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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [64/289](#), provides a summary of the normative aspects of the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in 2020, through its substantive support for intergovernmental processes. The report also highlights the Entity's contribution to implementing the policy guidance provided by the Commission on the Status of Women, including examples of the Entity's operational activities in different regions.

* [E/CN.6/2021/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. In 2020, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) continued to support Member States in accelerating progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including through research, policy analysis and recommendations in reports of the Secretary-General. The Entity placed a high priority on the activities related to the 25-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the twentieth anniversary of the adoption by the Security Council of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security.

2. The impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on the business continuity of intergovernmental processes required significant adjustments to the Entity's efforts and capacity to support the strengthening of global norms and standards; and also affected the Entity's support in translating normative frameworks into benefits for women and girls at the regional, national and local levels as part of its operational activities. In addition to the scaled-back sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the postponement, cancellation or reduced scope of other intergovernmental meetings required the modification of a number of the Entity's activities, as well as reprioritization to support Member States in analysing, addressing and responding to the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women and girls. The Entity also pivoted to online platforms for large parts of the normative aspects of its work.

3. As in previous years, the provision of substantive support to the Commission on the Status of Women, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council and other intergovernmental bodies remained a central feature of the normative aspects of the Entity's work, also within the constraints created by the pandemic. With the aim of strengthening the integration of a gender perspective into the work and outcomes of those bodies, the Entity continued to focus on synergies between achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and progress in other areas of sustainable development.

4. The normative aspects of the Entity's work are aligned with its strategic plan for the period 2018–2021 ([UNW/2017/6/Rev.1](#)) and contribute to the accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With the COVID-19 pandemic threatening to undermine or even reverse gains in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, the Entity has taken a leading role in responding to the crisis and offering sustainable gender-responsive solutions during the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals.

II. Gender equality and the empowerment of women

A. Twenty-five years after the Fourth World Conference on Women

5. As the substantive secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN-Women continued to provide substantive and logistical support to the Commission for its sixty-fourth session. The session marked the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to be conducted in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and this alignment was reflected in the preparations and outcome. While the two-week session had to be scaled down to an opening meeting on 9 March and a virtual closing on 14 July, the extensive preparations and mobilization of stakeholders in the context of the review and appraisal process since 2018 brought significant results.

6. In particular, the review and appraisal process resulted in a political declaration to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and give further impetus to its accelerated implementation. The Entity provided technical support for the negotiations in the lead-up to the session, thus contributing to the adoption of the declaration at the opening meeting. In the declaration, in addition to reaffirming political will for action, the Commission on the Status of Women recognized new challenges that have emerged requiring concerted and intensified efforts and identified cross-cutting strategies for tackling such gaps and challenges.

7. As part of the review and appraisal process, 173 Governments prepared national reports,¹ often in collaboration and consultation with UN-Women, civil society and other stakeholders. The national-level reviews contributed to the global synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal process (E/CN.6/2020/3). According to the report, while important gains had been made since the adoption of the Platform for Action, including in the areas of education and health, progress towards gender equality had stalled and even reversed in some areas, such as economic security and autonomy for women, especially during their child-bearing years. The report offered eight cross-cutting strategies to advance the implementation of the Platform for Action and bring about transformational change, including through gender-responsive law reform, policymaking, programme design and financing, shifts in social norms, the use of technology, data disaggregation and gender statistics. Areas such as decent work, the care economy and women in decision-making were highlighted for cross-cutting attention.

8. To give further visibility to the findings of the review process, the Entity also launched a report entitled “Gender equality: women’s rights in review 25 years after Beijing”, which highlighted important gains since the adoption of the Platform for Action as well as areas for improvement. For example, the gender gap in labour force participation among adults aged between 25–54 years has stagnated over the past 20 years, at 31 percentage points; 31 per cent of young women aged between 15 and 24 years were not in education, employment or training in 2020, more than double the rate for young men (14 per cent); and only 14 per cent of agricultural landholders were women. In September 2019, UN-Women convened an expert group meeting, which examined the current context, emerging issues and future prospects for gender equality and women’s rights.²

9. The Entity collaborated with the United Nations regional commissions in their review processes, examining regional trends and identifying key actions and strategies for moving forward. Prior to or in parallel with the regional intergovernmental meetings organized by the regional commissions, preparatory meetings were convened or facilitated by the Entity for civil society and young people.

10. Also in support of the session, UN-Women prepared the reports of the Secretary-General on women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS (E/CN.6/2020/6) and on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts (E/CN.6/2020/7). The Entity’s proposals on the priority and review themes for 2021 and beyond (E/CN.6/2020/4) supported the Commission on the Status of Women in drafting and adopting its multi-year programme of work for the period 2021–2024.

11. Other intergovernmental bodies also marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. UN-Women contributed to and supported events such as the high-level panel discussion of the Human Rights Council in

¹ Available from www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020/preparations.

² See www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020/preparations#expert-group-meeting.

February 2020, the multi-stakeholder hearing of the President of the General Assembly on 21 July and the high-level meeting of the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, on 1 October.

12. UN-Women also collaborated in a virtual joint event organized by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, together with the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women. The virtual panel discussion provided an opportunity to call upon Governments and other actors to draw from and utilize the work of the Commission on the Status of Women to design gender-responsive policies and other interventions in response to and in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and also confirmed the long-standing interaction between the three commissions and the catalytic role of the Commission on the Status of Women in promoting gender mainstreaming.

13. Although the Generation Equality Forum, convened by UN-Women and co-hosted by France and Mexico, in partnership with civil society, had to be postponed to the first half of 2021 owing to the pandemic, the Entity continued its preparations in facilitating action coalitions, which are global multi-stakeholder partnerships to catalyse collective action and investments and achieve tangible results on gender equality during the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals. The six coalitions focus on: (a) gender-based violence; (b) economic justice and rights; (c) bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights; (d) feminist action for climate justice; (e) technology and innovation for gender equality; and (f) feminist movements and leadership. Each will establish a targeted set of concrete, ambitious and immediate actions for the period 2020–2025. The Forum is also developing a new compact for women and peace and security and humanitarian action to drive action on the fulfilment of existing financial and political commitments and to strengthen coordination across existing mechanisms and partnerships.

B. Gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system

14. UN-Women prepared the annual report on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system ([E/2020/50](#)), with contributions from across the system. The report presents progress made in 2019 on accountability for gender mainstreaming by the entities of the United Nations system and the United Nations country teams, as measured by the indicators of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (System-wide Action Plan 2.0 and United Nations country team gender equality scorecard). UN-Women provides technical support to entities and country teams in their implementation of the System-wide Action Plan 2.0.

15. A total of 68 United Nations system entities reported on progress in 2019. As in the past, system-wide performance was weakest in the areas of financial resource allocation (27 per cent of entities met or exceeded expectations) and the equal representation of women (19 per cent). Coherence and financial resource tracking were also identified as areas that required strengthening.

16. With regard to the contribution of strategic plans to specific Sustainable Development Goals and priority thematic areas relating to gender equality, a total of 55 entities reported a focus on Goal 5 (4 more than in 2018). Most entities support gender equality in socioeconomic areas: Goal 1 (16 entities), Goal 16 (14 entities), Goal 10 (11 entities) and Goal 8 (11 entities). In contrast, only three entities focus their gender equality work on Goal 7, and two on Goal 12. In thematic areas, entities

continued to prioritize the engagement and participation of women (34 entities) and the promotion of norms and standards (24 entities), while only 5 entities (the same as in 2018) prioritized financing for gender equality.

17. A total of 33 country teams undertook the country-level System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard exercise, of which 17 prepared comprehensive reports that included an assessment of all 15 performance indicators and the development of an action plan. For the first time, 16 of the 24 country teams that had compiled comprehensive reports during the period from 2016 to 2018 prepared annual progress reports to capture changes against baseline performance and advances against their action plans.

18. The annual reports of the 16 country teams demonstrated improved performance in relation to communications and advocacy, gender equality coordination mechanisms and capacity for gender mainstreaming. Analysis of the comprehensive reports indicates that performance continues to be strongest in the area of collaboration and engagement with Governments and weakest in the area of resource allocation and tracking.

19. UN-Women provided technical support as the Economic and Social Council proceeded with virtual consultations and the adoption of a short resolution on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (Council resolution [2020/9](#)).

III. Sustainable development

A. Gender-responsive action in response to the pandemic

20. From the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, UN-Women mobilized itself to respond to the pandemic in a comprehensive manner across its mandate and functions. It supported the rapid response of the United Nations system and took the lead in ensuring that the social and economic impacts of the pandemic on women and girls were comprehensively assessed and addressed. The Entity offered targeted policy guidance for action by Governments and other stakeholders and significantly expanded its work in relevant areas such as gender statistics to respond to the needs created by the pandemic.

21. Following the launch in April 2020 of the policy brief of the Secretary-General on the impact of the pandemic on women, the Entity issued a series of policy briefs to support gender-responsive action through policy responses on various issues, such as gender-responsive economic recovery; the care economy; family-friendly policies; safe cities and public spaces; access to justice; the participation of women in the response to the pandemic and in peace processes; gender-responsive evaluation, management and data collection; gender-based violence, including online and technology-facilitated violence; service provision; the humanitarian response; women and girls with disabilities; and women migrant workers.

22. In its report entitled “From insights to action: gender equality in the wake of COVID-19”, released in September 2020, UN-Women summarized data, research and policies on the impact of the pandemic on women and girls, including in relation to extreme poverty, employment, health, unpaid care work and violence against women and girls. The report brings into focus the paucity of gender statistics and contains calls for greater investment in and prioritization of data collection on the gender-specific effects of the crisis. As part of its series on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Entity published a paper entitled “Spotlight on gender, COVID-19 and the SDGs: will the pandemic derail hard-won progress on gender equality?”, in which it

revealed how health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the response to them, can exacerbate gender inequality and derail hard-won progress on all the Goals. It underscored the urgent need for progress on Goal 3, including by scaling up international cooperation.

23. UN-Women took an early lead role in building a strong basis of gender statistics to inform gender-specific policy and programme responses to the pandemic. The Women Count data hub, launched in 2019 and already accessed by users in 192 countries, quickly emerged as a vital resource during the pandemic, issuing up-to-the-minute data, disaggregated by sex, to inform decisions and actions to save lives. UN-Women partnered with the World Health Organization to provide the first global data on COVID-19 cases disaggregated by sex and age. The Entity and its partners also developed the “COVID-19 and gender monitor dashboard”, an inter-agency collaboration to improve the overall United Nations response, comprising headline indicators on health and health-care vulnerabilities, social, labour and macroeconomic impacts and many other relevant areas.

24. Through the Women Count programme, UN-Women and its multi-stakeholder partners, including national statistics offices, spearheaded the collection of primary data on the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic on the lives of women and men. In that context, between March and September, the Entity commissioned rapid gender assessment surveys on the impacts of COVID-19, in partnership with the public sector and non-State actors in almost 40 countries in Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia and the Arab States. An additional 30 countries, mostly in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, are undertaking or planning similar assessments in the fourth quarter of 2020. Results of the assessments, available from the page on gender and COVID-19 data of the UN-Women data hub, are being used by Governments, the United Nations system and other stakeholders to inform policymaking, emergency responses and project financing.

25. In September 2020, UN-Women, along with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), launched the COVID-19 global gender response tracker to compile information on policy measures enacted by Governments worldwide in response to the pandemic and to highlight good practices in the integration of a gender perspective, as well as policy and funding gaps. The tracker includes over 2,500 measures in 206 countries and territories, including over 900 government measures that are gender-sensitive in three areas: tackling violence against women and girls, supporting unpaid care work and strengthening the economic security of women. The tracker shows that, while Governments have adopted a large number of measures to prevent or respond to violence against women and girls, attention to the needs of women in the areas of social protection and employment has been much more muted, with only 18 per cent of measures addressing either the economic security or rising unpaid care demands of women. The Entity will continue to collect, analyse and distribute data and generate gender statistics through the tracker, which will be further updated and improved over time.

26. UN-Women drew upon its extensive policy advisory and gender statistics work on the pandemic in its engagement with intergovernmental processes. This included the organization of a side event on the theme “SDGs after COVID-19: actions for a gender-responsive recovery” on the margins of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The side event focused on necessary immediate and long-term policy actions to ensure a gender-responsive recovery from the pandemic using the 2030 Agenda as a road map. Participants from Governments, civil society, the United Nations system and other stakeholders discussed opportunities for a gender-responsive economic recovery, including through economic and fiscal packages and social protection measures, as well as supporting the care economy, addressing

gender-based violence and strengthening the leadership and participation of women in responses to the pandemic at all levels.

27. The Entity fully utilized its mandate for United Nations system coordination to advance the Secretary-General's call for coordinated action to address the impacts of the pandemic. To that end, the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, chaired by UN-Women, produced a compendium capturing the key messages and efforts of United Nations system entities as they address the various gender dimensions of the pandemic. The Network also produced a checklist for integrating gender equality considerations into the implementation of the United Nations framework for the socioeconomic response to the pandemic. The primary audience for the checklist is United Nations country teams engaged in the socioeconomic assessment, design, implementation and monitoring of technical support, operations and programming for responses to the pandemic.

28. UN-Women contributed to the progress report of the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being, coordinated by the World Health Organization, to ensure that it included a strong focus on gender equality, given that unequal gender norms still influence health systems and access to health-care services. UN-Women chairs the gender working group tasked with supporting countries in accelerating action and co-leads, with UNDP, the accelerator on determinants of health.

B. Economic and social empowerment

29. As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect the work of intergovernmental processes throughout 2020, UN-Women provided technical support to the General Assembly in its consideration of gender-specific agenda items and towards strengthening the integration of a gender perspective into a range of resolutions, and contributed policy inputs to other processes.

30. UN-Women organized the high-level side event on the theme "Gender-based violence in a COVID-19 context", held on 29 September 2020. The objectives of the multi-stakeholder event involving Governments and women's and youth organizations included highlighting progress on and promising practices in tackling gender-based violence and accelerating policy responses to gender-based violence in the context of the pandemic. The Entity had a key role in the Sustainable Development Goals Moment, on 18 September, in which, along with UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme, it underscored the three cross-cutting and interlinked priorities of the 2030 Agenda: eliminating poverty and inequality, achieving gender equality and tackling climate change. It also contributed to the preparations for the Summit on Biodiversity, held on 30 September.

31. For the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, UN-Women prepared three reports of the Secretary-General. The report on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls ([A/75/274](#)), in particular, draws attention to the shadow pandemic of gender-based violence and increased vulnerability to violence in the home owing to the impacts of the pandemic, including lockdown measures and economic recession. The report contains calls for investments in long-term prevention measures to eliminate the root causes of violence against women and girls, including sexual exploitation and harmful practices. In the report, the Secretary-General also urged that prevention strategies should not be put on hold during the pandemic but adapted to the current context.

32. The report on trafficking in women and girls ([A/75/289](#)) highlights the fact that 47 million more women and girls will be pushed below the poverty line as a result of the pandemic and that this greater vulnerability may increase their risk of trafficking, including through online recruitment. The report contains calls for States to

strengthen measures to ensure that female victims of trafficking are not punished for the crimes that they were forced to commit during their exploitation. According to the report on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation (A/75/279), the pandemic could severely undermine progress, with an additional 2 million girls undergoing female genital mutilation by 2030. This means that progress in eliminating the practice needs to be 10 times faster now in order to meet the global target of elimination by 2030. Mainstreaming the prevention of female genital mutilation into efforts to address violence against women and girls generally is proposed as a key acceleration strategy.

33. Throughout the year, UN-Women contributed gender-specific inputs to reports, policy papers and technical materials covering a broad range of topics. For example, it provided technical inputs to inform the development of the United Nations System-wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements, coordinated by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The Guidelines are aimed at supporting the localization and gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda and building on the Entity's own work on safe cities and safe public spaces for women and girls.

34. The Entity provided inputs to the report of the Secretary-General on addressing inequality and preparing the next phase of the AIDS response (A/74/778), which highlights the HIV crisis among adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa, driven by gender inequality, violence, food insecurity and the denial of access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

35. In the course of 2020, UN-Women seized new opportunities to deepen its work in the area of information and communications technologies (ICT), including as a means of responding to challenges caused by the pandemic. The Entity acted as a co-facilitator alongside other United Nations agencies for the World Summit on the Information Society forum, which was held virtually from June to September. The Entity organized a thematic session on cybersafety to highlight increasing instances of cyberharassment of women and advocate measures to protect women and girls in their use of digital services and the Internet. It also participated in an expert panel during a stakeholder dialogue on ensuring the safety of women online amid the pandemic and beyond. It engaged in thematic workshops under the gender mainstreaming track of the forum, which included sessions on girls and ICT, women and e-commerce, African women and ICT, women in engineering and technology, and cybersafety, as well as in high-level policy dialogues to analyse trends, challenges and solutions related to the digital divide, including the gender digital divide. These experiences will contribute to preparations for the sixty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

C. Follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

36. UN-Women continued its engagements with the global follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda through its contributions to the high-level political forum on sustainable development. While much of the preparations moved to online platforms, a key area of focus for the Entity remained its technical support for Governments in the preparation of voluntary national reviews to encourage the integration of a gender perspective. UN-Women developed a guidance note to facilitate the Entity's country-level engagement with national Governments. Its participation in the virtual regional forums for sustainable development contributed to greater attention being given to gender equality issues.

37. A second key area of focus for UN-Women is its contribution to the substantive preparations for the forum. The Entity provided policy expertise, evidence and technical inputs for the virtual consultations organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, including the background papers, in preparation for the thematic reviews.

38. UN-Women also contributed to the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2020/57), spearheading coordination efforts across agencies to compile information relating to Goal 5 and contributing the relevant data and statistics for indicators for which the Entity is the lead or co-lead agency. To complement the report, the Entity, together with the Statistics Division, released the updated edition of “Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: the gender snapshot 2020”, which brings together the latest available evidence on gender equality across all 17 Goals. The 2020 edition also flagged the gender-specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the Goals by highlighting emerging data on the acute hardships that women and girls are facing on account of the pandemic, including higher rates of poverty, increased care burdens and greater exposure to violence.

39. The 2020 edition of the gender snapshot draws on the work of UN-Women as part of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the development of gender statistics. At the same time, the Entity continued to support Governments in building capacity on gender statistics and expanding the monitoring and reporting of gender-specific indicators. As a result of the Entity’s work, data coverage for several indicators of Goal 5 has expanded: indicator 5.1.1 now has data for 90 countries and areas, 5.5.1.b has data for 133 countries and areas and 5.c.1 contains information on 69 countries and areas. As part of the working group on geospatial information of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group, UN-Women is supporting efforts to develop a road map for the strategic use of geospatial information to inform monitoring of the Goals and build a bridge between official statistics and geospatial information. The aim of these efforts is to ensure that, from a statistical and geographical location perspective, the principle of leaving no one behind is achieved through the global indicator framework and that everyone is counted. This work stream directly contributes to the activities of the Statistical Commission and the high-level political forum.

40. Finally, UN-Women organized a two-day conference on gender and intersecting inequalities, in collaboration with the Statistical Division, on the margins of the fifty-first session of the Statistical Commission with the goal of making visible the most marginalized women and girls through greater disaggregation of data.

D. Environmental protection and disaster risk reduction

41. The contributions of UN-Women to the area of environmental protection and disaster risk reduction were affected because the Conferences of the Parties to the Rio Conventions and the meetings of subsidiary bodies were postponed to 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, UN-Women continued to work virtually, and through written submissions, with parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations system entities, the Convention on Biological Diversity Women’s Caucus and other experts on integrating a gender perspective into the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. UN-Women made submissions to support the inclusion of a gender-specific target in the draft monitoring framework and to strengthen the integration of a gender perspective across other targets, such as through the inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators and the disaggregation of data by sex. The Entity also made submissions on the post-2020 gender plan of action of the Convention on Biological Diversity, proposing activities related to building capacity in developing gender-responsive biodiversity strategies and budgeting, mapping the

contributions of women to ensure better sharing of benefits, providing technical and financial support and enhancing the availability of data disaggregated by sex.

42. In support of building the knowledge and evidence base, the Entity jointly organized, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Friends of Gender Equality group and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, a strategy session with stakeholders on the margins of the second meeting of the open-ended working group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, held in February 2020. The session provided a platform to discuss entry points for integrating a gender perspective into the draft framework under consideration by the parties. UN-Women also provided technical support to parties during the meeting of the working group.

43. In the area of disaster risk reduction, UN-Women, along with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and other partners, developed policy guidance on disaster risk reduction and COVID-19 recovery and rehabilitation, and on the dual challenges of climate-related hazards and pandemics. The Entity also contributed to the gender-responsive COVID-19 Recovery Needs Assessment methodology issued by the World Bank, the European Union and the United Nations system to assess the loss, damage and human impact caused by the pandemic and develop targeted recovery strategies. In October 2020, UN-Women launched a knowledge hub on the resilience of women to disasters, which provides relevant research, tools and expertise to the United Nations system and practitioners to enable the gender-responsive implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, implemented by 50 United Nations entities, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. As part of the reporting task team under the Plan of Action, UN-Women also ensured that reporting under the indicator framework of the Plan for the remainder of the implementation period (2020–2030) integrates a gender perspective.

E. Financing for sustainable development

44. Drawing on its work on financing for gender equality, the Entity supported the integration of a gender perspective into the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up. The agreed conclusions and recommendations ([E/FFDF/2020/3](#)) are focused on the importance of taking bold and concerted global action to address the immediate social and economic impacts of the pandemic and achieve an inclusive and resilient recovery using the 2030 Agenda as a road map. Member States emphasized the need for gender-responsive actions on the pathway to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and committed themselves to ensuring that emergency social and economic schemes integrate a gender perspective. This commitment recognizes the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women and girls as front-line health workers and as those who perform the majority of unpaid care and domestic work and face increased risks of violence.

45. UN-Women, with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, chaired the gender working group of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, comprising 22 agencies, which contributed to the annual report of the Task Force. The Entity's leadership and technical contributions underpinned strengthened gender mainstreaming in the report, including on issues of economic empowerment, digital technology and an assessment of trade policies. Its expertise also shaped the discussion, in the report, on gender-responsive public expenditure and procurement and gender statistics.

IV. Human rights

46. UN-Women continued to provide technical support to the Human Rights Council during its regular sessions and in relation to the universal periodic review, including on virtual platforms, to strengthen the integration of a gender perspective. The Entity supported Member States in preparing for the universal periodic review, assisted with the preparation of reports by stakeholders, contributed to United Nations country team reports, made interventions at meetings of the Council and supported the implementation of recommendations at the national level.

47. The Entity provided technical support on Human Rights Council resolutions on the elimination of female genital mutilation (Council resolution 44/16) and on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls (Council resolution 44/17). It also provided technical support for resolutions on the safety of journalists (Council resolution 45/18), on promoting and protecting the human rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) (Council resolution 45/28) and on promoting, protecting and respecting the full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls in humanitarian situations (Council resolution 45/29).

48. UN-Women contributed to gender mainstreaming through its participation in the annual discussion on women's rights, with a focus on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls, in the urgent debate on systemic racism and in the panel discussion on accountability for women and girls in humanitarian settings. In collaboration with the Permanent Missions of South Africa and Switzerland and other partners, the Entity co-organized a virtual side event on the theme "The recognition and respect of diverse families in times of a global pandemic". In other interventions, the Entity continued to underscore the experience of women and girls, including to highlight the importance of the political participation of women in the urgent debate on the situation of human rights in Belarus.

49. In coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN-Women supported the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in all regions. This included support for States parties in reporting under the Convention and in preparing for the constructive dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at the session held in February 2020. Two subsequent sessions scheduled for 2020 were not held owing to the pandemic. UN-Women supported 83 per cent of United Nations country team reports to the Committee, including in coordinating and leading the process of preparing the reports. The 2020 reports included a focus on the pandemic. The Entity also offered support in connection with the preparation of shadow reports by civil society organizations. During the Committee's seventy-sixth session, in June 2020, UN-Women convened a virtual dialogue with the Committee on the impact of the pandemic on women and girls across the Europe and Central Asia region, discussing key approaches to integrate gender analysis and programming into national responses to the pandemic and long-term recovery plans.

50. The Entity continued to provide support to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the development of a general recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. This included the submission of inputs for the Committee's first draft, support for the organization of regional consultations in the Latin America region and the submission of a statement to the Committee on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, which UN-Women co-chaired for the second consecutive year. In July 2020, UN-Women, in partnership with the Office for Democratic Institutions

and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, launched a guidance report entitled *Addressing Emerging Human Trafficking Trends and Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic*.

51. UN-Women worked with both the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to develop a joint statement on sexual harassment and women with disabilities, which builds on the Entity's discussion note on sexual harassment against women with disabilities in the world of work and on campus.

52. The Entity continued to support the work of special procedures. It served as the substantive secretariat of the expert working group for addressing women's human rights in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which includes both the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Entity engaged closely with both Special Rapporteurs in support of their mandates and contributed to the thematic reports of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, including a report on the right to freedom of association of migrants and their defenders ([A/HRC/44/42](#)) and a report on ending the immigration detention of children and providing adequate care and reception for them ([A/75/183](#)), which led to a greater focus on gender equality perspectives.

53. To address persistent discrimination in law, the Entity worked with partners to implement the multi-stakeholder strategy for accelerated action launched in 2019, entitled "Equality in law for women and girls by 2030". The strategy seeks to repeal discriminatory laws in six thematic areas (comprehensive reforms, the economic empowerment of women, provisions on the minimum age of marriage, nationality rights, discriminatory rape laws, and family and personal status laws) in 100 countries between 2019 and 2023. Legislative reviews are being undertaken in 20 countries. Over the past two years, UN-Women engaged in 266 legislative reform initiatives, of which approximately 50 per cent were aimed at addressing discriminatory laws and practices.

54. The Entity published a research brief examining how women's human rights in the context of the women and peace and security agenda have been addressed in past cycles of the universal periodic review and offering recommendations for stakeholders to improve reflection, action and progress on such rights in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding.

V. Peace and security and humanitarian action

A. Security Council

55. To commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), UN-Women conducted a month-long series of virtual events complemented by advocacy and outreach activities to increase visibility and contribute to advancing the leadership of women in securing sustainable peace. The report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security ([S/2020/946](#)) demonstrates how the unprecedented crisis unfolding as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the sense of urgency to accelerate global action on commitments on women and peace and security in order to prevent conflict and build and sustain peace. In coordinating the report, UN-Women strengthened the knowledge base on women and peace and security, documenting both achievements and failures and capturing trends and evidence from new research, data and practice. The report contains calls for the full and equal participation of women from the earliest stages in every peace and political process that the United Nations supports,

urges an end to the constant upward trend of global military spending and links the women and peace and security agenda and the 2030 Agenda in countries affected by conflict. It highlights the need for targeted action to address alarming increases in violence against women and threats against human rights defenders, women peacebuilders and civil society organizations, who are on the front lines of responses to the pandemic and left without support, as well as the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services, the dramatic rise in acute hunger in conflict-affected settings and the increase in economic insecurity and unpaid care work among women. The report sets forward-looking goals for the next decade.

56. The Entity continued to provide substantive support to Security Council members to strengthen the integration of women and peace and security concerns into the Council's deliberations and decisions, and continued to serve as the secretariat of the Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security. Between 2017 to 2019, almost 70 per cent of Council resolutions included references to women and peace and security issues, although the number dropped in 2019.

57. As the secretariat of the Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network and through its country- and regional-level partnerships, UN-Women supported Governments and regional organizations in translating global norms and commitments into action and designing frameworks to monitor results. Membership of the Network has continued to increase and, as at October 2020, 88 countries and territories and 12 regional organizations have adopted dedicated action plans or strategies on women and peace and security; however, fewer than 25 per cent of the plans included a budget at their adoption.

58. In line with Security Council resolutions [2242 \(2015\)](#) and [2467 \(2019\)](#), UN-Women supported gender mainstreaming of United Nations-led counter-terrorism efforts through its partnership with the Office on Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. The Entity continued to chair the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact working group on adopting a gender-sensitive approach to preventing and countering terrorism. Between May and July 2020, UN-Women convened a multi-part virtual consultation on the gender dimensions of violent extremism and counter-terrorism responses with civil society organizations from 43 countries, which resulted in a public statement and a set of concrete recommendations for clear definitions of terrorism and investment in human rights-based approaches and conflict prevention.

59. UN-Women continued to play a key role in promoting gender-responsive peacebuilding and supporting peacebuilding initiatives led by women and young people. The Entity worked with the Peacebuilding Support Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs to update the Secretary-General's Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding. It contributed to the 2020 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, including through inputs for the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace ([A/74/976-S/2020/773](#)), as well as the review of implementation of the gender strategy of the Peacebuilding Commission.

60. In partnership with other United Nations entities, UN-Women produced a report providing evidence of how gender norms and power structures shape the ways in which women and men of different backgrounds experience and manage climate-related security risks. The report provides entry points for integrated action across existing global agendas and contains suggestions of concrete recommendations for policymakers, development practitioners and donors.

61. Through collaboration with the United Nations Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law, UN-Women ensured that women's rights were at the heart of United Nations efforts on justice, corrections and policing. In 2020, the Entity initiated a global

programme with UNDP to support access to justice for women, aiming to reach women and girls in eight conflict-affected and post-conflict countries with legal assistance, support the reform of discriminatory legislation and provide technical assistance to ensure that transitional justice processes are gender-sensitive.

B. Participation of women and financing for sustained peace

62. UN-Women provided knowledge and technical expertise, monitoring progress and documenting results in partnership with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations, to ensure that women participate in all stages of peace processes and conflict prevention. The Entity continued to support the work of regional networks of women mediators and the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks.

63. The Entity supported the Secretary-General's initiative on action for peacekeeping and assisted Member States and the Department of Peace Operations in advancing the Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018–2028 to significantly increase the number of women deployed as military and police peacekeepers. UN-Women continued to host the secretariat of the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations, a multi-partner trust fund to assist Member States in recruiting and deploying more women as military and police personnel in support of peacekeeping. The response to the Fund's first programming round was overwhelmingly positive, and six troop- and police-contributing countries and one United Nations entity were invited to develop detailed proposals.

64. The COVID-19 crisis has exposed systemic inequalities, skewed spending patterns and the urgency of reversing prevailing trends in financing the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. UN-Women continues to monitor and report on global trends and has deepened its collaboration with the Peacebuilding Fund. In 2019 the Fund allocated 40 per cent of its funding to projects integrating a gender perspective, including 14.3 per cent to projects with gender equality and the empowerment of women as a principal objective. Through a special window, the Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative, \$21.2 million was allocated to projects fully promoting gender equality and \$20.4 million was invested in youth leadership. In 2020, UN-Women contributed to the thematic reviews on transitional justice and youth and peace and security of projects supported by the Fund between 2014 and 2018. The number of UN-Women offices receiving allocations from the Fund in 2019 rose to 27, from 16 in 2018.

65. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, for which UN-Women serves as the secretariat, provides direct, dedicated and flexible financing for women's civil society organizations. The Fund surpassed its target – of reaching \$40 million by the end of 2020 – early and quadrupled the number of grass-roots civil society organizations reached by supporting more than 200 organizations in conflict-affected countries and humanitarian settings. In 2020, the Fund launched two new funding windows: (a) a COVID-19 emergency response window to support projects of women's organizations on the front line of the pandemic and provide organizations working on women and peace and security issues with institutional funding to help them to sustain themselves through the crisis; and (b) a new response window on the participation of women in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements.

C. Humanitarian action

66. Following the launch of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 in March 2020, UN-Women led the development of the Inter-Agency Standing

Committee gender alert on the pandemic, on behalf of the Gender Reference Group. The alert provides gender analysis of the impact of the pandemic on women and girls worldwide, with a specific focus on those already affected by crisis or particularly at risk, as well as practical guidance to humanitarian practitioners on the action and minimum standards required on a cluster-by-cluster basis to address the key needs of women and girls affected by the pandemic.

67. During the humanitarian affairs segment of the Economic and Social Council, UN-Women organized an event to present the findings of a joint study with the United Nations Population Fund, which highlights the benefits of gender-specific humanitarian action, indicating cost-benefit ratios averaging \$8 for every \$1 dollar spent. Nevertheless, the amount of funding received is disproportionately lower for gender-responsive programming compared with general humanitarian funding, with only 39 per cent of coverage for programmes targeted to the needs of women and girls, compared with 69 per cent of coverage for the overall appeal request.

68. As the convener of the Grand Bargain Friends of Gender group, co-chair of the sub-work stream on cash and gender, and member of other work streams, UN-Women intensified efforts to mainstream a gender perspective across the Grand Bargain, as demonstrated in the increased reporting on gender issues in the annual report of the Grand Bargain. The reports illustrated the formulation and implementation of institutional strategies on gender equality, as well as examples of how signatories have been integrating those issues into their implementation of specific commitments. There were also examples of targeted investments in gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women published technical guidance for the Grand Bargain work streams, as well as the explorative and participatory research study entitled “Who holds the microphone? Crisis-affected women’s voices on gender-transformative changes in humanitarian settings: experiences from Bangladesh, Colombia, Jordan and Uganda”.

VI. Support for implementation of policy guidance

69. The operational activities of UN-Women were strongly informed by the agreed conclusions on social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-third session. This work has become even more critical and urgent in the light of the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on the economic and social situation of women and girls everywhere.

70. UN-Women supported Governments in integrating a gender perspective into national social protection systems and policies. The Entity worked closely with the relevant ministries to develop and implement the gender action plan of the national social safety net programme in the United Republic of Tanzania and a gender strategy on social protection in Uganda. In Lebanon and Liberia, the Entity supported initiatives to strengthen access for women and girls to social protection and public services, including through cash transfer programmes. In Ecuador, it supported the development of strategies for closing gender and age gaps in social protection and social mobility and for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on employment, social security, care services and labour recovery. In the context of the pandemic, rapid assessments were undertaken in Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia and the State of Palestine to determine the extent of support and gaps in public service provision, in particular in relation to violence against women, in order to inform the response and recovery plans from a gender perspective by both Governments and the United Nations system. With the Economic Commission for Europe, UN-Women also started a new project to strengthen national capacities to design and implement

gender-responsive social protection policies for sustained recovery from the pandemic and increased resilience against future shocks.

71. In Colombia, the Entity's engagement with the Government led to the creation of a gender budget map to track public investments for gender equality, prioritizing financing for projects promoting women's rights, and the expansion of social protection floors and parental leave was included as a main objective in the Government's response to the pandemic. In the Europe and Central Asia region, UN-Women used the agreed conclusions to strengthen its work with finance and sectoral ministries to improve national legal and policy commitments related to gender-responsive budgeting, to conduct sectoral programme analysis and to identify measures and indicators with a greater focus on gender-responsive social protection and care services at the local level. In Rwanda, the Entity focused on promoting gender-responsive budgeting to support resourcing for the national social protection system, while, in South Africa, a joint programme on social protection, funded by the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, was conducted and research on social protection in the informal sector was undertaken. Studies conducted by the Entity on unpaid care and domestic work in Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Serbia and other countries informed policy dialogues and awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns. In Morocco, a reference guide on mainstreaming a gender perspective into urban policy projects was developed, including the design of smart applications to prevent and end violence against women and girls in public spaces.

72. UN-Women supported the adoption of laws related to strengthened care policies in Uruguay, as well as the publication of the framework document for building a care policy, with the Ministry of Women, in Paraguay. Governments in Ecuador, Mexico and Uruguay also ratified the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), or the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), of the International Labour Organization following advocacy efforts by UN-Women and its partners. In preparation for the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, UN-Women conducted a webinar series on strengthening gender perspectives in health care, education and social protection, linking recommendations from the regional preparatory meeting for the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women with pandemic response efforts and the provision of essential services.

VII. Conclusion

73. Despite the challenges presented by the onset of the pandemic, UN-Women was able to provide effective normative support to intergovernmental processes and bodies, including in the context of the 25-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It provided strong evidence of progress and gaps in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and contributed to the development of concrete recommendations to accelerate the implementation of commitments. The Entity continued its efforts to strengthen the integration of a gender perspective and improve coherence, consistency and coordination between the normative and operational aspects of its work. The 25-year review and appraisal process was also an opportunity to galvanize impactful initiatives and partnerships to close gaps and intensify action.

74. UN-Women will continue to support the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and other intergovernmental bodies, including as they strengthen a gender-responsive global normative framework in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such policy guidance will be critical as societies rebuild after the pandemic and lay the groundwork for strengthening the resilience of women and girls to future shocks.