



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

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**Second regular session of 2017**  
29 and 30 August 2017  
Item 1 of the provisional agenda  
**Organizational matters**

## **Report on the annual session of 2017, 27 to 28 June 2017**

### **I. Organizational matters**

1. The annual session of 2017 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, on 27 and 28 June 2017.
2. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session ([UNW/2017/L.3](#)), and approved the report on its first regular session held on 14 February 2017 ([UNW/2017/1](#)) and workplan for the second regular session of 2017, to be held on 29 and 30 August.
3. The Executive Board adopted three decisions (2017/2 and 2017/3 and 2017/4) as contained in the annex to the present report.

### **II. Opening statements**

4. The President of the Executive Board, Lana Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates), in her opening remarks, spoke of her country's support of UN-Women since its inception and the significance of last year's inauguration of the UN-Women Liaison Office in Abu Dhabi, which aims to strengthen UN-Women's work in accelerating efforts to deliver for women and girls around the world.
5. She highlighted the work of the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, on which the United Arab Emirates Minister of State for Tolerance served as a member. The Panel's aim was to advise on accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through placing women's economic empowerment at the top of the international agenda. Referring to the release of the Panel's report in March 2017, the President emphasized the importance of ensuring that its recommendations were implemented.
6. Touching on this year's joint Executive Boards' visit to Nepal as well as the UN-Women Executive Board's visit to India respectively, the President stated that UN-Women demonstrated its ability to leverage its unique and effective tripartite mandate by delivering on norms, providing an operational response at country-level, and coordinating the United Nations System on gender equality. It was an opportunity for

her not only to experience first-hand how the normative intergovernmental work of UN-Women at Headquarters was implemented at an operational level in the field, but also to observe how this operational work served to inform the cycle of developing norms, refining policy, and improving overall operational response. In her view, the ability of UN-Women as a single entity to be responsive to the entire life cycle of women's empowerment in all of the varied contexts throughout the world was a particular strength.

7. The President referred to the relationship between UN-Women and its Executive Board as one built on trust and partnership, underscoring that the process of developing the next strategic plan was a highly collaborative and consultative exercise. In her view, the Executive Board was in a good position to adopt the next strategic plan at its second regular session this year.

8. In concluding her opening statement, she urged Members of the Executive Board to act as champions of gender equality in other intergovernmental fora, seizing the opportunity to be advocates and positive voices for UN-Women.

9. The Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka thanked the President for her strong interest and engagement, as well as the Executive Board Bureau for its dedication to the promotion of gender equality. She took this opportunity to formally introduce Katja Perhman, newly-appointed Senior Adviser and Focal Point for Women in the United Nations System. This was a key position to support the Secretary-General's quest for gender parity in the United Nations, and the work of UN-Women, as the Entity endeavouring to align the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, (UN-SWAP), and the country-level gender scorecard that will monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, she bid farewell to outgoing Director of the UN-Women Independent Evaluation Office, Marco Segone, wishing him the very best as he moved to another appointment. Under his leadership, the United Nations Evaluation Norms and Standards were revised and a new stand-alone Norm included on integrating gender into the evaluation function of the United Nations system.

10. In addressing the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, the Head of UN-Women stated that the Entity's performance to date significantly informed the development of the new Strategic Plan, under the overarching direction of the 2030 Agenda. She illustrated examples of progress made around the world, pointing out the importance of effectively leveraging partnerships to scale up positive change in women's daily lives. In 2016, 72 laws were adopted or amended with the support of UN-Women, in 61 countries with a combined population of nearly 1.6 billion women and girls. UN-Women in some cases supported the implementation of these laws through its country presence. In 24 of those countries, the improved legislation was on ending violence against women and girls.

11. UN-Women was active in 74 countries to support an enabling environment for women's economic empowerment. In 2016, its support resulted in stronger economic policy frameworks in this area in nine countries. The Entity's work on economic empowerment benefited from extensive engagement in the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, and was enhanced by the agreed conclusions of the 61st Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61).

12. Efforts continued towards better investments in gender equality and women's empowerment. Some initial progress was made in 28 countries, which increased their

budget allocations for gender equality. These countries represented a combined female population of over 1.2 billion.

13. Speaking of the audited Financial Statements of UN-Women for the year ended 31 December 2016, the Head of the Entity underlined the show of good liquidity and the Entity's strong net asset position, expected to receive yet another unqualified audit opinion. In spite of exchange rate losses and a constrained funding environment in 2016, it was an improved year for resource mobilization, with increased revenue compared to 2015 levels, reaching US\$327 million. Regular resources reached US\$141.6 million and other resources grew to US\$178.1 million. This steady growth path helped inform projections for the Integrated Budget. She emphasized, however, that the Entity was still not where it needed to be, in order to make the largest impact on those being left behind. This underlying aspiration of the 2030 Development Agenda cannot be reached at the current pace.

14. Stating that the draft two-year Integrated Budget estimate complemented the very limited funding received from assessed contributions under the Regular Budget of the United Nations, the Head of UN-Women stressed that resources remained well below the level of political commitment for the gender equality agenda.

15. Speaking of the limitations faced by the Entity, she mentioned that, in some cases, not as much progress was achieved as expected in some areas of the Strategic Plan. Eight outputs remained off track. For example, the Entity did not meet the target number of countries for nationally generated and disaggregated statistics on economic opportunities for women. Nor did it succeed in supporting a sufficient number of countries with evidence-based practices to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. This was a reminder of how much capacity was needed in order for the Entity to fully and effectively carry out its mandate, and to further develop its institutional structure and systems.

16. In the development of the new Strategic Plan 2018-2021 therefore, attention was given to structural barriers to gender equality across all the Strategic Plan outcomes with a view to achieving truly transformative change. The Head of UN-Women stressed commitment to collaborating across the United Nations, and building enhanced gender expertise within the United Nations System, so that gender mainstreaming could be both effective and impactful. She thanked the Executive Board for its active engagement, guidance and support throughout the process of the development of the new Strategic Plan.

17. Leaving no one behind and reaching the further behind first were core principles of the new Strategic Plan and a measure for success. Key features included the human rights-based approach; partnerships; innovation; and the use of data. The Strategic Plan also addressed multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, with particular attention to young women, older women, women with disabilities, indigenous women, rural women, and other vulnerable groups.

18. The Flagship Programme Initiatives have applied UN-Women's composite mandate to scale up results and create impact through partnerships with governments, United Nations agencies, civil society and the private sector, as envisaged in the Quadrennial Comprehensive Programme Review.

19. The Executive Board was informed that in line with the Regional Architecture evaluation, the Entity was in the process of moving towards a differentiated field presence, introducing transparent criteria for UN-Women's presence, respecting national ownership and leadership and promoting South-South cooperation.

20. In concluding her opening remarks, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director emphasized the significance of strong partnership with Member States and civil society as being essential in the work of UN-Women.

21. Several Member States took the floor, thanking the President for her leadership and welcomed the United Nations Secretary-General's proposal to re-appoint the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director to a second term at the helm of UN-Women. They applauded the many positive results achieved as highlighted in her Annual Report and spoke of their own achievements and challenges at the national level.

22. The stagnant levels of political participation, enduring gender pay gaps, uneven economic participation, high levels of violence against women and girls and the targeting of women's human rights defenders, were all noted with concern.

23. One speaker concurred that the elimination of violence against women and girls was not only a stand-alone priority but also a cross-cutting issue affecting women's participation in the economy and politics, and therefore was directly related to the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

24. On the development of the draft Strategic Plan 2018-2021, several speakers commended UN-Women for the transparent and consultative process undertaken, and felt that it was on the right path. Some of them emphasized that this new Strategic Plan should build on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and be aligned with the 2030 Development Agenda, the reform-agenda of the Secretary-General, and the guidance provided through the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolution of December 2016. In addition, the new Strategic Plan should ensure that UN-Women becomes a results-based, innovative organisation that delivers on all three parts of its composite mandate, and should promote collaboration and coordination among the members of the United Nations organizations, for effective gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system. The speakers commended UN-Women for taking into consideration the lessons learned from the current Strategic Plan.

25. A Member State called for more attention to be paid to women's economic empowerment. He reckoned that providing economic assistance to women and eliminating poverty promotes overall gender equality and women's empowerment, which is essential for women in developing countries. The delegation noted that in the draft strategic plan, women's income security, decent work and economic autonomy is the third strategic priority area and further recommended that UN-Women increase its activities in eradicating women's poverty, and improving their education, employment and health in the Strategic Plan 2018-2021. This delegation supported the highest financial support to women's economic development among all strategic areas.

26. Some delegates underlined that combating gender-based violence, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation was critical for women's economic empowerment that was key to achieving gender equality. They also highlighted the importance of including women and girls with disabilities in the work of UN-Women.

27. One speaker noted with appreciation that the human rights-based approach was a guiding principle in the draft Strategic Plan, stressing that women and girls' rights were basic human rights that covered all aspects of life from health and education to political and economic participation. It was underscored that the strategic direction that guides implementation must ensure that UN-Women focuses its efforts where

they were needed the most. In this respect, the delegation appreciated that the demand-driven approach mentioned in previous drafts of the Strategic Plan had been replaced with a country level programming typology, combining national capacity, gender inequality and other factors. Further elaboration of this typology was called for to ensure an even more focused and strategic direction, while outlining the main tools to achieve the results of the Plan.

28. Another delegation felt it was necessary to adjust the draft of the new Strategic Plan to include an elaboration of an updated classification of countries. It was important in their view to provide clarity to the architecture of UN-Women since the Executive Board would need to undertake a more in-depth analysis and discuss a new methodology in more detail. This may require a separate decision that it would not be necessary to outline in the Strategic Plan itself.

29. One Member State emphasized that physical presence at the country level was fundamental to delivering cost-effective services and tangible results to women around the world. In this vein, UN-Women was urged to increase its presence in the Pacific region, where currently only one multi-country office caters to the needs of 14 Pacific Island countries with the assistance of a small team of national programme coordinators. The delegation further requested that the needs of the Small Island Developing States be included in the new Strategic Plan.

30. Another Member State acknowledged that much of UN-Women's operational work was normative and coordination at the country level. UN-Women's catalytic role and ability to act when needed were appreciated. Noting the scarcity of resources, it was essential to identify partners who can scale up interventions. The delegation shared its view that if the normative and coordinating parts of its mandate were given sufficient priority, Member States would benefit from UN-Women's unique expertise and competence in the face of great demand.

31. A speaker underscored that the principle of national ownership of programmes must be adhered to. UN-Women, in carrying out programmes in countries, was requested to respect their needs, priorities and national ownership, and strengthen communication and consultation with relevant government departments in programme countries so that UN-Women interventions truly benefit the people of these countries. This delegation appreciated the references to the "national ownership" principle in the new draft strategic plan, and recommended an even greater focus on it, as well as ensuring its implementation at country level.

32. One speaker commended the Entity's resource mobilization efforts while acknowledging that shortfalls in funding persisted. UN-Women was urged to ensure realistic budgeting and contingency planning that safeguard UN-Women's priorities. Another speaker expected UN-Women to take a lead role in coordinating the United Nations System and other relevant partners in the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda, stating that the Entity had a vital role in coordinating the accountability of the United Nations System on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, both in humanitarian and in development contexts. The Entity's efforts to enhance global norms and standards in response to the commitments of the 2030 Agenda were appreciated. The delegate also stressed that it was important for the new Strategic Plan to clearly emphasize UN-Women's normative and coordination roles.

33. Another speaker suggested more assistance should be given to developing countries, reckoning that due to restricting factors, developing countries face even larger challenges in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. UN-

Women should further focus on developing countries so they can overcome these hurdles. Support should be given to strengthening capacity building in developing countries, in particular by giving technical assistance to gender data collection and analysis, and assisting women in innovation. The flagship projects should be results-oriented and achieve real impacts.

34. Several delegations presented a joint statement also delivered at the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund, on the strategic plans. They appreciated the draft common chapter and informal discussions so far and also viewed them as steps in the right direction. Recalling statements made at the first regular session, they urged the four entities to include more information on the innovative and collaborative ways of working together, reflecting the new context of the 2030 Agenda in accordance with each entity's mandate and taking into consideration different agency and country realities and priorities. They requested the articulation of this approach with detailed and practical actions on areas of collaborative advantage both in the common chapter as well as in the individual strategic plans, partnerships, budgets and integrated resource and result frameworks.

35. New ways of working together should be supported by harmonized approaches to results reporting, including common results statements and indicators, as well as practical implementation modalities to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness, both collectively and individually in their work. The delegations also looked forward to revised plans and frameworks that better reflect increased coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness in the programmatic and operational work of the entities.

### **III. Evaluation**

#### **A. UN-Women Evaluation Function**

36. The Director of the Independent Evaluation Office presented the Report of the UN-Women Evaluation Function (UNW/2017/4). The report provided information on the performance of the evaluation function at corporate and decentralized levels, as well as the contribution of UN-Women to the United Nations system-wide coordination, and national capacity development for gender-responsive evaluation.

37. Over the course of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, significant progress was made in all key evaluation performance indicators. However, progress varied among regions and certain key performance indicators required continuous follow-up. UN-Women's evaluations have proven valuable to reinforce ongoing work and to inform changes in UN-Women approaches and business processes, as it transitions into its next Strategic Plan. The Entity's continuous investment in influencing and advocating for integration of gender equality perspectives both within the UN System and beyond was yielding positive results.

38. The evaluation policy governed the evaluation function and established a framework for evaluation that provided credible evidence with respect to the performance of UN-Women, as it endeavoured to fulfil its mandate. To further enhance the independence and credibility of the evaluation function, the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee (GEAC) provided independent advice on the overall performance of the evaluation function. The GEAC found that UN-Women had advanced to a high level of performance, with systems and staff capable of sustaining

this high standard over time. The efforts made by the UN-Women management to act on evaluation findings and recommendations were also acknowledged.

Nine out of the nine key performance indicators were achieved or on track. They were outlined as follows:

- (a) Financial resources  
Estimated investment on evaluation in 2016 amounted to US\$7.3 million, which represented 2.9 per cent of the total UN-Women 'programme expenditure'. Spending on decentralized evaluation in 2016 increased from the previous year. Altogether, the decentralized evaluation function accounted for 51 per cent of the total spending on evaluation.
- (b) Human resources  
At the field level, 100 per cent of field offices appointed either a Monitoring and Evaluation officer or focal points, the latter being staff who performed these functions in addition to their main designated function.
- (c) Coverage and types of evaluations  
2016 saw an upward trend in coverage of evaluations. 84 per cent of offices conducted a least one evaluation during the period of 2011-2016, which represented a 13 per cent increase as compared to 2015.
- (d) Implementation rate of planned evaluations  
Overall implementation of planned evaluation in 2016 showed steady improvement over the previous year.
- (e) Quality of evaluation reports  
The average quality of evaluations rose yearly with the proportion of reports rated 'good' and 'very good' increasing from 72 per cent in 2014 to 83 per cent in 2016. There were no reports that were unsatisfactory.
- (f) Submission rate of completed evaluation reports to the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system  
Continuing trend since 2013, 100 per cent of completed evaluations were posted in the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system.
- (g) Management response submission to the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system  
Of 36 evaluations completed in 2016, 34 (94 per cent) had a management response as required by the evaluation policy. All regions have almost achieved full compliance.

39. By the end of 2016, the implementation rate for corporate evaluations in 2016-2017 was 100 per cent. Out of the six planned evaluative studies, four were 'completed' and two were 'on track'. Corporate evaluations have proven to be valuable in strengthening UN-Women performance and to have informed changes in approaches and business processes, as the Entity transitioned into its next Strategic Plan. The Independent Evaluation Office ensured timeliness and quality of corporate evaluations, and reported that in 2015/6, 100 per cent of planned corporate evaluations were being implemented – four completed and two on track.

40. The Assistant Secretary-General, Deputy Executive Director, Programmes and Policy, outlined the management perspective to the 2016 Annual Report on the Evaluation Function in UN-Women. He expressed the management's full endorsement of the Annual Report on the Evaluation Function, as well as its

commitment to the evaluation function as a foundation for improved effectiveness. He thanked the Independent Evaluation Office for its support, especially in capacity building of staff, stating that their feedback was overwhelmingly positive. General reflections included the following points:

- (a) UN-Women management endeavoured to draw on evaluation findings to inform programmatic and strategic decisions, which is key to UN-Women's goal to be a knowledge hub.
- (b) Evaluation was considered a lever through which UN-Women's experience with respect to its coordination, normative and operational aspects of its mandate, can inform the work of its United Nations partners.
- (c) Efforts to strengthen its Results Based Management systems contributed towards enhancing the evaluability of UN-Women's work.

41. He outlined the status of the 2016 key performance indicators and highlighted positive trends in 2016, noting for example progress made in the quality of evaluation reports: 100 per cent rated as 'satisfactory and above', out of which 83 per cent (30 evaluations out of 36), were assessed as 'good' or 'very good.' It was also underscored that 94 per cent of committed actions in management responses for 2015 completed evaluations were implemented.

42. Touching on opportunities for improvement in evaluation coverage and implementation rates, he noted that initiatives were underway to strengthen oversight function; build capacity; and increase investments in systems.

## **B. UN-Women's strategic partnerships for gender equality and the empowerment of women**

43. The Deputy Director of the Independent Evaluation Office presented the Corporate Evaluation of the UN-Women's strategic partnerships for gender equality and the empowerment of women. This evaluation was mandated by the UN-Women Corporate Evaluation Plan 2014-2017. Its objectives were to assess the relevance, effectiveness and organizational efficiency of UN-Women's approaches to strategic partnerships, and determine whether the human rights approach and gender equality principles were integrated adequately. The evaluation also aimed to identify and validate lessons learned, good practice and innovations supported by the Entity.

44. UN-Women identified a vast constituency affected by and contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment which included: women's groups and civil society, governments, national mechanisms for women's affairs, parliaments, regional organizations, businesses and foundations, national committees, goodwill ambassadors, citizens (key influencers/multipliers), and media, among others.

45. The recommendations provided were as follows:

- (a) Establishing a sufficiently resourced, integrated, and commonly agreed framework for strategic partnerships needs to be a central part of UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021.
- (b) Within the proposed framework for strategic partnerships, clarity must be established regarding rules and responsibilities within the current UN-Women structures that would best support strategic partnerships; and the corresponding importance of leadership capacities, skills and knowledge for partnership working must be explicitly recognized.



- (c) Undertake a systematic process of integrating strategic partnership considerations in the day-to-day workflow and tools used by leaders, managers and staff at all levels.
- (d) Further leverage UN-Women's experience in using strategic partnerships to convene and mediate between different world views by shaping multi-stakeholder spaces/platforms for dialogue and innovation; this required changes in incentive structures from both donors and within UN-Women systems.
- (e) Extend UN-Women's global approach to movement-building to country-level work with Civil Society Organizations to address the core capacity of women's organizations to work with governments in the national implementation of international commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women, especially Agenda 2030.
- (f) Address the dual relationship with private enterprises and public companies as both funders and a target of advocacy by establishing clearer coordination between the policy, programme and private sector teams to ensure an integrated approach to managing strategic partnerships and gradually diversifying relationships beyond corporations to individual donors and foundations.
- (g) Identify and address barriers to country-level United Nations coordination of relationships with strategic partners that work with multiple United Nations entities.
- (h) Establish a model for a strategic partnership between UN-Women and the various agencies within a member state that supports coordination between the role of that state in intergovernmental processes, regional mechanisms, global and local donor community and the global economy.

46. The Director of the United Nations Coordination Division presented the related management response. UN-Women welcomed the overall positive findings and conclusions of the evaluation that acknowledged UN-Women's success in forging multi-stakeholder partnerships across UN-Women's broad and diverse normative, operational and coordination mandate and areas of work.

47. The recommendations were noted with appreciation, and seen as relevant and appropriate, in addition to being in line with initiatives already completed or underway at the time of development of this management response. The evaluation was viewed as a valuable point of reference on priority areas to strengthen the Entity's work in partnerships, specifically in relation to relevance; effectiveness; organizational efficiency; approaches to gender equality and human rights; partnership with civil society; the private sector; as well as through United Nations Coordination.

48. Several delegations thanked the outgoing Director of Evaluation for his work and dedication and congratulated him on his new appointment. Given that 90 per cent of UN-Women evaluations are managed by the field, Member States were pleased with the efforts of the Independent Evaluation Office to intensify its collaboration with the field offices.

49. They recognized the steps taken by the UN-Women's Independent Evaluation Office to further strengthen the evaluation function within UN-Women, the United Nations System and beyond, including the first-time addition of a stand-alone norm on human rights and gender equality within the United Nations' evaluation norms and standards. They also acknowledged the contribution of UN-Women to the

development and release of a new guidance document entitled: “Evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals with a ‘No one left behind’ lens through equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluation”.

50. While pleased to see the improvements across the nine performance indicators of the global evaluation oversight system by UN-Women, including the increase in coverage, the implementation of planned evaluations, the quality of evaluations and submissions of management responses, they urged UN-Women to remain diligent in its efforts to address variance across regions in completing planned evaluations, to increase geographic and thematic coverage, the implementation of planned evaluations and timely preparation of management responses. This included issues related to the buy-in, the commitment of country representatives to evaluation, and other challenges that have resulted in no evaluations being conducted in nine country offices since the creation of UN-Women. The delegations requested that UN-Women reduce this number by at least half.

51. Further information was requested on how UN-Women would participate in the United Nations country teams’ common efforts to strengthen national evaluation capacity; and on how the evaluations were assessed and would be utilized.

52. Delegations were pleased to note that 100 per cent of country offices were equipped with a monitoring and evaluation officer or focal point, which demonstrated increasing commitment to results measurement. They urged UN-Women to ensure that these officers have strong skills and qualifications in field of evaluation, given the differences that exist between monitoring and evaluation.

53. Regarding the frequent changes in monitoring and evaluation focal points noted in the report, the delegations inquired about the steps being taken by management to address this challenge.

54. UN-Women was commended on the extensive activities undertaken, including United Nations system-wide coordination of gender responsive evaluation and the UN-SWAP, supporting national gender-responsive evaluation capacities. It was noted with concern, however, that 28 per cent of the entities did not follow the United Nations Evaluation Group endorsed process for scoring evaluation reports against the UN-SWAP criteria. More information on how this issue would be addressed was requested.

55. UN-Women was urged to prioritize the allocation of internal capacities to this function so that the Entity could continue this important work. Efforts to advance collaboration and joint evaluation work with other United Nations entities were also encouraged, especially with the United Nations Funds and Programmes.

56. With respect to the Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women’s strategic partnerships for gender equality and the empowerment of women, Member States were pleased with the overall conclusions noting for example, the significant added value of strategic partnerships in extending the Entity’s reach, influence and access to constituencies; that partnership objectives were aligned with gender equality and human rights principles; UN-Women effectively engaged with United Nations entities; as well as the value placed on partnerships with Civil Society Organizations among others.

57. They welcomed efforts made to engage new partners, particularly in current and increasingly difficult financial times and underscored the need for UN-Women to be more strategic in its efforts as noted in the report’s recommendations. They called on the Entity to clarify internal roles and responsibilities and ensure that staff were

equipped with adequate tools. It was mentioned that the level of detail of its response demonstrated that the evaluation was well considered by management.

58. Regarding the nine countries yet to undergo an evaluation since the creation of UN-Women, the Director of the Independent Evaluation Office clarified that more than half were already planned for this year and the others were completed. One country had so far been unable to undergo an evaluation due to an ongoing security situation.

59. In addition, he explained that Monitoring and Evaluation officers and focal points were members of Monitoring and Evaluation task forces where they exist, which also served to support capacity development in the field.

#### **IV. Audit**

60. The Director of the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI), United Nations Development Programme, presented the 2016 annual report of UN-Women (UNW/2017/3). This was the 6th year of the Internal Audit and Investigations Function of UN-Women entrusted to OAI, under a Biennial Service Level Agreement between UN-Women and OAI, in place until 17 December 2017.

61. All planned audits for 2016 were completed, except the resource mobilization audit, due to a UN-Women Senior Management request to postpone to 2017. In consultation with UN-Women Senior Management, the headquarters risk assessment was also postponed to 2017, to allow for completion of the Internal Review of UN-Women Regional Architecture.

62. The UN-Women management benchmark was a 90 per cent implementation rate. The OAI independently assessed and validated actions and reported on the implementation status. As of 31 December 2016, the rate of implementation was 98 per cent. The implementation rate as of 31 December 2015 was 99 per cent. As of 31 December 2016, eight recommendations had been outstanding for more than 18 months, three of which were of high priority. As of 15 June 2017, three recommendations had been outstanding for more than 18 months, one of which was of high priority.

63. In the OAI's opinion, based on the scope of work undertaken, the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and control in the audits issued in 2016 were in aggregate partially satisfactory, which means that they were generally established and functioning well but needed improvement. The opinion was based on an audit coverage of 15.4 per cent of the 2016 expenditures of UN-Women. 27 per cent of all audit recommendations were corporate in nature, relating to policy guidance and corporate support.

64. UN-Women's management response was presented by the UN-Women Director, Management and Operations. He outlined concrete measures taken to address the audit recommendations, underscoring the commitment of management to ensuring that all recommendations issued from any unsatisfactory audit report would be implemented and ready for assessment from the auditors during their follow-up audit. This is consistent with the result of the sole follow-up audit reported in 2016 where all the recommendations were assessed as implemented. Of the four outstanding recommendations, only two were assigned with high priority. These two high priority recommendations involved the creation or revision of policies requiring careful study to be aligned with UN-Women's maturing scalable operations and to be well suited for the effective exercise of mandate.

65. The OAI's system for computing the audit recommendation implementation rate posted for two field office audits, reports rates of 106 per cent and 108 per cent respectively. Due to the accelerated implementation of recommendations, individual rates of more than 100 per cent were received. In addition, UN-Women noted the OAI's reported audit coverage of 13.5% of the 2015 expenditures of UN-Women. UN-Women, however, highlighted that this oversight/audit coverage did not include the simultaneous oversight coverage UN-Women independently received from the United Nations Board of Audit, the UN-Women Global Auditors for the audit of UN-Women projects implemented by partners (such as non-governmental organizations, government agencies and non-UN intergovernmental organizations) and the Independent Evaluation Office.

66. The Chair of the Audit Advisory Committee (AAC) presented its report for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2016 (UNW/2017/2 Add. 1) and shared findings in the following areas: regional architecture and organization challenges; programming activities; funding framework and resource mobilization; enterprise risk management; evaluation function; internal audit; investigations; ethics; financial statements; information and communication technology; and the relationship with the United Nations Development Programme.

67. The AAC in its final considerations expressed support for the continued strengthening of governance, risk management, internal controls and accountability at UN-Women. However, the Committee continued to be concerned that the current funding situation of UN-Women may affect its ability to adequately resource key accountability functions and activities such as internal audit (including increasing internal audit coverage), enterprise risk management, and monitoring and oversight, which include functions in the Second Line of Defence in Headquarters and the field. The Committee supported the continued collaboration of UN-Women with partners within and outside the United Nations in achieving its strategic objectives in advancing gender equality, promoting the empowerment of women and girls and ending violence against women.

68. In responding to the AAC report in each of the afore-mentioned areas, the UN-Women management expressed appreciation to the members of the Committee for their dedication to the mandate of the Entity.

69. With respect to the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) reports and management letters for the year ending 31 December 2016, it was recommended that: "The Executive Director of UN-Women should set up a system of reporting to the Executive Board on JIU reports and recommendations, in line with relevant provisions of the JIU statute, by the next annual session of the Board in June 2017." UN-Women management took action accordingly and reported on actions taken in response to JIU recommendations to the Executive Board. Complete responses can be accessed through the JIU Follow Up System at <https://fus.unjiu.org>

70. Delegations thanked the respective offices for their reports and all related management responses. They noted with appreciation, confirmation of the independence of the Audit and Investigations function and welcomed the inclusion of the overall opinion, in the audit functions report, on the adequacy and effectiveness of UN-Women's framework of governance, risk management and control. They stressed that the Audit function should continue to build on this in future years and offer further analysis of the key organizational level issues and risks, how well management is responding and how these issues informed the overall audit opinion. It was noted with concern, however, that reportedly management did not respond substantively to concerns related to the adequacy of resourcing and resulting audit

coverage raised by the Audit function and the Audit Advisory Committee. They urged UN-Women to follow up on the Committee's advice as a matter of priority.

71. The delegations appreciated UN-Women's plan to internalize the audit function as of January 2018, and requested further analysis and information on the options that have been considered, related benefits and costs and any associated risks. While efforts were made by UN-Women to urgently address many of the audit recommendations in general, Member States requested more detail on plans for addressing them, including milestones and targets for implementing changes and improvements.

## V. Draft Integrated Budget Estimates 2018-2019

72. The Director, Management and Administration made a preliminary presentation to the Executive Board (prior to its formal submission at its 2017 second regular session), on the draft integrated budget estimates for the Entity for the biennium 2018-2019.

73. The integrated budget is the financial plan that allows the Entity to have the financial and institutional capacity to achieve the results set out in its proposed Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and covers all cost categories and funding sources (both regular and other resources) within a single, consolidated proposal. The two-year integrated budget is aligned with the four-year strategic plan and complements funding from assessed contributions under the Regular Budget of the United Nations.

74. The realistically ambitious projections for 2018-2019 aimed at moving the Entity closer to the critical mass needed for it to fulfil its universal mandate; to provide policy-based advocacy and technical support in programme countries; to be fully engaged in intergovernmental, inter-agency coordination and multi-stakeholder processes; and to be prepared to respond to the challenges defined by the post-2015 development agenda.

75. The integrated budget set out the resources needed to achieve the results laid out in the integrated results framework of UN-Women for the first two years of the proposed Strategic Plan for 2018-2021. The projections were for a biennial integrated budget of US\$880 million in voluntary contributions, with US\$203.9 million (gross) requested as an institutional budget appropriation, representing an increase of US\$7.5 million, or 3.8 per cent, in relation to the 2016-2017 budget.

76. The United Nations General Assembly would continue to consider the resources from the regular budget required to service the normative intergovernmental processes, policy and coordination work in the context of its consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019, totalling \$16.3 million for UN-Women, and received as assessed contributions.

77. The Chief of Accounts presented an update on the cost recovery. She recalled that the Executive Boards jointly requested the following of the United Nations Funds and Programmes:

- (a) Consideration of the need for an update of the roadmap to an integrated budget: cost classification and results-based budgeting (DP-FPA/2010/1-E/ICEF/2010/AB/L.10);
- (b) Revision or confirmation of the list of critical cross cutting functions (that can be deducted from the cost recovery amounts); and a revision of the exceptions to the 8% 'normal' rate;

- (c) Development of different options for cost recovery; and
- (d) An assessment of the adequacy of cost recovery rates and proposed future options (or updates) for these rates.

78. At the latest informal consultation of the Executive Boards on Cost Recovery on 26 April 2017, the Funds and Programmes and UN-Women presented several options for the cost recovery methodology, specifically proposing several options on what regular resources (the core) should cover. The options presented different scenarios on what functions should be protected from cost recovery, and thus paid from the core, and the resulting cost recovery rates under each scenario. The draft Integrated Budget 2018-2019 adhered to the harmonized approved cost recovery methodology. In response to clarification requests, the functions that the core covers under the current methodology as well as of critical cost cutting functions were also outlined.

## **VI. Special briefing: Operational response of UN-Women at the country level**

79. The UN-Women Regional Representative for East and Southern Africa made a presentation – that included a video on women’s political participation – on the work of UN-Women in Somalia. She provided the context and elaborated on the key directions of UN-Women’s country level operational response – the ways it attempts to make maximum impact by adopting strategic areas of engagement; provided examples of results to which UN-Women contributes; and highlighted new approaches employed with success.

80. The Regional Director outlined the operational challenges in the country, highlighting significant costs related to security. She spoke of UN-Women’s comparative advantage in overall coordination of gender issues, in leading advocacy at the political level, and in providing technical advice to the United Nations, the federal government and civil society. Together with the opportunities presented by the positive results of the 2016 elections in terms of significant increase of women’s representation in the new parliament, and by the adoption of the National Development Plan, which would guide the engagement of all development partners in the next three years, these advances provide UN-Women Somalia with excellent opportunities to further women’s empowerment in the country.

81. Member States appreciated the presentation and commended UN-Women for its work especially under difficult circumstances. UN-Women was urged to continue its work, to lay the groundwork for transition to peace and was also encouraged to enhance engagement with civil society organizations.

## **VII. Closing**

82. The Executive Director/Under-Secretary-General thanked the President for her guidance, the Bureau and Members of the Executive Board, as well as the Secretary and Executive Board secretariat for their hard work as demonstrated by the efficient deliberations of this session. She expressed her appreciation for the support and encouragement of Member States on the United Nations Secretary-General’s recommendation for renewal of her term as Executive Director of UN-Women.

83. On the Strategic Plan draft, she informed that UN-Women had started integrating comments received from delegations and planned to further revise the text in

accordance with their interventions. She noted Member States' call for clarity of impact and output, and need to explicitly outline the value that UN-Women brings, working together with other United Nations entities. She thanked the delegations that appreciated the consultative process leading to the draft of the next Strategic Plan, including the transparency of the process and the inclusive way in which the Entity worked. She appreciated the amount of time that the Member States dedicated to this exercise, which reflected the commitment of the Bureau and the leadership of Executive Board.

84. The Head of the Entity thanked the Members who underscored the importance of resources, the many who affirmed the Entity's composite mandate and the need to ensure balance in the manner in which work is implemented within this mandate. She noted with appreciation the Member States who highlighted their increased contributions to UN-Women, such as Japan and Iceland as well as the continued financial support for UN-Women from Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, and Sweden. She mentioned that UN-Women was the United Nations entity receiving the most support from the United Arab Emirates and that an increasing number of Member States were moving towards multi-year funding, providing the Entity with better certainty. She stated that similarly to Member States, UN-Women looked forward to the Secretary-General's reform process, and the opportunities that this will bring to enable the Entity to be flexible and responsible, and dedicated to the principle of leaving no one behind.

85. The President thanked the UN-Women Executive Director for her leadership and expressed her gratitude to the Executive Board, the Bureau, the entire UN-Women management team, the Executive Board secretariat, as well as her own team, for their work in ensuring a productive and successful Annual Session of the Executive Board. The meeting was then adjourned.

## Annex I

### Decisions adopted at the annual session of 2017

#### 2017/2

#### Annual Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017

##### *The Executive Board:*

1. *Takes note* of the annual report of the Under-Secretary General/Executive Director on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the Strategic Plan, and commends UN-Women on its strong performance to date;
2. *Takes note* of the efforts undertaken by UN-Women to implement the strategic initiatives contained in the midterm review of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017;
3. *Commends* UN-Women on effectively leveraging its mandate as a composite entity in assisting Member States, upon their request, and in ensuring coherence, consistency and coordination between the normative and operational aspects of its work; and reaffirms the important role of UN-Women in leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and women's empowerment and on gender mainstreaming across the United Nations System;
4. *Recognizes* the interagency efforts made to harmonize the report methodology and format, and requests UN-Women to continue consultations with United Nations funds and programmes for further alignment of reporting where applicable, bearing in mind UN-Women's mandate as a composite entity;
5. *Urges* UN-Women to continue to align, as appropriate, its results frameworks with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, and to coordinate with United Nations funds and programmes, to help measure performance in supporting gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
6. *Recalls* decision 2016/1 in which the Executive Board requested UN-Women to improve its programmatic focus and strengthen its programme delivery and normative-operational linkages through multi-stakeholder partnerships, in particular within the Flagship Programming Initiatives and through synergies with the Fund for Gender Equality and the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women;
7. *Takes note* with appreciation of UN-Women's efforts to work collaboratively and strengthen inter-agency cooperation and division of labour in line with the principles of the QCPR, and requests UN-Women to present its contributions in this regard in the Strategic Plan 2018-2021; further requests UN-Women to include in its annual report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, information on how the individual flagship programme initiatives contribute to the five outcome areas, identify their cooperating partners and indicate the role and contribution of these partners;
8. *Recognizes* the importance of strengthening the capacity of UN-Women, including through adequate and sustainable funding, noting the ongoing funding gap



in regular resources and encourages countries in a position to do so, to increase their voluntary contributions, especially to regular resources, to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017;

9. *Requests* UN-Women to take into account lessons learned from the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, including tracking of the progress made towards the achievement of expected results, findings and recommendations of corporate and country-level evaluations and audits, in the development of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021;

10. *Emphasizes* the need for UN-Women to continue to improve transparency in the use of resources to achieve programme results and to enhance organizational effectiveness and efficiency and requests UN-Women to present in its future financial planning and reports a higher level of detail on the way regular (core) resources are attributed and used, inter alia with regard to staff costs, programming arrangements, programmatic budget lines, oversight functions, development effectiveness and the special purpose activities budget line;

11. *Recalls* decision 2013/2 in which the Executive Board requested UN-Women to recommend adjustments to the approved cost recovery rates, as required, to be presented at the 2016 annual session of the Executive Board, notes that this process has been delayed and requests UN-Women, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, to continue the consultations with Member States with regard to the cost recovery policy and to present evidence-based proposals for harmonized cost recovery policies of UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Women and UNICEF, with adjustments if required, for consideration by the respective Executive Boards no later than their annual sessions in 2018;

12. Encourages UN-Women contributors to adhere to the aspects of the cost recovery policy approved by the Executive Board in decision 2013/2;

13. *Recalls* that in line with UN-Women's founding resolution A/RES/64/289\*, the annual report on operational activities of UN-Women is to be transmitted to the Economic and Social Council for consideration during its operational activities segment.

### **2017/3**

#### **Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2016**

##### ***The Executive Board:***

1. *Takes note* of the Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2016 and the programme of work and budget for 2017 of the Independent Evaluation Office;

2. *Welcomes* the efforts made by UN-Women and the progress achieved in systematic strengthening of the evaluation function, in leading system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts, and in fostering innovative partnerships for national evaluation capacity development;

3. *Emphasizes* that, in line with the UN-Women evaluation policy guiding principles, evaluations should be country-driven, impartial and independent, and that programme countries' ownership and leadership be ensured in the evaluation of all forms of assistance, and requests UN-Women, in cooperation with other United

Nations system organizations, to continue its efforts to facilitate the building of national evaluation capacities, where applicable;

4. *Reiterates* its request to UN-Women contained in decision 2016/3 to enhance the coverage of evaluations, the implementation rate of planned evaluations, financial resources invested in the evaluation function and the submission of management responses to Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation system and use evaluation recommendations in its work;
5. *Requests* UN-Women to continue the gender-responsive evaluations of country programmes in order to improve programming at country level;
6. *Recognizes* the importance of the evaluation function of UN-Women in providing high-quality, independent and impartial evaluations, and requests UN-Women to take into account the findings of its evaluations in the development of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021;
7. *Requests* UN-Women, in particular the Independent Evaluation Office, to continue leading United Nations system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts and innovative partnerships for national evaluation capacity development;
8. *Requests* UN-Women to further advance collaboration and joint evaluation work with other United Nations entities, especially United Nations funds and programmes;
9. *Encourages* UN-Women, in particular the Independent Evaluation Office, to continue its efforts to strengthen the quality and process of corporate and decentralized evaluations, while respecting the independence of the Independent Evaluation Office of UN-Women, and to use the evaluations as learning and knowledge management tools to enhance future programmes;
10. *Takes note* of UN-Women's work in evaluating its performance in strategic partnership building for gender equality and the empowerment of women and encourages UN-Women to take into account lessons learned in the development of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

## **2017/4**

### **Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2016**

#### ***The Executive Board:***

1. *Takes note* of the Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2016;
2. *Takes note* of the inclusion, as requested by Executive Board decision 2016/3, of a list of investigated cases, including information on the cases and UN-Women follow up, and requests UN-Women to continue this practice in its annual reporting on the internal audit and investigation activities;
3. *Notes* that the effectiveness of UN-Women's governance, risk management and controls function well, and the implementation rate of audit recommendations is high, while expressing its concern that there are areas which need improvement. Takes note with appreciation of the efforts made by UN-Women to address the existing problems and requests UN-Women to rectify the identified areas for improvement;
4. *Expresses* its continuing support for the internal audit and investigations functions of UN-Women;

5. *Requests* UN-Women to present options for the most appropriate model to deliver sufficiently resourced internal auditing, through outsourcing or in-house, including a comprehensive work plan and budget proposal that sets out the resources required to manage the realization of a full transition to internal audit capacity with increasing audit coverage, the resources needed to establish and sustain the management and administrative infrastructure of the function, and in addition, a determination of the level of audit assurance required, at least four weeks before the second regular session of the Executive Board in 2017;
6. *Recalls* decision 2016/3 in which the Executive Board noted several areas of recurring weakness, including the high number of audit recommendations that were corporate in nature, appreciates the efforts of UN-Women to address these; urges UN-Women to continue and intensify efforts in this regard, and provide information on the impact of measures taken;
7. *Takes note* of the Report of the Audit Advisory Committee for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2016;
8. *Encourages* UN-Women to consider the Audit Advisory Committee's recommendations.