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**Coordination, programme and other questions:
mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and
programmes in the United Nations system**

Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution [2019/2](#), assesses progress in the implementation of accountability frameworks for gender mainstreaming of the United Nations system at the global and country levels and in the operational activities of the United Nations development system.

It draws on United Nations entities' reports under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group information management system and on secondary sources.

Recommendations are offered to United Nations entities to accelerate gender mainstreaming in the policies and programmes of the United Nations system.

* [E/2020/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in resolution [2019/2](#), requested that I submit a report to the Council at its 2020 session on the implementation of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, including in operational activities, and progress in implementation of accountability frameworks for gender mainstreaming of the United Nations system at the global and country levels.
2. The present report responds to this request and coincides with a year of significant anniversaries: 75 years of the United Nations; 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; and 20 years since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325. The attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls remain at the heart of the United Nations' mission. Accordingly, the Beijing Conference specifically affirmed gender mainstreaming as a critical global strategy for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.
3. The present report looks at progress and trends in gender mainstreaming based on reporting under the System-wide Action Plan and its United Nations country team equivalent, the gender equality scorecard, and other recognized data sources.¹

II. Advancing the gender equality agenda in the United Nations system

A. Gender equality and sustainable development

4. Gender mainstreaming remains a key strategy for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. While the world faces unprecedented challenges that threaten progress for women and girls, the inextricable link between gender equality and sustainable development is consistently reaffirmed.
5. The report on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action ([E/CN.6/2020/3](#)) attests to important gains for women and girls. However, in some areas, progress towards gender equality appears stalled and even reversed. The United Nations system must therefore redouble its efforts in support of gender-transformative outcomes both in the United Nations and, upon request, in Member States, including through systematic gender mainstreaming in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
6. At the United Nations system level, the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, for which UN-Women is the secretariat, undertook a review in 2019 of the United Nations system implementation of the Platform for Action from 2014 to 2019. A forthcoming report indicates that, during that period, United Nations entities focused their interventions on, inter alia: the elimination of violence against women; changing discriminatory social norms; improving access to quality education and increasing women's political participation. Some have also focused on improving access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The United Nations system paid relatively less attention to areas such as financial inclusion, digital inclusion, gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and basic services and infrastructure.
7. Since 2016, the Council has consistently recognized in its annual resolutions on gender mainstreaming that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

¹ Including data and information drawn from the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Information Management System.

underpins progress across all the Sustainable Development Goals.² Accordingly, upon embarking on the decade of action for the delivery of the Goals, the Council has a key role to play in urging the United Nations system, including its agencies, funds and programmes, to accelerate support for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels.

8. At the field level, the United Nations system continued its capacity-building initiatives for staff supported by members of gender theme groups at the country and regional levels. The initiatives covered, inter alia, basic gender training, gender mainstreaming in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, gender equality and the Goals and gender equality in joint programmes.

B. Strengthening organizational reform for gender equality

9. In December 2019, the High-level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality concluded that financing for gender equality remains insufficient across the United Nations and that, without investment in gender equality outcomes, results will remain elusive. The Task Force recommendations provide practical ways to address current gaps and strengthen the resource base for gender equality, including through the implementation of an automated Gender Equality Marker system at the entity and country team level. All efforts will be made to accelerate implementation by all entities in 2020.

10. As a top priority, the United Nations system continues to focus on achieving gender parity in the Organization. As of 1 January 2020, gender parity – 90 women and 90 men – was achieved in the ranks of full-time senior leadership in the United Nations Secretariat, two years ahead of the target date set in 2017. The United Nations system is also making progress towards the achievement of gender parity at all levels by 2028 in entities in non-field locations. The challenge remains in the field and, in particular, in peacekeeping missions. Therefore, and in support of the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy on gender parity, senior leadership has continued its efforts as part of a working group to consider emergency measures and policies to support parity in these settings. Every entity has a role to play. In response to the Secretary-General's strategy, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) developed the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System, which promote a more diverse, inclusive and respectful work environment.

11. Preventing sexual harassment and abuse of authority also remains a top priority.³ In addition to the measures to address sexual harassment that have been put in place over the past two years, including a helpline, dedicated investigators and protocols for the investigation of sexual harassment complaints in the United Nations system and the Clear Check screening system to prevent perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment from being rehired in the United Nations system were put in place in September 2019, the Secretary-General promulgated the policy on addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority. The aim of the policy to ensure dignified and respectful treatment of all staff members and non-staff personnel of the Secretariat and enhanced awareness of their role and responsibilities in maintaining a workplace free of any form of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority (see [ST/SGB/2019/8](#)). The new Code of Conduct on Harassment, including Sexual Harassment at United Nations System Events, was also launched last year after

² See Economic and Social Council resolutions on gender mainstreaming 2016–2019 (resolutions 2016/2; 2017/9; 2018/7 and 2019/2).

³ www.unsystem.org/content/addressing-sexual-harassment-within-organizations-un-system.

extensive consultation, including through the Ambassadorial Group of Friends against Sexual Harassment. Over the last year, the responsibilities of resident coordinators to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse have been addressed in the Management and Accountability Framework, their terms of reference and related guidance. In addition, country teams are asked to notify resident coordinators in “real time” of any allegations that they receive. An annual management letter is also sent by resident coordinators, through the Development Coordination Office, to certify that all sexual exploitation and abuse cases have been addressed and all mandatory training carried out by United Nations staff at the country level.

C. Gender mainstreaming in operational activities

1. Gender mainstreaming in country-level planning and United Nations programming

12. The roll-out of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (formerly the United Nations Development Assistance Framework) provides an important entry point for gender mainstreaming in the work of country teams. Gender equality is one of the mandatory guiding principles of the common country analysis and the Cooperation Framework. Further, the Cooperation Framework internal guidance⁴ stipulates that gender equality has to be integrated in alignment with the minimum standards provided by the gender equality scorecard.

13. As of 2019, 72 per cent of all United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks feature specific outcome level results on gender equality. Approximately two-fifths of joint programmes reported a focus on Goal 5 on gender equality. Of these, roughly half comprised stand-alone gender-specific programmes.⁵ Gender-based violence constituted the most common area of gender-specific joint programming, followed by economic and/or political empowerment of women and girls and sexual and reproductive health and rights, which most often pursued a dual focus on delivering essential services for both the sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence.

14. The United Nations system continued its efforts to support Governments to advance gender equality and empowerment of women and girls through legislation, policies and programmes across sectors. Notably, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development led to the Nairobi Statement, with over 1,200 commitments to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights. To address the gap in existing guidance and tools, the H6 partnership of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN-Women, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank issued the guidance, *Promoting Gender Equality in Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health*.

15. In the context of the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and in line with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, joint United Nations programmes to advance the rights of women with disabilities were implemented in six countries, with initiatives spanning work with parliamentarians, the media, the justice sector and national women’s machineries. In addition, the Global Partnership for Action to Eliminate All Forms of HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination, co-convened by UNAIDS, UNDP and UN-Women with

⁴ https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/UN-Cooperation-Framework-Internal-Guidance-Final-June-2019_1.pdf.

⁵ United Nations Sustainable Development Group. Information Management System.

the Global Network of People Living with HIV, emphasized the influence of gender inequality on stigma and discrimination amongst women and girls living with HIV.

2. Mainstreaming gender equality in the humanitarian, peace and security pillars

16. Considerable efforts are ongoing to integrate gender perspectives into humanitarian responses, bolstered by the publication in 2019 of the first ever gender accountability framework report for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.⁶ In the report, the Committee reviews the extent to which its bodies, at the global and country levels, adhere to its Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, which was endorsed in 2017. It notes that members of the Standing Committee upheld their gender commitments to varying degrees. While the report's findings indicate that 90 per cent of humanitarian needs overviews incorporated some level of gender analysis and 56 per cent used sex- and age-disaggregated data in at least half of clusters, only 46 per cent had both. Humanitarian response plans were also often inconsistent in responding to the gender priorities identified by humanitarian needs overviews. An online version of the *2018 Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action* was launched in Arabic, English, French and Spanish in 2019. Instability, violent conflicts and humanitarian crises are increasingly more complex and protracted, affecting more people and impeding progress for women and girls (see [E/CN.6/2020/3](#)). Simultaneously, the normative framework on women, peace and security, humanitarian action and the rights of refugees continued to reinforce the connection between gender equality, sustainable development and peace. Accordingly, the United Nations is prioritizing stronger action to better incorporate gender equality, women and peace and security commitments in its initiatives (see [S/2019/800](#)).

17. Entities such as the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations are implementing new gender equality and women, peace and security policies; and the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security functions as a proven conduit for situation-specific gender and conflict analysis to inform Council decisions and greater consideration of implementation of the results of the analysis among senior mission leadership. With the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, the United Nations reaffirmed the centrality of the women and peace and security agenda as one of the eight priority pillars against which to measure operational effectiveness for peacekeeping, and all transition planning is now to be informed by comprehensive and joint human rights and gender-responsive analysis.⁷

3. Gender data and statistics

18. In 2019, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics continued to support the production and use of gender statistics, particularly in relation to sex-disaggregated and gender-specific Sustainable Development Goal indicators. At the country level, United Nations entities supported the integration of gender perspectives into national strategies for the development of statistics; the implementation of population, demographic and health surveys integrating key gender components, as well as gender specific surveys including on gender-based violence and time-use; and efforts to improve gender data. However, significant data collection and monitoring challenges remain to better gauging of progress on gender equality (see [E/CN.6/2020/3](#)).

⁶ Available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-reference-group-gender-and-humanitarian-action/iasc-gender-accountability-framework-report>.

⁷ Haiti manifests initial results of United Nations system commitment to mainstream gender equality in its integrated strategic framework and promote the full and effective participation of women at all levels.

III. Accountability for gender mainstreaming/gender equality issues at the global and country levels

19. Accountability for gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system at the entity and country team levels remains key to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

20. 2019 marked the second round of reporting on the United Nations systems updated accountability frameworks for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, consisting of the System-wide Action Plan 2.0 and the gender equality scorecard. Updated in 2018, both frameworks include new indicators on normative and development results in the context of the Goals and strengthen alignment at the overall entity and country levels.

21. Significantly, 2019 witnessed an uptake in the number of United Nations entities and country teams reporting against the System-wide Action Plan 2.0 and the gender equality scorecard. Two additional entities and 17 country teams reported in 2019, reflecting growing acceptance of the utility of both frameworks as system-wide accountability mechanisms.

22. In response to the request of the United Nations General Assembly in resolution [67/226](#), in 2019 the Joint Inspection Unit evaluated the effectiveness, value added and impact of the System-wide Action Plan as a tool for system-wide performance monitoring and accountability. In its review ([JIU/REP/2019/2](#)), the Joint Inspection Unit found that the Action Plan has proven to be a catalyst for progress towards gender mainstreaming, an effective framework for tracking system-wide advancement and a system-wide achievement. It also concluded that further work is needed to accelerate progress under the Action Plan, particularly on human and financial resources, a strategic area which embodies the most visible commitment to gender mainstreaming. Finally, because Action Plan reports are self-assessed, the Joint Inspection Unit in its review issued recommendations on entity quality assurance and enhanced transparency. Consequently, 2019 entity report cards are now available on the UN-Women website.⁸

23. The System-wide Action Plan help desk at UN-Women reviews all reports for thoroughness and accuracy, as part of the quality assurance process. To ensure the integrity of self-assessments, entities are required to provide evidence substantiating each indicator rating as outlined in the System-wide Action Plan technical notes. In 2019, the help desk recommended changes for 13 per cent of ratings and requested additional supporting documentation for 22 per cent of explanations. Entities accepted 73 per cent of the help desk's suggested revisions.

A. Accountability at the entity level: System-wide Action Plan 2.0

24. In 2019, 68 entities, including the Secretariat, its departments and offices,⁹ or 94 per cent of United Nations entities, reported on the System-wide Action Plan 2.0, up from 66 entities in recent years and 55 entities in the first year of reporting, 2012. Some 60 per cent of all ratings fell into the "meets requirements" or "exceeds requirements" category (see figure I), representing a 2 percentage point increase from 2018, with a 5 percentage point increase in "exceeds requirements" ratings.

⁸ www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability/un-swap-results.

⁹ Non-reporting entities included: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; United Nations Research Institute for Social Development; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children; Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Figure I
Overall System-wide Action Plan 2.0 ratings for the United Nations system, 2018–2019



1. Analysis of System-wide Action Plan 2.0 indicators on entity gender-related Sustainable Development Goal results

25. In addition to being an accountability framework, the System-wide Action Plan promotes enhanced coordination for system-wide strategic planning and identifies synergies for gender equality and the empowerment of women. This is achieved through providing recommendations for addressing gaps and overlaps, as well as identifying comparative advantages and improving inter-agency approaches. The first three indicators in the System-wide Action Plan 2.0 address achievement of results in the context of the Goals, and as requested in the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review (see General Assembly resolution [71/243](#)).

26. **Strategic planning gender-related Sustainable Development Goal results.** Five more than in 2018, 66 per cent, or 45 entities, reported to have achieved or to be on track to achieve their high-level results. Those entities highlighted capacity-building, engagement with Member States, cooperation through inter-agency mechanisms and policy advocacy as drivers for success. Of those entities, 17¹⁰ focused on achieving a high-level transformative result. These transformative results encompassed: changes in organizational norms, policies and standards; implementation of legal and social frameworks; and changes in structural barriers to gender equality.

27. Analysis of 2019 results shows that the United Nations system primarily contributes to gender-related Goals in socioeconomic and human rights areas (Goal 1 on poverty, Goal 16 on peace and justice, Goal 17 on partnerships, Goal 8 on decent work and economic work, Goal 10 on reducing inequalities) (see figure II). There clearly remains space for entities to incorporate gender equality in technical areas and increase cross-sectoral gender mainstreaming. A total of 55 entities (30 per cent) integrated Goal 5 in their main strategic document, with the majority targeting participation and leadership in political, economic and public life (target 5.5) followed by a focus on ending all forms of discrimination (5.1) (see figure III). A new

¹⁰ Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance; Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA); International Fund for Agricultural Development; Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; Office of Legal Affairs; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; UNAIDS; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction; United Nations Office at Nairobi; United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS); United Nations University; UN-Women.

partnership within interagency spaces such as the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the System-wide Action Plan network will enable gender analysis on technical areas with potential to effectively address emerging gender inequalities, such as through infrastructure, digital or financial inclusion.

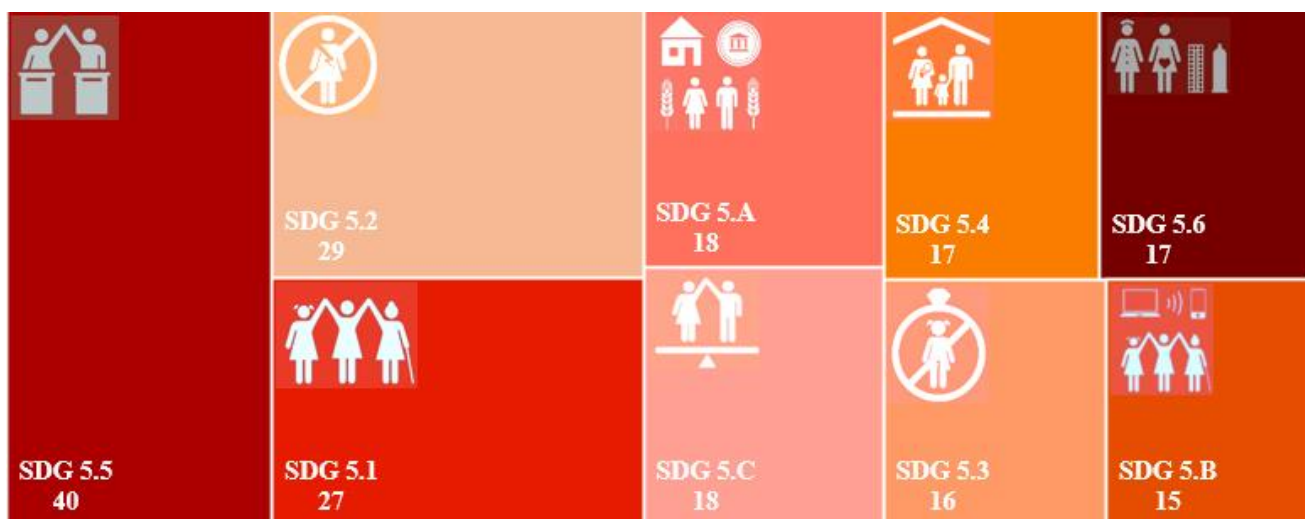
Figure II

Number of entities contributing to each Sustainable Development Goal, according to System-wide Action Plan 2.0 reporting



Figure III

Number of entities contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 5 targets, according to System-wide Action Plan 2.0 reporting

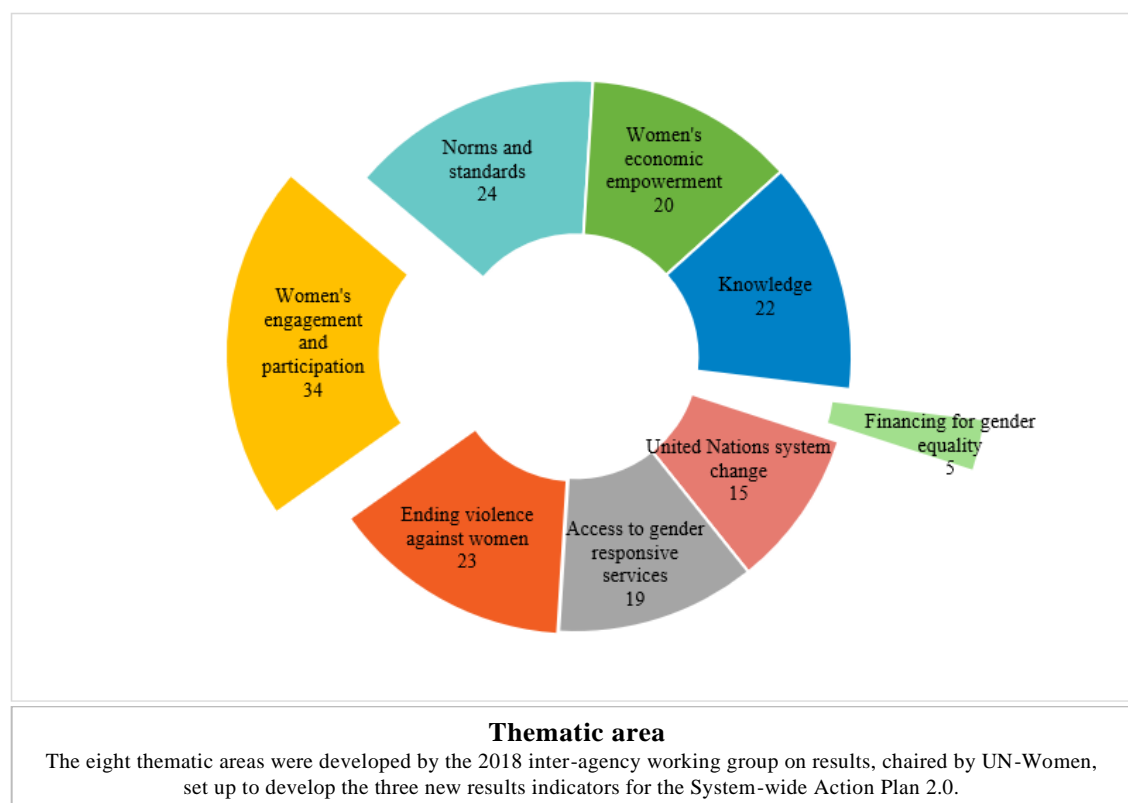


Note: Targets 5.1. End discrimination against women and girls; 5.2. End all violence against and exploitation of women and girls; 5.3. Eliminate forced marriages and genital mutilation; 5.4. Value unpaid care and promote shared domestic responsibilities; 5.5. Ensure full participation in leadership and decision-making; 5.6. Universal access to reproductive health and rights; 5.A. Equal rights to economic resources, property ownership and financial services; 5.B. Promote empowerment of women through technology; 5.C. Adopt and strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality.

28. Analysis of the main thematic areas¹¹ (see figure IV) reveals that, similarly to 2018, the United Nations system integrated gender perspectives in strategic plans fairly equally across areas, with greater emphasis on women's engagement and participation (34 entities). Work on this area involved assistance to promote women's participation in electoral processes, the enhancement of Member States' institutional and legal frameworks promoting gender justice, the organization of capacity-building initiatives for national women's machineries and the reinforcement of women's access to finance, entrepreneurship and information and communication technologies.

Figure IV

Number of entities contributing to each thematic area, according to System-wide Action Plan 2.0 reporting, 2019



29. Importantly, 24 entities (35 per cent) reported promoting norms and standards in their strategic planning documents, including 16 Secretariat entities, four specialized entities and four funds and programmes. Since achieving transformative results encompasses changes in organizational norms, promotion of normative work underscores the entities' potential to deliver transformative results.

30. **Reporting on gender-related results.** In 2019, 40 entities (59 per cent) met or exceeded requirements for this indicator, systematically reporting to their governing bodies on high-level gender-related results and using sex-disaggregated data in their main strategic plans. Pursuant to the Council's resolution, entities continued to monitor and report on sex-disaggregated data for gender analyses and strategies to promote women's empowerment. Furthermore, some entities took an intersectional approach

¹¹ A thematic areas typology was developed as part of a theory of change to provide an overall framework for the work of the United Nations system to contribute to gender-related results. System change refers to a fully gender-responsive United Nations system. Access to gender-responsive services involves supporting rights holders to access services such as health, water, housing, education, natural resources, agricultural services and food assistance.

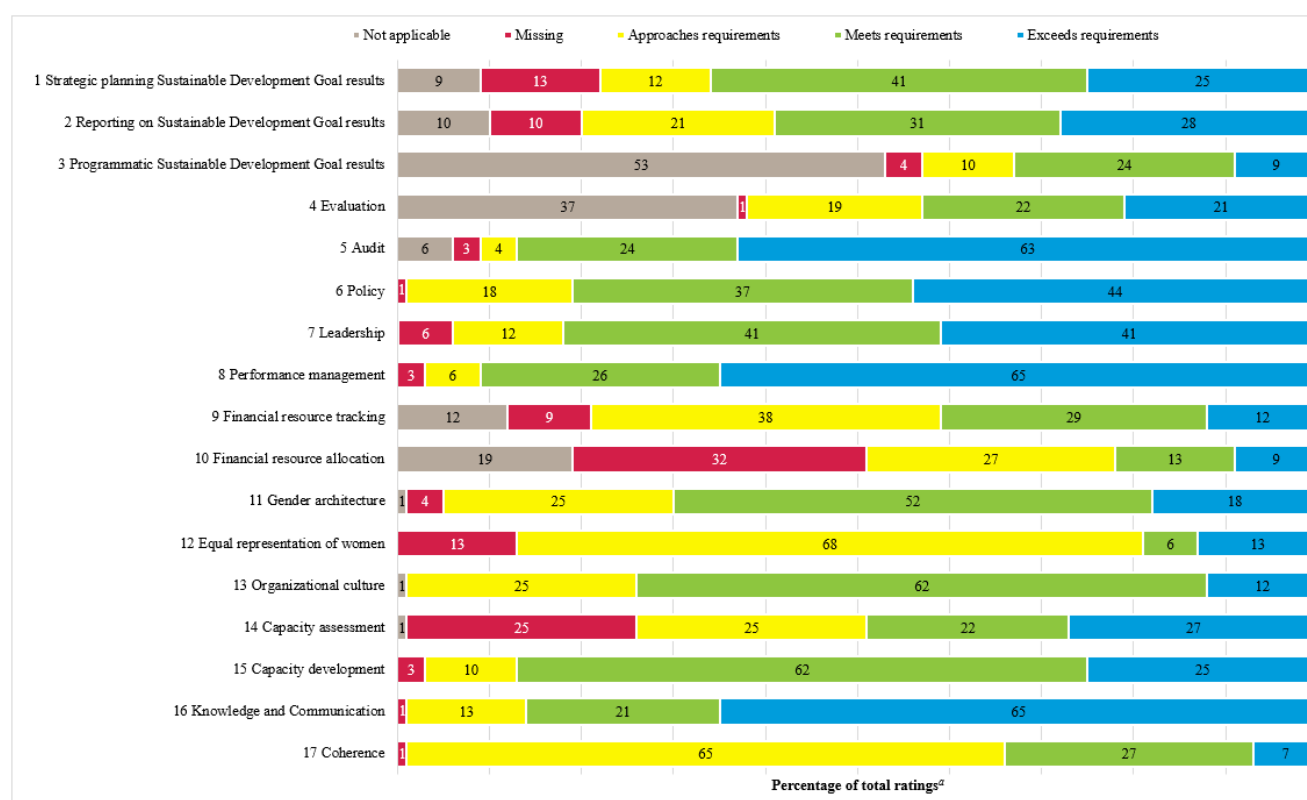
focusing on “leaving no one behind”, including ethnicity, disability, age and geographic location.

31. **Programmatic gender-related results not directly captured in the strategic plan.** In 2019, 69 per cent, or 22 entities,¹² met or exceeded this indicator. Exceeding requirements, six entities¹³ reported working on transformative results by integrating gender equality in male-dominated sectors, such as infrastructure or the maritime sector, battling gender stereotypes and norms, raising awareness about violations of women’s and girls’ rights, working on incivility as a strong predictor of sexual harassment and exclusion within United Nations entities and converting cultures of impunity into cultures of justice and accountability.

2. Comparative analysis of overall United Nations system performance (2018–2019)

32. Figure V shows a breakdown of 2019 ratings for all entities by performance indicator. Table I presents a comparison of “meets” and “exceeds” ratings, by indicator, for the 2018–2019 period.

Figure V
2019 System-wide Action Plan 2.0 ratings, by performance indicator



^a Percentages were rounded to the nearest per cent, to add up to 100.

33. Ten indicators registered progress between 2018 and 2019 (see table 1): Audit, Gender-responsive performance management, Capacity development, Leadership, Strategic planning gender-related Sustainable Development Goals results, Gender

¹² A total of 53 per cent of entities did not report on this indicator as all of their work on gender equality is included in their strategic plans.

¹³ Department of Global Communications; International Maritime Organization; Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; UNICEF; UNOPS.

architecture, Capacity assessment, Financial resource tracking, Coherence and Equal representation of women.

34. Audit and Gender-responsive performance management comprised the highest-performing indicators, as in 2018. The areas of Capacity development, Gender architecture, Leadership and Strategic planning Sustainable Development Goals results all registered noteworthy gains.

35. Significantly, between 2018 and 2019, the Gender architecture indicator registered a significant 10 percentage point increase in meeting and exceeding requirements, from 60 to 70 per cent. Positively, five entities¹⁴ reported strengthened gender architecture, including centrally located gender teams and organization-wide networks of gender focal points or equivalents with defined roles, sufficient time allocation and adequate seniority.

36. Although Knowledge and communication, Policy, Organizational culture and Evaluation retained overall strong performance in 2019, all four indicators registered slight declines.

37. Despite relatively low compliance levels, several historically weak indicators registered slight progress between 2018 and 2019: Financial resource tracking, Capacity assessment, Coherence and Equal representation of women. Financial resource allocation, however, witnessed a small decline.

38. The analysis of 2019 System-wide Action Plan reporting results in table 1 is supplemented by web annexes, including entity-specific good practices and lessons learned (see www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability/un-swap-results).

Table 1

Comparative analysis of System-wide Action Plan 2.0 “meets” and “exceeds” ratings by indicator, 2018–2019

<i>Performance indicator area, ranked by 2019 performance</i>	<i>Percentage of total ratings meeting or exceeding requirements (N/A omitted)^a</i>			<i>Percentage point difference</i>	
	<i>2019</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2018–2019</i>	<i>2012–2019</i>
Audit	92	89	13	3	79
Gender-responsive performance management	91	88	59	3	32
Capacity development	87	76	23	11	64
Knowledge and communication	85	89	34	-4	51
Leadership	82	80	N/A	2	N/A
Policy	81	82	40	-1	41
Organizational culture	75	76	48	-1	27
Strategic planning results on gender-related Sustainable Development Goals	73	66	N/A	7	N/A
Gender architecture	70	60	N/A	10	N/A
Programmatic results on gender-related Sustainable Development Goals	69	70	N/A	-1	N/A
Evaluation	67	72	36	-5	31
Reporting on results on gender-related Sustainable Development Goals	66	67	N/A	-1	N/A
Capacity assessment	49	45	15	4	34
Financial resource tracking	47	46	22	1	25

¹⁴ IFAD; United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs; United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; UNFPA; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; World Intellectual Property Organization.

<i>Performance indicator area, ranked by 2019 performance</i>	<i>Percentage of total ratings meeting or exceeding requirements (N/A omitted)^a</i>			<i>Percentage point difference</i>	
	2019	2018	2012	2018–2019	2012–2019
Coherence	34	31	77	3	-43
Financial resource allocation	27	31	7	-4	20
Equal representation of women	19	17	N/A	2	N/A

^a Percentages in table 1 were calculated omitting “not applicable” ratings. Percentages differ slightly from those in figure V.

Areas of strength

39. Areas of strength are defined as performance indicators with 75 per cent of entities or more meeting or exceeding requirements.

40. **Audit.** Audit constituted the top performing indicator in 2019. It increased by three percentage points, and 59 entities (92 per cent) met or exceeded requirements. Secretariat entities performed strongly, owing to achievements of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), which drove progress. In 2019, OIOS conducted five gender mainstreaming and responsiveness audits in peacekeeping missions, issuing 35 recommendations to strengthen the gender responsiveness of activities.

41. **Gender-responsive performance management.** For this indicator, 62 entities (91 per cent) met or exceeded requirements, up from 57 (88 per cent) in 2018. Significantly, 44 entities (65 per cent) exceeded requirements, up 20 percentage points from 2018. To exceed requirements, entities must have a system of recognition in place for excellent work promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment, for example the United Nations Secretary-General Awards, which include a category on gender parity.

42. **Capacity development.** This indicator continued to gain momentum, increasing from 50 entities (76 per cent) which met or exceeded requirements in 2018 to 59 (86 per cent) in 2019. The 11 percentage point gain is likely attributable to increased uptake of the e-learning “I know gender” course offered by the UN-Women Training Centre. The course is now mandatory for 31 entities, including the Secretariat, where it is administered by the Office of Human Resources. Course uptake increased 21 percentage points as compared with 2018. A total of 48,843 persons had taken part in the course by the end of 2019.

43. **Knowledge and communication.** In 2019, 58 entities (85 per cent) met or exceeded requirements, signifying that the majority of reporting entities systematically document and publicly share knowledge on gender equality and women’s empowerment and/or integrate gender equality in their communication plan, with entities increasingly organizing campaigns focusing on improving gender equality and the empowerment of women and actively advocating for gender-balanced communication products and social media initiatives.

44. **Leadership.** In 2019, 56 entities (82 per cent) met or exceeded the requirements for the Leadership indicator, up 2 percentage points from 2018. Significantly, an additional four entities exceeded requirements in 2019, demonstrating increased accountability and transparency through wider distribution of entity-specific System-wide Action Plan results from the highest levels of an organization. Several entities now regularly report on their System-wide Action Plan results to their governing bodies.¹⁵ Participation in highly visible campaigns, such as the International Gender

¹⁵ Including: IFAD; International Telecommunication Union (ITU); UNDP; UNFPA; World Food Programme (WFP).

Champions, creates healthy peer group pressure among leaders and ignites support for gender equality.

45. **Policy.** Despite a nominal decline of 1 percentage point, performance for this indicator remained strong, with 55 entities (81 per cent) meeting or exceeding requirements in 2019. Individual rating categories, however, reveal an 8 percentage point decline in entities exceeding requirements. To exceed requirements, entities have to fulfil specific senior-level accountability mechanisms to ensure the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. This decline reflects a weakening in oversight for achieving gender-related mandates at the highest levels of organizations. Gender policies serve to structure accountability and implementation and catalyse and drive progress.

46. **Organizational culture.** Performance in this area remained stagnant between 2018 and 2019, with 50 entities (75 per cent) continuing to meet or exceed requirements. Nevertheless, entities initiated several good practices, including surveys on staff well-being and work culture, the supplementation of existing leave policies with additional special leave with full pay and improved breast/bottle feeding policies.¹⁶

Areas for improvement

47. Areas for improvement are defined as performance indicators wherein 50 per cent or fewer of the entities meet or exceed requirements.

48. **Financial resource tracking.** Despite an additional four entities meeting or exceeding requirements, only 28 entities (47 per cent) currently fall under these rating categories. Positively, eight entities¹⁷ exceeding requirements implemented quality assurance mechanisms and utilized results to influence strategic planning and budget allocations. Top performers co-chaired working groups within the High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality¹⁸ and supported others on the basis of their lessons learned. Eight entities¹⁹ implemented tracking systems that capture extrabudgetary resources and enhanced business intelligence tools to provide in-depth information.

49. **Financial resource allocation.** This indicator saw a slight decrease of 4 percentage points to 27 per cent, or 15 entities, meeting or exceeding requirements. Financial benchmarks for gender-related mandates vary widely between entities, from 2 to 70 per cent of total resources. To improve performance in this area, common methodologies are needed to map existing financial resources and determine adequate financial benchmarks. As a good practice, some entities²⁰ have established different financial benchmarks for each gender marker category.

50. **Capacity assessment.** By contrast with the indicator on capacity development, this indicator witnessed only slight progress, with an increase of four percentage points in the combined “meets” and “exceeds” categories. Capacity deficits in gender equality and the empowerment of women comprise one of the chief constraints to better performance and leadership. Fewer than half of all entities (33) conduct entity-wide assessments of capacities of all relevant staff. Conversely, gender capacity

¹⁶ Good practices by: the Secretariat; UNFPA; ITU.

¹⁷ ESCWA; International Trade Centre (ITC); United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; UNHCHR; UNAIDS; UNDP; UNFPA.

¹⁸ UN-ESCWA and UNDP, together with UN-Women.

¹⁹ Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; DPO; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia (ESCAP); International Labour Organization (ILO); United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF); United Nations Volunteers (UNV); UNCTAD; United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

²⁰ ESCWA; ITC; OCHA; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; UNAIDS; UNFPA.

assessments of several entities set standards worthy of emulation.²¹ Good practices include organization-wide staff surveys, gender competencies and learning needs.

51. **Equal representation of women indicator.** This indicator registered a 2 percentage point increase, with 13 entities (19 per cent) reaching equal representation of women for all professional levels. Encouragingly, a majority of entities (46 or 68 per cent) have developed plans to meet requirements for all professional levels over the next five years.

52. **Coherence.** This indicator registered slight progress. Some 34 per cent of entities met or exceeded requirements, up 3 percentage points as compared with 2018. An increase in the number of peer reviews drove this progress. In 2019, 15 entities reported conducting peer reviews. Progress is expected to continue, with an additional 29 entities planning to conduct peer reviews in 2020. To facilitate this growth, UN-Women updated its peer review guidance.

B. Accountability at the United Nations country team level: United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard

53. United Nations country teams reporting on the gender equality scorecard has increased overall, from 23 in 2012–2015 to 48 in 2016–2019. In 2019, 33 country teams undertook the gender equality scorecard exercise, of which 17 country teams developed a periodic comprehensive report entailing the assessment of all 15 performance indicators and the development of an action plan; and 16 developed an annual progress report, which incorporates select indicators to capture incremental change against baseline performance and includes reporting against their action plan, prepared in response to their gender equality scorecard periodic report findings.

54. Comprehensive gender equality scorecard assessments are intended to meaningfully inform the development of Cooperation Frameworks (formerly the United Nations Development Assistance Framework). These assessments are periodic and are therefore recommended to be undertaken during the planning stage of the Cooperation Framework.

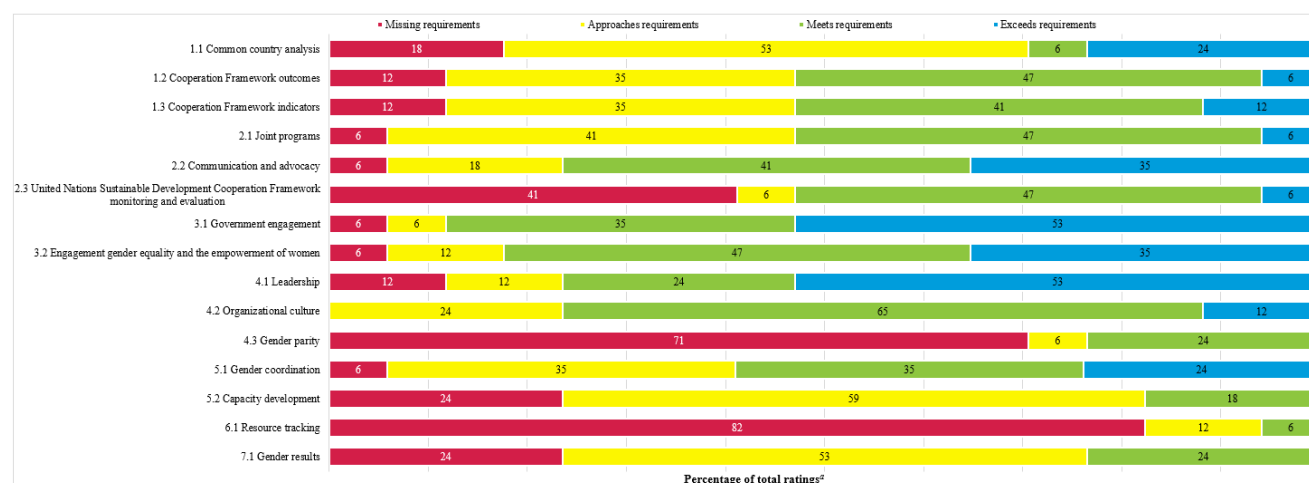
1. Analysis of United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard periodic comprehensive reports 2016–2019

55. In 2019, 17 country teams undertook the periodic comprehensive assessment. A total of 37 country teams are expected to start the implementation of new Cooperation Frameworks in January 2021, implying that approximately half of these undertook the exercise in 2019. This represents an increase from 2016–2018, when the number of country teams reporting each year varied from 7 to 13. However, the number of country teams remains relatively low, underscoring the need for concerted efforts to systematize periodic reporting by country teams at the Cooperation Framework planning stage, in alignment with the gender equality scorecard *Framework and Technical Guidance* and as reconfirmed by the Cooperation Framework internal guidance.

56. In 2019, country teams reported their strongest performance (see figure VI) in the following three indicators: Collaboration and engagement with government; Collaboration and engagement with civil society organizations and Communication and advocacy.

²¹ Including from the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM); Department of Global Communications; DPO; Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC); ESCAP; Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); IFAD; WFP.

Figure VI
United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard periodic report scorings in 2019, by performance indicator



^a Numbers may not add up to 100, owing to rounding.

57. Collaboration and engagement with government on gender equality and the empowerment of women. A total of 88 per cent of country teams (15) met or exceeded performance requirements.

58. Collaboration and engagement with gender equality civil society organizations. A total of 82 per cent of country teams (14) met or exceeded performance requirements.

59. Communication and advocacy address areas of gender inequality. A total of 76 per cent of country teams (13) met or exceeded performance requirements, with the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign the most frequently cited joint advocacy campaign.

60. Conversely, in 2019 the following three performance indicators were in greatest need of improvement: Resources for gender mainstreaming, Capacities for gender mainstreaming and Gender results.

61. Adequate resources for gender mainstreaming are allocated and tracked. Only 12 per cent of country teams (2) reported at least one capacity development event on gender markers and only 6 per cent (1) also established and met a financial target related to gender equality, thereby meeting minimum requirements.

62. United Nations Country Team has adequate capacities developed for gender mainstreaming. While 59 per cent (10) of country teams undertook at least one inter-agency gender capacity development event in 2019, only 18 per cent (3) of country teams in addition either established a capacity development plan or incorporated content on gender equality in country team induction material for new personnel. Of note, none of the country teams exceeded minimum performance requirements.

63. United Nations programmes make a significant contribution to gender equality in country. Only 24 per cent of country teams (4) met requirements, achieving or staying on track to achieve all gender equality results as planned in the Development Assistance Framework.

64. Gender parity in staffing is achieved. Only 24 per cent of country teams (4) were able to demonstrate a positive trend towards achieving gender parity

commitments and, at 71 per cent (12), most country teams lacked a mechanism for monitoring gender parity.

65. **Resource allocation and tracking.** Of interest, the one country team that reported meeting requirements related to resource allocation and tracking either met (10) or exceeded (4) all other performance benchmarks. Conversely, country teams that reported missing requirements for resource allocation and tracking were more likely to miss requirements overall, and none reported meeting minimum requirements on results achievement.

2. Comparison of country team performance in the period 2016–2018 and 2019

66. In the analysis in table 2, comparisons in performance reported by 24 country teams in 2016–2018 and by the 17 country teams in 2019 are highlighted to illustrate changes in the cumulative score, exploring differences and similarities in performance against the same, globally defined minimum requirements. Overall, the strongest and the weakest areas of performance by country teams remained the same in 2019 as in 2016–2018: strongest performance was recorded for partnerships, in particular with regard to collaboration and engagement with the Government; and weakest performance was recorded for resource allocation and tracking, with only 1 of 24 country teams meeting or exceeding performance in 2016–2018, and 1 out of 17 in 2019.

67. Overall, the collective performance of reporting country teams in 2019 registered gains of over 6 per cent for eight of the performance indicators as compared with 2016–2018 (see table 2). The performance indicators that witnessed the most significant increases of 15 percentage points or more include: Development Assistance Framework monitoring and evaluation; Communication and advocacy; Leadership; and Engagement with civil society.

Table 2

UNCT–SWAP “meets” or “exceeds” ratings by indicator, 2016–2019

<i>Performance indicators, ranked by performance</i>	<i>Total ratings</i>		
	<i>2016–2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>Cumulative 2016–2019</i>
3.1 Engagement with government	100	88	94
2.1 Joint programmes	78	53	65
4.2 Organizational culture	75	77	76
3.2 Engagement with civil society organizations	67	82	75
1.2 Development Assistance Framework outcomes	65	53	59
4.1 Leadership	58	77	45
2.2 Communications and advocacy	50	76	63
5.1 Gender coordination	50	59	54
1.3 Development Assistance Framework Indicators	43	53	48
7.1 Gender results	33	24	29
1.1 Common country analysis	22	29	26
2.3 Development Assistance Framework monitoring and evaluation	22	53	37
4.3 Gender parity	13	24	17
5.2 Capacity development	13	18	15
6.1 Resource tracking	4	6	5

68. **Development Assistance Framework monitoring and evaluation measures progress against planned gender equality results.** A total of 53 per cent of country teams in 2019, compared with 22 per cent in 2016–2018, met or exceeded minimum requirements, an increase of 31 per cent.

69. **Communication and advocacy address areas of gender inequality.** An increase of 26 per cent of country teams met or exceeded minimum requirements, up from 50 per cent in 2016–2018 to 76 per cent in 2019.

70. **Country team leadership is committed to championing gender equality.** A total of 77 per cent of reporting country teams in 2019, compared with 58 per cent in 2016–2018, met or exceeded minimum requirements, an increase of 19 per cent.

71. **Collaboration and engagement with gender equality civil society organizations.** A total of 82 per cent of country teams (14) met or exceeded performance requirements, an improvement of 15 percentage points from 2016–2018.

72. In contrast, only 56 per cent of country teams met or exceeded requirements for the performance indicator on Joint programmes in 2019, a decline of 25 percentage points from 78 per cent reported by United Nations country teams in 2016–2018. This finding reflects the broader country situation regarding joint programmes, with three countries in 2019, compared with one only in 2016–2018, lacking any joint programmes.

73. The proportion of country teams meeting or exceeding performance indicators did not change significantly and stood at 49 per cent of the 41 country teams in the period 2016–2019. This suggests that, overall, country teams are well positioned to improve performance, when appropriate investments target weaker performance areas.

74. One performance indicator, Organizational culture supportive of gender equality and empowerment of women, has maintained strong performance, at 77 per cent of country teams meeting or exceeding minimum requirements. A closer inspection, however, reveals differences in the perceptions of male and female staff in rating this indicator, with men inclined to score a more positive rating on questions regarding the equal treatment of personnel irrespective of sex, gender identity or sexual orientation.

3. 2019 annual progress reports

75. For the first time in 2019, 16 out of the 24 country teams which prepared a gender equality scorecard periodic comprehensive report in 2016–2018 prepared an annual progress report. Relative to the baseline established by their periodic reports, the greatest improvement was registered by reporting country teams in performance against the following performance indicators in 2019: Communication and advocacy; Gender coordination; and Capacity for gender mainstreaming.

76. **Communication and advocacy addresses areas of gender inequality.** This indicator saw the greatest increase in performance by 10 country teams. Six country teams improved performance on Gender coordination mechanism influences country teams for gender equality and empowerment of women. Five country teams respectively enhanced their performance for the two indicators for Country Team has adequate capacities developed for gender mainstreaming and Cooperation Framework indicators measure changes on gender equality.

77. Conversely, declines were registered by reporting country teams in performance against the performance indicators for joint programmes by five country teams, Gender parity by three country teams, Engagement with government by two country teams, and Resources by one country team, which of all 24 country teams reporting in 2016–2018 was the only one that previously met minimum requirements for this performance indicator.

78. Overall, performance improved in areas of highest investment in actions taken to improve performance. The highest number of country teams (15) reported actions in the area of programming and monitoring and evaluation, with most actions relating specifically to addressing gender inequality through communication and advocacy, and Gender-based violence the most frequently reported topic of joint communication.

79. By contrast, only 11 country teams acted to improve performance for resource allocation and tracking, most limiting this to training on the United Nations country team gender equality marker. With periodic comprehensive reports undertaken between 2016–2019 also indicating that financial resource allocation and tracking comprises the weakest area of United Nations country teams' gender mainstreaming performance, more concerted efforts are needed to impact United Nations performance in this area.

80. Taken together, these results underscore the need for more focused attention to performance improvement in areas of weakness and for concerted actions to both strengthen and maintain country team performance in gender mainstreaming.

C. Conclusions from entity-level and country-team accountability Frameworks

81. The System-wide Action Plan and the gender equality scorecard were updated in unison during 2017–2018 to establish a comprehensive accountability framework covering the whole of the United Nations system, and to allow comparison between performance at corporate and country team levels.

82. Results from 2019 reporting demonstrate that there are similarities in strengths and weaknesses at all levels and therefore generic opportunities and challenges. On leadership, results were equivalent, with 82 per cent of entities meeting or exceeding requirements at the corporate level and 76 per cent for country teams, suggesting that both frameworks have been catalysts promoting senior manager accountability. Country teams and entities at the corporate level also achieved similar levels in relation to organizational culture, with 76 per cent meeting or exceeding requirements for the former and 74 per cent for the latter.

83. The analysis shows a substantially higher level of entities achieving or on track to achieve at least one high level result at the corporate level, at 66 per cent, than at country team level, at 24 per cent. Nevertheless, 72 per cent of Development Assistance Frameworks feature specific outcome level results on gender equality, suggesting that, with renewed focus, what has been achieved at the corporate level could also be accomplished by country teams.

84. Tracking and allocation of resources to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women remains weak across the system. Only 1 of all 33 country team reporting in 2019 established and met a financial target related to gender equality and only 15 entities at overall entity level. Allocation of resources lies at the heart of strategic planning and decision-making. Without increased attention to adequate financing on gender equality, the United Nations system is unlikely to make its full contribution to the 2030 Agenda. The introduction of a mandatory country team gender equality marker should lead to an improvement in the system-wide focus at the country level.

IV. Gaps and challenges

85. The United Nations system continues to propel progress in mainstreaming gender perspectives in policies, programmes and thematic issues at the global,

regional and country levels. Nonetheless, further efforts remain necessary, including for the accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the need for data, analysis and resources that underpin progress.

86. Data, in particular, remain inadequate. Roughly one-fifth of the 53 gender-specific Sustainable Development Goal indicators lack gender data, and 6 of the 17 Goals lack gender-specific indicators altogether, indicating the need for further investment in closing gender data gaps and in gender analysis to ensure the achievement of equality for women and girls.

87. Further, as noted earlier, important areas of work such as women's digital inclusion and access to infrastructure continue to require much greater focus, posing a concern, particularly given the potential of both sectors to mitigate the negative effects of climate change on women and girls. Connectivity affords women the ability to mitigate the impacts of climate change and access to sustainable infrastructure improves their economic and social well-being.

88. In the humanitarian area, notwithstanding some progress in addressing gender inequalities, major challenges persist. Gender analysis and the use of sex- and age-disaggregated data remain either unavailable or inconsistently applied to humanitarian needs overviews. Gaps in the requisite gender capacity are apparent at all levels everywhere.

89. Despite progress in developing gender policies in alignment with the System-wide Action Plan 2.0, 20 per cent of entities still lack such a policy, while others require updating. Analysis shows that entities with a gender policy meet or exceed, on average, twice the number of indicators as those without. To advance achievement in gender mainstreaming, gender policies require an integrated approach combining leadership, programmatic priorities, resources and capacities.

90. Reporting on the System-wide Action Plan 2.0 and the gender equality scorecard indicates that the majority of entities and reporting country teams have made significant progress in the inclusion of a high-level result on gender equality in their strategic planning documents, yet resource allocation and tracking remains an area of weakness and a barrier to the effective delivery of results for women and girls. In moving forward, there is a need to improve alignment of strategic planning with resource planning, strengthening capacities for gender-responsive financial targeting and tracking, including for gender markers.

91. While having increased, the proportion of country teams reporting on the gender equality scorecard remains low and is an issue of concern. With only a fourth of reporting country teams meeting gender equality scorecard minimum requirements regarding the integration of gender analysis in the common country analysis, the need to support capacity development for such analysis remains urgent.

92. In relation to financing, the United Nations system as a whole would benefit from strengthened accountability for financial investment on gender equality, in accordance with the recommendations of the High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality. In line with smart and sustained investment for greater impact, funding for gender mainstreaming needs to be flexible, predictable and commensurate with the ambition of the decade of action.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

93. In line with stated priorities, the United Nations system continues to strengthen its efforts in mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, including through accountability frameworks such as the updated System-wide

Action Plan 2.0 and the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard. This comprehensive approach contributes to a more effective, cohesive and accountable United Nations system on gender equality results in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

94. Strengthening gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system warrants strong support and action to improve performance at all levels of the United Nations System, in alignment with the decade of action, to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and across the development, humanitarian and peace nexus. On the basis of the findings in the present report, I recommend that the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies and funds and programmes, consider the following recommendations:

(a) Continue to strengthen gender mainstreaming and gender equality strategic results across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and strengthen system-wide common methodologies for reporting on gender-related contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals during the decade of action;

(b) Enhance leadership and commitment at the highest levels, including through resident coordinators, for gender mainstreaming and gender equality issues across individual organizations and interagency and system mechanisms, by supporting the full implementation of accountability frameworks, including the United Nations System-wide Action Plan 2.0 and the updated United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard;

(c) Strengthen investments in gender data production, gender analysis and the use of gender statistics to ensure the effective and accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets to benefit women and girls globally;

(d) Enhance investment in and accountability for gender mainstreaming across the nexus of humanitarian action, peace and security operations and development cooperation, including through implementing existing gender policies, institutionalizing foundational gender training for all staff, including at the managerial and senior leadership levels, and investing in staff capacities to significantly strengthen gender analysis, including in common country analyses;

(e) Continue to systematically and vigorously mainstream gender perspectives into all thematic areas within their respective mandates, as well as into emerging issues and technical areas where gender perspectives are particularly weak or absent, such as financial inclusion, digital inclusion, disaster risk reduction and basic services and infrastructure that relate to Goals 7, 9 and 11;

(f) In line with recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit, enhance the implementation of the System-wide Action Plan accountability framework for gender mainstreaming through policy development and regular reporting to legislative and/or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations on results and on strategies and measures to be undertaken to improve capacity for compliance with the performance requirements;

(g) Encourage United Nations organizations and country teams to maintain progress in implementing the System-wide Action Plan 2.0 and the gender equality scorecard in an integrated manner, including by better aligning results commitments, capacity-building initiatives and financial resource allocations;

(h) Enhance integrated support to ensure the inclusion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as a stand-alone priority in its own right and a cross-cutting issue, in United Nations country team strategic planning processes, frameworks and guidance, exercising leadership through resident coordinators and country teams to ensure that the minimum requirements agreed upon by the United

Nations Sustainable Development Group in the gender equality scorecard inform the development of common country analyses and Cooperation Frameworks;

(i) Invest adequate financial and human resources for gender mainstreaming commensurate with targeted entity commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women, and with the gender equality ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(j) In line with recommendations of the High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality, the Strategy for Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Task Force on Digital Financing of the Sustainable Development Goals, coordinate internal systems and processes to better support financing for gender equality, including by ensuring full mainstreaming of gender equality in these efforts and the inclusion of gender markers in the design of pooled funds and innovative financial mechanisms;

(k) Advance the development and implementation of a harmonized gender equality marker across the United Nations system, including at the Secretariat, and enhance country team reporting on the gender equality marker incorporated in UN-INFO, establishing financial targets for allocations for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

(l) Accelerate and sustain progress in support of the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity at the corporate and country levels through inter alia effectuating workplace flexibility, family-friendly policies and standards of conduct for all personnel, in alignment with the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System.
