UNDP will work with countries to expand human capabilities through which 100 million people can escape multidimensional poverty; support access to clean energy for 500 million people; support 800 million people to participate in elections, many for the first time; and promote the investment of over \$1 trillion of public expenditure and private capital in the Sustainable Development Goals.

This Strategic Plan describes the future direction of UNDP, continuing on from the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. UNDP will continue to work through its six signature solutions on poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy and gender equality. These are where countries' needs are greatest and where the capabilities and position of UNDP within the United Nations development system best equip the organization to work. Learning from the lessons of the last four years, the signature solutions will be adapted to better match countries' evolving priorities. Collaborating across the strengthened United Nations system and beyond, UNDP will develop integrated approaches that apply combinations of solutions for greater impact. Powerful enablers – strategic innovation, digitalization and development finance – will further accelerate and scale results.



To be an effective partner in transformative change, UNDP has to build not just new skills, like systems thinking, but a new culture: one that embraces complexity, actively manages risk, continually adapts and seeks to learn alongside delivering results. In an uncertain world, its business model must empower UNDP to respond to partners with the flexibility and at the scale they expect. In this way UNDP not only supports countries' progress towards the 2030 Agenda, but also fosters collective investment in building global public goods, contributing to a fairer, sustainable future for all.

I. Strategic context

1. The world faces a planetary emergency that threatens the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Only development within planetary boundaries will enable humanity to tackle the central challenges of the Anthropocene: mitigating and adapting to climate change; protecting biodiversity and ecosystems; and ensuring just and equitable development for all. This Strategic Plan describes how UNDP will help to enhance human capabilities and expand countries' development choices, to build a more equitable world with people and planet in balance.

2. The challenge of reaching the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was already huge even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Although the number of people living in extreme poverty dropped from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 689 million in 2017, a significant proportion remain perched just above the poverty line and highly vulnerable. Across 107 developing countries, 1.3 billion people live in multidimensional poverty. Since 1990, inequality has increased in most developed countries and some middle-income countries, home to 75 per cent of the world's population. While inequalities in basic capabilities, like life expectancy at birth, have been shrinking, the gaps have increased in enhanced capabilities like tertiary education or digital access. Having almost reached gender parity in primary education enrolment and reduced the global maternal mortality ratio by 45 per cent since 2000, the world has seen progress towards gender equality falter in many countries as efforts shifted to areas of wider gender gaps.

3. The effects of COVID-19 and the largest economic contraction since the Great Depression, compounded by armed conflicts, climate change and biodiversity loss, mean the number of people living in poverty rose in 2020 for the first time since 1998. Over 3.9 million people have died. Seventy-six per cent of all workers in the informal economy are affected. In April 2020, schools were closed for 85 per cent of the world's children, hitting the poorest, without access to online learning or the security of school, hardest. Women's jobs are 1.8 times more vulnerable than men's, their unpaid care burden three times greater. The pandemic may force an additional 11 million girls out of school; many will not return, with snowball effects on their lives for years. Now is the time for a concerted "push" towards the Sustainable Development Goals, to help people rebound from COVID-19 and reverse or mitigate these impacts before they become permanent.

4. Yet while COVID-19 has illuminated the challenges already facing the world, it has also demonstrated the scope for choice in how to address them. It opened up space for policies previously considered controversial or impracticable, such as temporary basic incomes, and revealed the potential of unobvious solutions from diverse sources. Many Governments established massive emergency cash transfer programmes in record time. The idea of government as a platform, meeting and serving people online, became familiar worldwide. Responses at regional and local level were often able to deliver timely support attuned to local realities. Principled leadership earned trust.

5. Nearly half the global poor live in conflict-affected countries. There were 82.4 million forcibly displaced people by the end of 2020, 86 per cent of them hosted in developing countries. Conflicts have become more complex and protracted, increasingly driven by non-traditional security threats like economic stagnation, irregular migration and displacement, environmental degradation, competition for natural resources or rapid growth in cities. As these risks accumulate, marginalized populations find themselves trapped in a cycle of vulnerability. Those displaced through conflict suffer further shocks. An integrated approach that links development, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action and sustaining peace is needed to build resilience and strong foundations for sustainable development and human security.¹ Risk-informed development is key to prevention, recovery and stabilization.

6. COVID-19 reminded the world that development challenges are dynamic puzzles of multidimensional risk that require systemic solutions. As long-term drivers of change like urbanization, climate change and biodiversity loss intersect with current trends, risks are compounded and pressure on resources increases. Global greenhouse gas emissions continue to grow, driven by increased energy demand. Up to 132 million people may fall into poverty by 2030 because of climate

¹ As per [General Assembly resolution 66/290](#) of 10 September 2012.

change. More people were displaced in 2020 by extreme weather events than by conflict. But there is a flip side to this interconnectedness. Decarbonizing the world economy could add \$98 trillion to gross domestic product (GDP) by 2050, quadrupling the number of renewable energy jobs to 42 million, with higher gender parity than traditional sectors. The renewable energy revolution holds the promise not only of reducing emissions, but of offering energy access to millions.

7. A systemic approach that addresses these points of connection may help Governments and communities as they contend with the fact that existing social contracts are no longer working for many. More than 1.1 billion people live without proof of identity and struggle to access basic services. Eighty-three per cent are worried about losing their jobs through automation, globalization or the gig economy. Some are losing confidence in the ability of public institutions to uphold the rule of law and human rights and deliver fair, inclusive policies. Yet a positive face of this social disruption is evident in more vibrant citizen activism, like youth movements on climate change, collective action against gender and race discrimination, or the voluntary cooperation of billions practising social distancing. Lessons from COVID-19 show the potential, for example, for stronger and more inclusive civic engagement, digitally transacted, between Governments, parliaments and young people.

8. With 4.66 billion active Internet users at October 2020, and a million more joining every day, digital systems are becoming the default means to interact, produce, consume and understand the world. This is reshaping the very landscape of development. Exponentially growing quantities of multidimensional data make stronger evidence-based policymaking possible. Technological innovation can enable countries to leapfrog hurdles to growth. But the benefits depend on access, and if jobs requiring physical effort and human interaction shrink dramatically, a “digital underclass” may be left behind. Digitalization poses challenges to societies – of privacy, accountability, misinformation, equality – at massive scale. Its tremendous opportunities will not be universally shared without a conscious, common effort to direct them in support of inclusive, ethical societies and the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. Multilateral cooperation will be vital in addressing these shared challenges. While trends towards protectionism and nationalism may militate against a collective approach, encouraging signs of greater awareness are appearing. These include more diverse alliances of Governments and businesses, regions and cities collaborating on shared challenges. Seventy per cent of countries supported by the UNDP Climate Promise are raising their climate mitigation goals, while insurance companies and institutional investors are increasingly factoring climate risk and social and environmental impact into their decisions.

10. The Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement bring clarity of purpose to this complex, uncertain landscape. These shared commitments of the international community – to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice and protect the planet – continue to guide UNDP and define its goals. The future is challenging, but it is not preordained. It is for the global community to choose.

II. Building on lessons learned

11. The Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 set an ambitious agenda: to transform UNDP into a more nimble, innovative thought leader, more effective and efficient at delivering results, a trusted partner for countries in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals. The Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 continues in this direction, building on the progress of the last four years. It draws on assessments, evaluations and audits, including the midterm review and the evaluation of the previous plan, and on the lessons of experience. Conversations with practitioners and thought leaders from government, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and UNDP staff worldwide have enriched this plan.

12. Key lessons to which the plan responds include:

(a) **The power of integration.** Performance analysis cited in the midterm review showed that applying multiple signature solutions to particular sectors contributes to higher results across the whole

country programme. The plan describes how a systems approach will help UNDP, collaborating with United Nations partners, to deliver more strongly integrated development solutions;

(b) **Understanding and managing risk.** Accelerating and scaling development impact requires a better understanding of multiple threats to improve risk-informed programming, for which timely, actionable data and analysis are essential. The plan prioritizes resilience-building to better address cascading and interconnected risks, as well as strengthening the data and knowledge management that must underpin risk-informed programming;

(c) **Modernizing operational systems and structures.** Due diligence protocols, financial rules and management systems need to evolve in line with the requirements of new ways of working and forms of partnership. UNDP will continue to modernize its operational systems so they efficiently support these new ways of working, enabling a more proactive approach to risk management while maintaining the highest standards of transparency, accountability and operational effectiveness;

(d) **Updating programming arrangements and implementation modalities.** UNDP mobilized or reallocated nearly \$1 billion to assist partners in over 170 countries and territories with their COVID-19 response. Within 16 weeks of launching the rapid response facility, 129 proposals worth \$105 million were approved using expedited mechanisms. This underscores the lesson that timely, effective responses depend on flexible resources and adaptable programming approaches.

III. A partner in the United Nations system

13. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) underlined the importance of the system working together to deliver coherent and integrated development solutions, driven by demand from countries, that maximize collective results and impact. The QCPR also recommended a more differentiated approach to country contexts, particularly for countries in special circumstances such as small island developing States, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and middle-income countries, including through agreed intergovernmental frameworks such as the Samoa Pathway and the Istanbul and Vienna Programmes of Action. Having supported the transition to a repositioned United Nations development system with significant funding and expertise, UNDP continues to work closely with United Nations country teams (UNCTs) and resident coordinators² towards these goals.

14. UNDP works with UNCTs in establishing United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs), based on which UNDP and Governments develop their country programmes in areas of UNDP strengths. UNDP will sharpen its offer of integrated support, providing demand-driven services to the system, under the overall coordination of resident coordinators, that meet Governments' policy and programming priorities.³ UNDP support to the system consists of expertise to advance cross-sectoral programming and integrated analysis; data, analysis and foresight for common country analyses and UNSDCF; and system-wide offers on integrated policy solutions, development financing and evidence-based programmatic approaches.

15. As technical lead of the United Nations socioeconomic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP deployed its expertise, regional and country presence and partnerships to help system partners come together to provide timely, integrated support, including socioeconomic response plans covering 139 countries and a policy modelling platform to help decision makers analyse the impacts of policy choices before precious investments are locked in. This collaboration is continuing. In conflict and crisis contexts, such as in the Sahel, UNDP works closely with humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors⁴ to prevent crisis, promote coherent, risk-informed recovery, protect development gains and build resilience. This starts with establishing a common understanding of

² More detail is provided in information notes to the Executive Board on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, from 2019 to the present.

³ As per General Assembly resolution 72/279, paragraph 32.

⁴ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Department of Peace Operations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migration and others.

objectives, risks and vulnerabilities to underpin an integrated approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. In operationalizing the Secretary-General's recommendations on the multi-country office review, UNDP has scaled up its support to small island developing States through its "Rising up for SIDS" initiative, supporting access to financing and the deployment of additional capacities including on climate, the blue economy, digitalization and disaster risk reduction. UNDP is working with system partners on key priorities for countries and territories serviced by multi-country offices – policy support, development financing, data systems and South-South cooperation – including through developing the concept for an innovative finance design facility and contributing to the development of a multidimensional vulnerability index for small island developing States.

17. UNDP is strengthening its partnerships across the United Nations system, drawing on agencies' complementary strengths and capabilities to deliver stronger results. Collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on financing for development builds on UNDP strengths in macro-level and innovative financing and UNICEF strengths in social sector financing and budgeting. Cooperation towards COVID-19 recovery includes a new framework for action with the International Labour Organization (ILO) on jobs and livelihoods, social protection and social cohesion. UNDP is working with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to build back greener and more equitably, and collaborating with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker. UNDP and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are collaborating to help countries respond to the nature and climate crises and strengthen sustainable food and commodity systems. UNDP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme are working together on national urban planning and climate action planning for urban resilience. A new partnership phase with the International Organization for Migration was launched in 2020. UNDP will work with the United Nations system to implement the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, tracking progress through its dedicated project marker, in line with its continued commitment to disability inclusion across programming and operations.

18. To support COVID-19 vaccine preparedness and deployment, UNDP is working with Governments and partners under the leadership of the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. UNDP focuses on digital solutions for vaccine delivery, data for vaccine equity and greening COVID-19 vaccination. In collaboration with WHO and other partners, UNDP is developing a global dashboard to provide multidimensional insights on vaccine equity and recovery.

19. The United Nations Volunteers programme, Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation and United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), system assets hosted by UNDP, also reinforce the revitalized development system. Volunteerism is a powerful means of implementing the 2030 Agenda,⁵ as volunteers provide expertise, enhance capacity and encourage community engagement in development.

20. South-South and triangular cooperation are integral to how UNDP works and thinks about the future of development, as UNDP connects countries and applies their knowledge and experience to advance sustainable development. The development of a Global Policy Network and extensive country-to-country solutions sharing through the Accelerator Labs Network show how UNDP is leveraging South-South and triangular cooperation as a fundamental approach to development cooperation.

⁵ General Assembly resolution 75/233.

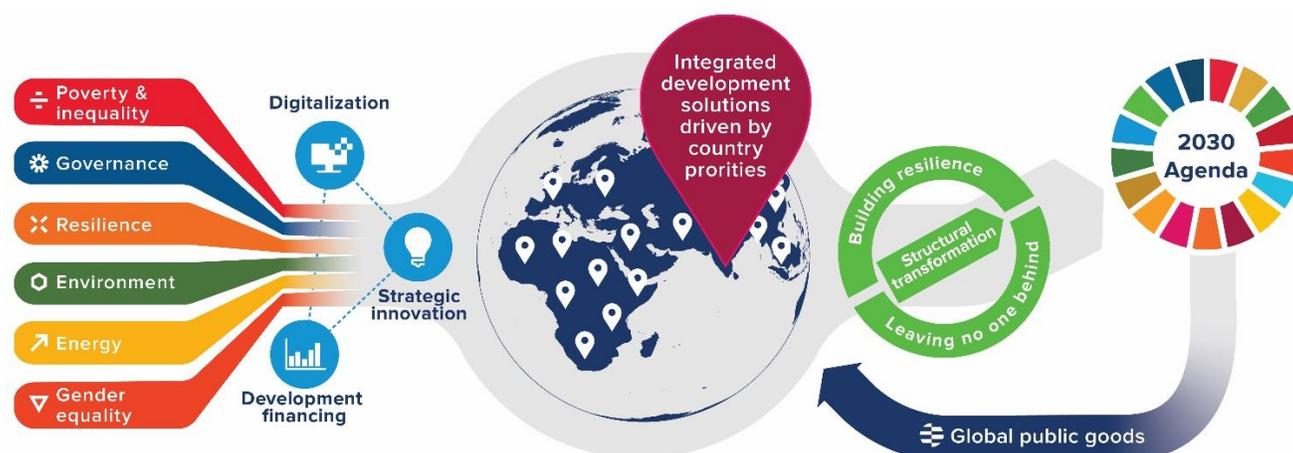
IV. The UNDP offer: what UNDP does

21. UNDP supports countries in their path towards the Sustainable Development Goals through country programmes driven by national development choices, as envisioned by the QCPR. Poverty eradication remains at the core of its work.

22. This Strategic Plan describes the work of UNDP as:

- (a) Supporting countries towards three directions of change: structural transformation, leaving no one behind and resilience,
- (b) Through six signature solutions: poverty and inequality, governance, resilience, environment, energy and gender equality,
- (c) Enhanced by three enablers: strategic innovation, digitalization and development financing.

The UNDP offer



Directions of change

23. UNDP supports countries towards three directions of change:

(a) **Structural transformation, including green, inclusive and digital transitions**, working with countries beyond solving immediate development challenges to supporting change in the underlying systems and structures that shape a country's development. The pandemic is an opportunity to reimagine development and accelerate systems transformation towards more inclusive, accountable and sustainable models. Depending on a country's context, the focus of a transition to a green and inclusive economy will vary, from increasing economic productivity to driving sustainable development transitions through innovation and creativity. In all cases, effective governance is essential to achieve such transformations and prevent reversals;

(b) **Leaving no one behind**, a rights-based approach centred on empowerment, inclusion, equity, human agency and human development capabilities which recognizes that poverty and inequality are multidimensional;

(c) **Building resilience**, strengthening the capacity of countries, institutions and people to prevent, mitigate and respond to diverse risks including crisis, conflict, natural disasters, climate and social and economic shocks.

24. No country has yet achieved the combination of very high human development and sustainable ecological impact. While structural transformations are critical to the economic and social progress

needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda, they must be underpinned by a deep commitment to sustainability, inclusion and equity, and greater capacity to anticipate, respond to and recover from shocks and crises. The three directions of change are interdependent. While every context is unique, every country's development path is likely to feature some combination of all three.

25. During this Strategic Plan period, the COVID-19 pandemic will remain a significant and unpredictable factor affecting countries' development, and in each case, differently. UNDP support will be planned and delivered in a deliberately flexible manner to respond most usefully to countries' evolving priorities.

Signature solutions

26. The six signature solutions have proven to be the areas where country demands are greatest and where the capabilities and role of UNDP within the United Nations system best equip the organization to work. Each will be refined and developed to scale up its impact and more effectively respond to countries' evolving needs.

Poverty and inequality

27. Global inequality is now less about disparities of income and more about disparities of opportunity that exacerbate poverty and reduce upward mobility, trapping successive generations in poverty. The hardest to reach are often vulnerable on several fronts, including geography, age, gender, displacement, disabilities or digital access. Building on UNDP work on poverty in some 129 countries, the next generation of this signature solution will invest in the enhanced capabilities people need to move above the poverty line and keep moving forwards, towards the goal of building prosperity for all.

28. UNDP expects by 2025 to help empower 100 million poor, marginalized and excluded populations to escape persistent multidimensional poverty and vulnerabilities. UNDP will apply a systems approach that addresses the multidimensionality of poverty, investing in assets, services and social protection across sectors. It will promote job creation, social protection and social safety nets for low-income people and the "missing middle", vulnerable individuals working in the informal sector, with a focus on women, 85 per cent of whom in developing countries are in informal employment. The organization will work with partners such as ILO to make the business case for social protection as an investment in human capital to protect individuals against shocks and improve productivity and inclusive economic growth. With partners like ILO and UNICEF, it will scale up engagement on youth economic empowerment, focusing on decent jobs for youth, green jobs, social entrepreneurship and protecting informal workers.

29. The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the widening gap between those with access to quality health care and those without. UNDP will scale up work with UNICEF, WHO and others on policy proposals and programmatic solutions to strengthen systems for health, including to regain lost ground in the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria and to address emerging issues such as non-communicable diseases, mental health and pandemic preparedness.

30. Many low-income individuals, including the displaced, are trapped in a cycle of poverty and vulnerability because of their lack of credit, inability to borrow to invest in skills and productive assets or lack of a legal identity. Working closely with UNCDF, UNDP will promote an enabling policy and regulatory environment for financial inclusion, and digitalization to scale up services for those left behind.

31. Affordable and reliable energy is fundamental to achieving prosperity for all. Drawing on synergies with the signature solution on energy and working with partners such as the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the private sector, UNDP will invest in closing the energy access gap.

Governance

32. Effective governance is an essential foundation of the three directions of change. It helps to manage the risks and impacts of structural transformations. It helps to guarantee the empowerment and inclusion that ensure that no one is left behind. It contributes to resilience, helping to prevent reversals of development gains and relapse into conflict or crisis.

33. Building effective, inclusive and accountable governance is a long-term process deeply rooted in social and political systems. For decades, UNDP has taken a holistic approach to governance across rights, accountability, rule of law, voice and participation and multilevel governance systems. For example, through the Global Programme on Rule of Law and Human Rights, UNDP provides expertise and seed funding to support rule of law in some 48 countries through national human rights systems and access to justice. UNDP and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime work closely on anti-corruption and, alongside other United Nations entities, are committed to joint follow-up to the political declaration of the special session of the General Assembly against corruption.

34. UNDP work will pivot in the next four years to anticipatory and preventive measures to address emerging complexities. UNDP will reinvigorate its work on public sector capabilities, learning from experiences in the pandemic response. Building on early examples such as the “triple AAA” (anticipatory, agile and adaptive) governance approach in Viet Nam, it will consider how to “future-proof” governance systems through anticipatory approaches and better understanding and management of risk. This is also relevant in conflict and crisis contexts, for example in Yemen where UNDP is supporting platforms that bring together local government, civil society, private sector and tribal leadership to analyse and anticipate challenges of the context.

35. UNDP will support partners in areas of governance systems that present particular challenges or opportunities, including enhancing civic space; ensuring rights and equity in digitalization and innovation; addressing racism and discrimination; and empowering women and youth. UNDP will help to promote the rights of future generations and amplify young people’s voices in decisions on climate action and the future of their communities, through capacity development, youth political participation and support to young innovators.

36. UNDP will focus more strongly on local governance systems and their linkages to multilevel systems, where there is most potential for change and capacity to prevent and recover from shocks and make progress towards the 2030 Agenda. While national Governments will remain its primary partners, UNDP will engage with a wider range of actors, from regional to local, including the private sector and civil society. This approach builds on existing programmes such as the work of the Accelerator Labs to identify local innovators, tapping into their expertise and creating actionable insights.

37. Many UNDP interventions across the signature solutions, for example on nature, climate, biodiversity and energy, are fundamentally about supporting country governance systems and ensuring human rights. UNDP will explicitly mainstream the agreed intergovernmental principles of accountability, inclusion and effectiveness⁶ across all signature solutions and development contexts, drawing on experience with mainstreaming gender equality, human rights and the social and environmental standards.

Resilience

38. UNDP supports countries and communities in building resilience to a wide range of shocks and crises, including conflict, climate change, disasters and epidemics. UNDP will continue to take a developmental approach across the issues of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, disaster risk reduction and crisis response. As human and environmental systems become ever more interdependent, risk has become increasingly systemic, cascading and interconnected. Better understanding and addressing the systemic nature of risk is critical.

⁶ Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [Principles of effective governance for sustainable development](#)

39. First, UNDP will contribute to a better understanding of systemic, multidimensional risk as the basis for building resilience and human security. It will provide its partners with knowledge, predictive analysis, techniques and tools to help them think and plan resilience for the long term. This will help them measure the resilience value of different development options and make better risk-informed choices towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

40. Second, UNDP will build resilience throughout its work at regional, national and local levels. It will work with UNCTs to establish a common understanding of risks in a particular context as the basis for integrated programming, i.e., gender-responsive and risk-informed interventions that bring different sectors together towards collective outcomes. In crisis and conflict contexts, this shared approach to multidimensional risk fosters greater coherence and complementarity among humanitarian, development, human rights and peace and security partners. In the Sahel, for example, UNDP is working with partners to mitigate conflict and climate risk, stabilize communities, strengthen inclusive governance and build innovative development partnerships.

41. Working at local level is a practical entry point for reducing the accumulation of systemic risk and building resilience in line with the human security approach, as for example in UNDP disaster risk reduction work with Caribbean communities after the devastating hurricanes of 2017. UNDP will continue to partner with communities and civic actors to strengthen their capacities and work with national Governments to amplify their voices in decisions on resilience, focusing on those at greatest risk of being left behind, e.g., those forcibly displaced by climate, disaster and conflict. Strengthening local capacities and dialogue mechanisms promotes a culture of prevention, strengthens social cohesion and human security and combats extremism. Local-level resilience solutions must feed into national processes to achieve change, and vice versa. In Somalia, for example, UNDP is helping to strengthen community resilience to climate change and water scarcity by supporting water conservation infrastructure and education at local level, coupled with national policies on disaster risk reduction. When risks cross borders, transnational or issue-based approaches will be needed.

42. Crisis prevention and resilience-building are most effective when partners work together. For example, the Insurance Development Forum, a platform led by the industry, the United Nations and the World Bank, co-chaired by UNDP, brings together complementary capabilities and assets to deliver risk finance solutions to 20 high-priority countries by 2025. Businesses are beginning to recognize that resilience can protect business continuity. This makes the private sector a key collaborator as companies re-engineer their business models to become more adaptable and set themselves green and risk-informed standards.

Environment

43. COVID-19 has highlighted the costs of over-exploitation of nature and its implications for health, including the risks of zoonotic diseases spreading to humans. This signature solution aims to put nature and the environment at the heart of national economies and development and fiscal planning. UNDP will help Governments to protect, manage and value their natural assets by supporting informed policy and regulatory choices that minimize negative environmental impact and incorporate incentives for environmentally positive decisions. This will include repurposing nature-negative government subsidies; developing new bond instruments; and working with Governments to create new technology options and policies that support the large-scale deployment of clean energy.

44. Financing for nature and nature-based solutions remains critically low. UNDP aims to mobilize substantial public and private investment in nature-based climate solutions, building on its track record of working with over 100 countries addressing financing for nature. This will include innovative and blended finance to support green recovery, with UNDP providing matchmaking services between finance and bankable projects; derisking private funding for crisis and conflict-affected areas where others do not go; or transforming national debt that is driving harmful, short-term decisions on natural resources, for example linking delivery of nature commitments to debt payments. New finance and funding partners are critical to accelerating a pipeline of investment-ready projects.

45. At the same time, UNDP will support partners in addressing the root causes and drivers of change. Working with FAO, UNEP and other specialist partners, UNDP aims to catalyse a shift away from

business-as-usual land-use and agricultural systems towards practices that restore long-term productivity, bolster livelihoods, safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services and provide climate solutions. This requires a renewed focus on strengthening governance, rule of law and human rights, including land rights, since 80 per cent of biodiversity is found on the lands of indigenous peoples and local communities.

46. Other levers of change are digitalization and use of spatial data (which can work across environment into gender and poverty); mobilizing behavioural change in support of nature-sensitive investment and production; and convening new coalitions around transformative change. UNDP will work with corporate leaders who are transforming their supply chains and production to become fairer, more inclusive and sustainable. Finding new champions for nature, including at subnational and community levels, will empower advocacy for change.

Energy

47. Access to energy is a precondition for health, education and economic prosperity: an essential multiplier for all the Sustainable Development Goals. Some 759 million people still lack access to electricity and 2.6 billion live without clean cooking options, disproportionately hurting women and girls. Without these basics, the most vulnerable risk being trapped in cycles of poverty and inequality.

48. The first objective of UNDP is increasing energy access for those furthest behind. By speeding up investment in distributed renewable energy solutions, especially for those hardest to reach and in crisis contexts, it aims to increase access to clean and affordable energy for 500 million people. The Africa Mini-Grid Market Acceleration Programme, for example, is improving the financial viability of renewable energy mini-grids in 18 countries, encouraging private investment, lower tariffs and expanded service.

49. Second, UNDP will work to accelerate the transition to renewable energy through systems changes that support inclusive, green economies, particularly in countries with low levels of renewable energy generation or poor energy-efficiency improvement rates. This work will capitalize on technological gains, clean energy innovations and new business models in the energy sector.

50. Change will be disruptive. Decreasing fossil fuel subsidies or shifting investment incentives, for example, will create winners and losers. UNDP will work to ensure that such transitions are fair, their impact on the vulnerable understood and mitigated. By adopting a human-centred approach, for example taking productive use of energy as an entry point rather than technical challenges, connections with areas like poverty or gender equality will naturally emerge, enabling a more integrated approach.

51. Drawing on partners' expertise and resources is key to scaling up the delivery and reach of UNDP. The organization will continue to work across the United Nations system and with IRENA, UNEP and Sustainable Energy for All, financial institutions and civil society. It will develop a strategy and instruments for working with the private sector, whose participation is essential to reaching the necessary levels of investment.

Gender equality

52. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the fragility of global progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The gender gap in the labour market is likely to rise and women and girls have suffered increased sexual violence, particularly in crisis contexts. To strengthen progress enough to withstand future shocks, it is essential to tackle the persistent, structural obstacles to gender equality. This means designing all interventions for deliberate impact on gender equality and putting equality at the centre of dialogues with partners.

53. UNDP will work towards more inclusive economies that accelerate women's economic empowerment. It will work with partners to foster innovative public policies, such as proposing options for counting unpaid care in national accounting systems. Its goals include access to basic services, financial services and non-financial assets for 55 million women and girls and equal female representation among voters registered through UNDP electoral support in 42 countries. In 100 countries where UNDP is supporting environmental governance and climate action, it will promote

opportunities for women in leadership and address gender gaps in access to and control of natural resources. In crisis contexts, it will invest more boldly in women's economic empowerment and leadership, working with women peacebuilders to sustain peace and stabilization through empowering women mediators, community-based social infrastructure and rebuilding women's livelihoods.

54. Evaluations and audits observe that investment fails to match ambition. More resources need to be mobilized to rise to the challenges of the context, for example unlocking financing for gender equality through the integrated national financing frameworks. New coalitions with civil society for policy and social change, renewed partnerships with UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund and other United Nations agencies, and networks of external thinkers, are also powerful assets to further develop.

More integrated approaches

55. As the midterm review observed, greater value can be found where signature solutions intersect or are applied in integrated ways like the Climate Promise. UNDP will look beyond sectoral challenges for opportunities for transformative change. It will continue to deliver projects, but will increasingly plan, align and manage them as portfolios comprising a mix of short-, medium- and long-term interventions, supported by research, advocacy and investment. A portfolio approach means understanding issues from a systems perspective, leveraging linkages across interventions to achieve broader goals. This requires a different risk appetite, prepared to explore innovative options.

56. UNDP is already applying these integrated portfolio approaches. As the United Nations system technical lead on the socioeconomic response to COVID-19, UNDP is supporting Governments in developing and implementing inclusive economic stimulus packages to restore the livelihoods of the newly poor, through combined interventions including health, education and digital access. The "Rising up for SIDS" approach integrates support to climate action, blue economies and digital transformation, plus access to financing, to support small island developing States in safeguarding progress on the Samoa Pathway and towards the 2030 Agenda.

57. Working towards transformative change requires rethinking how development results are planned and measured. As the Human Development Reports emphasize, broader metrics than GDP are needed to measure all the dimensions of human (and planetary) well-being. UNDP will continue to develop these metrics and support countries' capacities to collect and apply them, including disaggregated data. The UNDP funding model, too, should be adapted to reflect metrics of human development beyond national income.

V. Maximizing development impact: how UNDP delivers

58. UNDP is investing in enabling capacities and approaches that can scale up development impact. UNDP will support countries in cultivating and applying these enablers, while also embedding them in its own ways of working.

Strategic innovation

59. There is a growing incoherence between the complex challenges facing countries, arising from systemic risks like climate change, and the linear way that government and development planning are usually conducted. Innovative technological solutions, like smart cities or COVID-19 contact tracing apps, may help solve urgent challenges in the short term yet fail to address underlying issues.

60. While many Governments recognize this mismatch, they are struggling with how to address it. UNDP will help Governments and communities to identify options and capabilities for enhancing the performance of entire systems, making them adaptive and resilient to change. Drawing on initiatives like addressing depopulation in Serbia and tackling plastic pollution in the Asia-Pacific region, UNDP will be a partner in research and development, helping to reframe policy choices and building coalitions for change committed to continuous learning and adaptation.

61. UNDP has already invested significantly in innovative approaches and infrastructure: the Accelerator Labs Network, the digital strategy, the Innovation Facility. Now is the time to orient these assets more purposefully towards supporting partners with systems transformation.

Digitalization

62. Development has to be reimagined for a digital age. Demand is growing rapidly from UNDP partners worldwide for support ranging from specific digital projects to policies and regulation. In the next four years, UNDP will invest in building the capacity to be a key interlocutor and adviser, the digital dimension built into all its work.

63. The UNDP development mandate, experience, presence and ability to work with multiple levels of government equip the organization to support a holistic approach to digital transformation. UNDP will connect countries to specialist expertise and help define a strategic vision to guide UNCTs. Building on its long-standing work, from digital infrastructure to government capacity-building, UNDP has developed a guide to inclusive digital transformation and a digital readiness assessment. Using these tools, UNDP country offices will identify strategic entry points and drive digitally-informed programming across all thematic areas.

64. Experience on the ground anchors UNDP engagement in the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and the United Nations Common Agenda, global platforms where UNDP will advocate for inclusive and ethical digital solutions for sustainable development. Practical support includes a new Joint Facility for Digital Capacity Development, launched by UNDP and the International Telecommunication Union, to expand digital capacity for underserved communities.

65. The corporate digital transformation effort is well under way, with hundreds of successful initiatives and critical digital support infrastructure already in place, including the Digital Team, Accelerator Labs and data and information technology strategies. Deeper investment in capacities and culture – cultivating a digital mindset – will now follow. Staff will be supported in understanding digitalization in their context: how it impacts thematic areas or geographies, how it can be leveraged for development impact and its risks managed. UNDP will invest in cutting-edge digital tools and processes, both for its own management effectiveness and to ensure its support is informed by the latest technology and research.

Development financing

66. The Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement provide the framework to direct finance towards development impact. Yet few countries have a coherent strategy to mobilize and align public and private capital flows in support of their development priorities. Almost half of COVID-19 stimulus spending by 21 of the largest countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, for example, supported the fossil fuel sector. While the financing gap has grown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the principal challenge remains this lack of alignment.

67. UNDP will continue to work with Governments towards integrated national financing frameworks that align public and private financing to the Goals; and with ministries of finance and central banks to integrate the Goals into national budgetary and tax frameworks and private sector regulation. Through the G20 and United Nations financing for development processes, UNDP will work to ensure that the Goals are integrated into global financial system reform.

68. UNDP will work with Governments and the private sector to mobilize finance at scale, developing pipelines of investments aligned with the Goals and directing capital flows towards these country pipelines via the SDG Investor Platform and Goal-oriented financing tools and services, like sovereign debt instruments and SDG Impact Standards for private equity funds, bonds and enterprises. Recent examples of UNDP support to catalyse significant investment capital include nearly \$5 billion of bonds aligned to the Goals issued by the New Development Bank and the Governments of Indonesia and Mexico.

69. Official development assistance remains a significant source of funding for many countries, especially in crisis and low-income contexts. But the scale of reaching the 2030 Agenda can only be

met through co-investment, with development assistance helping to leverage public and private investment from a wider variety of sources. UNDP will support Governments and their partners in exploring innovative financing options, including blended finance, recognizing that countries need different types of financing for different development needs.

70. Leveraging finance at scale includes working with partners to take portfolio approaches aimed at longer-term, transformative goals and brokering stronger public-private collaboration. This requires change within UNDP: a readiness for fast, efficient decision-making and an appetite for considered risk that match the operational agility of prospective financial sector partners; and impact measurement systems that can capture the scale of finance catalysed.

Partnerships

71. Reaching the 2030 Agenda calls for collective action and a collaborative approach, leveraging the combined strengths of diverse partners to achieve impact at scale. To do so, UNDP will build partnerships that generate shared value, transform systems, empower local actors and leverage digital platforms. Long-standing UNDP partnerships with Member States, United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, civil society, academia and the private sector remain crucial to its effectiveness and impact.

72. UNDP will use its convening power to continue building strategic alliances that include marginalized voices and empower local actors, for example through social innovation platforms that have strengthened commodity chains for small farmers in Paraguay and are addressing urban development challenges in Pakistan. New alliances with the private sector include the COVID-19 Private Sector Global Facility, addressing challenges facing small and medium-sized enterprises, in partnership with the Global Compact, the International Chamber of Commerce and businesses.

73. Strengthening existing partnerships and forging new ones will require flexible instruments, modalities and funding, better suited to new types of partners or new ways of collaborating. For example, innovation partnerships will require a different attitude to sharing intellectual property (“creative commons” approaches). To increase opportunities for partnerships to drive research and development, especially with the private sector, more flexible thresholds will be set for launching collaboration of an exploratory or experimental nature.

74. UNDP will work with partners to advocate for and facilitate global and regional cooperation around common challenges and showcase the value of multilateral solutions. UNDP will deepen its collaboration across sectors and geographies, leveraging partners’ diverse capabilities, resources and knowledge. For instance, UNDP is part of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, a global network using the opportunities of the data revolution to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Becoming more agile and anticipatory

75. Since the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 outlined steps towards a more effective, efficient business model, UNDP has invested substantially in new ways of working. Ninety-one Accelerator Labs serving 115 countries, the digital strategy and the Innovation Facility are strengthening UNDP support to partners in responding to complex, recalcitrant development challenges. UNDP will embed the agile way of working, testing and prototyping of the Accelerator Labs – valued by partners – across the organization.

76. UNDP will invest in six key areas – people, knowledge, risk management, funding, operational excellence and impact measurement – to build the agile, anticipatory organization its partners expect.

77. **People.** By 2025, through implementing its “People for 2030” strategy, UNDP will have built the skills and competencies to respond to development challenges of the future. Through attracting new talent and continually building the capabilities of its personnel through targeted learning and development, it will have strengthened its capacity to deliver, with skills in portfolio and risk management, strategic foresight, systems thinking, finance, digital literacy and data management, as well as “frontier” skills such as artificial intelligence and others that may not even be on the

development radar yet. Where country priorities call for specialized expertise beyond country office skillsets, for example niche areas of energy or finance, these will be readily accessible. Committed to excellence in people management and leadership at all levels, UNDP will continue to build an inclusive working culture, free from all forms of discrimination, exploitation or abuse.

78. **Knowledge.** Its rich, extensive data is an extraordinary UNDP strategic asset that can be leveraged much more powerfully for development impact. Through its new data strategy, aligned to the Secretary-General's Data Strategy, UNDP will collect, manage, analyse and deploy data and knowledge more purposefully to strengthen thought leadership and country programming, contributing as well to UN INFO, the common United Nations platform that tracks contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals. Real-time data-collection systems and analysis, such as the award-winning COVID-19 Data Futures Platform, will enable immediate analysis of and response to changing contexts. By 2025, the Global Policy Network will be fully connected, an open platform providing an instant connection to UNDP expertise across country, regional and global teams, including through regional and global centres of excellence such as the Sustainable Development Goals Finance Sector Hub.

79. **Risk management.** The new UNDP enterprise risk management policy incentivizes innovation for development, while strengthening oversight and accountability. By 2025, a more proactive, dynamic approach to risk management will be embedded in the UNDP culture and business model. Underpinning this is the capacity to be more adaptable to country needs, especially in crisis contexts.

80. **Funding.** Responding effectively to evolving country priorities requires flexible and predictable funding. UNDP aims to see Member States increase regular resources funding as a proportion of its revenues, in line with the 30 per cent goal of the funding compact, as well as pooled and thematic funding. These are increasingly valuable as UNDP shifts to managing its programming within portfolios with longer time horizons and more transformative goals. During the next four years, UNDP will pilot and propose to the Executive Board a revision of the criteria for allocation of regular resources to better align with countries' development needs.

81. **Operational excellence.** UNDP will review and amend its programming and operational procedures and instruments to be more agile, transparent and accountable, in order to efficiently support new ways of doing business, like portfolio management; and to meet the expectations of partners, including the private sector. These include implementation modalities; financial instruments and regulations that match the needs of portfolios, not project cycles; and a greater variety of operational modalities, including on-granting, performance-based payments, fee-for-services and guarantees.

82. **Impact measurement.** Traditional, linear results-based management has not evolved to measure new ways of working and the outcomes of a portfolio approach. Work is under way to develop systems of monitoring, evaluation and results measurement better suited to these new ways of working, that value learning as results, and can track transformative change and its enablers, like changing social norms, over longer timespans. Significant investment in a revamped enterprise resource planning system coming online in 2022 will improve efficiency, results and resources planning, monitoring and impact measurement.

83. Investing in these areas will equip the country office of the future with the flexible resources, skills and access to best practice its partners expect, grounded in UNDP norms and values. The culture of this future office is one of continuous learning and experimentation, working in partnership with others, including UNCTs. Strategic foresight, futures thinking and risk monitoring are standard ways of working. With solid digital, data and finance skills, the office is ready to respond in emerging areas, such as building intergenerational perspectives into policy design, public sector innovation and digital governance. Real-time data analysis strengthens programming and supports advocacy. The office measures local results but can also track its contribution to higher development outcomes. Climate-neutral, it is committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 25 per cent by 2025 and halving them by 2030.

84. The country office of the future continues to provide quality services in human resources, finance, procurement, general operations and administration to the resident coordinator system, while maximizing opportunities for greater efficiency through clustering and other initiatives. Serving as a platform for non-resident United Nations entities enables them to operate in otherwise impracticable contexts.

VI. Looking to the future

85. COVID-19 has left the world a different place. The poor and vulnerable are even worse off, multilateral cooperation is strained and the Sustainable Development Goals seem more distant.

86. In this new landscape, UNDP has chosen where it will invest: making digitalization much more prominent, for stronger programming and more effective management; urging development financing to flow where it is most needed; encouraging innovation and creativity to help change systems and tackle the hardest “last mile” of the journey towards the Sustainable Development Goals. All this will be to scale and accelerate progress towards green, inclusive transitions that empower every last person through greater opportunity and resilience.

87. Every UNDP country programme is linked into a rich global network: to countries with specific, shared experience, to best practice throughout the United Nations system and beyond. For country partners, the value of the deep local experience of UNDP is multiplied through access to this global knowledge and connections. Over the next four years, this value proposition will become even more powerful and relevant to country priorities, as UNDP builds its capabilities to support systems change and deliver integrated support with its United Nations partners.

88. As UNDP looks to the future, it sees development increasingly as co-creation and co-investment in global public goods, not a one-way transfer of resources or assets. Reaching the aims of the 2030 Agenda demands collective action and investment. Governments and UNDP need to develop dynamic, anticipatory, inclusive ways of working that can flex to cope with constant change and respond to empowered, digitally connected citizens. The next four years will see UNDP, its people and its partners building those capabilities and co-creating a better future for everyone.
