



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

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## Second regular session of 2018

10 and 11 September 2018

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

### Organizational matters

## Report on the annual session of 2018, 19 to 20 June 2018

### I. Organizational matters

1. The annual session of 2018 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) was held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 19 and 20 June 2018.
2. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session ([UNW/2018/L.3/Rev.1](#)), and approved the report on its first regular session held on 13 February 2018 ([UNW/2018/1](#)) and workplan for the second regular session of 2018, to be held on 10 and 11 September.
3. The Executive Board adopted four decisions (2018/1, 2018/2, 2018/3, and 2018/4) as contained in the annex to the present report.
4. At the request of some delegations, the Executive Board decided to postpone the consideration of the cost-recovery report, to its second regular session 2018.

### II. Opening statements

5. The President of the Executive Board, Ambassador H.E. Ms. Ivana Pajević (Montenegro), opened the session by acknowledging the presence of the new Deputy Executive Director, Åsa Regnér, and underlined her delight to work with her to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.
6. Noting that the annual session of 2018 was the first Executive Board session since the adoption of the landmark General Assembly resolution on the repositioning of the UN development system, RES/A/72/279, the President highlighted that UN-Women was well positioned to mainstream a gender perspective throughout the implementation process. She assured Member States of her readiness to lead the Executive Board in outlining changes to its working methods and make it fit for purpose. The President stressed that the Executive Board will work more closely with the Boards of sister entities to harmonize joint work.
7. The President touched upon the Executive Board's recent joint field visit to Uganda and UN-Women's visit to Malawi. She expressed her appreciation of UN-



Women's leveraging its mandate and working with other UN agencies, partners and various stakeholders in promoting human rights in even the most challenging environments. She also highlighted the Executive Board's fruitful interactions with cultural leaders in Malawi, who worked with UN-Women to rescue girls from child marriage and brought them back to school.

8. In closing, the President stressed the importance of zero tolerance in combating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment within the UN system, stating that these issues have no place in the United Nations system and pose a threat to the UN's credibility. The President assured Member States of her and her government's engagement towards gender equality and the empowerment of women.

9. In her opening address, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, thanked the Member States for adopting the resolution on the repositioning of the UN development system. Stating that its implementation will bring profound changes to UN-Women's work, she noted that the reform will leverage the Resident Coordinator system to ensure that the UN works better together and will develop a new generation of UN Country Teams (UNCTs) that can respond better to the needs of countries. The head of the Entity welcomed the attention placed on the UNDAF as the main operational tool of the UNCT going forward, noting that UN-Women co-led the development of the last UNDAF and that it will continue to be involved in its updating process. In implementing the Common Chapter, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director announced that UN-Women began 14 new initiatives, working together with sister UN agencies on at least one of the six thematic areas at regional and country level. She noted that the agencies will develop funding compacts to scale up joint actions, building on the experience of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative.

10. The head of the Entity stated that UN-Women is well prepared for the changes called for by the General Assembly resolution, especially because UN-Women anticipated these reforms during the preparation of its Strategic Plan 2018-2021. Most notably, UN-Women took critical steps towards fully implementing the management response to the evaluation on the regional architecture. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted that UN-Women will soon provide Member States with a concrete plan for addressing the implication of this landmark resolution on UN-Women, by the second regular session in September 2018.

11. The head of the Entity was pleased to note that these changes take place in a trajectory of growth and positive developments for UN-Women. She highlighted that in 2017 UN-Women achieved its highest revenue target since inception (US\$369 million), and that there has been an especially strong growth in non-core resources (US\$214.2 million, a 20% increase since 2016). She thanked Sweden for signing a multi-year agreement, pledging US\$62 million over four years.

12. The head of the Entity highlighted some positive numbers from UN-Women's Annual Report, indicating that 80% of targets outlined in the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 have been fully or largely met. Furthermore, in 2017 alone, UN-Women contributed to the amendment or reform of 27 laws in 17 countries to strengthen women's rights. She also remarked that, since 2014, an additional 2 billion women and girls live in countries where policy frameworks for women's economic empowerment were strengthened, over 1.5 billion women and girls are better protected from violence through stronger legal frameworks, and more than 1.48 billion women and girls are benefitting from an increase in budget allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.

13. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director drew attention to UN-Women's work in supporting the strengthening and implementation of global norms. In 2017, UN-Women worked with Member States to bring a strong gender equality focus to the Ministerial Declaration of the High-Level Political Forum. The Entity engaged with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with the COP adopting a Gender Action Plan. Together with private sector partners, UN-Women created the Unstereotype Alliance, working to address stereotypes perpetuated by marketing and advertising. The head of the Entity informed Member States that on 19 June 2018, UN-Women signed a US\$6.5 million agreement with the United Arab Emirates' NAMA Women Advancement Establishment to support a flagship programme for women entrepreneurs. Since 2014, UN-Women supported an average annual participation of 2,500 officials and more than 3,700 civil society representatives at the Commission on the Status of Women.

14. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director highlighted the significant progress UN-Women has made to improve its institutional performance. She noted that UN-Women's social media followers grew from 640,000 in 2014 to 6.5 million in 2017. The Entity developed a second generation of the UN SWAP. The head of the Entity underlined that UN-Women is engaging collaboratively with other agencies to implement the Secretary-General's System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity and its objective of reaching parity within the UN system by 2028.

15. Addressing UN-Women's response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director asked her Director of Policy, Purna Sen, to act as Executive Coordinator and Spokesperson on Addressing Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Discrimination. The Entity has also established a network of focal points on addressing SEA at HQ and Regional Offices to guide staff on reporting allegations. UN-Women has led prevention of SEA efforts in some countries like Haiti, Sudan and Sierra Leone, providing training to Gender Focal Points and other members of the UNCTs. As part of the Secretary-General's CEB task force on sexual harassment, UN-Women is co-chairing the work to develop a model policy to strengthen sexual harassment policies and practice for the UN system. Reminding Member States of her stance, the head of the Entity assured that UN-Women has a zero-tolerance policy for SEA and sexual harassment.

16. The head of the Entity reported that UN-Women received a clean audit for the sixth consecutive year. Within the context of the establishment of its in-house consolidated oversight unit, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director informed Member States that she will soon appoint the Director of Independent Evaluation and Audit. She noted that she already appointed the Chief of the Internal Audit Service. She also approved a risk-based workplan for 2018, which includes nine country office audits and one headquarters audit with 20 DIM Project audits in 15 different countries. She thanked the Interim Director for ensuring that there was no gap in internal audit while the new audit was being set up.

17. On evaluation, the head of UN-Women appointed the Chief of the Independent Evaluation Service. She noted that the report on the evaluation function shows significant progress across all performance indicators, and that UN-Women agrees with the recommendations and will take actions in the management response.

18. Underlining UN-Women's ability to elevate the voices of women from the grassroots level, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director drew attention to the European Development Days in Brussels, which were focused on gender equality and women's empowerment and highlighted the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative. She also noted her involvement in Canada's Gender Equality Advisory Council for the G7

Presidency and encouraged Member States to read the full Council's report, which called for 20% of all aid to go to programmes that benefit gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. She underlined that G7 leaders discussed gender equality and women's empowerment for two full hours and that gender perspectives were systematically mainstreamed in other G7 themes. She welcomed the nearly US\$3 billion commitment to girls' education and the commitment by G7 development finance institutions to mobilize US\$3 billion by 2020 for women's empowerment.

19. In conclusion, the head of the Entity told Member States that she, the Deputy Executive Directors, the Senior Management Team and the entire UN-Women team were committed to making the most of the opportunities provided by the repositioning of the UN development system.

20. Thirty speakers took the floor, 16 of which were women. Overall, Member States welcomed the progress outlined in the annual report and expressed their support for UN-Women's normative framework and its operational achievements at country level. Many delegations stressed the vital role of gender equality and women's empowerment in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda and called on UN-Women to continue making progress in its own capacity. Delegations asked UN-Women to leverage its coordination mandate to streamline gender perspectives in the work of sister agencies, including by promoting gender parity within the UN system. Several delegations encouraged UN-Women to ensure adequate funding for its coordination and oversight functions, looked forward to learning more of its resource mobilization strategy, and called on Member States to increase core contributions.

21. One delegation, delivering a statement on behalf of 50 Member States and echoed by several others, firmly condemned sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment, stating that these practices, undermining the work and credibility of the UN, should not be tolerated under any circumstances. The delegation called on UN-Women to step up its commitment to combating these forms of abuse and provide a supportive network to victims and whistle-blowers.

22. Recalling the recently adopted resolution on the repositioning of the UN development system, one delegation, delivering a statement on behalf of 22 Member States, called on UN-Women to support the Secretary-General in fully implementing reforms. The delegate urged UN-Women to not only apply focus to its own activities of comparative advantage, but also leverage its coordination mandate to further mainstream a gender perspective throughout all the work of the UN development system.

23. One Member State called on UN-Women to increase support to developing countries and place emphasis on women's education, employment, health and eradicating poverty.

24. One delegation urged UN-Women to consider cultural and religious contexts in its work. Echoing the remarks of other delegations, the Member State requested UN-Women to ensure that its operational activities are always conducted with the consent and guidance of the host country.

25. In response, the Secretariat thanked Member States for their welcoming remarks supporting UN-Women's mandate. Acknowledging that Member States' support was critical to UN-Women's normative and intergovernmental agendas, the Secretariat noted that more work needed to be done to translate normative standards in New York into operational policies at the country level.

26. The Secretariat echoed the sentiments of Member States on the issues of SEA and harassment and assured them that UN-Women was working continuously to effect change within the UN system and beyond. Looking forward to the informal lunch briefing, the Secretariat stressed that UN-Women has already developed a response in line with Member States' expectations.

27. Regarding UN reform, UN-Women has worked to anticipate the implications of the newly adopted resolution in the preparation of its Strategic Plan 2018-2021. The Secretariat assured Member States that UN-Women remained committed to abiding by the reform and collaborating closely with sister agencies. The Secretariat also noted that UN-Women was the first agency to pledge that there will be no single freestanding UN-Women project by 2021, and that all projects would take part of a UN joint programming approach.

### **III. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters: briefing on cost recovery**

28. The Director of Management and Administration gave a short briefing on the progress made on the cost recovery process. A formal item on cost recovery will be present in the agenda of the second regular session in September 2018, to be informed by the joint report on cost recovery.

29. The report will present two evidence-based proposals for harmonized cost recovery policies. These proposals are built on overarching principles from past decisions of the Executive Boards of the respective entities. These principles include: harmonization across the four entities; maximizing allocation of core resources to programmatic activities; minimizing cross-subsidization between core and non-core resources; and continuing to be cost-effective and competitive within the overall development cooperation system.

### **IV. Evaluation**

30. The report on the evaluation function, 2017 ([UNW/2018/4](#)), outlined milestones achieved in 2017, the Interim Director acknowledged the development of key strategies such as the Global Evaluation Strategy 2018-2021 and the Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018-2021, containing the joint evaluation of the Common Chapter of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021. He also highlighted the co-location of the independent evaluation and internal audit functions under one oversight umbrella, the Independent Evaluation and Internal Audit Service (IEAS).

31. From 2014 to 2017, the Evaluation Office conducted seven corporate evaluations, four meta-analyses, and two joint reviews on gender policies and practices in the UN system and beyond. At the decentralized level, 116 evaluations were completed from 2014 to 2017. The results indicated that UN-Women achieved or made good progress on all nine key performance indicators (KPIs). However, the Interim Director noted with concern the decrease in financial resources invested in evaluation, from 2.9% in 2016 to 2.7% in 2017, both missing the target of 3% for 2017.

32. In providing the management perspective to the report on the evaluation function, 2017, the Deputy Executive Director for Programmes noted with appreciation the overall positive feedback from Member States on UN-Women's

evaluation reports. In this context, he noted that the evaluation function was working on preparing a new strategic note in line with the 2030 Agenda. He underlined that UN-Women's organizational strategic goals and priorities are also closely aligned with the evaluation strategies outlined in the report. Despite seeing the positive trends across the evaluation KPIs, the Deputy Executive Director acknowledged that two KPIs need to progress. The first KPI, indicating a decrease in the financial resources invested in evaluation, represents a reduction in the third-party cost-sharing arrangement UN-Women has for developing the capacities of national evaluation entities. The second KPI, indicating a decrease in the implementation rate of evaluation recommendations despite the increased implementation efforts, represented a lag in reporting.

33. The corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to women's political participation and leadership ([UNW/2018/CRP.2](#)) was presented by the Chief of the Independent Evaluation Service (IES). In the evaluation process, applying gender equality and human rights perspectives, six countries were visited and 397 stakeholders were consulted. The evaluation report contained 20 findings, six conclusions and six recommendations. Among the conclusions, the IES found that UN reform efforts would provide new opportunities as well as challenges to implementing UN-Women's coordination mandate on women's political participation, especially at the country level. Furthermore, UN-Women needed to prioritize and increase its efforts to address marginalization within its women's political participation work. Among the recommendations, the IES encouraged UN-Women to strengthen its prioritization capacity at the country level, establish a clear division of labour with other UN agencies around potentially overlapping mandates, invest in a thematic resource mobilization approach that addresses regional priorities, and invest in new programming on social norms change.

34. Providing the management response to the corporate evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to women's political participation and leadership, the Deputy Executive Director outlined key action points that UN-Women will take to implement the six corporate evaluation recommendations. This includes developing operational guidance for clarifying the implementation of the Entity's coordination mandate to establish a clear division of labour with other UN agencies; investing in the capacity-strengthening of personnel to enhance UN-Women's ability to deliver results and meet stakeholder requests; and enhancing UN-Women country programming with community dialogues, media capacity building, and leveraging the HeForShe campaign to encourage more political leaders to publicly promote women's leadership.

35. Overall, Member States were pleased with the reports from the evaluation offices. They welcomed the high level of implementation of recommendations and the actions taken to improve data collection methodologies. One Member State stressed the need to allocate sufficient resources to the evaluation function. Another noted that some issues raised in the report, particularly regarding the prioritization of activities and its coordination role, were not new. One delegation, noting that UN-Women has policy advisors in just two regional offices, has asked the Entity why it has prioritized those regions above others. Another delegation asked UN-Women to elaborate further on its efforts to strengthen partnerships both within and outside the UN system to address marginalization.

36. Responding to Member States questions, the Deputy Executive Director Yannick Glemarec stated that, due to resource constraints, UN-Women could only have two regional policy specialists. However, he noted that the Entity will soon recruit new

policy specialists for Latin America and Asia. Regarding partnerships, the Deputy Executive Director highlighted how UN-Women would partner with media associations, particularly radio stations, which would reach out to millions who are marginalized.

## V. Audit matters

37. The Director of the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) of UNDP presented the report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017 ([UNW/2018/3](#)). This report represented the seventh and last year that UN-Women has outsourced its audit functions to UNDP.

38. In 2017, OAI continued to use a risk-based approach for all audit plans, focusing on offices and functions rated high and medium risk. OAI issued seven field office audit reports and 20 directly implemented project audit reports by the end of 2017, while the two remaining audits were issued in 2018. The OAI has reported that no field office was assigned an overall rating of unsatisfactory in 2017. Out of the nine reports, three were rated partially satisfactory with major improvements needed, two were rated partially satisfactory with some improvements needed, two offices were rated satisfactory, and two did not receive a rating as they were follow-up audit reports.

39. As of 31 December 2017, the rate of implementation was 99%, which is one percent higher compared to 2016 and fully meets the UN-Women management benchmark of 90%. Furthermore, as of 31 December 2017, there were no recommendations outstanding for more than 18 months.

40. In 2017, OAI opened 17 new investigation cases for UN-Women, compared with 41 in 2016. The office also carried over 26 cases from 2016. Seven investigation reports were issued in 2017.

41. The Chairperson of UN-Women's Audit Advisory Committee (AAC) presented the report of the Audit Advisory Committee for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017 ([UNW/2018/3/Add.1](#)). She noted that regional architecture was one of UN-Women's organizational priorities, and that in response to the independent evaluation of regional architecture completed in 2016, the Entity has been working on refining its country presence typology to support structural adjustments in line with its Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

42. The AAC continued to note UN-Women's ongoing challenges regarding resource mobilization, understanding that it remained the highest organizational risk for the Entity. In response, a resource mobilization performance audit was conducted in 2017 and recommended some major improvements, which the Entity plans to address in its resource mobilization strategy 2018-2021.

43. In 2017, the AAC supported UN-Women's recommendation to establish one organizational unit beginning in 2018 that would bring together the independent assurance functions of internal audit and evaluation. The AAC commended UN-Women on the transitioning process but noted with concern that the current level of audit coverage remains somewhat limited. The AAC also noted the decrease in new investigation cases in 2017 and stressed that UN-Women continue to focus on creating a greater awareness of reporting obligations and the channels to do so. The committee remained concerned that the future projected budget for the evaluation function may be high considering the size of UN-Women and the resource challenges it faces.

44. In the management response to the 2017 annual report on internal audit and investigation activities, UN-Women's Director of Management and Administration noted that the Entity received a satisfactory opinion and had a 99% implementation rate of audit recommendations. He informed delegates that UN-Women is committed to extending its audit assurance coverage. In response to the Executive Board's decision 2017/4, UN-Women confirmed that all corporate and recurring recommendations from 2016 were implemented, which led to positive effects such as an increase in funding and streamlining the management of global programmes. Regarding investigations, UN-Women has fully implemented a zero-tolerance policy in all substantiated cases of SEA and sexual harassment and has fully recovered from financial losses recorded in 2016.

45. In the management response to the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) reports issued in 2017, the Director stated that of the 40 recommendations assigned to UN-Women for action, 19 have been implemented, five are in progress, and 16 are under consideration. He noted that some recommendations' implementation is largely subject to available resources, internal capacity, or requires consultation with Member States.

46. In the management response to the report of the Audit Advisory Committee, the Director highlighted how UN-Women has worked to implement the AAC's recommendations. Specifically, UN-Women refined its country office typology considering the outcomes of the repositioning of the UN development system. The Entity integrated its Results Management System with the Enterprise Resource Planning System to enable the tracking of budgets and expenditures against results. UN-Women developed a new Corporate Resource Mobilization and Partnership Strategy 2018-2021 with clear targets, timelines, roles and responsibilities.

47. Overall, Member States expressed satisfaction with the results highlighted in the reports. Two delegations asked UN-Women to explain the decrease in investigation caseloads in 2017. One Member State noted with concern the lack of an adequate response to the limited OAI audit assurance coverage and additionally requested UN-Women to assess and implement the appropriate structures to support the Entity's Second Line of Defence. One Member State asked for more details on the proportion of reported sexual harassment cases in comparison to other harassment cases. Finally, another delegation requested UN-Women to provide an update on its new resource mobilization strategy.

48. In response to Member States, the Secretariat indicated that it could not explain the decrease in investigation caseloads; however it has continued to raise awareness on issues of misconduct and fraud and has actively publicized the availability of reporting mechanisms. UN-Women agreed to follow the AAC recommendations for its Second Line of Defence. The Secretariat informed Member States that UN-Women cannot currently separate the cases of sexual harassment from other harassment cases, but it assures that it will be able to do so starting in August with the new case management system. Finally, elaborating on UN-Women's new resource mobilization strategy, the Secretariat indicated that a new area of focus will involve prioritizing funding prospects that carry the greatest potential. In this regard, the Secretariat invited Member States to request a briefing for more details.

49. The Interim Director of UN-Women's Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) gave a brief update to Member States on the establishment of an in-house internal audit service alongside the independent evaluation service. In the implementation of the approved transitional risk-based audit work plan for 2018, six senior audit specialists were engaged to undertake five country office audits and one



HQ audit, and three international audit firms were contracted to carry out the audit of 17 Direct Implementation projects in 14 country offices. The internal audit service performs in accordance with the standards of the International Professional Practices Framework, including the professional Code of Ethics from the Institute of Internal Audit. The co-located evaluation and internal audit functions will benefit from two levels of independence: on the organizational level with a direct reporting line to the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director and the Executive Board, and on the functional level, with clear roles and responsibilities defined for each function. In strengthening synergies between both functions, collaborative work planning is critical to maximizing coverage and avoiding overlap.

50. One Member State thanked UN-Women for the update and encouraged the Entity to continue providing updates to Member States on the transition process. Another Member State requested UN-Women to elaborate on how the Director position for the IEAS will be filled.

51. In response to the delegations, the Secretariat explained that while the Director position for IEAS has yet to be filled, several quality candidates have been identified.

## **VI. Special briefing: Operational response of UN-Women in Tanzania**

52. UN-Women's Programme Director made opening remarks on the Entity's operational work in Tanzania. She highlighted that UN-Women helped incorporate several laws pushing gender responsive legislation and ending violence against women. She also noted that the Entity was working in line with UN reforms and collaborating closely with other UN agencies.

53. UN-Women's Representative for Eastern and Southern Africa provided Member States with a detailed briefing on UN-Women's work in Tanzania, which has been primarily guided by the country's national development plan and the United Nations Development Assistance Programme (UNDAP) II. The response was focused on key thematic results areas: democratic governance, human rights and gender equality; inclusive economic growth and education; environment and climate change resilience; and HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and support. The regional office has reported several positive results, notably in women's leadership and political participation where 2015 saw a 47% increase in the number of women elected as MPs since 2005; in women's economic empowerment, where 8,628 women entrepreneurs were empowered to conduct profitable businesses; and in ending violence against women, where UN-Women supported Tanzania in launching the Legal Aid Act and National Plan of Action (NPA). The representative also acknowledged challenges in addressing child marriage and changing mindsets. The regional office is currently supporting the Tanzanian government in developing a new comprehensive gender policy to make sure no one is left behind.

54. In response, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tanzania commended UN-Women for the report and its work in the country. The Ambassador reiterated his country's principles and agreements contained in the Beijing Platform for Action to prioritize the empowerment of women. In this regard, he highlighted several achievements made thus far, including a 36% female representation in parliament, the development of programmes that have economically empowered women entrepreneurs through bank loans, and establishing policies banning gender discrimination or harassment at the workplace.

55. Other Member States have also commended UN-Women's work. One delegation asked the Secretariat to elaborate on how UN-Women fulfils its coordination mandate in the context of the UN reform process. Another speaker asked how UN-Women addresses cultural issues in Tanzania.

56. In addressing the issue of coordination, the UN-Women Representative for Eastern and Southern Africa explained that the Entity frequently meets with sister agencies to follow common reporting processes. The Entity has also been focused on creating a new gender equality scorecard in the region to ensure that all agencies are delivering effectively for gender equality. Regarding cultural challenges, UN-Women has been creating partnerships with local religious leaders to advocate for women's participation across faiths, as well as working with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) at the grassroots levels for raising awareness campaigns.

## **VII. Informal briefing on UN-Women's actions to strengthening the protection of populations from sexual exploitation and abuse by its personnel; and sexual harassment at the work place**

57. During the lunch-time session on 20 June 2018, the Executive Board held an informal briefing on UN-Women's actions to strengthening the protection of populations from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by its personnel and against sexual harassment at the work place, attended by the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director.

58. In her opening remarks, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director noted that tackling SEA and sexual harassment was an extremely important topic for UN-Women, as it concerned all women and girls of the world. Encouraged to see greater awareness on this issue and the high prevalence of cases it has exposed, the head of the Entity noted that UN-Women is uniquely placed to address the problem both within and beyond the UN system. She mentioned the appointment of an Executive Coordinator of UN-Women, to serve as the focal point for addressing sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination, and stressed the critical value of having a "go-to" person on the issue, noting that other agencies are following this model. The head of the Entity emphasized that UN-Women will adopt a victim-focused approach on the issue to make sure women are not afraid to report misconduct and are protected throughout the process. This approach is particularly important because sexual harassment is primarily a power relations problem, where predominantly younger women and men in more junior positions are victims of this form of abuse.

59. The Human Resources Director of UN-Women presented on the Entity's prevention measures from SEA. Aligned with other agencies, UN-Women continues to implement a zero-tolerance policy against sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination. The policy framework is built upon established framework for combating SEA, like the Secretary-General's Bulletin, and UN-Women's own policies against sexual harassment and retaliation, in working closely with the independent UN ethics office. She elaborated on the reporting process for sexual harassment complaints and described the formal and informal channels the victims can use to address the problem: the former involving a formal report to the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), and the latter typically involving the intervention of an independent ombudsman. The Director noted that one case of SEA was reported in 2017, with an ongoing investigation. No cases of sexual harassment were reported.

The Director highlighted that all staff are required to take three mandatory online training courses, and staff were also handed a June 2018 handbook on policies and procedures for SEA and sexual harassment. Additionally, UN-Women has been an active participant in the CEB Task Force on sexual harassment and the SEA Working Group.

60. The Executive Coordinator and Spokesperson on Sexual Assault and other forms of discrimination underlined that the heightened awareness of the prevalence of sexual violence and sexual harassment has strong implications for the work of UN-Women and the UN system in achieving the SDGs. She explained that sexual harassment consisted of a range of behaviours often based on gender inequalities in power. In this regard, UN-Women's work has been focussing on combating all forms of sexual violence and discrimination within the system. The UN's work is being reviewed in seven areas: policy (in which a working group is co-chaired by UN-Women); guidelines for managers; sexual harassment at UN events; helplines and hotlines; investigations and reporting; training and communications (in which a working group is co-chaired by UN-Women); and harmonized factsheets and information. In the policy working group, UN-Women is working on developing a framework for addressing sexual harassment in the UN system. The Executive Coordinator stressed the importance of zero tolerance and addressing cultural norms head on, and assured Member States that UN-Women will be reviewing its own practices to be better aligned with these new frameworks.

61. Overall, Member States were appreciative of UN-Women's zero-tolerance approach to combating SEA and sexual harassment, and some thanked the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for appointing a spokesperson to address these issues directly. One Member State, citing the need to increase efficiency and avoid duplication in the UN's work, stated that a briefing on the topic would be more welcome during the Joint Meeting of the Boards where all relevant Entities can address these common issues. In contrast, other Member States argued that the topic should be engaged in both a system-wide and entity-by-entity track due to differences in governance and because the Joint Meeting of the Boards does not hold any decision-making authority. One Member State asked the Secretariat to elaborate on what challenges UN-Women is facing in combating SEA and sexual harassment. Two delegations requested more details on how UN-Women is addressing issues of under-reporting. One speaker wanted to know about the number of cases in the formal and informal tracks of reporting. Another Member State wanted to know how UN-Women was specifically working to protect staff in junior positions such as interns or consultants.

62. The Secretariat indicated that while changing procedures to address SEA and sexual harassment is a challenge, changing workplace culture is more difficult. This would primarily involve changing the mindsets that treat reports of misconduct as inherently suspicious. The Secretariat then informed Member States that the issue of under-reporting only looks at formal reports to the OIOS, and that almost all reports have been conducted through informal channels. However, the Secretariat did acknowledge that under-reporting may still be an issue, which would thus warrant further training staff, reassuring personnel that all reported cases of misconduct will be treated with confidentiality and that victims will be supported. UN-Women will be working with the UN on creating a database to screen prospective hires and ensure that perpetrators will no longer be part of the UN system. The Secretariat was unable to provide an exact number on cases pursued in the informal process since this channel used different routes, but it assured Member States that it will work on capturing these numbers in the future. Understanding the underlying implications of unequal power

relations, UN-Women has worked closely with interns, trainees and JPOs during a youth town hall and discussed how the Entity can offer support and create a safe workspace.

63. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director reiterated the importance of addressing this issue and stressed that the UN-Women Executive Board is in a better position to change these discriminatory trends than ever before, and that the UN must work harder to be a standard setter for the rest of the world. The head of the Entity acknowledged a lack of trust from UN staff towards Senior Management to tackle these issues, as the UN system suffers from credibility issues and mindsets are not being changed fast enough. In this regard, she called on Member States to support the Secretary-General's initiative against SEA and sexual harassment and become more engaged at home.

64. In closing, the Deputy Executive Director underlined the harmful imbalances in unequal power relations that allow male perpetrators to escape accountability for their actions and noted the importance of changing mindsets. She also stressed the importance of co-opting support from the leadership level to protect victims in lower level positions. Finally, she emphasized the need for UN-Women to be a leader in effecting change in the UN system.

## **VIII. Closing**

65. In his closing statement, the Deputy Executive Director thanked the Executive Board President for her exceptional support and work in harmonizing the working methods of the Boards. He also thanked Member States for their decisions and the guidance provided. Looking towards to the annual session of 2019, he reminded Member States that the report will look at the first year of implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, which will provide a deeper analysis of any unmet indicators and attrition than previous reports. Welcoming the strong support for the flagship programme initiatives, the Deputy Executive Director thanked all the Member States that supported UN-Women in organizing partner round tables and noted that such programmes make the most difference when championed by Member States. On the repositioning process of the UN development system, he assured that UN-Women remains committed to ensuring a swift implementation of the recently adopted General Assembly resolution, seeing it as a smart catalyst for gender equality and women's empowerment. He reiterated the importance of combating SEA and sexual harassment, and underlined that these issues pose a fundamental threat to the UN's ability to work. On evaluation and audit, UN-Women remains committed to preserving the independence of the functions. Finally, touching on the issue of resources, the Deputy Executive Director noted that the stagnant level of core funding risks adversely impacting the quality, efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of UN-Women's work, as well as the effectiveness of oversight functions.

66. At the closing of the session, the President of the Executive Board thanked Member States for their work and guidance. Reflecting on the session's discussions, she shared her appreciation for UN-Women's responsiveness to the UN development system reform.

## Annex I

### Decisions adopted at the annual session of 2018

#### 2018/1

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

##### *The Executive Board:*

1. *Takes note* of the Annual Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on the Strategic Plan 2014-2017;
2. *Commends* UN-Women on a strong performance to date, and notes with appreciation that UN-Women has reached the majority of the objectives of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, further takes note of the progress made in the results-based management system and requests UN-Women to continue to improve its efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability;
3. *Takes note of* the increased number of partnerships for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and encourages UN-Women to continue its efforts in this regard;
4. *Encourages* UN-Women to continue to take into account lessons learned from the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021;
5. *Recognizes* the interagency efforts being made to advance the Common Chapter of their strategic plans and requests UN-Women to continue consultations with United Nations funds and programmes on the harmonized format for Common Chapter reporting and asks UN-Women to report on the status of the implementation of the Common Chapter, starting with the annual report for 2018, at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards and at its annual session;
6. *Commends* UN-Women on effectively leveraging its mandate as a composite entity in assisting Member States, upon their request, and in ensuring coherence, consistency and coordination between the normative and operational aspects of its work; and reaffirms the important role of UN-Women in leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and women's empowerment and on gender mainstreaming across the United Nations System;
7. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to engage with the Secretary-General, other United Nations development system (UNDS) entities and Member States with a view to support full implementation of General Assembly resolutions 71/243 and 72/279, including its contribution to a smooth transition and business continuity of the resident coordinator system;
8. *Requests* UN-Women, as a UNDS entity, to engage with the Secretary-General and Member States to support preparation of a well-thought-out implementation plan for the inception of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including on the operationalization of its funding arrangements, to be presented to the General Assembly;

9. *Also requests* UN-Women to present a preliminary analysis of the financial and other implications of resolution 72/279 for UN-Women to the Executive Board at the second regular session 2018;
10. *Further requests* UN-Women, in accordance with resolution 72/279, to provide its contribution to the adequate, predictable and sustainable funding of the resident coordinator system, in line with the forthcoming implementation plan for the inception of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system to be presented to the General Assembly, on an annual basis starting 1 January 2019;
11. *Welcomes* the Executive Director's commitment to implementing resolutions 71/243 and 72/279 and in this regard encourages the secretariat of the UN-Women Executive Board to work together with the secretariats of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and WFP Executive Boards to produce a joint response to the 2018 joint meeting of the Executive Boards segment on working methods by no later than four weeks before the second regular session 2018, allowing for a consultation process among Member States ahead of that session;
12. *Requests* UN-Women to provide in advance of the second regular session 2018 an overview of funding gaps in relation to the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, taking into account both regular and other resources, and encourages countries in a position to do so, to increase their contributions, especially to regular resources, to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and requests UN-Women to be transparent in the use of resources to achieve programme results;
13. *Decides* to transmit the report to the Economic and Social Council.

## **2018/2**

### **Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2017**

#### *The Executive Board:*

1. *Takes note* of the Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2017, and the programme of work and budget for 2018 of the Independent Evaluation Service;
2. *Welcomes* the steps taken by UN-Women to establish a credible and useful evaluation function and its contribution to system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts, emphasizes that evaluation should be country-driven and that programme countries' ownership and leadership should be ensured in the evaluation of all forms of assistance, and requests UN-Women, in cooperation with other United Nations system organizations, to continue its efforts to facilitate the building of national evaluation capacities, where applicable;
3. *Requests* UN-Women to ensure the adequate functional integrity and independence of the evaluation function within the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services and to report on how this has been done in its next report;
4. *Expresses* its support for the strengthening of the Independent Evaluation function, including building capacity of UN-Women's evaluation specialists, and requests UN-Women to continue increasing the implementation rate, coverage and use of evaluations and to address the drop in the implementation of management responses in this regard;

5. *Requests* UN-Women to continue the gender-responsive evaluations of country programmes in order to improve programming at country level;
6. *Recognizes* the importance of the evaluation function of UN-Women in providing high-quality, independent and impartial evaluations, and requests UN-Women to take into account the findings of its evaluations in the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021;
7. *Requests* that the Independent Evaluation Service seeks out opportunities with respective evaluation bodies of the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies for joint evaluations of system-wide activities as well as the evaluation of the Common Chapter of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and calls upon the Independent Evaluation Service and UN-Women to brief the Executive Board at the second regular session 2018 on progress on these matters, including their contributions to the function of system-wide independent evaluation measures;
8. *Takes note* of the progress made on implementing decision 2016/2 which requested UN-Women to enhance the coverage of evaluations, the implementation rate of planned evaluations, financial resources invested in the evaluation function and the submission of management responses to the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation system and use evaluation recommendations in its work; and *further requests* UN-Women to make progress in implementing the recommendations of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee (GEAC) and to update the Executive Board on progress by the annual session 2019;
9. *Strongly encourages* UN-Women management to work with the Independent Evaluation Service to continue efforts to strengthen the quality and process of corporate and decentralized evaluations, the implementation rate and coverage of decentralized evaluations, and to use the evaluations as learning and knowledge management tools to enhance future programmes and to ensure appropriate resourcing for centralized and decentralized evaluations;
10. *Notes* the decrease in total spending on evaluations and strongly encourages UN-Women to reach the target of allocating 3% of the total UN-Women programme budget to the evaluation function by the end of the period of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021;
11. *Requests* UN-Women to present an oral update to the Executive Board on its new Global Evaluation Strategy, 2018-2021, at the first regular session of 2019;
12. *Takes note* of UN-Women's work in evaluating its contribution to women's political participation and leadership and encourages UN-Women to take into account lessons learnt in its work.

### **2018/3**

#### **Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017;
2. *Notes* the increase in the implementation rate of audit recommendations and the number of audit reports issued in 2017 and encourages the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services to address the lack of audits completed at Headquarters level;

3. *Notes with appreciation* that UNDP/OAI has been allocated appropriate and sufficient resources in the year 2017, and requests UN-Women to continue to allocate sufficient resources to ensure a satisfactory number of internal audits and investigations each year and guarantee the independence of these functions within the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services;
4. *Expresses* its continuing support for further strengthening of governance, risk management, internal controls and accountability at UN-Women and requests UN-Women to strengthen its analysis of the functioning of these key processes in its future reports to assist the Executive Board's understanding;
5. *Expresses* also its continuing support for the audit and evaluation functions at UN-Women, and urges UN-Women management to continue to leverage synergies between the Evaluation and Audit functions of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services and *requests* UN-Women to provide information on the measures taken to ensure effective linkages between audit and the outsourced investigation function;
6. *Notes* that resource mobilization is a high organizational risk that may affect UN-Women's ability to adequately resource key accountability functions and activities, and in this regard, acknowledges the importance of setting realistic targets and clear assignment of responsibility and accountability for resource mobilization for core and non-core resources;
7. *Recalls* decision 2016/3 in which the Executive Board noted several areas of recurring weaknesses, including the high number of audit recommendations that were corporate in nature, and underscored the importance of progressing with implementation of recurring high priority recommendations;
8. *Reiterates* its concerns about the adequacy of audit coverage and urges UN-Women to follow up on the advice of the OAI and the Audit Advisory Committee to further intensify its efforts to address areas of recurring audit recommendations that pose significant risk, and assessing and implementing appropriate frameworks to support UN-Women's Risk Management and Compliance Functions ("second line of defence") at Headquarters and in the field;
9. *Supports* the "zero tolerance" of the head of UN-Women towards sexual harassment, and appreciates the actions UN-Women has taken so far to prevent and manage sexual harassment, to implement further institutional and cultural changes, and to ensure a joined-up, system-wide, coherent approach;
10. *Requests* UN-Women management, as required under the Secretary General's report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, to present its annual certification to the Executive Board at each annual session, to cover sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, as appropriate, complementing and strengthening its existing reporting, and to provide updates on progress made in that regard, including working with the United Nations Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate; and further urges UN-Women to consider how to align reporting formats and content with agencies, where appropriate;
11. *Encourages* UN-Women management to undertake, using existing resources under the integrated budget 2018-2021, an independent victim-centred review of its policies and processes on tackling both sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, to review the current practices of UN-Women and provide recommendations on both issues, and requests UN-Women to present the review and associated management response to the Executive Board at its annual session 2019;



12. *Encourages* UN-Women to provide more detail in their future responses to both existing and new audit recommendations, including milestones and targets for implementing changes and improvements;
13. *Requests* the audit and investigation functions to include in future annual reports an analysis of the channels by which allegations of fraud and other misconduct are detected or reported to the investigation function and to provide a more detailed analysis of workplace harassment cases, including sexual harassment, covering the falling number of cases, as well as investigations and actions taken, in its 2019 annual report to the Executive Board;
14. *Takes note* of the Report of the Audit Advisory Committee for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017;
15. *Encourages* UN-Women to consider the Audit Advisory Committee's recommendations.

## **2018/4**

### **Cost Recovery**

#### *The Executive Board:*

1. *Recalls* decision 2013/2 and subsequent decision 2017/2 in which it was requested that UN-Women, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, continues the consultations with Member States about the cost recovery policy and presents evidence-based proposals for harmonized cost recovery policies of UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Women and UNICEF, with adjustments if required, for consideration by the Executive Board no later than its Annual Session in 2018;
  2. *Notes* the request of some members of the Executive Board to postpone the presentation of the proposal;
  3. *Requests* UN-Women to present the joint cost-recovery proposal report, prepared by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, to the Executive Board, at its Second Regular Session in 2018.
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