



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

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Organizational matters

Report on the annual session of 2023, 19 to 21 June 2023¹

I. Organizational matters

1. The annual session of 2023 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) was held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 19 to 21 June 2023.
2. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session ([UNW/2023/L.3/Rev.1](#)) and the report on its first regular session of 2023 held on 13 and 14 February 2023 ([UNW/2023/1](#)). The Executive Board approved the provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2023, to be held on 12 and 13 September 2023 ([UNW/2023/CRP.3](#)).
3. The Executive Board adopted five decisions (2023/3, 2023/4, 2023/5, 2023/6, and 2023/7) as contained in the annex to the present report.

II. Opening statements

4. Opening the session, the President of the Executive Board claimed that gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls are among the most profound injustices across the globe. Noting that only one of the 18 indicators of Sustainable Development Goal 5 is close to target, he stressed that progress requires steadfast dedication and unwavering support for UN-Women's mandate. He congratulated the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her excellent leadership of UN-Women and said he was honoured to serve alongside his fellow Bureau members.
5. In her opening statement, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the President and the entire Bureau for their able leadership and support to UN-Women. She also thanked *in absentia* former Deputy Executive Directors Åsa Regnér and Anita Bhatia for their service. She expressed concern at the global state of gender equality, especially considering deepening inequality, economic instability, the deterioration of global peace and security, climate change and rising food

¹ Note: The present document was processed in its entirety by UN-Women.



insecurity, among other issues. Echoing the Secretary-General's remarks that the 2030 Agenda is off-track, the Head of UN-Women stressed that gender equality acts as both a prerequisite and a catalyst for progress across all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She confirmed that UN-Women is actively engaged in the Gender Review as part of Our Common Agenda and welcomed the process as an opportunity for the whole United Nations to deliver better and more coherently for women and girls and to strengthen the criticality and interconnectedness of UN-Women's triple mandate.

6. Presenting her annual report, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director highlighted two areas demonstrating how UN-Women leverages its normative, coordination and operational roles to achieve results. Regarding coordination in crises, she shared that in 2022, UN-Women supported the formulation of global, regional and national policies and standards as part of crisis response and recovery efforts. For example, as a new member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), UN-Women is leading the update of its Gender Policy to ensure clarity of principles, standards and designated roles and responsibilities within humanitarian action. As a result, she noted that some 87 per cent of the humanitarian response plans UN-Women engaged with incorporated gender equality outcomes. She added that the Entity supported programmes that demonstrate the transformative impact of women's empowerment in crises, providing services to over 800,000 crisis-affected women and girls. On violence against women, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director said that UN-Women worked with 900 national and subnational governments, civil society organizations and private institutions to strengthen the provision of essential services, goods and resources. Almost three million women across 20 countries gained access to information, goods, resources and services through UN-Women-supported platforms and programmes. Regarding UN-Women's coordination mandate, she shared that 30 per cent of UN-Women's expenditure in 2022 went through joint programmes and that more than half of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) developed in 2022 featured stand-alone gender equality outcomes. She further shared examples of how UN-Women has led efforts to mainstream gender analysis among the United Nations system and through technical support provided to countries. In closing, the Head of the Entity asked Member States to ensure the centrality of women's rights in every intergovernmental space and to continue to carry the messages of the UN-Women Executive Board to all the governing bodies of its sister agencies, while noting that mainstreaming gender across the United Nations system is a shared endeavour.

7. Upon opening the floor for delegations, numerous Member States thanked the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her comprehensive update and reiterated their support for UN-Women's triple mandate, with many delegations specifically underscoring the importance of the Entity's operational mandate. Several Member States stressed how gender equality is crucial to the achievement of the SDGs and called for a redoubling of efforts by all, as well as ensuring solid and sustained funding to provide adequate resources to UN-Women as a vital part of UN-Women's efforts to meet the 2030 Agenda. In response to the presentation of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director's annual report, delegations commended UN-Women's strong delivery as presented in the annual report despite the overlapping crises. Additionally, some speakers thanked UN-Women for its transparency surrounding the information provided by the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on unallocated regular resources, while others spoke in support of the Generation Equality Forum.

III. Evaluation

8. The Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) presented the report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2022 (UNW/2023/4). The report provides an overview of the performance of the UN-Women evaluation function at centralized and decentralized levels in 2022; captures key insights from the independent corporate evaluations and strategic evaluations completed; reviews the evaluation's function key performance indicators; and highlights the advocacy undertaken to promote gender-responsive evaluation in the United Nations system and national evaluation capacity-building. The 2022 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Service (IES) was outlined. In 2022, IES completed two corporate evaluations, an evidence gap mapping, and a system-wide evaluation synthesis in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund and World Food Programme. Additionally, several other corporate evaluations are in progress. The office delivered 40 decentralized evaluations, consisting of eight country portfolio evaluations, five regional evaluations and 33 joint evaluations. The overall evaluation results showed a strong uptick on evaluation coverage, management responses and spending. However, two performance indicators regarding the quality of decentralized evaluation reports and the percentage of offices reporting that they used evaluations in previous years were slightly below expectations.

9. The Director of IEAS presented the corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment (WEE) by advancing gender-responsive laws, frameworks, policies and partnerships (UNW/2023/CRP.4). The evaluation assessed the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of UN-Women's normative and partnership work in its economic empowerment portfolio. The evaluation's findings led to eight conclusions, including that UN-Women has a comparative advantage in normative work and that UN-Women works effectively to build consensus and facilitate a coherent voice in global policy dialogues on WEE. Additionally, the evaluation identified that the lack of a WEE strategy and managerial vacancies have impacted the direction of UN-Women's work on WEE, as well as the efficiency of its internal architecture and personnel. It also mentioned that UN-Women's reporting shows that the Entity has exceeded or is close to achieving its targets on strengthening gender-responsive WEE policies, including on decent work, social protection, care systems, gender-responsive procurement and land tenure systems. The evaluation found that financial and human resources are identified as the most significant challenges for UN-Women in advancing gender-responsive WEE laws, frameworks and policies. As a result, the evaluation made six recommendations.

10. Speaking on behalf of management, the Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, expressed appreciation for the high-quality work of IES and the guidance that it provides to improve the Entity's performance. She endorsed the proposals outlined in the report on the evaluation function of UN-Women in 2022 and added that UN-Women's Strategic Plan includes two indicators on evaluations. Discussing the increased number of decentralized evaluations, she stressed the importance of building field capacity to maintain a high standard for evaluations. She reiterated that UN-Women remains committed to strengthening the quality, coverage and use of both corporate and decentralized evaluations in strong collaboration with the IES team. Regarding the corporate evaluation on UN-Women's contribution to WEE, she highlighted that UN-Women accepts the evaluation's five main recommendations and that it partially accepts one recommendation. She concluded by saying that the work

of independent evaluation has been very helpful in advancing the work of UN-Women on economic empowerment.

11. A delegation speaking on behalf of 22 Member States thanked IES for its report and its confirmation that UN-Women has established a quality and impactful evaluation function. It expressed that UN-Women has an opportunity to build its influence across the United Nations development system (UNDS) to promote evaluative approaches and gender-inclusive evaluation, improving accountability for results related to gender. The delegation welcomed the increased number of evaluations and the overall good performance of IES in 2022, and suggested the Entity allocate additional financial resources to IES to make further progress on key performance indicators and accountability. It encouraged the Entity to meet the financial target set in the evaluation policy. Another Member State speaking on behalf of a regional group welcomed the evaluation for touching on the issue of WEE and expressed concern that the economic empowerment section experienced multiple vacancies among its senior leadership. The delegation expressed concern that under Strategic Plan 2018–2021 the economic empowerment section had the lowest funding among thematic areas and welcomed increased funding for the Strategic Plan 2022–2025. It further welcomed management’s decision to develop a global WEE strategy and stressed the importance of allocating sufficient resources for this initiative. The group asked UN-Women to provide an overview of the strategy, as well as plans for its implementation. Additionally, one Member State described several national initiatives championing gender equality and the economic empowerment of women. Another delegation speaking in a national capacity reiterated the importance of UN-Women’s approach on WEE and its focus on leaving no one behind. One Member State encouraged UN-Women to commit more resources to WEE and noted with satisfaction that the Entity has endorsed five of the six recommendations, including regarding establishing a special post on WEE and strengthening cooperation with international partners. The delegation asked how UN-Women proposes to help governments in WEE and asked the evaluation team what the effects of their suggestions would be if implemented. Another speaker highlighted the importance that recommendation three could play in helping UN-Women deliver on its WEE programmes. Speaking in a national capacity, one Member State asked UN-Women how they measure the quality of country-level trainings for conducting evaluations and asked the Entity to provide an update on the status of all evaluation recommendations issued in 2022 and what actions UN-Women is taking to increase evaluation expenditure to 3 per cent by 2025. A different delegation expressed appreciation for UN-Women’s work to build consensus and facilitate a coherent voice and global policy dialogue on WEE. The delegation asked UN-Women to elaborate on the implementation of the WEE strategy in the field and how to ensure the strategy is aligned with national priorities and contexts. A group statement on behalf of 26 Member States welcomed UN-Women’s commitment to building a rights-based strategy for WEE and underlined the role WEE can play in addressing climate change. The joint statement asked about UN-Women’s view on the recommendation that the Entity take on a supportive role in the climate change process and what resources and collaboration need to happen for this to be effectively implemented. The group asked how WEE can remain a priority and how effective the current division of labour between international financial institutions, civil society and other United Nations entities is in this regard. Lastly, the joint statement asked how UN-Women can ensure a realistic assessment of available resources in implementing WEE. Speaking in a national capacity, a delegation asked if decentralized evaluation of specific projects is utilized for other specific projects supported by UN-Women. The delegation also asked if the new WEE strategy will seek to strengthen partnerships with international financial institutions. Another Member State asked UN-Women for clarification on data collection of gender-responsive policy.

12. In response, the Director of IEAS thanked Member States for their keen interest in the evaluation function. She responded to comments and questions made by delegations, including to highlight that there is greater emphasis placed on WEE as part of UN-Women's new Strategic Plan and confirmed that IEAS will continue to track progress on the implementation of the recommendations to this evaluation as part of its reporting back to the Board in future years. The Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, added that the goal of the new WEE strategy is to focus on economic marginalization and that UN-Women has consulted widely with other components of UNDS and other key stakeholders to effectively leverage UN-Women's triple mandate. She emphasized the importance of WEE in the four impact areas of UN-Women's Strategic Plan and reported that WEE now has the second highest budget allocation. Clarifying a point made by a Member State, she went on to say that WEE is actively aligned with national priorities wherever feasible. The Chief of Economic Empowerment emphasized that UN-Women recognizes structural inequalities that contribute to women's economic disempowerment and that the Entity is taking advantage of its convening power to identify pathways forward. She stressed that UN-Women works closely with the private sector to increase funding going towards WEE. Answering several questions about the use of the evaluations, the Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, confirmed that findings are reflected in country-level strategic notes and that resources are prioritized to meet recommendations. He concluded by stressing that UN-Women deals with finite resources and that the Entity must optimize between output and implementation.

IV. Audit and investigation matters

13. The Director of IEAS presented the report of the Internal Audit Service (IAS) on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2022 (UNW/2023/3). As requested by the Executive Board in its decision (UNW/2015/4), and in relation to internal audit activities, this report included: (a) an opinion, based on the scope of work undertaken, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Entity's framework of governance, risk management and control; (b) a concise summary of work and the criteria that support the opinion; (c) a statement of conformance with the internal audit standards being adhered to; and (d) a view on whether resourcing of the function is appropriate, sufficient and effectively deployed to achieve the desired internal audit and investigation coverage. The report provided an update on the status of the management and implementation of internal audit recommendations. Based on the internal audit work performed in 2022, IAS's annual overall opinion is that the Entity's governance, risk management and control processes were generally well established and functioning but needed some improvement. The report identified four areas for improvement that require UN-Women management's attention: (1) the need to continue to enhance the Entity's management oversight mechanisms; (2) prioritizing the investment needed, to free up resources, and/or by strengthening certain authorities and reporting lines; (3) advancing management's vision of "pivoting to the field" to ensure sufficient and stable capacity is available at the decentralized level so that offices can effectively perform their responsibilities related to governance, risk management and compliance; and (4) prioritizing a Statement of Internal Controls process to clearly establish and demonstrate management accountability and responsibility for risk management and internal controls.

14. On the caseload of investigations in 2022, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) registered an intake of 55 new allegations against UN-Women while 14 were carried over from 2021. Out of the 69 total allegations, 53 cases were closed in 2022. Of the 53 closed cases, 37 were closed after preliminary assessment and 16

were closed after investigation. OIOS referred 21 cases to UN-Women for potential management action. Of the 16 cases investigated by the OIOS and closed in 2022, eight were substantiated and eight were unsubstantiated.

15. The Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, presented the management response to the respective recommendations received. He expressed appreciation for the work done by IEAS and OIOS to strengthen UN-Women's organizational and operational effectiveness and efficiency. He noted that the Entity did not receive any unsatisfactory results in 2022 and argued that this demonstrates UN-Women's ability to uphold responsibilities while adapting to an evolving operational environment. The Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, highlighted that UN-Women has no more than 15 per cent of long outstanding recommendations and detailed the Entity's efforts to meet each of the four recommendations made by IAS. Turning to investigation activities, he shared that UN-Women has taken prompt action to implement its zero-tolerance approach while undertaking actions aimed at promoting a respectful and ethical work environment.

16. The Chair of the Advisory Committee on Oversight (ACO) presented the report of the Advisory Committee on Oversight for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2022. This report reviewed the functioning of the Entity's oversight function, as well as its internal control accountability, including governance, risk management and control systems. ACO concluded that IEAS is continuing to support corporate, strategic and decentralized evaluations. On investigations, ACO determined that IEAS is a key interface with OIOS and is increasing focus on anti-fraud awareness. On ethics, the Committee established that management is continuing to enhance its anti-fraud mechanisms, including risk management. ACO noted that the United Nations Board of Auditors have given UN-Women an unqualified opinion for the eleventh year on financial statements. Despite strong management commitment to organizational excellence, ACO highlighted three areas for improvement: (1) to enhance the Entity's budget allocation to better calibrate its operations; (2) to ensure a well-resourced HR function; and (3) to invest additional resources to strengthen the second line of defence for better delivery at the country level. Other governance control matters requiring management attention include: (1) stronger structure with clear accountability; (2) managing transition risk regarding senior vacancies; (3) embedding the new ethics function; (4) addressing the limitations of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system; (5) the need for proper communication of the Generation Equality Plan across the Entity.

17. Speaking on behalf of management, the Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, welcomed the report's findings and underscored UN-Women's commitment to operational excellence. He appreciated ACO's acknowledgement of the 11 unqualified audit opinions from the United Nations Board of Auditors. In response to the ACO recommendations from 2021, the Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, announced that the first ever in-house Ethics Advisor at UN-Women had taken up her post as of 1 April. Agreeing with ACO's finding on calibrating resources to manage operations, he stated that this is done through the present governance framework that offers strategic clarity on the Entity's organizational footprint. In anticipation of the growth of non-core resources, he shared that UN-Women is identifying options to counter any tendencies for the imbalance between core and non-core resources. He emphasized that UN-Women is addressing issues caused by the recent adoption of Quantum. On pivoting to the field, he stated that the Entity is working to bolster UN-Women's integrated tripartite mandate at the country level by investing more resources into critical field functions.

18. A delegation speaking on behalf of 26 Member States began their remarks by thanking IAS, ACO and UN-Women for strengthening the Entity's structures and systems. The delegation welcomed recommendations on making information in the

reports more easily understandable for the Executive Board to help guide the Entity on the implementation of recommendations. The group noted with concern the long outstanding recommendations and that the pace of implementation has slowed. The joint statement further welcomed management's reflections on how budgeting and staff levels will impact implementation for 2024–2025 and its reflections on improving the second line of defence and possible reasons for an increase in allegations concerning fraud. Another delegation delivering a joint statement on behalf of 38 Member States thanked UN-Women for its work to reinforce ethical and value-based standards and called for a further increase in this effort. The group noted with concern that the number of staff who have completed mandatory ethical training modules are not at satisfactory levels and called on the Entity to improve participation. Following up Executive Board Decision 2022/14, the joint statement inquired about the status of whistle-blower protection and asked about observations of best practices throughout the United Nations system. Speaking in their national capacity, another delegation asked how UN-Women is integrating Quantum into its daily activities. Finally, another speaker urged UN-Women to implement all long-standing recommendations as soon as is feasible.

19. Responding to questions from Member States, the Director of IEAS acknowledged that areas for improvement from external quality assessment have all been accepted. She further highlighted that in order to make information more understandable for the Executive Board, UN-Women is working with sister agencies to harmonize reporting. Addressing the question about the increasing number of allegations, she said that this is the sign of a healthy organization because people trust the reporting mechanisms and are coming forward. The OIOS Director addressed a Member State's question on the sustainability of OIOS as a service provider. The Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, answered a question about the implementation of long outstanding recommendations and highlighted that recommendations often take time and resources to implement, but that UN-Women would be using some of its unallocated resources to implement them. He further responded to questions on anti-fraud, internal control and Quantum. The Director of the Strategy, Planning, Resources and Effectiveness Division (SPRED) and the Under-Head of the Entity also took the floor to respond to comments from Member States.

V. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

20. In his opening remarks, the Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, introduced the draft integrated budget estimates 2024–2025. For the upcoming biennium, UN-Women is projecting voluntary contributions totalling USD 1.03 billion, indicating an increase of USD 30 million (3 per cent) from the previous biennium's budget. He then outlined the allocation of resources, with 87.5 per cent dedicated to development activities and the remaining portion distributed among management, coordination and special purpose categories.

21. The Director of the SPRED elaborated on the proposed integrated budget for the period 2024–2025. After highlighting that the budget would support UN-Women's triple mandate and underpin the implementation of UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025, she detailed that the zero-growth institutional budget included investments to strengthen coordination at the field level, funded through cost savings and efficiencies at headquarters. Furthermore, she noted that UN-Women has proposed a cost-neutral organizational realignment that entails an upward reclassification and relocation of a P5 humanitarian post to a D1 Chief of Humanitarian Action in Geneva. She further added that the Entity proposed to maintain a special purpose allocation of USD 5.3 million, including to support

continued performance and functionality improvements in the new ERP system to further strengthen the structure and functionality of UN-Women.

22. Member States thanked UN-Women for the presentation of the proposed integrated budget for 2024–2025 and commended the Entity for its commitment to strengthening oversight and transparency. One delegation specifically encouraged UN-Women to broaden its resource mobilization base, increase investment in its coordination mandate and the capacity of National Committees to fundraise, and strengthen engagement with the private sector. In separate statements, two delegations noted appreciation for the proposed increase in programme expenditure but raised concerns about the allocation for oversight and coordination, which appeared to be relatively reduced. Another delegation sought clarification on the distribution of budget allocations to the four thematic areas of the Strategic Plan and requested an update on the cost recovery policy.

23. In response to questions of Member States, the Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, clarified the investment in oversight and coordination in the proposed institutional budget. In response to a question on the cost recovery policy, the Director of SPRED mentioned that the four harmonized agencies, including UN-Women, have been requested to review the policy and submit it by the second regular session in September 2024. She announced that internal discussions have already begun, and that a joint briefing with the Executive Boards is planned before the end of 2023. Additionally, the Director of the Strategic Partnerships Division outlined UN-Women's efforts to broaden its resource mobilization base, benchmarking against peer agencies and working on strengthening revenue from individual giving and non-Development Assistance Committee donors. He highlighted the development of a private sector strategy focused on engagement rather than fundraising and emphasized investments being made in National Committees and individual giving.

VI. UN-Women's operational response at the regional level

24. In her opening remarks, the Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, described UN-Women's regional presence and specified five key principles that guide UN-Women in the region, namely: (i) use subregional analysis and approaches to tailor and target UN-Women's regional work to achieve greater impact and bring local solutions to regional and global forums; (ii) co-design and co-implement regional programming, knowledge management and consultation processes with field offices and partners; (iii) foster greater accountability, as well as shared responsibility, for gender equality results across the United Nations system; (iv) increase focus on measuring and capturing the results and impact of UN-Women's work on the lives of women and girls; and (v) recognize the interconnected nature of regional challenges, the Strategic Notes, the SDGs, the UNSDCF and UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 by applying an integrated and intersectional approach. In her presentation, UN-Women's Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia detailed the situation of women and girls in the region while specifically highlighting the polycrisis and socioeconomic repercussions from the impact of COVID-19, the Ukrainian refugee crisis and the devastation of the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria earlier this year. The Regional Director further discussed women's participation in the Information and Communication Technology sector, noting that women often tend to hold lower-status jobs with less decision-making power in this sector. She detailed the regional office's work in preparing for this year's Commission on the Status of Women, while partnering with Member States within the region to hold subregional conversations to discuss this year's priority theme ahead of the March session. The Regional Director described how her office worked on implementing the Agreed Conclusions adopted at CSW67, noting for example the work done on the adaptation of services

for survivors of violence to make sure that they continue to be fit for purpose, respond to all existing and newly arising challenges, and to map the pressing needs for the years ahead. She highlighted UN-Women's partnerships with the International Telecommunication Unit and Women in Tech to address the digital gender gaps across the region. In closing, the Regional Director mentioned several initiatives focusing on gender-responsive budgeting, women's entrepreneurship, youth engagement, data science and online violence against women.

25. After opening the floor, one Member State commended UN-Women for the comprehensive regional outline detailing how CSW67 Agreed Conclusions are being applied. The delegation welcomed the inclusion of marginalized groups in initiatives and stressed that human rights values and considerations need to be embedded in the improved global digital cooperation architecture. It further encouraged UN-Women to employ its Strategic Plan's ambition of applying a human rights-based approach by considering, within the CSW67 follow-up efforts, the call to action on human rights and the application of the recommendations by the high-level panel on digital cooperation.

VII. Implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system

26. The Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, presented the update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of UNDS. He stressed that UN-Women remains fully committed to implementing the reform agenda by leveraging UN-Women's tripartite mandate encompassing United Nations system coordination, normative support and operational programmatic activities. He stressed that stand-alone gender equality work, including work on Sustainable Development Goal 5, must be prioritized alongside mainstreaming a gender perspective across all the entire United Nations system's work. He further stated that UN-Women has made progress in aligning with central repositioning frameworks and processes, while highlighting how UN-Women has developed strategic notes at the country level and increased joint programming funding. He added that UN-Women has continued efforts to enhance business practices and improve efficiency, such as establishing and utilizing global shared services.

27. Regarding finances, the Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, said UN-Women reported efficiency gains of USD 2.6 million in 2021, and confirmed that UN-Women is up to date with its contribution to funding the Resident Coordinator system. After sharing further details regarding reporting on the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and how many country teams applied the gender equality marker in their joint workplans, he stated that these dates and figures are illustrative of positive trends resulting from the efforts of UN-Women and the United Nations system. He added that UN-Women received USD 545.4 million in contributions in 2022, though noted with concern that regular resources declined by 7.1 per cent.

28. After opening the floor, a delegation speaking on behalf of 41 Member States emphasized the importance of achieving the SDGs and the role of UNDS in supporting sustainable inclusive development. The group highlighted the necessity of UN-Women's continued support for Resident Coordinator leadership in-country and the importance of coordination and collaboration across United Nations agencies. They called for evidence collection and reporting on the impact on the ground, reduction of duplication and generation of synergies at the country level. Specific requests were made to UN-Women regarding alignment with United Nations cooperation frameworks, the role of Resident Coordinators in providing input into

performance appraisals of agency heads, and the consultation of Resident Coordinators in the selection process of United Nations country team members. The group applauded the development of the UNDS reform checklist and requested UN-Women to report annually on the checklist.

29. Both Deputy Executive Directors, ad interim, and the Director of the United Nations System Coordination Division responded to comments and questions from Member States, emphasizing the full alignment between UNSDCF's and UN-Women's country-level strategic notes to ensure coordination and collaboration between United Nations agencies, announcing that UN-Women will be launching a corporate survey on the implementation of the UNDS reforms at the country level, and referring to UN-Women's involvement in the humanitarian field and detailed its efforts to bring about coordination in crisis-affected countries.

VIII. Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

30. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director presented an update on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEA/SH). In her update, the Head of the Entity expressed gratitude for the Executive Board's continued partnership and support in UN-Women's endeavours to prevent and respond to SEA/SH. She emphasized that SEA/SH are grave violations of UN-Women's mandate and values and noted how they undermine the Entity's efforts to bring about positive change. She highlighted that considerable progress has been achieved since the last comprehensive updates provided to the Executive Board, outlining that the Entity has enhanced SEA/SH policies and governance structures, appointed dedicated SEA/SH specialists, increased its network of regional and in-country focal points, and operationalized SEA/SH frameworks while using a victim-survivor-centred approach across all country and regional offices as well as at headquarters. The Head of UN-Women further specified that the Entity has prioritized increased knowledge and key capacities for in-country focal points with scenario-based training on power dynamics, intersectionality and positive masculinities. Additionally, she noted the implementation of enhanced accountability structures which required all regional directors and country representatives to certify their compliance with preventing SEA/SH related leaderships responsibilities for 2022 and including SEA/SH in all UN-Women risk units' risk registers.

31. The Head of the Entity shared how UN-Women actively engages with system-wide efforts to address SEA/SH by participating in the Chief Executives Board (CEB) Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment, launching a United Nations System-wide Knowledge Hub on Addressing Sexual Harassment, and hosting peer-to-peer learning dialogues. She further shared how UN-Women, in collaboration with the President of the General Assembly, initiated a campaign to promote the completion of United Nations training courses on gender equality and SEA/SH prevention among Permanent Mission staff. She shared that since becoming a member of IASC, UN-Women joined IASC/PSEA (Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) Technical Advisory Group, contributing expertise to the development of a victim/survivor-centred approach to PSEA and SH. Lastly, she highlighted improvements made in UN-Women's organization structure and well-being, diversity and inclusion, including through the appointment of an Ethics Advisor and the development of equity and inclusion action plans across the organization.

32. After opening the floor, a delegation speaking on behalf of 48 Member States expressed appreciation for UN-Women's efforts to prevent and respond to SEA/SH. In the joint statement, Member States stressed the importance of collective learning

and engagement with implementing partners and a victim/survivor-centred approach. Additionally, the joint statement acknowledged the positive steps taken by UN-Women while encouraging further results-based reporting that evaluates impact and culture change. It also noted that there is a need to share best practices, monitoring and reporting frameworks and appraisal of the effectiveness of activities aimed at culture change.

33. In response to comments from the floor, the Director of Human Resources outlined the comprehensive matrix and indicators framework developed in consultation with sister agencies and detailed the development of PSEA action plans and the utilization of the ClearCheck database for vetting applicants. UN-Women's Senior Advisor and Focal Point for Women in the United Nations system informed Member States of UN-Women's co-leading efforts to enhance coordination and collaboration system-wide, including through the launch of the United Nations System-wide Knowledge Hub on Addressing Sexual Harassment and the organization of peer-to-peer dialogues together with the CEB Task Force. She further outlined the important role of the UN-Women led system-wide network of nearly 500 United Nations Gender Focal Points in mainstreaming the policies and tools developed by the CEB Task Force, including in implementing a victim-centred approach to addressing sexual harassment. Furthermore, the Deputy Executive Director, ad interim, stressed the importance of sharing best practices regarding prevention of SEA/SH.

IX. Field visit

34. The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations and former President of the UN-Women Executive Board in 2022, Muhammad Abdul Muhith, reported on the field visit of the UN-Women Executive Board to Ecuador, on behalf of the delegation. The field visit is mandated by Executive Board Decision [2017/8](#). The annual UN-Women field visit of the Executive Board to the Ecuador Country Office took place from 23 to 29 October 2022. The delegation was comprised of the of the President, four Vice-Presidents and additional members of the Executive Board representing the African States group, the Asia-Pacific States group and the Western Europe and other States group.

35. The purpose of the field visit was to observe and understand the impact of the programming portfolio of the UN-Women Country Office in Ecuador and its contribution to the fulfilment of Ecuador's national development priorities in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment. The objective was to comprehend how the UN-Women Country Office works collaboratively with the Government of Ecuador, development partners, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. The visit aimed to evaluate best practices of United Nations programming in Ecuador and its transferable value to the system at large.

36. The delegation expressed its deepest appreciation to the Government of Ecuador, the UN-Women Country Office and the office of the Resident Coordinator for their hospitality, facilitating the visit and the opportunity to witness first-hand how UN-Women's wide-ranging collaboration with a broad spectrum of stakeholders in Ecuador helps the country advance its gender equality commitments.

37. Recommendations for the consideration of UN-Women included the following: (a) UN-Women should streamline evaluation of its field operations in Ecuador and shift to more evidence and result-based outcomes; (b) UN-Women needs to invest more in strengthening gender statistics and collection of sex-disaggregated data, advocacy and capacity-building towards effective implementation of programmes through maintenance of databases prior to and after the implementation of its projects

through online platforms; and (c) UN-Women should consider diversifying its partnership portfolio to include non-traditional allies, such as the private sector and other non-traditional donor States to secure support towards its interventions in the field of economic and social justice for women and in reducing inequalities. The Board also suggested that given its wide-ranging and diverse mandate, more resources are essential to move UN-Women in Ecuador from a small- to a medium-sized office.

38. The current Executive Board President expressed profound appreciation to the authorities of Ecuador, including to the President of the Republic and many ministers and members of Parliament who received the delegation. He noted that the delegation received full cooperation during the field visit and argued that this exceptional experience should be referred to as a best practice for future field visits. The President added that the visit showcased how UN-Women's operational mandate in Ecuador directly benefited many regular citizens and migrant women and girls.

X. Closing

39. Following the adoption of Decision 2023/4 on the report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022, Cameroon thanked UN-Women for accepting almost all recommendations of the corporate evaluation on UN-Women's work on economic empowerment while noting that this will allow for bridging the human and financial gaps as well as increasing the visibility of this topic before the Executive Board. The delegation expressed satisfaction that the decision contains specific provisions related to sufficient resources, including the establishment of a WEE expert at the headquarters, regional and local levels. Cameroon welcomed the development of a WEE strategy in line with UN-Women's development mandate as well as the needs of beneficiaries. The delegation further expressed appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her leadership to address the underfunding of WEE. In closing, Cameroon encouraged UN-Women to increase the visibility of its work on WEE, including through a dedicated dialogue during formal meetings of the Executive Board on WEE. The statement can be accessed through the recording of the session at <https://media.un.org/en/asset/klu/klut1o73so>.

40. In her closing statement, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the President for leading the Executive Board with rigour and wisdom. She thanked the Vice-Presidents for their efficient coordination within their regional groups and recognized the facilitation of the negotiations by delegates of the Permanent Missions of Colombia, Italy, Thailand and Ukraine. She further expressed appreciation for the Executive Board Secretary and his team for their smooth and professional organization of the annual session. She also thanked all UN-Women colleagues for their contributions and preparations.

41. The Head of UN-Women reiterated her appreciation of Member States' constructive response to her annual report for 2022, noting that this was a key checkpoint for UN-Women's implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025 with its integrated systematic outcomes. She reiterated UN-Women's deep appreciation for many delegations' explicit commitment to the Entity's indivisible triple mandate and encouragement to make the fullest use of its comparative advantages, both within the United Nations system and throughout the broad network of partners and allies. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director added that UN-Women will continue to invest in its ability to drive accelerated progress towards 2030, including through increased and sharpened focus on its coordination mandate in particular. She further noted delegations' interest with clear articulation and factual information, the ways in which UN-Women's mandate works in practice – including its role as a nexus

between action, humanitarian development and peace – and increased disaggregated data collection. The Head of the Entity thanked delegations for the positive statements made in support of UN-Women’s efforts on accountability and transparency. She appreciated the Executive Board’s urging to continue to tackle multiple intersecting forms of discrimination by partnering with civil society and championing country programming.

42. Following the rich discussions of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the corporate evaluation of UN-Women’s work on economic empowerment, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director reiterated the Entity’s firm commitment to invest resources and personnel in this thematic area. She noted that doing so has a significant multiplier effect for women’s human rights and sustainable development. She confirmed that UN-Women is currently finalizing the strategy on WEE that will reflect a multisectoral approach to advance both development and human rights objectives. The Head of UN-Women underscored her full commitment to driving the organization’s communication of its impact and to invest further to strengthen capacities on the ground to monitor and report on results at a strategic level.

43. On the integrated budget for 2024–2025, the Head of the Entity stressed that UN-Women needs to be equipped with adequate resources to achieve its ambitions and that these need to be solid, sustained and well calibrated. With regard to the prevention of and response to SEA/SH, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted having insisted on enhanced accountability structures of preventing SEA and SH within UN-Women. She restated that UN-Women cannot and does not accept the continued exposure of women and girls to this type of sexual violence in the United Nations.

44. In his closing remarks, the Executive Board President conveyed his appreciation for the efficient proceedings and the quality of discussions on each agenda item. He thanked the Bureau, the Vice-Presidents and their experts, for its support during and in the lead-up to the session, including for the skilful facilitation of the decisions. He thanked the Executive Board members and observers for their constructive engagement and contributions throughout the session, as well as the Executive Board Secretary and Secretariat team for their support. The President concluded by thanking the briefers for their rich presentations and hard work, which helped to ensure the high quality of the Executive Board’s deliberations.

45. The session was then adjourned.

Annex I

Decisions adopted at the annual session of 2023**2023/3****Annual Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025**

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and commends UN-Women on its strong performance to date;
2. *Recognizes* UN-Women's contribution and its focused engagement within the United Nations development system to ensure that gender equality and women and girls empowerment continue to be an integral part of the sustainable development agenda;
3. *Encourages* UN-Women to make full use of its comparative advantage and to continue the full implementation of its triple mandate, in accordance with [A/RES/64/289](#), which includes normative support, UN system-wide coordination and operational activities;
4. *Welcomes* the transparent manner in which the unallocated regular resources surplus was brought to the attention of the Executive Board and calls on UN-Women to continue reducing its unallocated resources balance in a timely manner;
5. *Welcomes* the steps taken by UN-Women so far on the unallocated regular resources surplus, encourages UN-Women to further consider measures to improve forward looking and efficient budget management and requests an update in this regard in advance of the first regular session 2024;
6. *Takes notes* with concern of the funding gap in regular resources, and encourages all countries in a position to do so to increase voluntary contributions for the full and effective implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and encourage strengthened partnerships in this regard;
7. *Decides* to transmit the report to the Economic and Social Council.

21 June 2023

2023/4**Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022**

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note* of the 2022 report on the evaluation function of UN-Women and the Independent Evaluation Service 2023 programme of work and budget;
2. *Takes note with appreciation* that UN-Women continues to maintain an independent, credible and useful evaluation function and of its contribution to systemwide gender-responsive evaluation efforts and national evaluation capacity development, and encourages UN-Women to continue to make use of evaluation results including in its decision making processes;
3. *Notes* the report on the corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment, takes note of the ongoing development of a

UN-Women strategy on Women economic empowerment; and requests UN-Women to provide an informal briefing on the development of the strategy prior to its completion, and present the strategy to the board for information no later than the first regular session 2024;

4. *Encourages* UN-Women to implement the whole set of recommendations of the corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to women's economic empowerment, towards sufficiently strengthening and resourcing UN-Women's work in this regard, and requests UN-Women to report on its implementation within the Annual Report of the Executive Director 2023, which will be considered for decision at the annual session 2024;

5. *Recalls* previous Executive Board decisions on the Report on the evaluation function, and *requests* UN-Women to continue its efforts to achieve a high evaluation performance with a specific focus on key performance indicators which can be further improved;

6. *Encourages* UN-Women to increase investments towards allocation of at least 2 per cent and up to 3 per cent of its total programme expenditure to the evaluation function, and requests UN-Women to continue working to safeguard the independence of the Independent Evaluation Service and ensuring evaluation expertise in the Advisory Committee on Oversight (ACO);

7. *Encourages* the IES to continue to seek opportunities with other United Nations agencies to conduct further joint evaluations, including Country Framework evaluations, and independent system-wide evaluations in line with General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on repositioning the United Nations Development System;

8. *Expresses* continuing support for strengthening the evaluation function in UN-Women and the utilization of evaluations, in line with the Evaluation Policy as endorsed by the Executive Board in 2020.

21 June 2023

2023/5

Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2022

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note* of the report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2022;

2. *Takes note* of the Advisory Committee on Oversight's annual report;

3. *Takes note* of the management response to these two reports;

4. *Urges* UN-Women management, based on the concerning gaps identified by the Advisory Committee on Oversight, to strengthen its second line of defence, enhance investment in its ability to implement oversight recommendations, ensure sufficient and stable capacity in particular at the decentralized level, and to advance the preparation of a Statement of Internal Controls process;

5. *Further urges* UN-Women management to prioritize the implementation of those UN-BoA recommendations from 2021 and past years, which are still in progress but for which the ACO found the proposed actions insufficiently addressed;

6. *Recalls* decision [2023/1](#), notes with appreciation the completion of the initial assessment of the Financial Rules and Regulations and requests that UN-Women undertake a comprehensive review of the Financial Rules and Regulations to submit the revised Financial Rules and Regulations for approval to the Executive Board at the Second Regular Session 2025;

7. *Encourages* UN-Women to increase resources, as available, for the audit and investigation function;

8. *Expresses* its continuing support for the UN-Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS), reiterates the importance of its full independent and direct access to the Executive Board and of the full independence of the IEAS, including through the current practice that the Office comply with the standards of the International Professional Practice Framework by the Institute of Internal Auditors and requests at least one annual closed briefing to the Executive Board to discuss its annual workplan, the consolidated risk assessment, and any updates and concerns related to budget and staffing;

9. *Requests* the IEAS to continue to further improve its annual report by including substantive analysis of findings and continue providing an overview of strategic and systemic issues and trends, and encourage the Office to undertake a proactive approach in high-risk areas that are susceptible to fraud, corruption and other wrongdoing and include a discussion of these efforts in its annual report;

10. *Encourages* UN-Women Advisory Committee on Oversight to continue to present its annual report and key considerations to the Executive Board at the annual session, and encourages the management of UN-Women to continue to ensure gender balance and geographical representation in the composition of the Committee membership;

11. *Recalls* its decision [2022/8](#) on the self-assessment of the independence of the IEAS and requests an update from UN-Women to the Executive Board through an informal briefing before the second regular session of 2023, on the status of implementation of the recommendations included in the self-assessment of the independence of the Office.

21 June 2023

2023/6

Implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations Development System

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note* of the update provided by UN-Women on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) and related mandates on the repositioning of the United Nations development system (UNDS) in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system;

2. *Takes note* of the commitment of UN-Women to the United Nations development system repositioning and encourages UN-Women to continue to work closely with other UNDS entities, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator in the country, to support countries, whilst delivering on its mandate, in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in line with the UNSDCFs and national plans, needs and priorities;

3. *Recalls* its decision [2022/6](#) and requests UN-Women to continue to implement resolutions [72/279](#), [75/233](#) and [76/4](#) and to support the efforts of the UNDS in implementing related mandates;

4. *Calls* on UN-Women to strengthen efforts to implement the Management and Accountability Framework, notes the evolving nature of the Framework, and calls on the organization to share its experiences in implementing the Framework at all levels;

5. *Recalls* decision [2022/6](#) and requests UN-Women to continue to include contributions of representatives at country level and regional directors to the implementation of UNDS reform within existing reporting;

6. *Requests* UN-Women to report on the complete UNDS Reform Checklist as an annex to existing annual reporting on the implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system;

7. *Also requests* UN-Women to continue to strive for inter-agency harmonization of reporting on implementation efforts and results of the repositioning of the United Nations development system, including improved delivery of development programming at the country level;

8. *Recalls* the QCPR and stresses the importance of integrated solutions to address complex, multi-faceted challenges impacting achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and requests UN-Women to continue supporting collaboration in joint analysis, needs assessments, planning, including collective outcomes and programme delivery, and update the Board within existing reporting mechanisms;

9. *Further requests* UN-Women to continue to update the Executive Board annually on its implementation efforts on the repositioning of the United Nations development system and to include this as an item for decision during the annual session.

21 June 2023

2023/7

Update on UN-Women policies and procedures to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note of* the updates by UN-Women on actions to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment;

2. *Recalls* decision [2022/2](#), and notes with appreciation, the progress made and the need for continued effort to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, as part of the ‘zero tolerance for inaction’ approach, including ensuring that the required actions implemented at country, regional and global levels are properly resourced and deliver impact;

3. *Notes* UN-Women’s efforts to conduct risk assessments in respect of sexual exploitation and abuse; to work with implementing partners to assess and support their capacity to ensure adequate safeguards to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse; and to provide victims and survivors with support and assistance;

4. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to take action to ensure a victim/survivor-centred, system-wide and coherent approach to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and to continue to foster an inclusive and respectful organizational culture where all personnel are empowered and encouraged to report sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment;

5. *Encourages* UN-Women in this regard to continue to report to the Executive Board at its annual sessions about all cases in a transparent and accountable manner, and ensure that reporting mechanisms are safe, inclusive and victim/survivor-centered, and to strengthen its efforts in whistle-blower protection against retaliation;

6. *Encourages* UN-Women to continue to strive for inter-agency harmonization of reporting, and in this regard requests UN-Women to develop a more

uniform template for its future reports on this topic, to be shared with the Executive Board, to better track year-on-year progress against indicators, allow for enhanced comparison of reports and gain a more strategic understanding of the results, impact and organizational culture change achieved from its efforts and activities;

7. *Further encourages* UN-Women to continue to increase its system-wide collaboration efforts to improve coordination, reporting and transparency and to work effectively with relevant UN entities at country, regional and global levels to ensure the exchange of lessons learned and best practices from the entire United Nations system;

8. *Expresses support for* the continued use of ClearCheck, and invites UN-Women to examine how ClearCheck and the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme can be used to complement each other to further improve vetting and to provide an update to the Board;

9. *Further encourages* UN-Women to consider piloting the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme.

21 June 2023
