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23 July 2021–22 July 2022

### Summary record of the 17th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 18 May 2022, at 3 p.m.

*President:* Ms. Rainne (Vice-President) . . . . . (Finland)

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*Interactive dialogue with the executive heads of the United Nations development system*

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*In the absence of Mr. Kelapile (Botswana), Ms. Rainne (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 7: Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation** (*continued*)

**(b) Reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund/United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and the World Food Programme** (E/2021/34/Rev.1, E/2021/35, E/2022/12 and E/2022/36)

1. **Mr. Gungubele** (Minister in the Presidency, Republic of South Africa), delivering the keynote address in a pre-recorded video statement, said that since the reform of the United Nations development system, it had become a more integrated and efficient system capable of providing quality support to countries in line with their sustainable development needs and priorities. Furthermore, the reconfiguration of the United Nations country teams had ensured that the necessary skills and expertise were now in place to deliver on the priorities set out in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. During the process of formulating the Cooperation Frameworks, South Africa had advocated adherence to United Nations reform principles, including the reinforcement of national ownership and leadership; a whole-of-society approach based on partnership; and actions tailored to country-specific contexts.

2. The alignment of the Cooperation Frameworks with long-term national development plans was crucial. In that regard, South Africa had ensured that its own national development plan was aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and with the Agenda 2063 of the African Union. The plan aimed to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by focusing on four strategic priority areas: inclusive, just and sustainable economic growth; human capital and social transformation; effective, efficient and transformative governance; and climate resilience and sustainability. Those areas would benefit from the support of the United Nations in order to guide the country team programmes, funds and the work of agencies and to strengthen collaboration at the national and provincial levels.

3. There was a collective responsibility to rebuild from the devastation caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which had resulted in rising unemployment and deepening poverty. More ambition and urgency were required in order to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Moreover, the lives of billions of people depended on the achievement of the Goals. Lastly, the response of the United Nations to the devastating floods in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa had been met with great appreciation in his country.

*Interactive dialogue with the executive heads of the United Nations development system*

4. **Mr. Šimonović** (Croatia), moderator, said that the world was still not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, a situation that was exacerbated by the ramifications of both the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, among other negative factors. Nevertheless, there had been positive other recent developments, including the successful 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system as well as support for the new resident coordinator system. Reform of the United Nations development system had led to a more integrated approach towards achieving the Goals, as well as improvement of support to Member States. He asked the panellists to discuss how strategic plans reflected new ways of working as a result of the repositioning of the development system and quadrennial comprehensive policy review, as well as changes and resource mobilization efforts at the national level.

5. **Ms. Russell** (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), panellist, said that the new strategic plan of UNICEF was fully aligned with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and charted a clear path for inclusive recovery from the impact of COVID-19, putting children at the centre. The plan was designed to leverage humanitarian and development investments in order to build sustainable and shock-resilient systems, which was particularly critical for children in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

6. In line with the reforms to the United Nations development system, UNICEF representatives were part of a strengthened United Nations country team, led by the resident coordinators. UNICEF country officers were also systematically involved in the new common country analyses, facilitating the holistic assessment of needs by the entire country team. Common country analysis and the Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks were now the cornerstones of planning at

the country level by UNICEF. Another priority was to strengthen partnerships with United Nations agencies, together with the integration of new working methods. At headquarters, the parameters for such partnerships were set in order to create an enabling environment; at the country level, that partnership could be flexibly tailored in order to meet specific needs on the ground.

7. The management and accountability framework guided the country-level resource mobilization of UNICEF, and the resident coordinators played an important role in mobilizing joint or pooled funding for the country teams. UNICEF often benefited from new country-based pooled funds. The proliferation of new joint programmes that allowed UNICEF to work with other United Nations partners to advance implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the country level was also welcome. The framework also guaranteed that agency representatives had the right to continue fundraising for the own programmes. Improved flexibility and predictability of funding delivered more efficient and effective results, particularly in the context of crises. Given that unrestricted core funds were key to both past and future achievements, receiving more core funding was vital to all United Nations entities.

8. **Ms. Bahous** (Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), panellist, speaking via video link, said that during the United Nations repositioning process, UN-Women had aimed to support coherence, results and accountability in the United Nations system for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Placing women and gender equality at the heart of a reformed United Nations system was a priority at UN-Women, with a view to driving standardized, joint approaches to tackling issues such as the elimination of violence against women and girls. Ensuring investment in the programme countries was key, and policies must be informed by solutions that had been proven to work in those countries. UN-Women welcomed the gender-specific mandates and provisions of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, including the renewed focus on financial accountability for gender equality, which had already led to greater integration of gender equality into joint programme proposals.

9. Internally, UN-Women was seeking to ensure the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 by optimizing its coordination mandate and attracting more flexible, non-core funding in line with the funding compact and its emphasis on maintaining funding flexibility. UN-Women was also exploring the possibility of placing gender equality coordinators in the offices of the resident coordinators, in order to support

the United Nations country teams and advance gender equality results.

10. **Ms. Andersen** (Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)), panellist, speaking via video link, said that the inclusion of references to the environment in the current version of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review was a very positive development. Understanding the impact of humanity on development and economic growth activity had become critical. In that connection, UNEP was committed to contributing its environmental data to common country analysis work. As a small agency, UNEP could only succeed by working within the newly reformed United Nations development system, and had significantly benefited from being able to deploy UNEP resident coordinators at the country level and by collaborating with UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), among others. Meanwhile, the United Nations Environment Management Group had undertaken significant work on mainstreaming biological diversity, and was currently focused on addressing the issue of pollution.

11. **Ms. Kanem** (Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)), panellist, speaking via video link, said that the UNFPA strategic plan 2022–2025 had repositioned itself to place an emphasis on partnerships, making Sustainable Development Goal 17 a priority. UNFPA had conducted a survey among its country representatives on the topic of resident coordinator engagement, finding that 90 per cent of the resident coordinators were promoting the United Nations normative mandate, including on human rights and gender equality.

12. In order to strengthen its contribution to the design and implementation of Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks at the country level, UNFPA had presented rights-based solutions on the basis of population data, as well as significantly increasing both its engagement and resource mobilization for joint programmes. For every country, the UNFPA strategic plan addressed prevention and prioritized anticipatory action, alongside humanitarian interventions where necessary. It also focused on fostering complementarity among development, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian actions in line with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

13. **Mr. Šimonović** (Croatia) asked if there was any further possibility of improvements. What policies, incentives and actions were still needed to make progress through a whole-of-system approach, were there any bottlenecks and how had they been overcome?

14. **Ms. Russell** (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), speaking via video link, said that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations development system had helped to swiftly mobilize system-wide efforts to develop socioeconomic response and recovery plans and to mobilize resources, ensuring the business continuity of United Nations country teams. Such an agile approach should be the new norm in addressing all crises. System-wide progress had also been made in terms of integrated policy advice to Governments, which was crucial in helping countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and recover from the impacts of the pandemic. In particular, the Integrated Policy Practitioners' Network had ensured better support for country-level processes and had enhanced responses to present-day challenges, including through climate action and resilience building.

15. Joint programming enabled more efficient use of limited resources to achieve the Goals. There had been a significant increase in the number of joint United Nations interventions at UNICEF, in addition to a framework agreement with UNDP that had facilitated joint innovation programming and had led to co-funded investments that focused on climate change, the environment and sustainable economic recovery.

16. **Ms. Bahous** (Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), speaking via video link, said that strengthened resources and harmonized approaches were key to fast-tracking system-wide progress towards fulfilling the 2030 Agenda, not only for gender equality but for all of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, a key challenge to advancing system-wide efforts on gender equality was that of inadequate human and financial resources. In order to offer gender-responsive and integrated solutions to achieve the Goals, it would be necessary to strengthen the gender architecture at the United Nations and ensure dedicated gender expertise and funding within the United Nations system.

17. At the country level, leadership and coordination on gender issues must be strengthened, with a view to catalysing whole-of-system approaches and impacts. Moreover, incentives and monitoring mechanisms were required in order to ensure adequate investment in gender equality. UN-Women had always placed a strong emphasis on joint programmes to offer comprehensive, integrated policy and programming solutions to national gender equality priorities. The principles of integrating gender equality, human rights and leaving no one behind were key to joint programmes and encouraged the effective use of joint programmes for the implementation

of Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks at the country level. Nonetheless, streamlining was required in order to reduce the amount of work involved in implementing and reporting on joint programmes.

18. **Ms. Andersen** (Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)), speaking via video link, said that there had been significant inter-agency collaboration in the area of health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as action for the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030, aiming to foster investments and greater resilience and adaptation in connection with climate-related issues. However, while the indicators of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review had highlighted significant progress in relation to the environment, 50 per cent of United Nations entities had not integrated a common approach to biodiversity. Moreover, resident coordinators and country teams had indicated that environmental considerations were insufficiently integrated into programming and policy advice. In response, UNEP was working with the Development Coordination Office to roll out training programmes for resident coordinators in order to mainstream the environmental crisis in all its aspects, a process that would require both time and resources.

19. **Ms. Kanem** (Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)), speaking via video link, said that adequate, predictable and flexible core funding was the most effective and proven incentive for whole-of-system approaches. Furthermore, agility in responding to gender-based violence needs during the COVID-19 pandemic had depended on flexible core funding. While there had been some increases in the official development assistance (ODA), the decrease in resources for population issues and sexual and reproductive health was a matter of deep concern, notably as the Sustainable Development Goals could not be achieved without adequate investment in improving the lives of women and girls. Therefore, sufficiently funded and pooled mechanisms must be ensured, both for system-wide approaches and to complement entity-specific core funding.

20. UNFPA was in the top tier of agencies participating in the most joint programmes at the country level. In order to address health challenges such as COVID-19, Ebola and maternal mortality, an integrated health system was required. UNFPA was collaborating with other agencies in order to build resilient health systems and to support the integration of reproductive health and rights into universal health coverage packages and financial protection mechanisms. Those measures would be essential for women both in peacetime and, particularly, under humanitarian circumstances.

21. **Ms. Pereira Portilla** (Colombia) said that it was essential for resident coordinators to receive support that would enable them to meet the priorities set by Governments and to conduct leadership in an effective, strategic and impartial manner. Financing of the United Nations development system must be ensured through strengthened partnerships, and the access of middle-income countries to concessional financing must be facilitated. She asked how programme countries could be assisted by the development system to prevent backsliding in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and how the system could be better prepared for future crises.

22. **Ms. Schlyter** (Observer for Sweden) said that there was a shared responsibility to promote pooled funds and the incentives they provided for working together. However, competition sometimes acted as a counterforce to the reform agenda, and it was necessary to find ways of working together to overcome some of those issues. A modified approach to collaboration on humanitarian development and security challenges was also required in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Actions to meet immediate needs must thus henceforth be combined with longer-term actions towards peace and development. She asked for observations on those matters in the context of crisis situations.

23. **Mr. Hermann** (Denmark) said that, as a co-facilitator of the resolutions on reform of the United Nations development system, his delegation wished for information on the biggest obstacle faced in delivering on the promise of a system that worked better together. He also asked what was required from Member States aside from additional funding, particularly given that, since 1978, Denmark had delivered on the United Nations target of spending at least 0.7 per cent of its gross national income on ODA.

24. **Ms. Kalis** (United Kingdom) said that despite the progress made on implementing reforms, more action was required at the country level. In that regard, she asked what steps were being taken to ensure accessibility of the expertise of non-resident entities to resident coordinators. It was also critical that country programme documents be reviewed by the resident coordinators. She asked for examples of a country configuration exercise that had been undertaken and in which deficiencies had been found, as well as advancements made through common back-office functions, and plans to accelerate those advancements. Furthermore, a comprehensive discussion on the performance appraisal metrics of heads of agencies at the country level should be held. For example, did the performance appraisals include an evaluation of how

much joint programming had been supported by each head of agency?

25. **Mr. Belmont Roldan** (Observer for Spain) said that when issues related to agency budgets were discussed in meetings, Member States were not always duly informed with regard to the estimates of savings that featured in reports. Ensuring that they received such information would encourage the Organization to meet specified goals, allow savings to be monitored over the years and demonstrate how saved funds were being reinvested in programmes or being used for annual payments into funds and programmes.

26. **Mr. Steiner** (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and Vice-Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group), panellist, speaking via video link, said that following the guidance provided in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, not only had the reforms been rolled out, but their benefits had also become apparent. The strategic plan for reform had involved a systems-oriented approach that had identified the contribution of UNDP to the United Nations development system and much closer adherence to the policy review mandates. In particular, the integration mandate to ensure a whole-of-society and whole-of-government response to the COVID-19 pandemic had been included as one of the signature solutions in the UNDP strategic plan. UNDP had also considered how, as part of the development system and the United Nations country teams, an immediate and agile response could be ensured in the context of post-pandemic struggles, including the economic and social fallout, through integrated and synergistic development based on the policy review.

27. The current dual challenge of rising inflation rates and growing costs of capital required solutions that took rapidly changing development contexts into account, based on data and analytics, for country teams working together with the resident coordinators. Lessons had been learned from the rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic by the country teams and the development system, including in terms of the preparation and implementation of strategies to build back better and build forward better. Moreover, in over 130 countries, country teams had come together to produce early analytical documents, which had enabled the Secretary-General to prepare special briefs.

28. The process of moving towards the benefits of system-wide reform were ongoing, whether related to efficiencies or cost savings, and significant efforts were under way to better document and measure those benefits. With regard to policy and decision-making, part of the alignment between the two was driven

bilaterally through key collaborations between United Nations agencies. From a global programmatic perspective, alignment also served to facilitate collaboration between country teams through joint analysis, in order to ensure a synergistic approach.

29. **Ms. Pindera** (Canada) said that, as a top donor to the United Nations development system, Canada continued to monitor the return on investment from all parts of the system and to look to the leadership of the resident coordinators and country teams to champion joint efforts as the default in terms of analysis, field missions, planning and policy solutions, together with resource mobilizations to avoid competition of funding. She reiterated the call of the United Kingdom for further information on work towards advancing efficiencies in terms of performance appraisal, and asked for details of how implementation of the country programme document was being fully aligned with common priorities, whether through joint work plans, the sequencing of reviews or reporting.

30. **Mr. Chang** (United States of America) said that as one of the largest financial contributors to many United Nations agencies, as well as to the resident coordinator system, the United States had a strong interest in seeing those entities fulfil their mandates. The management and accountability framework recognized the need for agencies to take the initiative as necessary while also reporting to the resident coordinators and being accountable to their governing bodies. He asked for examples of how the framework could be improved to enable agencies to work more effectively and to contribute to the new development system under the leadership of the resident coordinators.

31. **Ms. Tarnutzer** (Observer for Switzerland) said that the participation and perspective of UNEP in the current dialogue demonstrated the profound potential impact of the resident coordinator offices in strengthening the work and impact of non-resident agencies. In that regard, contribution to the dialogue by more non-resident agencies would be welcome. With regard to the Joint Sustainable Development Goal Fund, the forthcoming results of the current system-wide evaluation would be beneficial in further enhancing the impact of the Fund and increasing its attractiveness to receive more adequate funding. Lastly, in the light of the ongoing challenge of alignment between agency-specific programme cooperation documents and the Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, she asked for more information on the specific challenges faced from an agency perspective.

32. **Mr. Koll** (Observer for Germany) said that while inter-agency collaboration had taken place, more joint

briefings for Member States or general updates would be beneficial. He asked the agencies for their perceptions of the extended role of the resident coordinators and whether it would largely remain focused on coordination or also on programming. He also asked whether, following the use of videoconferences during the COVID-19 pandemic, perceptions had changed with regard to how the designated roles and responsibilities of resident and non-resident actors were fulfilled.

33. **Ms. Russell** (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the biggest obstacle for UNICEF in delivering within the system was the breadth and scope of its operations. Moreover, UNICEF was very focused on the impact of its work, in particular seeking opportunities to coordinate and streamline processes by tracking progress and results. Focusing on the work itself rather than the process was also advantageous. To that end, the United Nations would benefit from having fewer meetings and discussions, in order to channel its energy elsewhere.

34. **Ms. Andersen** (Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)), speaking via video link, said that the prevention of backsliding was critical in the light of the crises related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the current war in Ukraine and the impending climate crisis. Hence the importance of working together. Notably, the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance sought to understand systems with a view to preparing for future crises. In terms of funding, there was no discernible competition, and the more funding received in what was an underfunded area, the better. All United Nations agencies must be active in the environmental field. Aside from the very real need for additional funds, Member States must speak consistently across all the bodies of which they were members, including the international financial institutions and the European Union.

35. With regard to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, UNEP was highly engaged in working on environmental security dimensions, together with UNDP and the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. There also appeared to be greater reach, cooperation and collaboration in terms of efficiencies within the new system.

36. **Ms. Keita** (Deputy Executive Director for the Programme of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)), panellist, said that with the increasing number of joint programmes in the field and so much work yet to do, there was little time for competition, aside from on funding. With respect to overcoming the biggest obstacle for delivery in the system, it was

important for all Member States to communicate the same message to all Executive Boards. In the context of the resident coordinator system and the non-resident agencies, while compliance with the resident coordinator system was expected from agencies, it was also important for the resident coordinators to ensure that non-resident agencies had sufficient information for meetings held at the country level and for government meetings, in order to guarantee their ability to prepare and participate. While agencies cooperated among themselves within the United Nations development system, they also worked with the regional commissions, which enabled them to address the Sustainable Development Goals and the common agenda.

37. With regard to efficiencies, the new strategic plan had enabled \$9 million of savings to be made the previous year, and changes had been made to work on the ground. Certain gains had also been made during the COVID-19 pandemic, in the light of digitalization and the new ways in which business was conducted.

38. With regard to the humanitarian portfolio, assistance had been increasing from Member States; a continuation of those efforts would be even more powerful than funding. It was also crucial to ensure that Member States received the same information that was requested from agencies. Doing so would significantly help with work in the field, specifically regarding the political aspects of mandates. With regard to the role of the resident coordinators, one of the challenges of the Spotlight Initiative had been the need to coordinate on its implementation, in order to ensure that reporting was done at the same time. However, the adjustments required during that process had ensured that the resident coordinator system was now highly functional and set to improve. Nonetheless, resident coordinators should not necessarily always have a programmatic role, as doing so could slow down certain processes.

39. **Mr. Steiner** (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and Vice-Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group), speaking via video link, said that with regard to the mandate of the resident coordinators, it was important to remember that every agency was first and foremost accountable to its governing board. In terms of coordination, the management and accountability framework was still being fine-tuned to ensure that clarity was retained and that the mutual accountability function was strengthened. Lessons were also still being learned on the optimal size for a resident coordinator office, which depended on the specific situation of the country in question, among other factors. It was also necessary to address a tendency to resource functions within resident coordinator offices

that should not, in principle, be operational but were often referred to in connection with policy programming.

40. It was crucial to consider the effectiveness of the United Nations development system and the efficiencies being developed that were aimed at enabling the mandated functions of United Nations funds and programmes to perform better. In many ways, non-resident agencies were the most significant beneficiaries, given the increased level of capacity in resident coordinator offices to engage non-residents and include them in key processes. However, it was also important to consider when a resident coordinator should become empowered to state that the presence of an agency was no longer necessary. Meanwhile, during a time of manifold crises, the reforms had enhanced the ability to draw together different United Nations capacities to respond in terms of humanitarian efforts, development, peace and political engagement through the new configuration of the resident coordinator system and country teams.

41. With regard to competition, there was a challenge in terms of the reality of diminishing ODA. The cutbacks seen over the past 12 months among some of the biggest and most long-standing donors had begun to seriously affect core funding and to call into question the funding compact as one of the integral parts of the reform agreement. That was a matter for great concern, given that the United Nations development system was already chronically underfunded and any further funding cuts would hinder the ability to fulfil implementation mandates. In that connection, joint funding was very welcome and was strategically the most effective way of catalysing coordinated and cooperative joint implementation. However, it was essential for overall financing to increase in order to avoid a zero-sum game, given that resourcing a joint fund essentially involved defunding the budgets of individual entities. A frank discussion was therefore required on that matter.

42. **Ms. Bahous** (Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), speaking via video link, said that core funding and flexible funding were crucial for facilitating the expeditious repurposing of funds to ensure the immediacy of humanitarian responses, particularly at a time of so many global crises. UN-Women was also working to ensure the proper functioning of pooled funding mechanisms, and advocated those mechanisms to have a strong gender equality lens, which would provide greater opportunities to advance coordinated, system-wide approaches.

43. She asked that Member States request a specific gender equality financial target on funds, which would operate as an incentive for stronger gender mainstreaming and for certain programmes to have gender equality as their main objective. No sustainable peace or recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic could be achieved without both a strong gender lens and funding. Gender equality markers enabled the tagging of expenditure and also operated as an incentive to design more effective proposals for enhanced equality, inclusion and scope. Steps were being taken to ensure that such markers were used in reports and to ensure collaboration in that regard, together with the pooling of the necessary funds.

44. **Mr. Šimonović** (Croatia) asked the panellists how the United Nations development system could better use strategic foresight and data to better support countries in preparing for the unexpected in times of growing complexity, uncertainty and rapid change.

45. **Ms. Russell** (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that United Nations agencies had significant capabilities to use foresight and data to engage in thinking about the future. It was important to maximize those foresight capabilities, but also necessary to embrace uncertainty and complexity, and to be more agile in terms of thinking and responses. UNICEF was always turning to data and statistics in order to use its experience in the field to constantly improve its work. New data sources and technologies, machine learning and behavioural science all had the potential to provide diagnostic, real-time, predictive intelligence, which would be highly beneficial.

46. Algorithm equity could be used to ensure diversity and representation of different groups. UNICEF was working with other agencies to promote equitable, open-source solutions and to develop global data governance frameworks. Amplifying the voices and solutions put forward by children and young people was highly important in that process. Not only were children the users and consumers of digital products and services, they were also creators and innovators, and had much to add to the discussion.

47. **Ms. Bahous** (Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), speaking via video link, said that everyone must continue working to improve their ability to anticipate and plan for an increasingly complex and uncertain future. At the country level, understanding the opportunities and challenges of different potential future scenarios was critical in order to enable better strategic planning, to enhance decision-making and to inform the actions taken that could improve the outlook in the future.

Amplifying the voices and needs of women everywhere was key, and women must be involved in discussions and decision-making given that their analytical capabilities often included a greater knowledge of their societies and the ability to project what might happen in the future.

48. **Ms. Andersen** (Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)), speaking via video link, said that evidence-based strategic foresight, including taking risks into account, was central to working as an agency on matters related to science and policy. UNEP was therefore deepening its capacities and using foresight tools to help Member States position themselves in areas such as future agricultural planning and hydraulic water infrastructure. Strategic foresight could therefore be used to aid Member States in using science to inform policy.

49. **Ms. Keita** (Deputy Executive Director for the Programme of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that UNFPA had also conducted foresight activities, drawing upon its own data and that of sister agencies. Foresight was more important than ever in the light of the current multiple crises related to the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, energy and food, among others. Crises in different countries had also led agencies to become more agile and flexible in the way they conducted business together, and also in terms of receiving more rapid support from Member States.

50. **Mr. Steiner** (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and Vice-Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group), speaking via video link, said that a more deliberate attempt to use foresight to inform policy decisions was critical. The UNDP Data Futures Platform was an attempt to leverage and utilize data in connection to trends, thereby better informing present-day government decision-making. Moreover, the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker allowed for timely recognition of where national COVID-19 responses had overlooked particular groups. It had also been reconfigured at UNDP to focus on foresight and strategic futures, as well as on insights, based on results reporting data.

51. The UNDP Human Development Reports were another key tool for foresight. UNDP was increasingly focused on the future of development and working to help countries make decisions in uncertain contexts. Technology also helped with development decision-making through artificial intelligence, and the United Nations system was becoming better at combining data, a critical precondition of which was the interoperability of datasets and databases.

*The meeting rose at 5 p.m.*