

UN-Women Executive Board

First regular session 2021

Background note on the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations Development System

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1. Introduction

This update is provided to the UN-Women Executive Board by the Entity, regarding its engagement in the repositioning of the United Nations Development System (UNDS), supplementing earlier information notes presented to previous Executive Board sessions in 2018, 2019 and 2020. This background note details how UN-Women has continued to support and implement UNDS repositioning processes, as well as the focus of the Entity’s efforts to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls figure centrally in a repositioned UNDS.

Marked by the start of the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with gender equality identified as one of the critical cross-cutting priorities, 2020 witnessed the COVID-19 pandemic challenge this ambition, posing a global humanitarian and development crisis with severe impacts on the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. UN-Women’s objective in this context has been to ensure that the hard-won gains of women’s empowerment and gender equality over the last decades are maintained and that responses to the pandemic address gender inequalities, including by leveraging UNDS repositioning processes to do so. These efforts represent a key component of UN-Women’s contributions to system-wide results on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in 2020.

In 2021, UN-Women looks forward to implementing and consolidating its advancements on the remaining mandates of UNDS repositioning, the regional review and multi-country offices (MCOs), while contributing to system-wide evaluation. In particular, the 2021 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations system (QCPR),¹ adopted by the General Assembly on 8 December 2020, provides a strong mandate and a comprehensive road map for the United Nations system to implement reforms. The QCPR will also help to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are at the heart of these processes, and of UNDS efforts to support countries in their recovery from COVID-19.

UN-Women is committed to continuing to play an active and central role in harmonizing the UNDS horizontal governance structure by regularly and constructively engaging with its sister agencies – the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) – and their Executive Boards to ensure a more effective operational response at the regional and country levels.

2. Supporting the new resident coordinator system

Management and Accountability Framework

UN-Women has continued to support the implementation of the country-level Management and Accountability Framework, the new resident coordinator (RC) system and the agreed funding arrangements for this system, including through the 1 per cent levy.

UN-Women is committed to having RCs and UN-Women’s management jointly assess the performance of UN-Women country representatives. In 2020, UN-Women senior leadership sent out joint letters to RCs and UN-Women country representatives with the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO), requesting that country representatives reach out to RCs to discuss the United Nations country team (UNCT) specific performance goal included in their Performance Management and Development Plan (PMD) for 2020, and to ensure RCs provide their inputs on this goal. UN-Women also developed standard key performance goal indicators for PMD performance goal indicators for UNCT activities, ensuring these are aligned with Management and Accountability Framework requirements.

UN-Women is an active member of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) Task Force on RC Talent Management** and has provided inputs to the revision of the RC leadership profile, the RC selection process and the review of the Resident Coordinator Assessment Centre (RCAC) nomination process. UN-Women continues to be actively engaged with UNDCO in creating a talent pipeline for RC positions; the Entity has nominated candidates

each year for the RCAC assessment and has put forward candidates for consideration for RC positions.

UN-Women participates in the **UNSDG RC/UNCT Performance Management Task Force** and has contributed to the development of a harmonized approach to ensure RCs inputs into the performance of the different UNCT agencies' representatives; development of a peer feedback tool for UNCT members on RC performance, based on the RC leadership profile; and design of the permanent RC/UNCT Performance Management System. Through its participation in the **UNSDG Leadership Development Task Force**, UN-Women has contributed to the design of a leadership development strategy and implementation plan for RCs and RC Talent Pool members, and the ongoing development of a suite of learning processes and products to support the RC talent pipeline, including a new RC Handbook that will include content on the specific leadership needs of women. In all these processes, UN-Women strived to ensure that gender perspectives were strongly reflected in RC recruitment, promotion and performance appraisal.

Levy implementation, cost-sharing

UN-Women remains committed to funding the RC system. The Entity commenced collection of the 1 per cent coordination levy from donors on tightly earmarked contributions in the second quarter of 2019, remitting a total of \$306,113 to UNDCO in 2019. In 2020, UN-Women's annual contribution is expected to increase in excess of \$500,000.

UN-Women has actively participated in discussions regarding the new cost-sharing formula, supporting the review of the cost-sharing agreement. UN-Women's contribution for 2021 is based on the doubling of the current UNSDG cost-sharing formula effective from 2018, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/279. UN-Women's contribution in 2022–2023, as for all UNSDG member entities, is being determined through a consultative process and will be based on updated, latest available data.

3. Funding and financing

Funding Compact

UN-Women continues to implement activities in support of the Funding Compact commitments, participating in the inter-agency working group on structured dialogue on financing and contributing to system-wide reporting to the Economic and Social Council as part of the Secretary-General's Annual Report on the QCPR.

In 2020, UN-Women, with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, continued to enhance the alignment of approaches to funding dialogues and the Funding Compact, exploring options to improve structured dialogues² and harmonizing reporting on Funding Compact commitments in the official report of the Structured Dialogue on Financing.³ In response to calls made by the Executive Boards

of the four New York-based operational agencies to engage with UNDCO to formulate a system-wide definition of joint activity expenditures, UN-Women, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF are working with UNDCO to establish an agreed definition of “joint activities”.

With the share of regular resources to total voluntary contributions falling from 39 per cent in 2018 to 29 per cent in 2019, UN-Women, together with funding partners, sought to reverse the downward trend and to achieve the Funding Compact threshold of 30 per cent. 2020 preliminary financial information indicates an approximate 10 per cent increase in UN-Women regular resources compared to 2019.

Funding from Joint Programmes

In line with the United Nations reform objectives, UN-Women’s 2018–2021 Strategic Plan aims for 25 per cent of UN-Women programming to be executed through Joint Programmes (JPs) by 2021. To support the achievement of this target and to strategically position the Entity to harness JPs’ potential to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment, UN-Women conducted an internal assessment of United Nations JPs. This assessment revealed strong understanding among staff of the benefits of JPs to UN-Women and the larger United Nations system, particularly with regards to the Cooperation Framework, promoting greater harmonization, reducing duplication, raising resources and improving development effectiveness to holistically address complex challenges.

The percentage share of UN-Women programming executed through joint programming increased in 2020, to an estimated 31 per cent at the end of 2020, more than doubling from 14 per cent in 2019. UN-Women is currently engaged in roughly 305 JPs or programming initiatives, with the largest number of active initiatives occurring in the Africa regions and the largest thematic area comprising Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The large number of WPS JPs in which UN-Women is involved has enabled the Entity to strengthen United Nations coordination on WPS at both the global and country levels; to build strategic partnerships; accelerate implementation of the WPS agenda in various thematic and sectoral areas; and to mobilize further funding for the WPS agenda.

Reporting on financial data

UN-Women has continued to engage in the development of the financial data cube through UNSDG. UN-Women provided 2019 financial statement data to the Chief Executive Board (CEB) in accordance with the financial data cube and provided additional analysis of 2019 financial statement to the CEB to give increased disaggregation and transparency on single-agency thematic funds, increasing the visibility of contributors. UN-Women has commenced the development and roll-out of a new Enterprise Resource Planning system, which is anticipated to be implemented by

1 January 2022, and will ensure that, where possible, all reporting on financial data will be compatible with the financial data cube.

Financing for gender equality

UN-Women has continued to support collaborative efforts of the United Nations system to drive sustainable financing for gender equality, spearheading the development of an implementation plan for the recommendations put forward by the High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality. Important strides have been made in advance of this implementation plan, including to implement an automated gender equality marker system at the entity and country team levels and in all pooled funding mechanisms, such as those managed by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office and stand-alone JPs, and developing related tools and guidance.

UN-Women has played a key role in advising on the integration of gender equality markers in the United Nations Secretariat through the recently developed Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting module in Umoja, and has continued to support the application of gender equality markers at the entity and country levels. In 2020, 28 United Nations entities (47 per cent) reported implementation of gender equality markers through the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP). Implementation of the UNCT gender equality marker has also increased⁴ and to respond to demand, UN-Women initiated an internal Gender Equality Marker Focal Point Network in October 2020, comprising over 50 UN-Women country office staff, which the Entity will build upon in 2021 to enhance availability of support for UNCTs.

UN-Women has continued to advocate for the establishment of gender equality criteria and financial targets in multi-partner trust funds. As a result of UN-Women's engagement, the second interim call of the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund aimed to ensure that 30 per cent of funding would be allocated to proposals with gender equality as their principal objective – this financial target was surpassed, with 65 per cent of funding allocated to gender equality proposals.⁵ The UN-Women Independent Evaluation Service is part of the Advisory Group on the Early Lessons and Evaluability of the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

UN-Women continues to provide technical assistance to the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), one of its key partners in peacebuilding, to establish and achieve funding targets for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The current PBF Strategic Plan identifies a 30 per cent target for funding proposals with gender equality and empowerment of women as their primary objective.

UN-Women has strengthened its **engagement with International Financing Institutes**, advocating strongly for a gender lens in COVID-19 economic recovery plans, deepening its partnership with Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to align messages and programming.

In 2020, UN-Women hosted a series of high-level ministerial roundtables, such as an executive level round table with the World Bank Group (WBG) and key global donors in April; regional roundtables with the Inter-American Development Bank in July and the Asian Development Bank in September; and with Denmark, representing Nordic countries, in December. These high-level roundtables, attended by senior executives of MDBs, finance ministers and national women's machineries, served to highlight best practices, share approaches, and build concrete partnerships to ensure that gender equality is at the heart of the COVID-19 response and related fiscal stimulus packages.

UN-Women has also held senior level strategic consultations with the WBG, identifying cooperation streams, and is planning a follow-up discussion on these with the WBG and UNCTs in 2021 to identify concrete steps for partnership on these streams. UN-Women has also identified areas of complementarity with the Asian Development Bank. In November 2020, UN-Women participated in the Finance in Common Summit, hosted by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and bringing together the 450 public development banks around the world. A chief outcome was the Paris Development Banks Statement on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment attached to the main Declaration of the 2020 Finance in Common Summit.⁶ UN-Women worked with AFD to include a gender equality segment in the Summit and to develop an annex to the final Declaration on Gender Equality.

4. Strengthening system-wide support to the SDGs and 2030 Agenda

4.1 Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed and widened deeply ingrained gender inequalities, rolling back many of the gains made in recent years as women and girls have been especially impacted by the economic and social consequences of the pandemic. UN-Women's approach has been to support governments, the United Nations system and other stakeholders to better understand and address the gender impacts of the crisis. (Annex 1).

In support of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Decade of Action, UN-Women has launched the Generation Equality initiative, as an opportunity to accelerate action to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment by 2030, as expressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This initiative includes fostering the collaboration and collective action of all United Nations entities. The Generation Equality Forum, to be held in Mexico and France in 2021, will launch six Action Coalitions and a Compact on Women, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action. The leadership groups of these platforms feature representation from 11 United Nations entities. As part of its stakeholder engagement strategy, UN-Women – in collaboration with UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDCO, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) – has held a series of briefings and engagement sessions with the United Nations Inter-Agency Network of Women and

Gender Equality (IANWGE), UNCTs and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. United Nations entities have also been represented in all of the Forum's preparatory activities, including the development of the Action Coalitions and Curated Discussions.

Also in support of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, IANWGE, led by UN-Women, undertook an inter-agency assessment of the United Nations system's contribution to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. The report, *25 Years After Beijing: A review of the UN System's Support for the Implementation of the Platform for Action, 2014–2019*,⁷ identifies areas prioritized by United Nations entities, as well as those that need greater attention, and serves as a useful tool to inform programming, advocacy and partnerships to accelerate implementation of the Platform.

UN-Women has strengthened the capacity of its regional and country offices to support Member States to reflect gender perspectives in the voluntary national review process in the context of the annual Economic and Social Council High-Level Political Forum.

To support joint efforts to monitor the 2030 Agenda, UN-Women has continued to collect data for SDG 5 indicators (5.1.1, 5.2.2, 5.4.1, 5.5.1b and 5.c.1), for which it is a co-custodian. UN-Women has continued to contribute to **SDG monitoring** by participating in inter-agency mechanisms, including the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on SDGs and the IAEG on Gender Statistics; by contributing and coordinating United Nations system inputs for 2020; and by producing a companion report, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2020*⁸ in partnership with the United Nations Statistics Division. Two further papers on gender equality and the SDGs were published, in partnership with other United Nations entities, on slums⁹ and employment¹⁰ respectively. The Counted and Visible: Global Conference on the Measurement of Gender and Intersecting Inequalities,¹¹ organized in February in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division, contributed to creating a common understanding among data users and producers on how to measure intersecting inequalities from a gender perspective in order to “leave no one behind”. It also contributed to current work on data disaggregation to better inform policies and advocacy on gender equality and women's empowerment. The Women Count Data Hub (<https://data.unwomen.org/women-count>) was mobilized as a go-to resource for SDG monitoring, data and analysis on COVID-19 (see annex 1).

UN-Women has continued to ensure that **system-wide gender mainstreaming accountability frameworks** capture and promote progress by the United Nations system on gender mainstreaming, including in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, through its function as Secretariat for the UN-SWAP and UNCT-SWAP and through provision of related technical and advisory support, including on demand global help desk support and dedicated trainings. A recent webinar on gender equality markers, hosted by UN-Women to strengthen compliance with UN-SWAP financial resource performance indicators, had 75 attendees from 42 United Nations entities.¹² A record number of over 500 UNCT staff, representing 50 UNCTs from 4 regions (Arab States, East

and Southern Africa, Europe and Central Asia, West and Central Africa) participated in e-trainings on UNCT-SWAP in 2020. At the entity level, the **UN-SWAP** framework¹³ was strengthened in 2020 to collect information on specific change in focus and direction of existing gender-related strategic and programmatic work, as well as new activities and deliverables introduced by United Nations entities in response to the COVID-19 crisis, while UNCT-SWAP benchmarks are being utilized to develop UNSDG guidance on gender mainstreaming in the UNCT response to COVID-19 (see 3.2 below).

UN-Women continues to support the implementation of the **Secretary-General's system-wide Strategy on Gender Parity**, including implementation of the Enabling Environment Guidelines in support of the Strategy, and support for inter-agency and system-wide collaboration to advance gender parity within the United Nations system, including in the field. The Entity has supported the Secretary-General's priority through leading and coordinating the system-wide Gender Focal Point Network, the membership of which has increased significantly, from 200 in 2019 to nearly 400 in 2020. The appointment of Gender Focal Points in field locations remains essential, as Focal Points are agents of change on the ground and contribute to achieving gender parity targets.

The persistently lower representation of women in the field and peace operations has been a critical challenge since the launch of the Secretary-General's Strategy in 2017. In response, UN-Women prepared field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines in 2020. UN-Women will support the United Nations system to implement the Guidelines in 2021 and facilitate their dissemination in collaboration with United Nations leadership in the field, including RCs, providing tailored support and capacity-building as needed.

4.2 UN-Women engagement in UNSDG processes and coordination bodies

UN-Women has continued to contribute to key UNDS repositioning processes through engagement in the UNSDG and its coordination bodies and mechanisms at the global, regional and country levels, with the specific aim of ensuring that gender equality is at the heart of UNSDG work.

UN-Women engagement in UNSDG processes at the global level

UN-Women is a member of all 11 UNSDG Task Teams and is Co-Chair of the Gender Equality Task Team established in September 2020, of all five working groups that sit under this Task Team, and the Task Team on Transitions and Recovery. Through its participation, UN-Women has sought to ensure that gender equality considerations are systematically addressed in the work and deliverables of all Task Teams, coordinating internally to ensure cross-fertilization and to ensure linkages across the work of different Task Teams, from policy and programmatic work to business operations.

Co-chaired by UN-Women and UNFPA Deputy Executive Directors, and with the participation of 17 United Nations entities, the **UNSDG Task Team on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women** aims to activate pooled funding mechanisms for gender equality and the empowerment of women; to ensure gender equality considerations are addressed in UNCT strategic documents; to strengthen gender equality coordination mechanisms at the country and regional levels; and to coordinate the identification of the new QCPR monitoring framework indicators related to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The Task Team's key deliverables are underpinned by a demand-driven and evidence-informed approach, and consultations led by the Co-Chairs with UNFPA, UN-Women and UNDCO regional offices serve as a mechanism to ensure vertical and horizontal coherence. Key results achieved in 2020 include a situation analysis of country-level United Nations gender theme groups; a gender analysis of all UNCT socioeconomic response plans to COVID-19; and ongoing analysis of multi-partner trust funds. These analytical products provide the basis for knowledge products due in early 2021: updated and revised UNSDG gender theme group guidance, a UNSDG brief on gender mainstreaming in the UNCT response to COVID-19, and guidance on the UNSDG funding framework.

The **UNSDG Task Team on Transitions and Recovery** is also co-chaired by UN-Women, together with the Assistant Secretaries-General of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs/Peacebuilding Support Office and UNDP. Its objective is to coordinate and support UNSDG member efforts to advance the implementation of sustainable development efforts and to sustain peace in countries affected by fragility, violence and conflict. It is the only Task Team that brings together the work of UNDS on development, humanitarian, and peace and security pillars. UN-Women is coordinating with members of the Team on implementation of WPS commitments by the United Nations and beyond.

UN-Women has also actively engaged in the United Nations Evaluation Group to support the development of the system-wide evaluation policy, and to ensure that gender issues are appropriately incorporated into **system-wide evaluation**.

UN-Women engagement in UNSDG processes at the regional level

UN-Women regional offices have played an active role in revamping the UNDS regional architecture, contributing to the establishment of Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs) and Issue-Based Coalitions (IBCs), with the key objective of ensuring a consistent and coherent approach to advancing gender equality as a guiding principle when developing regional solutions to country-level implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This includes the development of evidence-based analysis; policy recommendations; advocacy with regional intergovernmental partners; public outreach on advancing gender equality at the regional and national levels, including in response to the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls; and costing the implementation of SDG 5. In all regions, UN-Women is contributing to joint efforts to strengthen capacities on data and statistics, including via membership of RCP working groups on data. Gender equality focused IBCs exist in four of the five regional centres where UNDCO is present, and UN-Women is co-convenor of three of these IBCs.¹⁴ In addition, UN-Women is co-chairing two regional United

Nations gender theme groups,¹⁵ and in Europe and Central Asia, UN-Women is also Co-Chair of the Regional Operations Management Team.

While regional UNSDG repositioning is at an early stage and the development of tools and guidance is a work in progress, feedback from UN-Women regional offices indicates the importance of gender equality focused IBCs as a mechanism to ensure a coherent and demand-driven response to gender equality across the work of the RCP and to ensure gender equality figures centrally in the development of Cooperation Frameworks and UNCT socioeconomic response plans. In Europe and Central Asia, for example, the IBC on Gender Equality held a consultation with RCs at the beginning of 2020 to determine their gender equality priorities. This consultation informed the IBC's work throughout the year, with its key priorities integrated into the RCP workplan.

A key area of responsibility at the regional level is participation in the Regional Peer Support Groups to ensure quality assurance of Common Country Assessments and Cooperation Frameworks. UN-Women's regional technical support and quality assurance work is supported by the Entity's global United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework community of practice and associated support facility, which provides easy access to documents and tools, and effective transfer of knowledge in the form of a newsletter and webinars. UN-Women regional offices have continued to play a key role in strengthening UNCT capacity for gender-responsive Cooperation Framework planning, implementation and monitoring, including through related trainings in Cooperation Framework roll-out countries across regions, including Cameroon, Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Mauritania and Senegal in West and Central Africa, for example; and dedicated trainings on the UNCT gender equality marker as a tool to track financial investment in gender equality across the Cooperation Framework in the Arab States, Asia Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The COVID-19 response has required a coordinated effort to be able to leverage UN Women's full expertise. This has been a good example of finding new and innovative ways of working together, allowing UN-Women to leapfrog some of the thinking around a networked organization. New ways of deploying policy expertise to where it is needed and supporting regional cross-fertilization of lessons learned are currently being explored.

Strengthening system-wide analysis, planning and reporting through Cooperation Frameworks

UN-Women contributed significantly to the finalization of the Cooperation Framework Companion Package in 2020. Altogether, 15 UN-Women country offices worked on the development of their Strategic Notes in 2020, all of which were aligned with the roll-out of respective Cooperation Framework cycles.

As a key input to Common Country Assessments and to mainstreaming gender perspectives in Cooperation Frameworks, UN-Women continued to lead the development of Country Gender

Equality Profiles in the majority of Cooperation Framework roll-out countries, in partnership with governments, United Nations partners and other stakeholders. To date, 24 Country Gender Equality Profiles have been developed, including 19 in 2020.

5. Shared business operations and common premises

UN-Women has been actively engaged in the newly established Business Operations Task Team and its predecessor, the Business Innovation Group, in support of system-wide efforts to identify efficiency gains in the area of common business operations through key workstreams. Work has continued with regard to supporting UNCTs in having a Business Operations Strategy in place. UN-Women is actively participating in this inter-agency workstream, which includes participation in the first roll-out phase of Common Back Offices, which is already under way. UN-Women is also a signatory to the Client Satisfaction Principles and the Costing and Pricing Principles.

The UNSDG efficiency strategy outlines the way the United Nations system will report on efficiencies. A UNSDG working group on efficiency reporting has been established under the auspices of the Business Operations Task Team to identify how best to approach this, with the aim of achieving cost avoidance and performance improvement by harmonizing, centralizing and consolidating the use of resources to generate efficiencies in financial and quality terms. UN-Women is a member of this working group, and as a recipient of services, UN-Women looks forward to ensuring consolidated efficiency gains and cost reductions from shared business operations.

UN-Women has continued to actively participate in the Inter-Agency Task Team on Common Premises and has been supporting the development of the strategy to establish United Nations common premises worldwide. UN-Women will continue to promulgate the consolidation of options and strategies within UN-Women locations, with the immediate focus on consolidation through government-provided and leased premises. Construction of new premises will be reserved only for a limited number of capital city projects where the business case supports a full cost recovery. The Entity's goal is to maintain the achieved result of 84 per cent common premises worldwide and/or to increase this number where and if it makes financial sense.

6. Optimizing UN-Women to deliver results

UN-Women is committed to delivering on its ambitions to achieve impact at greater scale as a central partner in a repositioned UNDS. In the lead-up to its next Strategic Plan 2022–2025, and as UN-Women develops and refines its business model, the Entity is focused on driving for impact, ensuring continuous learning and building a matrixed knowledge organization that enables a stronger field presence, a nimble and effective headquarters, more efficient processes and improved governance. Greater use of digital technologies is a key step in UN-Women's efforts to foster a data driven, evidence-based culture underpinning UN-Women 2.0.

Since UN-Women presented its road map to the Executive Board in August 2020, the Entity has been actively engaging, both within and beyond the United Nations system, for the inclusive and participatory development of its next **Strategic Plan 2022–2025**. The goal is to design a strategic plan that is responsive, relevant and rights-based – one that forcefully addresses structural barriers to gender equality and aims to secure pandemic-proof gains. The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 will continue to be anchored in key normative frameworks, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2020 QCPR will further contribute to a greater harmonization with other United Nations entities, in line with the United Nations reforms, allowing UN-Women to synergistically implement its triple mandate.

Through the last quarter of 2020, UN-Women has been meeting regularly with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF to harmonize approaches and ensure that the entities can more effectively and efficiently deliver, measure and report on common results under their Strategic Plans 2022–2025. In December, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS and UN-Women organized a joint informal consultation with their Executive Boards to jointly discuss the development of their Strategic Plans 2022–2025. This was followed by the launch of an unprecedented joint online consultation for internal and external partners to provide their insights and reflections on joint challenges and the best ways to collaboratively respond to them. Finally, a joint consultation with RCs in January 2021 will request their views on how, and on what issues, the four entities (and beyond) can best work together to realize the ambitious potential of the United Nations reforms and jointly address the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

Optimizing UN-Women presence to deliver at the regional and subregional levels

UN-Women continues to harness the opportunities and efficiencies that a reformed UNDS offers to ensure that the Entity is present and capacitated at the right level, where it is most needed – including at the regional, MCO and country levels – leveraging its United Nations coordination mandate to catalyse and support system-wide results for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

UN-Women has continued its series of functional reviews to streamline processes to better support country offices and pilot new working modalities that aim to build team culture, responsiveness and cohesiveness, against the backdrop of remote working due to COVID-19. Two regional office reviews were completed in 2020 and two MCO reviews were initiated. Such reviews follow a holistic business process and strategy implementation methodology, clarifying the office’s business model and functional responsibilities while addressing client focus. Functional reviews at the regional level have also aimed to improve the client focus and service provision to MCO contexts.

UN-Women has focused on further refining its menu of services and non-physical presence modalities in the context of its field presence typologies. This has entailed further standardization

of UN-Women services across each presence type, covering policy, programming, knowledge products and coordination of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality.

UN-Women has also further defined its menu of services for MCO contexts and provides clarity on what should be expected of UN-Women country presences in MCO and Small Island Developing State contexts. The roll-out of UN-Women's country typologies is ongoing and is aligned with Annual Work Plan, Strategic Note and Cooperation Framework processes. The typologies are embedded in planning documents to ensure alignment and enable greater standardization across the Entity.

In 2020, UN-Women rolled out a virtual decentralization initiative, which it will build on in 2021 and which allows capacity to be redeployed closest to where it is needed. The effect of these initiatives will be to increase our capacity in regional offices, MCOs and in Small Island Developing State contexts.

7. Conclusion

Two and a half years after the United Nations General Assembly passed the landmark resolution on the UNDS repositioning, many of its mandates have been operationalized and important changes are being implemented, including through a reinvigorated RC system, more coherent and aligned UNCT planning processes, enhanced joint programming, and business processes that are becoming more agile and efficient. These efforts have benefited the UNDS response to the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. Policy guidance, gender data, analysis and reports, trainings, joint planning documents, and funding addressing the specific needs and concerns of women and girls in the context of the COVID-19 crisis have been rolled out swiftly and collectively, with UN-Women playing a leadership role at the global, regional and country levels to support efforts by the United Nations system to address the impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls in a coordinated and coherent way.

The QCPR adopted by the General Assembly on 8 December 2020 provides a clear blueprint for advancing the remaining mandates of the United Nations repositioning, and for consolidating and improving efforts to build a sustainable and inclusive recovery from COVID-19, with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the centre, ensuring a rights-based and gender-responsive approach across all UNDS activities.

UN-Women looks forward to contributing to this agenda, working collaboratively with other United Nations entities at the global, regional and country levels. Building on its triple mandate and on the momentum of the Decade of Action and of Generation Equality, UN-Women will focus further on realizing the full potential of United Nations repositioning processes in 2021 to drive effective, aligned and coherent results for all women and girls, tailoring its support to specific

contexts and continuing efforts to ensuring that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls remain at the heart of UNDS efforts to support countries in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda and their recovery from COVID-19.

¹ [A/RES/75/233](#).

² See www.unwomen.org/en/executive-board/documents/2020/joint-briefing-on-the-options-to-improve-structured-dialogue-on-financing.

³ Available at <https://undocs.org/UNW/2020/7>.

⁴ The application of the UNCT gender equality marker increased to 81 per cent, with 43 UNCTs having digitized joint work plans in UN INFO and applying the UNCT gender equality marker to over 50 per cent of their activities in December, up from 29 per cent in July 2020. This increase has been spurred by the ongoing roll-out of UN INFO – including a mandatory reporting field on the UNCT gender equality marker – to cover an increasing number of UNCTs. UN-Women has reciprocated through the provision of on demand helpdesk support as of April 2020 and the provision of global and regional webinars (Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, West and Central Africa).

⁵ To support achievement of the 30 per cent target, UN-Women provided on demand advice to applicant United Nations entities through its UNCT gender equality marker helpdesk; organized regional webinars for UNCTs in Asia Pacific, East and Southern Africa, and West and Central Africa, reaching over 250 participants; and mobilized a group of gender advisers from different United Nations entities to facilitate two global webinars, (reaching over 450 participants) and to peer review 104 concept notes submitted to the Trust Fund.

⁶ *Finance in Common, Paris Development Banks Statement on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Paris, 12 November 2020* (Paris, 2020).

⁷ Available at www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/ianwge-review-of-un-system-support-for-implementation-of-platform-for-action.

⁸ Available at www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2020.

⁹ UN-Women and UN-HABITAT, *Harsh Realities: Marginalized Women in the Cities of the World* (New York, 2020).

¹⁰ UN-Women and ILO, *The Impact of Marriage and Children on Labour Market Participation* (New York, 2020).

¹¹ See <https://data.unwomen.org/news/counted-and-visible-global-conference-measurement-gender-and-intersecting-inequalities>.

¹² Strong buy-in of UN-SWAP by United Nations organizations is demonstrated by an increase in benchmarking and evaluations by United Nations entities based on UN-SWAP performance indicators, and by the record number of participants – 130 participants, representing 60 United Nations entities – at the annual UN-SWAP conference. The number of UNCTs undertaking UNCT-SWAP has also increased (from 24 in 2016–2018 to 33 in 2019), facilitated by the incorporation of UNCT-SWAP within the 2019 UNSDG Cooperation Framework Guidance; the inclusion of a related mandatory reporting field in the Information Management System managed by UNDCO; and by the active role of UN-Women regional offices, as testified by the record number of UNCT members trained in 2020. UN-Women has also incorporated UNCT-SWAP content within its training package offer to UNCTs at the Cooperation Framework roll-out stage, and, in partnership with UNDCO, facilitated sessions on UNCT-SWAP via three global webinars with RC office staff as their primary target audience.

¹³ 2019 Annual Report Cards for all 68 reporting entities are available on UN-Women's website as follows, as well as an Addendum offering analytic information per each of the UN-SWAP indicators: Available at www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability/un-swap-results/2019.

¹⁴ In the Arab States, UN-Women is Co-Chair of the IBC on Gender Justice and Equality with UNFPA; in Asia-Pacific, UN-Women is Co-Chair of the IBC on Human Rights and Gender Equality with UNFPA and OHCHR; and in Europe and Central Asia, UN-Women is Co-Chair of the IBC on Gender Equality with UNFPA.

¹⁵ UN-Women is co-chairing regional gender theme groups in East and Southern Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Annex 1: Contributing to and supporting the system-wide response to COVID-19

From the outset, UN-Women has worked with United Nations entities under the leadership of the Secretary-General to ensure that calls for action at the highest levels of the United Nations system address the gender dimensions of the pandemic, and has contributed, through inter-agency mechanisms at all levels, to driving a coherent response to gender equality issues across the system in the context of its response to COVID-19. UN-Women's contribution to the UNCT COVID-19 response is explicitly referenced in 85 out of 108 UNCT socioeconomic response plans.

In the early days of the pandemic, UN-Women reprioritized many of its statistical and research activities and resources to support **COVID-19 related data collection and analysis** in the context of the Women Count Global Gender Data programme. The Entity has also worked in partnership with United Nations entities to increase the availability of gender-specific data on the COVID-19 pandemic and government responses thereto. Key results of such inter-agency collaboration include:

- Producing and publishing, together with the World Health Organization, the most comprehensive data available yet on the health impact of COVID-19 by sex and age
- Developing, through inter-agency collaboration, the COVID-19 Gender Monitor, which is hosted on UN-Women's Data Hub and represents a compilation of gender-related SDG indicators to drive gender-responsive policy action on COVID-19
- Launching, in collaboration with UNDP, the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, which provides real-time information on how governments worldwide are integrating gender equality in their policy responses.

In collaboration with national partners, United Nations entities and the private sector, UN-Women is also investing in roughly 100 rapid gender assessment surveys to gain insight into the gendered socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as impacts on unpaid care work, employment, mental and physical health, and violence against women.

Drawing on the data, UN-Women has worked closely with United Nations entities at the global, regional and country levels to develop **guidance, advocacy and policy responses**. Data reports and briefs developed by UN-Women have strongly influenced the debate on gender equality amid the pandemic and have been featured by leading global news agencies.

Feedback from regional offices and UNCT staff has emphasized the particular usefulness of inter-agency products and guidance that UN-Women has led the development of, such as the *IANWGE Minimum Requirements Checklist for Integrating Gender Equality in the Implementation of the UN Framework for the Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19* and the *COVID-19 Multi-Partner*

Trust Fund Gender Equality Guidance. Experiences emanating from the United Nations COVID-19 Multi-Partner Trust Fund point to the effectiveness of systemic efforts to ensure that gender equality considerations are addressed in the UNDS response, including through introducing gender equality markers and related financial targets (see Chapter 2 above). UN-Women is continuing to support this work moving forward, including through its engagement in the Advisory Committee of the COVID-19 Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

Adapting Joint Programmes – the Spotlight Initiative: Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, UN-Women has worked with other United Nations entities and national partners, including civil society organizations, grassroots women’s groups, national and local governments, to adapt JPs. For example, UN-Women has supported UNCTs to repurpose \$21 million of the European Union/United Nations Spotlight Initiative funding, supporting service adaptations, such as provision of personal protective equipment kits to women’s shelters, strengthening helplines, developing new virtual reporting mechanisms and innovations in support services, and increasing support to civil society women’s organizations to develop community-based support and prevention initiatives to reach women and girls who live in more remote or marginalized communities. Adaptations were made to programming to address the needs of women with disabilities (Papua New Guinea), migrant women (Association of South-East Asian Nations region) and indigenous women (Guyana, El Salvador), for example.