



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

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## Annual session 2025

17–19 June 2025

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

## Organizational matters

### Report on the first regular session 2025, 10 to 11 February 2025<sup>1</sup>

#### I. Election of the Bureau

1. On 10 January 2025, the Executive Board held elections for Bureau members of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for 2025. The Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, H.E. Ms. Nicola Clase (representing Western European and Other States), was elected President of the Executive Board. The Vice-Presidents were elected from the following regional groups: (a) Eastern European States: H.E. Ms. Suela Janina, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations; (b) Latin American and Caribbean States: H.E. Mr. Walton Alfonso Webson, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations; (c) Asia-Pacific States: H.E. Mr. Umetsu Shigeru, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations; (d) African States: H.E. Mr. Godfrey Kwoba, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations.

2. The outgoing President, H.E. Ms. Zoraya del Carmen Cano Franco, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations (representing the Latin American and Caribbean States), congratulated the incoming President and Vice-Presidents and thanked the Executive Board and her fellow Bureau members serving during her tenure: H.E. Mr. Jonibek Ismoil Hikmat, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations (representing the Asia-Pacific States); H.E. Mr. Andreas Von Uexküll, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations (representing the Western European and Other States); H.E. Ms. Halley Christine Yapi Bah, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations (representing the African States); and Ms. Joanna Sylwia Skoczek, Minister Counsellor and

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<sup>1</sup> Note: This document was processed in its entirety by UN-Women.



Deputy Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations (representing the Eastern European States).

## II. Organizational matters

3. The first regular session 2025 of the Executive Board was held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 10 to 11 February 2025. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the first regular session 2025 ([UNW/2025/L.1/Rev.1](#)) and approved the report on its second regular session 2024 held from 10 to 11 September 2024 ([UNW/2024/8](#)). The Executive Board approved the provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session 2025 to be held from 17 to 19 June 2025 ([UNW/2025/CRP.1/Rev.2](#)) and adopted the annual workplan for 2025 ([UNW/2025/L.2/Rev.1](#)).

4. The Executive Board adopted four decisions (2025/1, 2025/2, 2025/3 and 2025/4), which are contained in the annex to the present report.

## III. Opening statements

5. The newly elected President of the Executive Board opened the session by stressing the Bureau's continued commitment to strengthening the effectiveness of the Executive Board's oversight function for improved governance while building on the hard work of the previous Bureaux. She outlined the different reports and briefings to be presented during the first regular session, and the decisions to be negotiated.

6. In her opening statement, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director congratulated the newly elected President and Bureau and thanked last year's President and Vice-Presidents. After highlighting the different milestones to be celebrated in 2025, she went on to detail the six sub-themes identified in the Secretary-General's report on the Beijing+30 Action Agenda: (1) bridging the digital gap; (2) addressing poverty; (3) ending violence against women and girls; (4) advancing women's leadership and decision-making; (5) advancing women, peace and security commitments; and (6) prioritizing women and girls in climate justice. She added that across these six areas, there is a critical cross-cutting goal: to meaningfully engage young women and girls.

7. Discussing the current financial situation, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted that the Entity is celebrating its 15-year anniversary in a vastly different operating environment: one in which multilateral action on the rights and empowerment of women and girls has grown increasingly complex and development finance continues to decline, while earmarking rises. She added that UN-Women's 2024 resourcing underscored the acceleration of these trends, signalling a long-term trajectory of non-core resources outweighing core resources. She went on to explain that in the last two to three years, over half of UN-Women's top 20 core donors have shifted their development policy in ways that weaken support for the UN and UN-Women. She stressed that for UN-Women to fulfil its mandate, it is critical that it has the means to reach the women and girls it serves. The Head of the Entity said that she values the friendship with the Executive Board and asked for a financial commitment that matches this valuable friendship. She reiterated UN-Women's commitment to continuing to achieve the best possible results with the resources that Member States entrust to the Entity. Given the

constrained financial situation, the Head of the Entity assured the Executive Board that UN-Women was taking the necessary steps to contain costs and anchor its work in its founding resolution and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as other key intergovernmental standards.

8. Discussing the pivot to the country and regions initiative, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director shared that the pivot is about strengthening UN-Women's delivery on the ground and leveraging the Entity's triple mandate at the regional and country levels to achieve tangible changes in the lives of women and girls. The pivot includes prioritizing the country level and empowering UN-Women Representatives and Regional Directors with greater authority. It includes moving some 190 positions from New York to Nairobi and Bonn, to be closer to the women and girls that UN-Women serves and to leverage cost efficiencies. The Head of UN-Women shared that the Entity expects to save a minimum of \$8 million per year once the changes are completed. She acknowledged that these post relocations are inevitably unsettling and disruptive for some of the workforce and she commended the workforce for the spirit with which they are approaching these changes. She thanked the Staff Council for their excellent support in making these changes work as best as they can for everyone who works for UN-Women and for being a key part of the extensive consultation process. She added that UN-Women aims to make this transition as smooth and successful as possible for its work and workforce.

9. Despite these organizational shifts, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director reaffirmed UN-Women's commitment to fulfilling Member States' promises to women and girls. She noted that UN-Women will remain resolute in its mission to end violence against women and to drive their economic empowerment, breaking the persistent cycles of poverty that hold them back. She further expressed UN-Women's continued support to women's political participation across the world, through helping amend electoral laws and building the capacities of female candidates. Additionally, she noted that UN-Women will continue to address the gender impacts of climate change and amplify the voices of women impacted by war. She added that UN-Women is leveraging its roles in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to bring a gender analysis to humanitarian responses, ensuring that every dollar not only meets the needs of women and girls, but also unlocks their full potential, empowering them to contribute to their communities' recovery and resilience. She underscored that UN-Women has worked to advocate for the rights of women and girls in the most difficult contexts, where their voices most need to be heard and the voice of UN-Women is most needed to support them.

10. In conclusion, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director urged Member States to breathe new life into the beleaguered multilateral system. She stressed that it is our most powerful tool and best path to peace, sustainable development and much more. She added that the United Nations was born out of challenging times and that the stressors upon its work only affirm its indispensability. She reiterated that the commitments laid out by the General Assembly in UN-Women's founding resolution remain central to every concern and hope we share, and that UN-Women remains determined to help Member States to turn those priorities and promises into action. In turn, she asked Member States to match their stated support with action.

11. After the floor was opened, numerous delegations congratulated the President and Vice-Presidents on their election and thanked the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her comprehensive remarks and steadfast leadership. Several delegations highlighted how 2025 is a defining year for gender equality as it marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the twentieth anniversary of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 and the fifteenth anniversary of UN-Women, and only five years remain to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Delegations noted that despite the progress achieved, gender inequality continues to manifest in many forms. They shared that 2025 provides a critical opportunity to reflect on progress, address persistent challenges and reaffirm their collective commitment to gender equality. Several speakers reiterated their support for UN-Women's triple mandate and commended the Entity's pivotal role in promoting progress and honouring commitments to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. Delegations noted that the development of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2026–2029 offers an opportunity to set a strong course ahead, with some speakers calling on UN-Women to draw on lessons learned from past efforts and recent evaluations and reviews, and to consider including a chapter that defines its comparative advantages within the United Nations development system. Several speakers encouraged UN-Women to prioritize women's economic empowerment and women, peace and security in its next strategic plan, as well as to continue to leverage its coordination mandate to push for system-wide gender mainstreaming in line with the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan. One delegation urged UN-Women to avoid focusing on "radical" causes, such as diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and gender "ideology". On the pivot to the regions and countries initiative, Member States welcomed the update by the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director and encouraged UN-Women to provide regular updates to the Executive Board on the implementation of this organizational change, so as to ensure adequate oversight. Similarly, delegations expressed interest in receiving updates on the implementation of the recommendations from the Joint Inspection Unit's review of governance and oversight of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN-Women. In a joint statement, 31 Member States reiterated the importance of the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) as it provides the United Nations development system with a vital framework to accelerate SDG progress, and called on United Nations development system entities to harmonize reporting practices. Some delegations noted with concern the financial constraints facing UN-Women and underscored the importance of sustainable and predictable funding. Another delegation pressed UN-Women to stringently adhere to its mandate and encouraged the Entity to focus on promoting concepts that enjoy intergovernmental support. Finally, several delegations emphasized the importance of this year's Commission on the Status of Women to review the progress of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration Platform for Action and to reaffirm commitments made 30 years ago.

#### **IV. Audit matters**

12. In her opening remarks for this item, the Deputy Executive Director noted with appreciation the collaborative efforts between the United Nations

Board of Auditors and UN-Women. She welcomed the thirteenth consecutive unqualified audit opinion from the Board of Auditors, while adding that UN-Women's revenue in 2023 reflects its partners' strong confidence in the Entity. The Deputy Executive Director expressed gratitude to the Board of Auditors for their support of UN-Women. She highlighted that this is the first audit after the launch of the enterprise risk management system, Quantum. The Deputy Executive Director concluded by stating that the Entity has achieved a record 92 per cent implementation rate and a fourth consecutive year with no long-outstanding recommendations.

13. The United Nations Board of Auditors Representative and Director of External Audit of Brazil presented the report of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 ([A/79/5/Add.12](#)). In the opinion of the Board of Auditors, the financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of UN-Women as at 31 December 2023 and its financial performance and cash flows for the year ended on that date, in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). The Board of Auditors identified that the Entity's formula for allocating core resources requires updating. Other areas of improvement include the assurance activities life cycle and timely reconciliation of payments through Quantum in collaboration with UNDP. Regarding follow-up of previous recommendations, the Board of Auditors noted that of the 26 outstanding previous recommendations, 92 per cent were fully implemented and 8 per cent were under implementation.

14. The Director of the Management and Administration Division ad interim introduced the financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 ([A/79/5/Add.12](#)), with total revenue of \$619 million. Total expenses were \$546 million and the Entity recorded an accounting surplus of \$79.5 million for the year ended 31 December 2023, compared with \$131 million in 2022. This accounting surplus represents contractual funds available to UN-Women's programmatic activities in future years. Total contribution revenue had decreased by \$61 million, while total expenses had increased by \$10 million compared with 2022. UN-Women assets include mainly cash and cash equivalents of \$210 million, investments of \$624 million and contributions receivable of \$529 million. Total assets increased by 10 per cent to \$1.5 billion, mainly due to an increase in cash, cash developments, and investments. On revenue by funding type, it was noted that regular resources increased to \$164 million and investment revenue increased by \$12 million.

15. The Director of the Strategy, Planning, Resources and Effectiveness Division gave an update on UN-Women's implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, as well as the resulting impact. She highlighted that UN-Women had achieved an unprecedented 92 per cent implementation rate of recommendations from previous years. She shared that the implementation of audit recommendations had positive impacts that aligned with five organizational effectiveness and efficiency output areas of UN-Women's strategic plan. These areas are: (i) principled performance, noting improvements in risk assessment and validation; (ii) advancing partnerships and resourcing, highlighting elevated transparency and communication; (iii) business transformation, citing the successful upgrade to Quantum; (iv) empowered people, noting targeted trainings for personnel; and finally, (v) products, services and processes, noting enhanced procurement monitoring. She

concluded by stating that UN-Women is fully committed to implementing all Board of Auditors recommendations, as the Entity recognizes their importance in enhancing its operations and, ultimately, in delivering gender equality and women's rights and empowerment.

16. A joint statement delivered on behalf of a group of countries welcomed the thirteenth consecutive unqualified audit opinion and thanked the UN Board of Auditors for their report. The joint statement recognized UN-Women's efforts to implement the recommendations of the UN Board of Auditors, highlighting its 92 per cent implementation rate. The group of countries further noted areas of improvement identified by the report, including the allocation of core resources, and encouraged UN-Women to adhere to the Board of Auditor's recommendations in this regard. In addition, the group of countries encouraged UN-Women to strengthen its assurance activities life cycle by implementing an alert system. The joint statement urged UN-Women to perform monthly reconciliations with UNDP through the interfund cash clearing account to ensure timely payments are made by UNDP on behalf of UN-Women. Furthermore, UN-Women was encouraged to adhere to the recommendations to strengthen the support it gives to country offices to enable them to implement concrete actions that contribute to environmental sustainability.

17. In response, the Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships noted the progress made by UN-Women, highlighting the relative size and maturity of the Entity. The Deputy Executive Director went on to state that UN-Women is prepared to update its core resource allocation methodology ahead of the Executive Board's annual session 2026. She added that UN-Women is also working on the new integrated budget and internal core resource allocation tool in conjunction with updating its methodology. The Deputy stressed the importance of identifying priorities and opportunities through consultative processes while maintaining flexibility for allocating global funds at the regional level. The Director of the Strategy, Planning, Resources and Effectiveness Division confirmed that UN-Women is on track to update its core resource allocation methodology through reviewing its core resource allocation tool. The Director noted that the Entity is embedding procedures on social and environmental sustainability by building the capacities of staff at all levels through enhanced socialization. This will help personnel understand how to meet social and environmental requirements as part of a holistic approach to performance and planning. The Director of the Management and Administration Division ad interim concluded by stating that for the interfund cash clearing account, UN-Women and UNDP have made significant improvements to the reconciliation payment process and that UN-Women will continue to work with UNDP to further reduce discrepancies and maximize efficiencies in this matter.

## **V. Joint Inspection Unit review of governance and oversight of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women**

18. The President of the Executive Board representing the Western European and Others Group provided an update on the implementation of the assessment of how the Executive Board executes its governance and oversight functions following the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report [JIU/REP/2023/7](#) and as mandated by Executive Board Decision 2024/3. She noted that in November

2024, the Bureau of UN-Women's Executive Board received preliminary comments from the Entity's management and independent offices on the JIU report which have since been posted online. The President shared that a working group comprised of 15 Member States with cross-board and equal regional representation was approved through a silent agreement procedure on 24 January 2025. She noted that the UN-Women Bureau collaborated with the Bureaux of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS and UNICEF to draft the terms of reference for the working group which have been approved by the other Executive Boards during their first regular sessions, and she expressed the hope that the Board of UN-Women would do likewise. The President underscored the importance of this process in ensuring the effectiveness and governance of the Board and the role it has in helping UN-Women deliver on its mandate, while urging Member States to remain committed in advancing shared goals in this regard.

19. After the floor was opened, a group of Member States emphasized the importance of the JIU review for enhancing the governance and oversight of the Executive Boards, with the objective of maximizing the ability of United Nations entities to deliver. The joint statement went on to recognize the importance of making use of lessons learned to make the Executive Boards fit for purpose in the context of changing circumstances regarding the role of multilateralism. In addition, the group of countries noted the need to align the JIU review process with the QCPR, which calls on United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities to strengthen their governance and oversight functions. Lastly, the joint statement welcomed the formation of the working group and forthcoming actions.

20. The Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships welcomed the statement made by the group of countries and extended the full support of UN-Women to support and guide the JIU review process to ensure effective governance and oversight of the Executive Board.

## **VI. Organizational culture, anti-discrimination and anti-racism**

21. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director presented an update to the Executive Board on the steps that UN-Women has taken to improve the Entity's working culture and to act on the JIU's recommendations to combat racism and racial discrimination ([JIU/NOTE/2022/1/Rev.1](#)) in accordance with Executive Board Decision 2024/6. The Head of the Entity underscored that listening to staff is central to the management approach in UN-Women, listing a range of measures put in place such as counselling services, flexible work arrangements, and conflict-resolution training. In addition, the Head of the Entity emphasized efforts to keep the workplace free from discrimination, harassment and abuse of authority, and said that an Ethics Adviser is now in place to strengthen confidential reporting mechanisms for these areas. Following the JIU recommendations, UN-Women has established a group chaired by both Deputy Executive Directors that focuses on enhancing accountability, investing in training, and reforming the human resources process to ensure fairness. The Head of the Entity concluded by stating that UN-Women is undertaking a transformative shift to decentralize its leadership and further align with local and regional priorities. The goal of this shift is to create a workforce that is better positioned to meet the needs of the people

who the Entity serves, while setting a high standard of ethical practices across the United Nations.

22. A joint statement delivered on behalf of a group of delegations celebrated the occasion of the first-ever stand-alone item on organizational culture during an Executive Board session. The joint statement went on to note that respect and fair treatment of all personnel in UN-Women is important for the effective delivery of its mandate. The joint statement emphasized the vital role that executive leadership has in promoting a healthy organizational culture, and the contributions that the Ombudsman and Staff Council make to guide leadership towards this goal. The group wanted to know how different elements of organizational culture are combined to create a holistic image, as well as what additional methods are used, other than surveys to monitor and measure organizational culture. The group urged UN-Women to collect reliable data on organizational culture to help ensure that all voices within the Entity are heard. In addition, the group wanted to know how system-wide learning on organizational culture is measured and how UN-Women oversight offices collaborate towards this goal. One Member State emphasized its support for the elimination of discrimination within the Entity and for equality of opportunity for all individuals. This delegation stressed its support of a merit-based advancement system as opposed to a preference-based system. Another delegation encouraged UN-Women to develop trainings and courses on anti-racism and unconscious bias, as well as suggesting the inclusion of dedicated budget items to combat racism. Another Member State stressed the importance of data and asked whether UN-Women had undertaken a culture audit by a third party. The Member State asked how the Entity has increased its awareness capacity for disability and LGBTQI+ inclusion and what impact the forthcoming pivot will have on this capacity. In closing, the delegation requested further clarity on the development of an accountability framework and asked for an update on the forthcoming Human Resource Strategy.

23. Responding to the points raised by Member States, the Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships recognized the significant underinvestment in the Entity's human resource function. She explained that UN-Women is currently undertaking a review of the Human Resource Strategy, the results of which will soon be reviewed by management. The outcome of this review will be reflected in the new strategic plan and integrated budget, which will seek to adequately resource the Entity's human resource function. She emphasized that recruitments, promotions and decisions are firmly based on merit and professional experience while ensuring a balanced global workforce and gender parity.

24. The Director of Human Resources responded to a delegation's question by stating that the Entity has not done a culture audit but will look at best practices from other United Nations entities to consider moving forward on a culture audit. The Director went on to note that UN-Women has implemented three of the six JIU recommendations, and plans to further update the Executive Board on implementation of the remaining recommendations at the annual session. The Director shared that the Entity actively monitors personnel through a framework of indicators focused on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, as outlined in the strategic plan. He added that the Entity relies on support from other entities for the development of training, materials and other initiatives, drawing on best practices throughout the system and



preventing duplication of efforts in these areas. He further shared that the human resource function works closely with the oversight functions of the Entity, as well as the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Ombudsman when needed. The Director concluded by informing the Board that UN-Women will soon begin implementing a new modality for affiliate personnel which will provide enhanced benefits and entitlements. The Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, UN System Coordination and Programme Results concluded by emphasizing the importance of a healthy organizational culture in delivering on the Entity's triple mandate in multifaceted and sometimes challenging global contexts.

25. In her statement, the UN-Women Representative to the UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN-Women Staff Council recognized the lives lost in the ongoing conflict in Gaza, noting that this has been the largest loss of life of United Nations personnel in a conflict or natural disaster. She mentioned the sacrifices of personnel in other conflict areas such as Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ukraine and Haiti, among others. She went on to note efforts made by the Staff Council to strengthen representation and increase capacity-building by establishing the Global Forum of Local Staff and Personnel Associations. Critical personnel issues remain at the heart of Staff Council efforts, such as mental health, career development, and contractual equity, noting that the Council has undertaken strong advocacy work in these fields. These efforts have been able to expand consultations on UN-Women's ongoing pivot model and a human resource support plan for personnel. She noted that personnel continue to have concerns about the transparency of the pivot process and its impact on the Entity's effectiveness. In addition, personnel have requested more-detailed reports and opportunities to provide input as the process moves forward. The Staff Council Representative stated that personnel with non-staff contract modalities, as well as those unable to move, need to be handled with fairness and transparency. She concluded by welcoming the human resource support plan for the pivot and thanking management for their attentiveness to the concerns raised by the Staff Council.

26. The Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships thanked the Staff Council for their important work and acknowledged the losses suffered by United Nations personnel during the past year. She stated that UN-Women had engaged in intensive consultations across the Entity before beginning the pivot process. The Deputy Executive Director noted that there are varying perspectives on the pivot in the Entity, but that UN-Women is committed to supporting its personnel during the process through the human resource support strategy. She concluded by recognizing the importance of implementing the pivot process with maximum fairness and transparency.

27. One Member State took the floor to note that further work is needed from UN-Women to provide details on the pivot, such as a risk assessment and a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis. The delegation encouraged UN-Women to make use of all Executive Board sessions, as well as an informal briefing, to update Member States as the process develops.

28. The Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships responded to the delegation's comment by confirming that the Entity will continue to provide regular updates to the Executive Board on the pivot process. She reiterated the need for the pivot, noting that sustained funding viability for certain positions will not be able to continue without the pivot. The

Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, UN System Coordination and Programme Results thanked the Executive Board for its guidance during the pivot process. She went on to note that while transparency is critical, a balance needs to be maintained to protect certain confidentiality. In her reply, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the Staff Council, management and Member States for their remarks during the segment. She emphasized that staff well-being takes top priority in the organization, as does the further implementation of UN-Women's triple mandate.

29. The Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes presented his annual report to the Executive Board. He shared that during 2023, his office handled 31 cases pertaining to UN-Women, while in 2024 there had been 52 cases. Some common observations from these cases included a reluctance among UN-Women personnel to engage on the topic of mental health. In addition, there was a fear of reprisals, which constitutes a considerable barrier for conflict resolution. He went on to mention other common types of cases, including discrimination and a perceived lack of respect. He concluded by thanking UN-Women and the Staff Council for their strong collaboration with the Office of the Ombudsman and noted that the office continues to be a confidential space to raise concerns and find ways of addressing them.

30. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director welcomed the Ombudsman's presentation and noted that the increasing number of cases handled by his office is an indication of growing trust placed in it by colleagues. She concluded by thanking the Ombudsman for the ongoing support that his office provides to UN-Women.

## **VII. Risk management**

31. The Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships provided an update to the Executive Board on risk management. She noted that risk management practices are central to how UN-Women operates in a global setting in which increasing numbers of women and girls live in conflict-affected circumstances. UN-Women identified five interlinked critical risk areas prevalent in 2025: (i) funding; (ii) economic climate; (iii) global landscape of gender equality; (iv) climate change; and (v) cybersecurity.

32. The Director of Strategy, Planning, Resources and Effectiveness for UN-Women presented to the Executive Board highlights of the Entity's improving risk maturity and risk areas of strategic importance. She went on to note the high levels of engagement by senior management in risk maturity as shown by their engagement with the Risk Management Committee and a network of 80 global risk focal points. The Director stated that UN-Women has a long-established Risk Management Policy subject to routine review and a clear governance structure around risk management, reflecting thorough integration of risk into the Entity's operations. She went on to emphasize that the instability of UN-Women's core resources represents a pertinent risk which UN-Women seeks to mitigate through boosting cost recovery. The uncertain global environment represents another significant risk that the Entity mitigates through focusing on gender-responsive budgeting. The third risk area of growing political instability is mitigated through active engagement with the IASC and support for multi-stakeholder partnerships. The fourth risk area, cybersecurity, is mitigated

through enhanced cybergovernance and data privacy measures. The final area of risk, climate change, is mitigated through the Entity's programmatic work.

33. After opening the floor, one Member State speaking on behalf of a group of countries noted the high priority placed on risk management and expressed its appreciation for UN-Women's efforts to recognize and mitigate risk. The joint statement encouraged UN-Women to use this item at Executive Board sessions to provide a forward-looking risk profile. The group asked several questions, requesting more information on UN-Women's risk appetite, on how the Entity adapts its risk management approach in fragile and conflict settings, and on how UN-Women collaborates with other entities to share information on risk. Another delegation requested to know what major internal risks the Entity is facing. One further Member State welcomed further updates on the pivot that UN-Women is undertaking as it pertains to risk.

34. The Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships responded to delegations' questions by stating that unacceptable levels of risk for the Entity are when the level of risk far exceeds any potential results. She added that UN-Women builds its risk management apparatus to be streamlined and efficient, keeping it flexible to respond to emerging risk such as artificial intelligence (AI). The Director of the Strategy, Planning, Resources and Effectiveness Division responded to Member States' comments by stating that when aggregated, the Entity has a medium risk appetite. However, when disaggregated, UN-Women has a very low risk appetite with regards to fraud, sexual exploitation, and harassment, but a higher risk appetite in conflict or crisis settings. In conflict and crisis settings, UN-Women has a robust security management system which works to identify and mitigate any security-related risks. In addition, the Entity works with partners in fragile contexts to develop capacity and build organizational resilience. Regarding coordination with other United Nations entities, UN-Women engages in system-wide discussions on risk at the country level. UN-Women contributes to the development of the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Through robust reporting on UN-SWAP 3.0 and participation in the Gender Equality Acceleration Plan, UN-Women can increase its role in promoting gender equality in the United Nations system, leveraging its coordination mandate to provide technical support to other entities. On internal risks, the Director noted that underinvestment in the Human Resources Division and maintaining strong internal governance constitute the two most significant potential risks for the Entity. The Director went on to emphasize the importance of strong organizational culture in promoting healthy risk management through dedicated trainings, noting that these take place at the country level.

35. The Enterprise Risk Management Manager shared that for training development, UN-Women works very closely with the Programme Support Management Unit and the Ethics Function, noting that ethics and organizational culture are key aspects of good risk management approaches. On internal risk, the Manager added that UN-Women uses a top-down, bottom-up approach which allows for aggregated and disaggregated data to form a comprehensive picture of the Entity's risk profile. These data are then reviewed every quarter, the results of which are shared with the Risk Management Committee for reflection on how this affects the strategic objectives of the Entity.

36. Additionally, the Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, UN System Coordination and Programme Results responded by emphasizing that

risks and issues may be very different in various local contexts. In this regard, she noted the importance of UN-Women's coordination mandate as it pertains to risk management, drawing on lessons learned from other entities. The Deputy Executive Director noted that the current financial environment poses a significant risk to achieving gender equality. In this setting, she noted the need to leverage best practices for gender equality, citing the UN-SWAP and Gender Equality Acceleration Plan as exciting initiatives in this regard. She concluded by assuring Member States that the pivot process will not minimize UN-Women's normative role at the global level, arguing that it will in fact enhance it.

## **VIII. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinating Board meeting**

37. In her opening remarks, the Deputy Executive Director presented key updates on the implementation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Programme Coordinating Board recommendations. She highlighted UN-Women's important coordination mandate, noting that UN-Women as a UNAIDS co-sponsoring agency ensures that gender equality and women's empowerment are prioritized and embedded at the core of the UN system agency efforts so that HIV strategies address the deep-rooted gender inequalities that fuel the epidemic. While she celebrated the groundbreaking scientific advances and other achievements for women and girls in health, particularly on HIV, she noted that persistent challenges require stronger accountability and financing for gender equality and women's empowerment in the HIV response. For example, she shared how HIV infections among women and girls aged 15 and older had increased in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the Middle East and North Africa and remained largely unchanged in Latin America. She shared statistics demonstrating the compounded challenges in preventing HIV and accessing treatment. The Deputy Executive Director welcomed the establishment of a high-level panel to revisit the UNAIDS Joint Programme's operational model given the funding challenges in May 2024. She called on members to ensure that ending gender inequalities and investing in women's leadership at all levels remain central to the scope of the Joint Programme's work. She added that UN-Women has been responding and adjusting to the context around resources, but that the Entity is continuing to advance gender-responsive HIV policies and institutions and to support women's organizations and networks of those living with HIV. She went on to share examples of UN-Women's contributions to the HIV response across several countries, such as highlighting UN-Women's support of the Young Women for Life Movement in South Africa. She concluded by underscoring the importance of sustaining options and opportunities for people living with HIV, and highlighted the need to integrate the work on HIV into UN-Women's next strategic plan.

38. The UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director of the Policy, Advocacy and Knowledge Branch commended UN-Women for its impactful contribution to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and recognized the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her strong commitment to the programme. She highlighted the multiple forms of stigma and discrimination experienced by women and girls and the regressive social norms that continue to hold women back directly, increasing women's and girls' risks of HIV

infection. The Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS emphasized how UN-Women's leadership role at the country level in advancing gender equality and advocating for and supporting the leadership of women living with and affected by HIV, particularly adolescent girls and young women, remains central to the success of the HIV response. While discussing the next Global AIDS Strategy 2026–2031, she highlighted that UN-Women's bold and consistent voice, presence and support are necessary for maintaining a focus on eliminating gender inequalities, which will help accelerate progress to achieve shared objectives. She mentioned that the Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS, through the collaborative advocacy and technical strength of its co-sponsors and civil society representatives, has achieved and supported incredible progress and results for people, especially women living with and affected by HIV. She concluded by noting that ending AIDS requires sufficient resources and that the roles of the Joint Programme and UN-Women remain critical for accelerating action and ensuring all at risk are served.

39. A joint statement delivered on behalf of 19 countries commended UN-Women for its contributions to the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS, welcomed gains made in the fight against HIV/AIDS and noted the ongoing need to focus efforts on delivering for women and girls in the context of HIV/AIDS. The group highlighted that women and girls constitute 45 per cent of the total number of HIV infections globally, while noting that many new infections could have been prevented by advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. They added that widening inequalities and significantly reduced funding constitute important roadblocks in achieving the common goal. The joint statement further argued that enabling legal environments are critical for addressing the inequalities fuelled by the HIV epidemic and that the regression of human rights globally must be urgently addressed. The group expressed support for UNAIDS efforts to work with governments on developing national HIV response sustainability road maps and welcomed the increased collaboration between UN-Women and other UN agencies, based on their comparative advantages. In the context of the challenging HIV funding landscape, the group asked how UN-Women is planning to sustain its work up to and beyond 2030 on the HIV/AIDS agenda. It asked about the lessons that UN-Women learned through implementing its current strategic plan and how these will inform the next strategic plan, as well as about UN-Women's approach to providing support and technical assistance to countries adversely affected by conflicts and crises. Speaking in a national capacity, one delegation welcomed the continued decline in new HIV and AIDS infections in sub-Saharan Africa and the critical role played by UN-Women in ensuring that gender-responsive strategies remain central to the global HIV and AIDS response. However, despite these achievements, the delegation expressed deep concern that girls and young women continue to bear the disproportionate burden of new infections, making up 85 per cent of new cases in their age group in sub-Saharan Africa. The delegation commended UN-Women's leadership in supporting Member States to implement policies that prioritize gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and called for an increase of flexible and predictable funding for UN-Women to ensure the sustainability of its HIV- and AIDS-related programmes.

40. In response to the questions raised, the Deputy Executive Director shared lessons learned and underscored the importance of understanding the causes of transmission and addressing gender inequalities. The Director of the Policy,

Programme and Intergovernmental Division highlighted UN-Women's approach to responding to HIV and AIDS in its current strategic plan and discussed the funding challenges for co-sponsors of the Joint Programme. The Chief of HIV/AIDS shared that UN-Women is actively involved in the development of the new Global AIDS Strategy, including by convening women's organizations and networks of women living with HIV, to develop a holistic response.

## **IX. Field visit**

41. Speaking on behalf of the joint field visit delegation, the Second Counsellor of Mali reported on the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, WFP and UN-Women to Cambodia from 28 October to 1 November 2024. She explained that the purpose of the field visit was to help members of the Executive Boards more effectively understand the extent to which, and the ways in which, United Nations organizations work together and contribute to the achievement of national development plans and SDGs. The delegation expressed its deepest gratitude to the Government of Cambodia for receiving the members of the Executive Boards at the highest level and thanked the coordinating UNFPA country office, supported by the country offices of the other five UN entities, for organizing a very fruitful visit focusing on the main aspects of the work of those six United Nations entities and their partners in Cambodia.

42. During their visit, the delegation visited several joint United Nations projects, as well as projects by UN-Women. At the end of their mission, members of the delegation concluded that the joint field visit to Cambodia showcased how the United Nations organizations effectively work together in Cambodia to achieve national development plans and the SDGs. The delegation was impressed by the significant transformation and progress that Cambodia has made in recent years, with the support of the United Nations entities and other development partners. Members of the delegation were also pleased to note that the work of the United Nations country team under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator functions well in Cambodia, in line with the reform of the system in 2019, and that the United Nations is well received and trusted by the government. Recommendations are listed in the joint field visit report and include a suggestion to add more meetings with civil society organizations and government line ministries to help gain a better understanding of the issues on the ground.

## **X. Closing**

43. Following the adoption of Decision 2025/3 on organizational culture, anti-discrimination and anti-racism, the delegation of Denmark delivered a joint statement on behalf of Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Belgium, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, the EU as a donor, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. In the joint statement, the group expressed their expectation that UN agencies will continue, in accordance with previous Board decisions, to do all they can to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including through combating and preventing racial discrimination and racism, and to ensure disability inclusion

and access, in order to promote and protect DEI in all its forms and at all levels. The group further highlighted that achieving gender equality and consistently delivering for women and girls is a collective responsibility shared by every entity within the UN system and a cornerstone of the QCPR and current reform efforts. The joint statement added that UN-Women plays an especially important role in this regard, as the lead entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The group concluded by thanking the entire UN-Women staff in New York and around the globe for their commitment and untiring work to advance gender equality and DEI, and said they were looking forward to continuing to work in partnership with UN-Women on these issues to ensure that all personnel are respected, feel safe and have equal opportunity to thrive and succeed. Australia and New Zealand took the floor to express their support for the group statement delivered by Denmark. In a separate statement, Peru noted that while it had joined the consensus, it regretted that the question of the inclusion of persons with disabilities was not reflected in the decision, and noted the importance of including such references in Board decisions in the future. The statements can be accessed through the recording of the session at <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k17/k1737bs5hf>.

44. In her closing statement, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the Executive Board President for her strong and attentive leadership of the first regular session. She thanked the Vice-Presidents for their leadership and skilled coordination, including within their regional groups, and recognized the facilitation of the negotiations by experts of the Permanent Missions of Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Japan and Sweden. The Head of the Entity thanked the delegations for showing flexibility to reach consensus and highlighted that the adoption of the four decisions strengthens UN-Women's ability to deliver for women and girls worldwide. She expressed strong appreciation and recognition to the Executive Board Secretary and his team, as well as to all UN-Women colleagues, both in New York and around the world.

45. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted that the engagement, ambition and clarity of purpose of delegations at the first regular session are a source of optimism as UN-Women faces the challenges ahead. She added that 2025 will be a demanding year with many milestones and the development of a new, forward-looking and fit-for-purpose strategic plan to properly articulate the ambitions we share in an ever more complex world. While remaining hopeful for a strong financial outlook, the Head of UN-Women underlined the need to be realistic and ready to navigate a constrained resource environment. She added that in these endeavours, UN-Women will remain guided by the mandate that Member States gave UN-Women in its founding resolution 64/289. With regards to the JIU working group, the Head of the Entity said she is looking forward to the first meeting of the working group later this month, now that the terms of reference have been adopted and the membership finalized.

46. Discussing the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director highlighted that the declaration provides a clear road map, asserting among others the imperative of women's full and equal participation in political life, women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women and girls. The Head of the Entity stressed that UN-Women will continue to play its role in ensuring the declaration is afforded proper attention and resourcing. She

underscored the principle that UN-Women's work must serve all women and girls and reiterated paragraph 32 of the Beijing Declaration: that this means redoubling efforts to ensure that those facing multiple and intersecting barriers, whether due to race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability or indigenous identity, can fully enjoy their rights and freedoms.

47. Referring to the upcoming sixty-ninth Commission on the Status of Women, the UN-Women Executive Director stressed the need for a strong, forward-looking political declaration. She noted that as the lead agency on gender equality, UN-Women is strengthening its coordination mandate to drive system-wide change. She added that the Secretary-General's Gender Equality Acceleration Plan provides a bold road map and that UN-Women is committed to leading its implementation, ensuring that every part of the United Nations system delivers on gender equality with ambition and accountability. Regarding UN-Women's pivot to the country and regions, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director welcomed Member States' queries and underlined the need to better position UN-Women to drive real change where it matters most. Additionally, she mentioned working together with delegations on UN-Women's next strategic plan to make the Entity more agile, better resourced, and impactful at scale. She concluded by highlighting how the Executive Board is a demonstration of the way the multilateral system is designed to rise to address complexity. She applauded all delegates for their unwavering commitment and engagement and thanked them for their guidance, oversight and support.

48. In her closing remarks, the Executive Board President conveyed her appreciation for the interactive and rich discussions on each agenda item. She congratulated the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director, the Deputy Executive Directors and all other briefers from the Secretariat for their hard work and their efforts to ensure the high quality of deliberations. She also thanked the Vice-Presidents for their valuable assistance and their experts for facilitating the decisions during the first regular session. She further thanked the Executive Board Secretary and his team for their support. She then thanked all delegations for their active participation throughout the session.

49. The session was then adjourned.



## Annex I

### Decisions adopted at the first regular session 2025

#### 2025/1

#### **Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 and Report of the Board of Auditors**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the report of the UN Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2023;
2. *Takes note with appreciation* of the thirteenth unqualified audit opinion issued by the Board of Auditors on the financial statements of UN-Women for the year ended 31 December 2023;
3. *Acknowledges* the steady progress made by UN-Women in implementing the audit recommendations of the Board of Auditors and supports UN-Women's continuous efforts to ensure there are no long-outstanding recommendations;
4. *Requests* that in future informal briefings on the reports of the Board of Auditors, a representative from the Board of Auditors be present and available for questions from the Executive Board;
5. *Requests* UN-Women management to include in the documentation submitted to the Executive Board a detailed organizational chart showing the actual structure and geographical location and make it available on the Entity's website.

11 February 2025

#### 2025/2

#### **JIU review of governance and oversight of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note of* the consultative process undertaken to establish a working group and develop the terms of reference for the operationalization of the working group on the Joint Inspection Unit report on the 'Review of governance and oversight of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women' (JIU/REP/2023/7) and adopts the terms of reference;
2. *Acknowledges* the process undertaken by the Bureau, in coordination with the Bureaux of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS and UNICEF, to identify members of the working group, and welcomes their subsequent nomination, in accordance with Decision 2024/3, paragraph 15;
3. *Recalls* Decision 2024/3, paragraph 7, to include an item for decision on the progress of the consideration of the Joint Inspection Unit report on the agendas

of every formal session, until decided otherwise and reiterates its request to the working group to provide regular updates to the participating Boards, as necessary.

11 February 2025

## **2025/3**

### **Organizational culture, anti-discrimination and anti-racism**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Notes* the updates provided by UN-Women on its work in strengthening its organizational culture, with a shared focus on fostering a safe, inclusive, value-driven environment aligned with the United Nations values and principles;

2. *Underlines* that organizational culture impacts effective and efficient delivery of the strategic plan, internal accountability, risk management, and protection from discrimination, sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment;

3. *Encourages* UN-Women to continue strengthening organizational culture, in line with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, relevant policies and Board decisions, and to promote equal opportunities for all, particularly by enhancing actions to prevent and respond to discrimination and exploitation, including sexual exploitation and abuse, violence and sexual harassment;

4. *Takes note* of the development of a comprehensive human resources management strategy covering all parts of UN-Women and all categories of its workforce, and requests UN-Women to report, within existing reporting, biennially to the Executive Board on its implementation, including but not limited to the use of the UN-Women affiliate workforce, starting in 2026;

5. *Takes note* of the ongoing implementation of multiple actions by UN-Women across critical aspects of the internal workplace environment such as leadership, accountability, employee engagement and experiences, learning and development;

6. *Invites* UN-Women to develop results frameworks and targets, in line with paragraph 20 of the 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, in relation to organizational culture issues;

7. *Requests* UN-Women to assess and report on, at first regular sessions, the impact of its work on organizational culture, including: (a) results achieved, (b) key findings of organization-wide surveys, (c) progress on treating all personnel with dignity and respect and eliminating discrimination, and (d) successes and remaining challenges;

8. *Urges* UN-Women to continue to strengthen people management skills of all personnel in supervisory and management roles;

9. In relation to protection from and prevention of harassment and abuse of authority, as well as discrimination, sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment: *encourages* UN-Women to consider good practices of other UN agencies, funds and programs, including in relation to culture audits and accountability of managers, where relevant.

11 February 2025

**2025/4**

**Risk management**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Welcomes* the update from UN-Women on enterprise risk management and critical risks of strategic importance, as requested by Decision 2024/1, to support the role of the Board as part of the oversight and accountability system for the Entity;

2. *Decides* to include a recurring agenda item for decision on risk management at the first regular sessions;

3. *Underlines* that risk management is a tool to support delivery of UN-Women's mandate and strategic plan and requests that it includes a systematic and organization-wide approach to risk management as an integrated part of the planning process in the development of its new strategic plan;

4. *Acknowledges* the complex operating context for UN-Women and emphasizes the need to regularly review its risk profile;

5. *Considers* that accountability for ensuring effective management of risks sits with the Executive Director and encourages their continued presence during the discussion of the risk management agenda item at the Executive Board;

6. *Requests* that UN-Women, as part of the recurring agenda item on risk management, include in its update information on:

- a) Systems in place to identify and manage risks;
- b) Identification and assessment of principal risks facing the organization;
- c) Measures taken to manage or mitigate these risks, at all levels;
- d) Risk appetite, including the contextual factors by which the organization would consider accepting higher risk;
- e) Actions taken to ensure compliance (systematic implementation of risk policies and practices) is embedded through the organization and encouraged in implementing partners.

7. *Emphasizes* that internal factors such as organizational culture should be part of any risk assessment by the agencies;

8. *Welcomes* the focus of UN-Women on managing fraud to attain its objectives and fulfil its mandate;

9. *Welcomes* also the focus of UN-Women on risks of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment to fulfil its internal and external duty of care;

10. *Expects* communication and consultation about risks at any time if they exceed UN-Women's risk appetite and ability to manage those risks;

11. *Emphasizes* the importance of regularly updating the enterprise risk management documents, to ensure they remain effective tools for risk management;

12. *Invites* the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to engage, in accordance with its mandate and policies, with the Executive Board on matters relevant to the Board's mandate, as appropriate, in a format consistent with OIOS confidentiality.

*11 February 2025*