



# General Assembly Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
30 April 2020

Original: English

**General Assembly  
Seventy-fifth session**

Item 24 (a) of the preliminary list\*

**Operational activities for development: operational  
activities for development of the United Nations system**

**Economic and Social Council  
2020 session**

25 July 2019–22 July 2020

Agenda item 7 (a)

**Operational activities of the United Nations  
for international development cooperation:  
follow-up to policy recommendations of the  
General Assembly and the Council**

## **Implementation of General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

In line with the mandates contained in General Assembly resolutions [71/243](#) and [72/279](#), the present report provides a thorough update on the implementation of the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the reforms of the United Nations development system.

The report is based on the latest data and a number of surveys from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and serves to demonstrate that the United Nations development system reforms are being consolidated. The system is better positioned and ready to accompany countries as they seek to respond to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The reinvigorated resident coordinator system is now firmly in place, ensuring stronger and independent leadership of the United Nations development system at the country level. A new generation of United Nations country teams, more cohesive and responsive to national needs and priorities, is taking shape. Solid foundations have been built to nurture a culture of results and learning and to improve efficiencies in business operations. Challenges remain, however, and continued effort is needed to ensure further consolidation through ongoing leadership from all involved, sustained funding of the resident coordinator system, strengthened capacity on system-wide evaluations and improved implementation of the funding compact.

\* [A/75/50](#).



The report also contains an outline for a proposed way forward on three outstanding repositioning components. A final package of measures is provided to strengthen our support to multi-country offices – a historic deficit in our United Nations development offer to the countries concerned. A clear differentiated approach is set out to optimize the rich array of policy assets at the regional level, both to tackle cross-border issues and to strengthen the capacities of our country teams to respond to country needs. Member State consideration is also required of the system-wide strategy document.

Finally, to inform the development of the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review later in 2020, the report addresses a number of issues that go to the core of the integrated support that Member States expect of the United Nations development system to recover better from the current crisis and deliver during the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations development system will need to support governments with policy options and technical advice to make difficult choices. It will need to sharpen its offer on critical priorities, such as poverty eradication, climate change and sustainable economic growth. And it will need to strengthen its ability to work with other partners, including in some of the most difficult contexts.

Overall, I am pleased with the significant progress we have made on the reforms. I thank Member States for their continued support and for ensuring strong oversight along the way. I recognize colleagues across the United Nations system for rising to the challenge and embracing institutional and cultural change. We need to remain focused until it becomes the new normal. As we move forward, I stand firm in my commitment to translate the approved reforms of the United Nations development system into improved results for the people we serve and the planet we depend on.

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## I. Introduction

1. In 2020, we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations and embark together on a decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Over the past few months, however, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has challenged us all on our journey towards transformative change. Threatening millions of lives and causing massive socioeconomic disruption, it is the greatest challenge that our world has faced since the creation of the United Nations. The pandemic has affected countries indiscriminately and is projected to continue throughout 2020, spawning a global recession and potentially reversing decades of development gains. It has already exposed the many flaws of the prevailing socioeconomic development model, flaws that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change seek to address. From a health crisis with far-reaching human consequences, COVID-19 has rapidly become a development emergency.

3. The crisis has also highlighted our interdependence and the undeniable importance of effective multilateralism in today's hyper-globalized world. It is testing the commitment of States to the principles of shared responsibility and global solidarity. In such times, the world looks to the United Nations as a trusted partner and honest broker. At the national level, many countries have immediately reached out to the United Nations development system for essential guidance and support. Thus far, I believe the United Nations development system has responded admirably, in an effective, dynamic and coordinated manner. But we can and will do even more to rise to the challenge and help countries win the battle against COVID-19.

4. The United Nations development system that we see responding to the COVID-19 crisis today is, in many respects, the United Nations development system that we have been building towards over the past four years. Independent, empowered resident coordinators are serving as a centre of gravity to pull together United Nations assets and partnerships to respond to the pandemic, while staying firmly focused on the promises of the 2030 Agenda. The World Health Organization, a specialized agency, is leading the way, working with resident coordinators and supported by the entire United Nations system. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is putting its technical and operational capacities at the service of United Nations country teams to ensure a robust response to the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic. United Nations entities are working collaboratively across peace operations, humanitarian response, sustainable development and human rights at the global, regional, national and local levels. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group has come together around a comprehensive response framework, supported by a dedicated inter-agency funding mechanism. Our communication and partnership capabilities are bringing the United Nations response closer to people and communities, where it is most needed.

5. As we approach the 2020 operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council and the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, we are aware of the complexity and scale of the challenge. The present report provides an update on the implementation of the reforms launched by the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, and the General Assembly, in its resolution [72/279](#), outlined concrete recommendations to complete the unfinished business. The resolution also provided reflections to inform the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycle. It should be read in conjunction with the report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the Development

Coordination Office (E/2020/54), which provides a more detailed picture of the progress made in supporting and establishing a reinvigorated resident coordinator system.

6. Overall, I see three essential takeaways.

7. First, the data contained in the present report demonstrate that we are on track in implementing the change measures mandated by the General Assembly. The repositioning exercise is being consolidated, and all mandates of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review have been turned into action. In some areas, reforms are already beginning to bear fruit, but we have to stay focused and we must do more to fully operationalize the vision of the approved reforms.

8. Four years after the landmark quadrennial comprehensive policy review and two years after Member State approval of ambitious reforms, the United Nations development system is better positioned and ready to accompany countries in overcoming this large-scale human crisis and to accelerate progress towards sustainable development. Within 12 months, we have recast the resident coordinator's role as the independent leader of the United Nations development system at country level. We are nurturing a new generation of United Nations country teams and expanding the United Nations development system offer through a whole-of-system approach not limited by physical presence. Policies, procedures and mechanisms are being designed progressively, laying solid foundations for improving efficiencies in business operations. System-wide, we are improving results-based planning, monitoring and reporting, and audit and evaluation functions. We are strengthening our support to countries in special situations. The new funding compact has been internalized by United Nations entities and Member States, and it is helping to increase transparency and accountability and to secure resourcing that better matches the mandates Member States have given to the United Nations system.

9. In the period since my most recent report (A/74/73-E/2019/4), we continued to monitor the progress across all reform measures rigorously and transparently. A publicly available benefits management system constitutes the first United Nations system-wide tool to manage and track benefits directly derived from reforms.<sup>1</sup> The system confirms that we are on track to deliver all benefits planned to be realized by 2021. The system captures benefits derived from all major changes mandated by General Assembly resolution 72/279, with the exception of benefits related to establishing common country back offices and the funding compact, which were designed to generate tangible results by 2022 and 2023, respectively.

10. Further consolidation of the reforms requires continued leadership by partner countries, United Nations entities, governing boards and funding partners to put in place the right incentives for country teams to act as one across all facets of their work, under the leadership of the resident coordinator. To bring together the entire United Nations development system offer, we must, among other things, extend the management and accountability framework beyond the country level to the regional and global levels. To deliver on our commitment to strengthen system-wide evaluations, I will move ahead with critical measures defined in consultation with evaluation units from across the system. Member States must work to address the challenges encountered in funding the resident coordinator system and the continued imbalance between core and non-core resources, with the help of the funding compact, while strengthening the United Nations development system governance architecture through the General Assembly and the operational activities segment. In tandem, all United Nations development system entities will continue to step up our

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://reform.un.org/content/benefits-tracker>.

accountability and transparency and leverage the momentum we have created together to advance more efficient United Nations development operations.

11. Second, now is the time to move forward with outstanding essential repositioning components relating to the multi-country offices, the regional review and the system-wide strategic document. The repositioning exercise is a package of interconnected reform measures. Advancing without agreement on those critical components will undermine the ability of the United Nations development system to maximize its value proposition to some of the world's most vulnerable countries.

12. I am confident that the final package of measures to strengthen our support to multi-country offices will prove to be a turning point in our service to small island developing States, which comprise the vast majority of countries supported by such offices. It is time to address a historic deficit in our United Nations development offer to those countries.

13. The regional review has been finalized, with a strong sense of ownership by the United Nations development system. The broader reforms have vigorously permeated the regional level, which enables us to now tackle the regional architecture – which has been historically undervalued – to ensure an optimal deployment of our rich array of regional policy and operational assets to help countries deliver on the 2030 Agenda. As COVID-19 has tragically brought into sharp focus, the road to 2030 will require regional and cross-border collaboration to overcome the numerous challenges that stretch across borders and cannot be handled by any single country alone. Now, after an extensive process of analysis and consultations on the regional review and the multi-country office review, the time has come for a decision by Member States on the recommended way forward.

14. Consideration by Member States of the United Nations system-wide strategic document to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is also outstanding. The United Nations development system stands ready to move forward with implementation, with a clear commitment to report regularly to Member States on the progress and challenges that may arise in the roll-out process and to correct course as needed.

15. Third, I encourage Member States to use the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review to provide guidance to the United Nations development system not only on how it should work, but also on the kind of integrated policy guidance and technical support it should provide to countries to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. As Heads of State recognized at the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, held on 24 and 25 September 2019, the pace and scale of implementation of the Goals thus far has been inadequate. We are not on track to end poverty. We are not on track to avert the worst impacts of climate change. We are not on track to achieve gender equality. The COVID-19 crisis threatens to make our journey on the decade of action even steeper, causing a significant contraction of the world economy, wiping out millions of jobs, deepening poverty and inequality and undermining progress across a range of goals.

17. As we progress through the immediate health crisis, we are simultaneously focusing on mitigating the potentially devastating socioeconomic impacts and on protecting human rights, building resilience and recovering better. In that context, the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review must raise the bar. It must examine what role the United Nations development system should play in accelerating implementation of the Goals, as well as in following up on progress at the global, regional and country levels.

18. The choices we make now and in the medium term are key to the way we exit and recover from this crisis. The United Nations development system will need to support governments with policy options and technical advice to make difficult choices, building on synergies and addressing trade-offs. That means sharpening our offer on critical priorities for Governments, such as poverty eradication, universal health coverage and addressing the multiple deprivations in people's lives, climate change, sustainable economic growth and strengthening national capacities. It means going further to advance gender equality and leave no one behind. It means collaborating and integrating our efforts better across our development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding response. Last, it means maximizing our ability to catalyse partnerships for the Goals, while closing the loop between the valuable lessons emerging from the voluntary national reviews of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and United Nations development system support at country level. Such issues should be further considered in the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

19. The present end-of-cycle report comes at a momentous time, as the world rethinks the assumptions of its geopolitical landscape, responsibility for global public goods and models for inclusive and sustainable development. There are lessons to be learned regarding our current model of globalization and the consequences of increasing protectionism and nationalism. Success during the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals depends on strengthening multilateralism and deepening international cooperation and solidarity right now and in the years to come. Success is also contingent upon a continuous effort by such international organizations as the United Nations to leverage our comparative advantage and evolve with the needs to remain fit-for-purpose. Only in doing so will we come substantially closer to fulfilling the promise made 75 years ago, when the United Nations was born, for a more just and peaceful world, through international cooperation and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

20. Overall, I am pleased with the progress we are making in translating approved reforms into improved results. I am thankful for the continued faith and support Member States and our development partners continue to provide as we move forward together. I am also grateful for the leadership and commitment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, without which the reforms would not have advanced as they have.

21. While I am aware that we still have some way to go, I am confident that we will progressively see the repositioned United Nations development system fully fit to fulfil its potential and its important role in supporting the transformation of the Goals.

## **II. Equipping the United Nations development system to respond to various country needs and priorities**

22. In the space of a single quadrennial review cycle, together, we have transformed the United Nations development system on the ground, guided throughout by General Assembly resolutions [71/243](#) and [72/279](#), by subsequent resolutions on the operational activities for development segment of the Economic and Social Council and by the September 2018 implementation plan for the reinvigorated resident coordinator system.

23. We have established an independent, empowered resident coordinator system, as the backbone of a reformed United Nations development system in country, with increased human and financial resources. We have established tools and mechanisms to enhance system-wide analysis, joined-up planning and integrated implementation, starting with the renewed United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation

Framework. We have bolstered mechanisms at the regional and global levels to coordinate United Nations assets and to place their expertise at the service of Governments in their efforts to achieve the Goals.

24. The early efforts of the United Nations development system and Member States alike are beginning to bear fruit. The enhanced leadership of the resident coordinator system is maximizing the single-entity and collective offer of the United Nations development system in support of national needs and priorities. A new generation of United Nations country teams is emerging with the provision of tailored system-wide expertise to address country needs and priorities, including through the new common country analyses and Cooperation Frameworks. We are improving our support to countries in special situations. And we have made steady progress in our efforts to maximize efficiencies.

25. The road ahead remains complex, not least in terms of tailoring the in-country configuration of United Nations country teams, sustainably funding the resident coordinator system, and delivering on promised efficiencies and mutual accountabilities between the resident coordinator system and United Nations development system entities. With strong collaboration by United Nations development system entities and ongoing support from Member States, however, I am confident that we will soon see the full potential of the repositioned United Nations development system.

## **A. A reinvigorated resident coordinator system**

26. In resolution [72/279](#), the General Assembly decided to create a dedicated, independent, impartial and empowered coordination function for the United Nations development system to address factors that were hampering the resident coordinator system's ability to better support both the United Nations development system and national Governments in their efforts.

27. In 2019, I made a successful and timely transition into a new resident coordinator system a top priority. Accordingly, the first months of 2019 were focused on setting up a new administrative, legal and operational system, which ensured the transition into the new system without disruption of activities and support to national Governments. The operational support of UNDP to a smooth transition was essential.

28. More broadly, I am encouraged by the progress achieved over the course of 2019 and the first quarter of 2020. Early results point to a system that is moving in the right direction and is already benefiting development activities on the ground. However, data and evidence also show that more is needed to ensure that the changes fully permeate both the resident coordinator system and the entire United Nations development system in response to the paradigm shift required by the 2030 Agenda, which ranges from ensuring a stronger resident coordinator pool to continue to strengthen our already high-calibre resident coordinators, through a redesigned selection process, to a sustained cultural shift within the United Nations family to coalesce around the resident coordinator leadership.

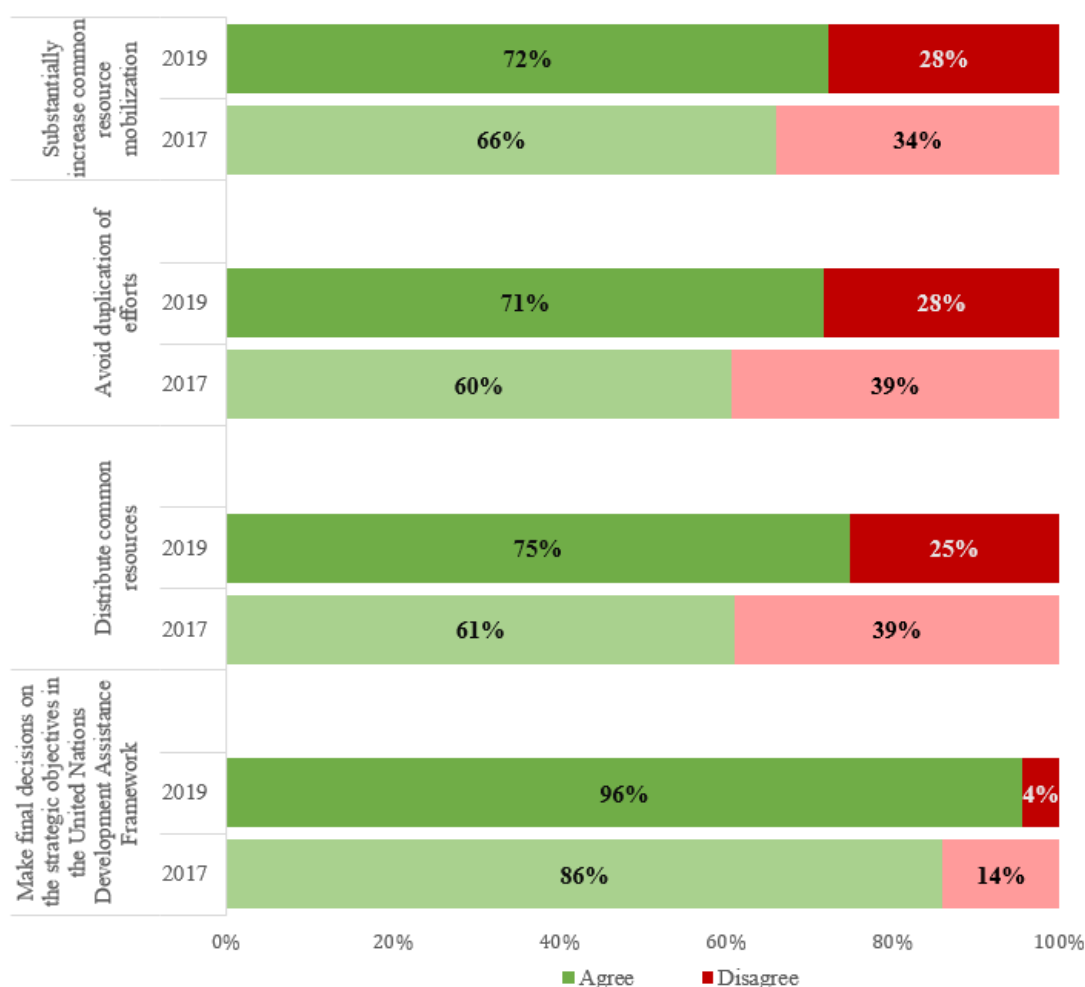
### **Strengthening the influence and capacity of the resident coordinator system**

29. Positive results are emerging that show that the authority, decision-making prerogatives and resource mobilization capacities of resident coordinators have been



reinforced.<sup>2</sup> Independent surveys carried out by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs show that over half (56 per cent) of programme country Governments state that since 1 January 2019, the resident coordinator has strengthened the coherence of United Nations development system activities and helped reduce duplication (see figure I). Over half (57 per cent) of resident coordinators agree that they have sufficient prerogative to avoid duplication within country teams, an increase from 48 per cent in 2017. More resident coordinators also report that they can make final decisions on the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (from 86 per cent in 2017 to 96 per cent in 2019) and to distribute common resources (from 61 per cent in 2017 to 75 per cent in 2019). A smaller increase is registered for their influence in decision-making and avoiding duplication (from 66 per cent in 2017 to 72 per cent in 2019).

Figure I  
**Resident coordinator capacity**



Source: 2017 and 2019 Department of Economic and Social Affairs surveys of resident coordinators.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated, data in the present report have been compiled by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Additional data on a complete list of indicators of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review are available in the monitoring and reporting framework that accompanies the present report and is accessible through the website of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of the Economic and Social Council ([www.un.org/ecosoc/en/oas-qcpr](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/oas-qcpr)).

30. The data also confirm that the transformative process is still ongoing and will require continued attention to consolidate. Many resident coordinators report that their authority is sometimes undermined by a lack of clear guidance from individual entities' headquarters to their country representatives on the resident coordinator's role. Close to half (46 per cent) of resident coordinators still perceive significant gaps between policy decisions of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and how they translate into action by United Nations country teams on the ground. There is variation by region, with much lower rates in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean (34 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively) compared with Arab States (50 per cent) and Asia and the Pacific (52 per cent). The regional directors of United Nations entities play a key role in bridging the gap, and I count on them to send cohesive messaging to country representatives on the importance of rallying behind the resident coordinator and implementing a system-wide response. Numerous resident coordinators also called for a full adjustment to the corporate policies of United Nations development system entities and the consistent application of guidelines on resident coordinator authority and prerogative. Such efforts are ongoing, as part of the progressive shift happening within each entity and in their governing bodies, and we should continue to monitor the relevant data. The role of the Development Coordination Office regional directors will also be critical in supporting and strengthening resident coordinator leadership. Their work is ongoing and will be reinforced as their newly established offices in the regions are fully operational.

31. Resident coordinator authority and influence are defined by regular, strategic, advisory and solutions-oriented engagement with host Governments and donors in country as the fulcrum of the United Nations country team. Several resident coordinators said that host Governments still tend to resort to "business as usual" in their relationship with individual United Nations development system entities. The surveys also point to continued challenges in consolidating the role of resident coordinators in coordinating outreach to funding partners at the country level. We count on all partners to dedicate attention to the issue and help create the right incentives for a more coordinated approach to fundraising, in the spirit of the funding compact. For now, the situation can be largely attributed to the need for more time for partners to have a comprehensive understanding of the United Nations development system reform and an appreciation of the benefits of a whole-of-system approach, and to make the necessary shifts in culture and practice. With resident coordinator offices now better resourced and increasingly adding value to the work of country teams, we expect that the behavioural shift in our engagement with government counterparts and other partners will take hold.

32. It is also critical to continue efforts to consolidate the administrative and legal foundations of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, within the planned timelines, including a full overhaul of the recruitment and talent management processes for resident coordinators. Our pool of resident coordinator candidates is still insufficiently diverse in terms of gender, geography and skill sets, which sometimes creates challenges in sustaining progress already achieved toward gender parity and geographical balance of incumbent resident coordinators. A stronger pool will ensure that we can deploy the right profiles to the right place, at the right time. I expect the pool to be significantly strengthened as we finalize measures, in the course of 2020, to make resident coordinator selection more effective and transparent and the resident coordinator career path in the Secretariat as appealing as it is complex.

33. I count on all Governments to ensure that a sound long-term legal basis for the operations of resident coordinators and their offices across the globe is in place. In some cases, negotiations on the new host agreement on the resident coordinator

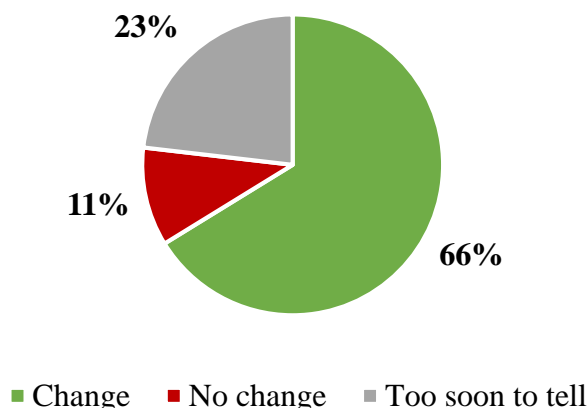
system are still ongoing. It is important that they be finalized as soon as possible so that the focus in our engagement with host Governments can turn entirely to substantive collaboration to advance the Goals.

34. Efforts to strengthen the capacities of resident coordinator offices are also bearing fruit. While recruitment is still ongoing, many resident coordinator offices are already benefiting from increased capacity for strategic planning, policy support, particularly for economics, and financing of the Goals, scaled-up partnership efforts, and joined-up communications and results monitoring, evaluation and reporting, with a much stronger focus on data.

35. Two thirds of programme country Governments report that, since 1 January 2019, the resident coordinator has strengthened capacity to coordinate United Nations activities in support of the country's development priorities (see figure II).

Figure II

**Strengthening and increasing resident coordinator capacity to coordinate United Nations activities, compared with capacity before 1 January 2019**



Source: 2019 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of programme country Governments.

36. Over 90 per cent of resident coordinators agree that United Nations country teams view the resident coordinator office as a common resource for supportive analysis, policy and programming.

37. A total of 75 per cent of resident coordinators report that they now have the capacity to access the expertise available within the United Nations development system to address national needs, priorities and challenges.

38. I am also encouraged to see resident coordinators taking on a greater convening role, leveraging partnerships across society in support of national efforts to implement the Goals in the light of the additional dedicated capacities in that crucial area.

39. The ability of the resident coordinator system to serve as an amplifier of the impact on the ground of the United Nations development system primarily rests on the leadership capacities of resident coordinators and of the resident coordinator system as a whole. The Development Coordination Office has been at work to recalibrate leadership capacities at the global, regional and national levels. New regional development coordination offices offer critical technical and quality support to the work of resident coordinators, although their phased establishment has resulted in some regional offices being more advanced in their work than others. The resident

coordinator assessment, selection and performance management systems are being recalibrated. The report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the Development Coordination Office provides a full account of the progress made, results achieved and remaining challenges. It demonstrates how early investments in United Nations development coordination are being leveraged for higher impact results.

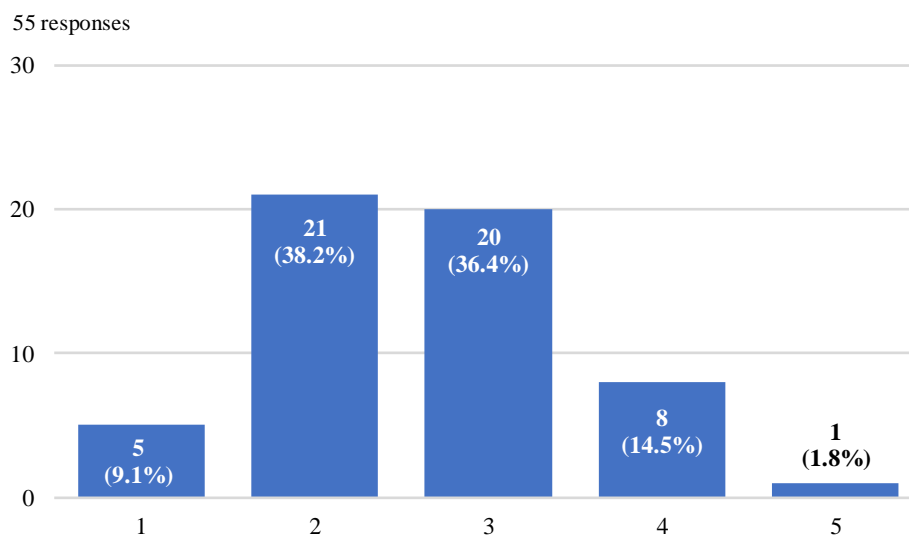
### **Implementing the management and accountability framework: a work in progress**

40. The management and accountability framework was established as the primary tool to guide the new relationships and accountabilities within the United Nations development system, as set out in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). The country-level component of the framework was updated in 2019 to reflect new arrangements. It appears that those changes are already helping to empower resident coordinators and to guide strong and efficient working relations in United Nations country teams.

41. When surveyed in November 2019, over 90 per cent of resident coordinators said that the management and accountability framework had changed the way United Nations country teams work, albeit to different extents (see figure III). The level, scope and pace of progress varies across locations and entities, but most resident coordinators report greater commitment by United Nations country team members to working together collaboratively as well as more regular engagement by entities that are not physically present in the country.

Figure III

### **Extent to which the management and accountability framework has changed the way the United Nations country team works**



Source: Development Coordination Office survey, 2019.

Note: 1: not at all; 5: very significantly.

42. The emerging change in outlook is evident across a number of indicators.

43. Most United Nations country team members seem to exhibit a better understanding of the leadership role of the resident coordinator, although the participation of resident coordinators in high-level delegations or events of United Nations development system entities remains uneven, and accountability mechanisms

in the performance appraisal systems of entities are not yet fully in place, although work is under way.

44. Resident coordinators also report greater engagement in and ownership of joint planning by the United Nations country team, although engagement at the implementation and reporting levels can be further improved. Resident coordinators also report an increase in joint communications and collective advocacy, although some entities continue to communicate independently in areas that affect the entire United Nations country team. With respect to common services, implementation of the business operation strategies continues at an uneven pace (see sect. II.B, paras. 89–96 for more details).

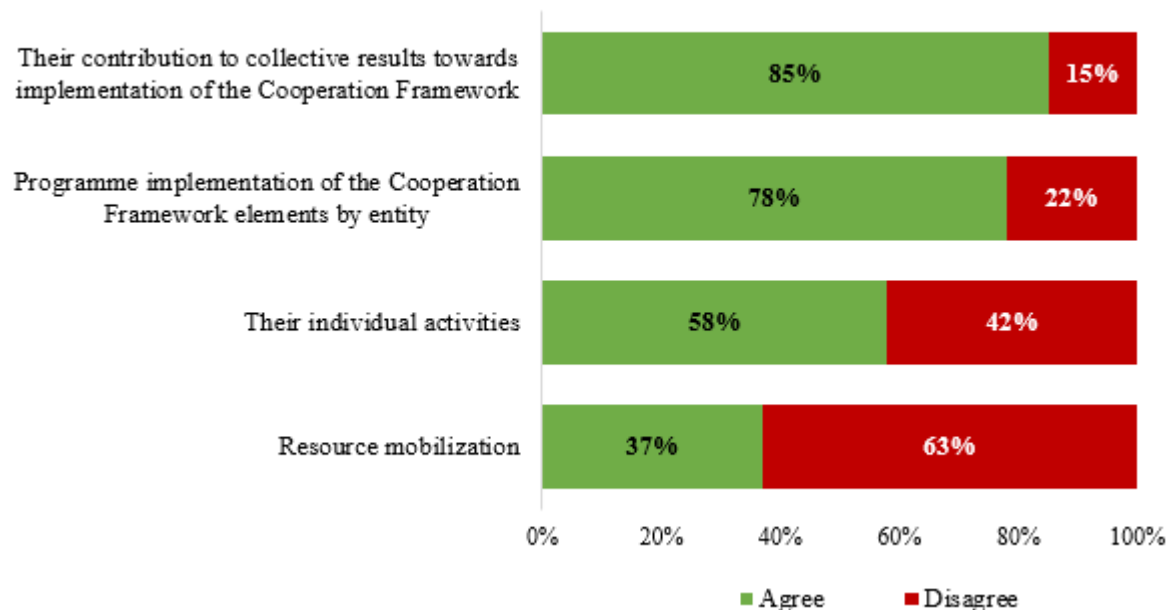
45. The management and accountability framework also stipulates that United Nations development system entities must regularly update the resident coordinator on their individual activities and on their respective contributions to Sustainable Development Goal results on the basis of the Cooperation Framework

46. As figure IV reveals, resident coordinators indicate that United Nations country team members provide regular updates to the resident coordinator regularly on their contribution to collective results in the implementation of the Cooperation Framework and in entity-specific programme implementation of Cooperation Framework elements, but less so on individual activities and resource mobilization.

Figure IV

#### Reporting of United Nations country team members to resident coordinators

United Nations country team members report to the resident coordinator regularly enough on ...



Source: 2019 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of resident coordinators.

47. Moreover, in terms of the quality of reporting, resident coordinators indicate that United Nations country team members report relevant information, but they see room for improvement in the frequency, quality and scope of the reporting.

48. All United Nations development system entities should reflect the reporting link to the resident coordinators in job descriptions of their country representatives. Ten

United Nations development system entities,<sup>3</sup> including a number with substantial country presence, indicated that they had adjusted the job description of their country representatives to reflect the change. Several other United Nations development system entities indicated that the subject was under review.

49. Formal input from resident coordinators to the performance appraisal of United Nations country team members is another key element of the country-level management and accountability framework. While it was not possible to secure data on that aspect, as the system was undergoing changes in the course of 2019, steps are being taken as planned. The vast majority of resident coordinators have already started providing formal inputs into performance assessments of United Nations country team members. The Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group will continue to work with all members to ensure full compliance by the next reporting cycle.

50. Drawing on the country-level experience, the regional-level and global-level chapters of the management and accountability framework will be completed over the course of 2020, at which time the country-level chapter of the framework may see adjustments to ensure that we fully deliver on the guidance in General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). Feedback from United Nations country team members on their experience in implementing the framework to date will be important in defining if any amendments are required.

#### **Sustainably funding the resident coordinator system**

51. The resident coordinator system is the backbone of the repositioning of the United Nations development system. It is central to the United Nations development system's ability to deliver results effectively and efficiently in support of national Governments. The level, predictability and sustainability of funding for the resident coordinator system remains a top priority and a challenge.

52. Working under the close guidance of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, the Development Coordination Office has led efforts to operationalize the new hybrid funding arrangements for the resident coordinator system mandated by the General Assembly through fundraising, the establishment of a dedicated trust fund, guidance to operationalize the 1 per cent levy on earmarked funding and the establishment of an online portal for full transparency on contributions and expenditures. All details are provided in the report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the Development Coordination Office.

53. The trajectory to date is positive. With the contributions received, we were able to build the reinvigorated resident coordinator system over the course of the past year steadily and in line with the implementation plan for the reinvigorated resident coordinator system. In 2019, revenue from contributions for the resident coordinator system amounted to \$223 million, comprising \$118 million from voluntary contributions, \$75 million from the cost-sharing arrangement and \$30 million from the 1 per cent coordination levy. Despite the positive effort, in 2019, there was still a gap of approximately \$58 million in relation to the full budget of the resident coordinator system. It has not affected the pace of implementation in the first, transitional year, as recruitments for the new resident coordinator system were

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<sup>3</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Peacebuilding Support Office, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Office for Project Services, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Population Fund.

staggered and we were able to draw on legacy staff and premises halfway through 2019. It also resulted in the carry-over of some funds to 2020, helping to address cash flow constraints. The funding gap must now be bridged as a matter of priority for the system to continue to run at full capacity.

54. I am grateful to all countries that have contributed thus far and supported the implementation of the cost-sharing and levy components of the resident coordinator funding model in relevant governing bodies. I am also grateful to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities that contributed to the resident coordinator system through the doubling of their contributions. Nurturing such efforts is a priority. There is an urgent need, however, for other contributors to step in to ensure that we can sustain the investments made to date and deliver adequate coordination capacities to support the 2030 Agenda.

55. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/279](#), I will submit a report to the Assembly on the functioning of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including with recommendations on its funding arrangement, during its seventy-fifth session. I will do so in close consultation with the President of the General Assembly and Member States to define the ideal timing and modality for consideration of the report. The review will provide an opportunity to assess whether the current hybrid funding model is a sustainable arrangement for a reinvigorated resident coordinator system.

56. As we head towards that first assessment, it is our common responsibility to implement the funding model devised by the General Assembly and to ensure that the necessary capacities are in place to deliver on Member State expectations. If there was ever a time for stronger development coordination, that time is now. As we continue to work with countries to advance the 2030 Agenda, only a strong and coherent United Nations response can help protect development gains while responding to the immediate and longer-term socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Resident coordinators and United Nations country teams are all on the front lines of these efforts.

## **B. The emergence of a new generation of United Nations country teams: more attuned to country needs and priorities**

57. A new generation of United Nations country teams – a central component of the approved United Nations development system reforms – is emerging. Step by step, measures are taking root as United Nations country teams progressively tailor their focus, skill sets and capacities to better serve countries on their sustainable development journey.

58. The goal is to ensure more flexible, responsive and demand-driven United Nations country presences – United Nations country teams that deliver results at greater scale, together, and with more efficient operations.

59. Section B of the present report provides an overview of efforts since the establishment of a new resident coordinator system on 1 January 2019. It addresses the new Cooperation Frameworks, the optimum United Nations country presence, our support for countries in special situations and the effectiveness and efficiency of business operations.

### **Rolling out the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework**

60. In 2019, the first steps were taken towards the operationalization of the new United Nations Cooperation Framework. As detailed in the complementary report by

the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, guidance for the development of Cooperation Frameworks was issued to all United Nations country teams, and roll-out is progressing as planned.

61. The new Cooperation Framework is the vehicle through which a new generation of United Nations country teams can make good on their value proposition to Governments seeking to accelerate implementation of the Goals. It marks a clear departure from its predecessor, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

62. As the principal planning and implementation instrument of the United Nations development system in each country, the Cooperation Framework represents a compact between United Nations development entities and host Governments. Each stage of the Cooperation Framework is to be co-led by the Government and anchored in national development priorities and planning cycles. The signed Cooperation Framework provides the parameters and substantive focus for aligning the configuration of United Nations country teams to country priorities and needs, and places much stronger emphasis on the landscape of Sustainable Development Goal financing to achieve national priorities. The Cooperation Framework also serves as a funding framework to enable its planned results to be achieved. The guidance on the Cooperation Framework makes clear that it is no longer a reflection and compilation of all activities planned in individual entity programmes. Rather, United Nations development system entities are now required to derive their programmes from the Cooperation Framework, not vice versa.

63. The Cooperation Framework will also ensure that a much stronger focus is placed on ensuring that the integrated United Nations development offer to countries responds directly to specific national demands and to gaps countries face to achieve the Goals. The Cooperation Framework begins and ends with a joint common country analysis of the country's development landscape and Sustainable Development Goal priorities. The common country analysis will be frequently updated to reflect shifting national realities and demands and to continuously build on lessons from voluntary national reviews and recommendations emanating from universal periodic reviews. This approach ensures a more agile internal analysis, reflective of evolving country contexts, and reduces the period required for formulating a new Cooperation Framework.

64. All Cooperation Frameworks have a strong focus on inclusive economies and on leaving no one behind. They also now explicitly recognize regional and transborder elements to ensure that they help inform a national response. Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators are now the default results monitoring framework for every United Nations country team. The results framework and its indicators will be informed by country-defined, disaggregated baselines and will be tracked online through the online platform UN-Info at the national, regional and global levels.

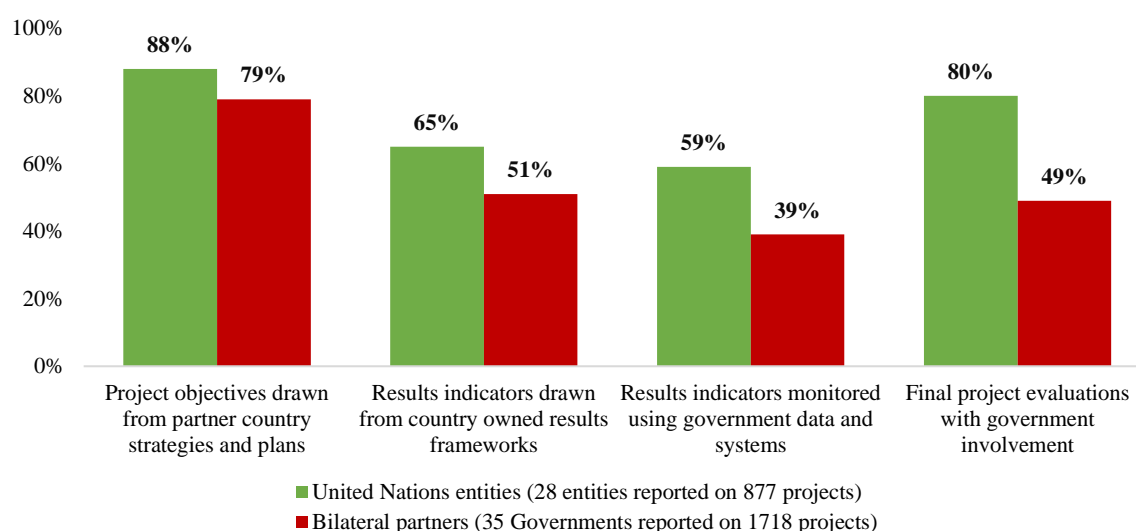
65. None of those elements were features of the predecessor, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

66. New Cooperation Frameworks are being rolled out, according to where United Nations country teams are in terms of their programming cycle. A number of countries have already developed new Cooperation Frameworks with their national counterparts, adapting them from the final guidance in the latter half of 2019. Another 37 will use the full endorsed guidance in the course of 2020. Nevertheless, data from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs surveys also indicates that an important shift in that dimension of the relationship with national partners has already begun.



67. More than three quarters (78 per cent) of programme country Governments indicate that the United Nations development system has become more relevant to their country's development needs in the past three years. The majority of programme country Governments (89 per cent) also agree that the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the Cooperation Framework have enabled them to ensure that United Nations development system activities are closely aligned with national needs and priorities. The finding is echoed by external data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and UNDP, which show that United Nations development system entities are more closely aligned to country needs and priorities, as set out in national development plans and strategies, than other bilateral partners (see figure V), with alignment increased significantly from 2016 to 2018.

Figure V

**Alignment of United Nations entities and bilateral partners to country needs**

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and UNDP (2019) *Making Development Co-operation More Effective: 2019 Progress Report* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2019).

68. Cooperation Frameworks also build on nationally led, inclusive multi-stakeholder consultations, such as those used to elaborate the national development plan. The majority of resident coordinators report that civil society and bilateral and multilateral actors were consulted to a moderate or great extent when developing the Cooperation Framework. More than two thirds of resident coordinators report that international financial institutions were consulted to a moderate or great extent. Fewer, just over 50 per cent, report that parliamentarians and the private sector were consulted.

69. The data suggest that such changes are part of a broader trend that aligns with the emergence of the 2030 Agenda itself. They are expected to be further amplified as we move forward with implementation of new Cooperation Frameworks. For full coherence, however, country programme guidance of individual United Nations development system entities and approval processes by their governing boards need to be streamlined and/or sequenced with the timeline of the Cooperation Framework design. Several governing bodies are already taking steps in that direction. At the end of 2019, seven United Nations development system entities had already reported that outcomes in individual entity programme documents would now be copied verbatim from the Cooperation Framework.

70. In June 2019, the Executive Boards of UNDP, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) took initial steps to sequence entity-specific country programme documents so that individual programmes derived directly from the Cooperation Framework. The respective entities are expected to provide an update in 2020 on further adjustments that are required. The Executive Board of the World Food Programme (WFP) is taking similar steps. Commitments in the same direction are needed from all United Nations development system entities.

#### **The coronavirus disease crisis: a first test of the repositioned United Nations development system**

The very first big test of the repositioned development system arrived before anyone could have expected it. At the time of writing, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) had started wreaking havoc across the world. The early benefits of the reforms became self-evident.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Group provided quick collective leadership to respond to COVID-19 as a development emergency, complementing the health and humanitarian responses. Its work helped signal to our regional and country teams the imperative of a "one United Nations" response to the pandemic.

Our empowered resident coordinators are already at the centre of the COVID-19 response, relying on and supporting the technical lead of the World Health Organization for the health response and counting on the United Nations Development Programme, which helps channel the expertise of all members of the United Nations country team for the socioeconomic response, through integrated programmatic responses, including non-resident agencies.

From the very onset of the crisis, staff were fully briefed and prepared at country, regional and global levels, and a system-wide knowledge platform was rapidly put in place, centralizing crucial information and materials, especially targeting resident coordinators and United Nations country teams. An online COVID-19 Partners Platform, hosted by the World Health Organization, also provides strategy, policies, information and advice for residents coordinators and United Nations country teams to enable effective collaboration and coordination of actions to address the emergency.

United Nations country teams immediately pivoted their efforts to scale up country preparedness and response, with an amplified focus on the most vulnerable populations, and to provide crucial support to Governments. They assisted countries in developing public-facing communication on risk and awareness, ensuring continuity of care and social services, facilitating partnerships with the business sector to address the emergency, finding solutions to enable continuity of learning during school closures and advocating the inclusion of underserved refugee and migrant communities.

As we move forward in addressing the pandemic, the system will step up its collaboration with national Governments and the global community to rethink health-care and service provision systems, education and job skills training, economic growth and production models, and recovery and resilience strategies, making better use of science and technology and ensuring equality and privacy.

We expect that the reforms made to our business operations can now help reduce implementation time by allowing United Nations entities to quickly use administrative procedures from other United Nations entities with new mutual recognition agreements. We are also sharpening our strategies to ensure that we tailor our response to the specific needs of the population, for instance children, older

persons or persons with disabilities. Working closely with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), resident coordinators are now better able to focus on the most vulnerable and to ensure that women and girls are at the centre of the response.

Our increased ability to draw on global and regional policy capacities will help ensure that United Nations country teams should help offer integrated policy support to Governments as they deal with trade-offs and identify ways to keep supply chains open and increase investments in the response. Our stronger focus on partnerships will ensure that we leverage and enable further action by partners, including international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations.

Time will tell how effective our response ultimately is, but the early signs are encouraging.

### Getting the configuration of United Nations country teams right

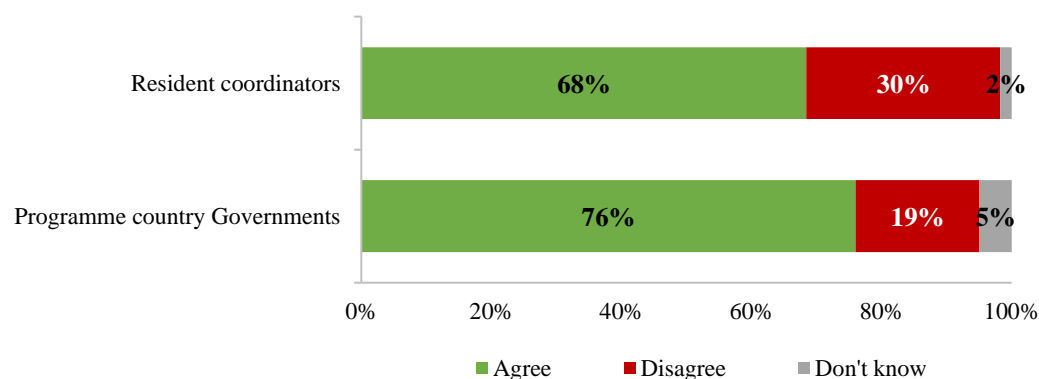
71. To be relevant in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals, I am convinced that the United Nations development system must deliver an integrated response on the ground across all dimensions of sustainable development, as I elaborate in chapter VII of the present report. Relying primarily on entities with physical presence or relying too much on individual programmes will simply not provide the most effective response.

72. I remain committed to a system in which we continuously assess with the host Government and other partners whether our United Nations country teams are optimally configured to respond to shifting national priorities and needs, as well as adapting to any emerging or new risks they may face.

73. The data continue to suggest that that is not always the case. One in five Governments and 3 in 10 resident coordinators consider the respective United Nations country team configuration insufficiently tailored to meet the specific challenges of the country (see figure VI).

Figure VI

**United Nations development system presence is adequately tailored to meet the specific challenges of the country**



Source: 2019 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of resident coordinators and programme country Governments.

74. It remains my expectation that any new Cooperation Framework cycle should trigger a review of the United Nations country team configuration to ensure that we have the required capacities and skill sets to deliver on commitments.

75. Accordingly, the Cooperation Framework guidance makes it clear that the Framework should be signed only after that step is completed and a decision is made on the optimal configuration needed. It is a decision that is ultimately made by the host Government and the respective United Nations entity, but I count on resident coordinators to facilitate the dialogue in an inclusive and open way.

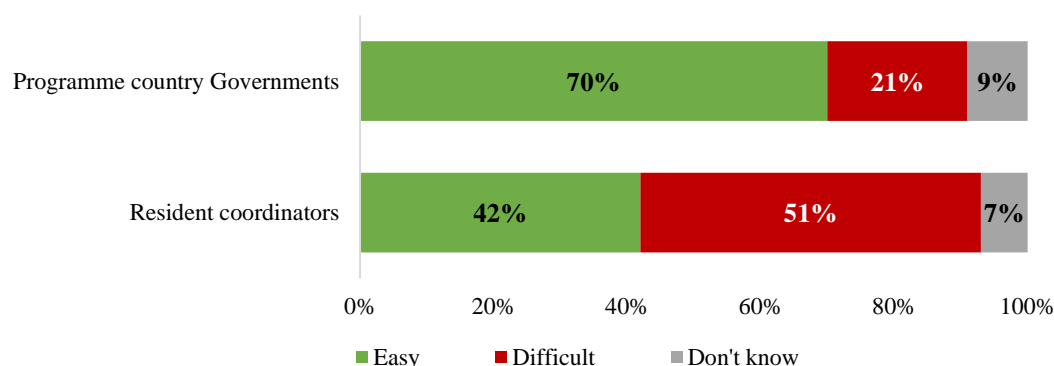
76. At the current stage, only a handful of United Nations country teams has carried out a dialogue on their configuration as they prepare new Cooperation Frameworks, which is not surprising, given the staggered roll-out of Cooperation Frameworks, and progress is expected to accelerate moving forward. Nearly half of responding resident coordinators report plan to hold a focused dialogue on the United Nations country team configuration with the government in 2020. In preparing for such dialogues, some entities have initiated reviews of their own criteria for country presence. For example, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has conducted an initial review of its presence in the period 2018–2019, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has a similar review under way. UN-Women is discussing ways to enhance its support to countries through more cost-effective models, drawing on the new resident coordinator system.

77. Yet, data also show that resident coordinators remain concerned by an anticipated resistance by some United Nations country team members to engage in such discussions. I encourage host Governments and all governing bodies to remain supportive of coherent, effective and efficient agency representation on the ground, in line with the needs and priorities agreed in the Cooperation Frameworks.

78. Moving in that direction implies a much greater focus on enabling countries to systematically access the “non-resident” capacities of the development system. It remains a work in progress (see figure VII).

Figure VII

**Ease of access to technical expertise from United Nations development system entities not physically represented in country**



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2019 surveys of resident coordinators and programme country Governments.

79. On the one hand, only 39 per cent of Governments responding to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey reported accessing support by non-resident entities through the resident coordinator.

80. On the other, resident coordinators report that most entities are now included in at least some Cooperation Frameworks regardless of physical presence (see Table 1).

81. Several United Nations development system entities have taken steps to strengthen their own capacities and realign support to better respond to the 2030 Agenda. As part of its reforms, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, for instance, has started to make normative and analytical products available to resident coordinators and United Nations country teams in a more systematic manner through the Development Coordination Office. The effort is exemplified by its work on data, financing for development and voluntary national reviews, as elaborated in the present report. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has also been providing briefings to the Member States on its internal reforms and their initial impacts. I will continue to work with the leadership of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, under the guidance of Member States, to build on efforts to enhance the Department's support to Member States and to ensure strengthened support in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

82. We must build on those experiences – and on the promising new relationships with regional commissions and other non-resident entities – to take the effort to the next level.

Table 1

**Funds, programmes and specialized agencies included in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework/United Nations Development Assistance Framework**

Entity type	Entity	Percentage			Total number of offices physically present or included in CF/UNDAF
		Physically present and included in CF/UNDAF	Physically present and not included in CF/UNDAF	Not physically present and included in CF/UNDAF	
Funds and programmes	UNDP	99	1	0	114
	UNCDF	56	22	22	32
	UNV	55	23	23	71
	UNICEF	96	1	3	113
	UNFPA	94	1	6	109
	WFP	88	4	9	82
	UN-Women	75	3	22	96
	UNRWA	67	33	0	3
	UNOPS	65	14	20	69
	UNODC	60	7	33	84
	UN-HABITAT	54	10	36	61
	UNEP	35	6	59	81
Specialized agencies	WHO/PAHO	97	1	2	113
	FAO	94	1	5	112
	ILO	75	3	23	106
	UNIDO	66	6	28	82
	IMO	60	40	0	5
	WIPO	60	0	40	5
	ITU	57	21	21	14
	UNESCO	55	5	41	106
	IFAD	48	17	34	58
	ICAO	33	44	22	9
	World Bank Group	22	75	3	92

Entity type	Entity	Percentage			Total number of offices physically present or included in CF/UNDAF
		Physically present and included in CF/UNDAF	Physically present and not included in CF/UNDAF	Not physically present and included in CF/UNDAF	
Secretariat	IMF	14	84	2	64
	UNWTO	0	0	100	8
	ECA	56	22	22	9
	OHCHR	52	11	37	87
	OCHA	49	30	21	57
	UNDRR	44	17	39	18
	ECLAC	29	71	0	7
	ESCAP	29	14	57	7
	ESCWA	25	0	75	4
	UNCTAD (inc. ITC)	10	21	69	42
Related organizations	ECE	0	0	100	13
	DESA	0	25	75	4
	IOM	84	13	3	105
	IAEA	4	6	89	47
Other United Nations entities	UNAIDS	82	1	17	87
	UNHCR	83	5	12	95
	Other entities not listed	53	29	18	17

*Source:* Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2019 survey of resident coordinators, based on responses from 116 locations.

*Note:* Entity type is based on the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination classification. Although they are administered by UNDP, the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the United Nations Volunteers programme are represented separately in some United Nations country teams and by UNDP in others. Data are based on a sample survey response and are intended to reflect configuration patterns globally. Total numbers for entities and countries may differ.

*Abbreviations:* CF, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework; DESA, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; ECA, Economic Commission for Africa; ECE, Economic Commission for Europe; ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency; ICAO, International Civil Aviation Organization; IFAD, International Fund for Agricultural Development; ILO, International Labour Organization; IMF, International Monetary Fund; IMO, International Maritime Organization; IOM, International Organization for Migration; ITC, International Trade Centre; ITU, International Telecommunication Union; OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; OHCHR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; PAHO, Pan American Health Organization; UNAIDS, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; UNCDF, United Nations Capital Development Fund; UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; UNDAF, United Nations Development Assistance Framework; UNDRR, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme; UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UN-Habitat, United Nations Human Settlements Programme; UNHCR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNIDO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization; UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; UNRWA, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; UNV, United Nations Volunteers programme; UNWTO, World Tourism Organization; WHO, World Health Organization; WIPO, World Intellectual Property Organization.

**Tailoring United Nations development system support to countries in special situations while responding to a universal agenda**

83. In line with the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, the United Nations development system has placed continuing emphasis on providing targeted support to countries in special situations. We are making progress, but during the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycle, we must go further, especially taking into account the disproportionate negative socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on those countries.

84. There are currently 47 least developed countries, of which 5 are scheduled for graduation in the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycle.<sup>4</sup> Up to seven additional countries may graduate at the end of the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycle. In its 2019 report to the Economic and Social Council (E/2019/33), the Committee for Development Policy stressed the urgency for the United Nations development system to develop common guidelines to ensure that least developed countries are prioritized in all programming and budgeting and that the system supports the smooth transition of countries from the least developed country category. The Committee also expressed concern about the significant number of graduation-related capacity development activities that United Nations development system entities and other international organizations were conducting outside the framework and coordination efforts of the inter-agency task force on least developed country graduation. Moving forward, and ahead of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in March 2021, I will request the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the inter-agency task force to develop the above-mentioned common guidance. I also encourage all United Nations development system members to ensure that graduation-related capacity development activities are coordinated and demand-driven, and to encourage an ambitious and flexible approach to help Governments to mitigate the impact of graduation. I encourage Member States and other relevant stakeholders to provide financial and in-kind assistance to the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, which has been operational since 2018, to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

85. The United Nations development system has continued to support implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024. The midterm review of the Vienna Programme of Action, conducted in December 2019, resulted in the adoption of a political declaration that includes a call for action to accelerate the Vienna Programme of Action in its remaining five years. I will work to ensure that the United Nations development system provides support to landlocked least developed countries in the areas identified in the Vienna Programme of Action and the political declaration of the midterm review. To that end, I have requested the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to develop a road map for accelerated implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the political declaration in order to strengthen United Nations-coordinated support to the landlocked developing countries.

86. The high-level meeting on the review of implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway in September 2019 resulted in a political declaration urging the international community to act to address the priorities of small island developing States over the next five years and to enhance coherence of the issues of those States in United Nations processes at the national,

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<sup>4</sup> Vanuatu (2020), Angola (2021), Bhutan (2023), Sao Tome and Principe (2024) and Solomon Islands (2024).

regional and global levels (see General Assembly resolution 74/3). Strengthening the support of the United Nations development system to small island developing States is described in chapters V and VI (on multi-country office and the regional review) of the present report.

87. Significant efforts are under way to strengthen the quality and coordinated nature of United Nations support to African countries. Africa accounts for 41.4 per cent of total country-level expenditures and 49.5 per cent of core expenditures (an increase from 40.3 per cent in 2015). The recently concluded thirty-third session of the African Union provided the opportunity for the leaders of both organizations to renew their commitment to a strengthened partnership, particularly in the context of the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since the signing of the Framework, there has been progress in elevating development to the top of our common agenda and in working more collaboratively across the United Nations system to ensure enhanced support to all African countries. The steps set out in the present report, as part of the regional review, illustrate the significant potential for the United Nations to further enhance its coordinated regional offer in Africa.

88. While bolstering our support to countries in special situations, we also need to continue to develop our support to middle-income countries in all their diversity. In the context of the current reforms, I have designated the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist as the focal point for middle-income countries, and we are proceeding in our efforts to advance multidimensional measurements of sustainable development. In middle-income countries, a gradual shift from a traditional model of direct support and service provision towards a greater emphasis on integrated high-quality policy advice, capacity development and support for the leveraging of partnerships and financing is needed. In that regard, as set out in my road map for financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2019–2021, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group is committed to developing a joint framework of collaboration with multilateral development banks to improve regional and country-level synergies, with specific attention paid to middle-income countries. While funds, programmes, and other United Nations development system entities are directed to focus on a loosely defined concept of “programme country”, specialized agencies and Secretariat entities have universal mandates that encompass all countries of the world. The 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review could provide guidance on how best to address the contribution of the United Nations development system to the implementation of the universal 2030 Agenda beyond the Member States traditionally categorized as “programme countries”.

### **Progress made in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of business operations**

89. Working hand-in-hand with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, we have set up the building blocks in our trajectory towards more efficient United Nations country team operations. We have come a long way in overcoming the initial challenges in advancing efficiencies in a system with a large degree of autonomy in its operations. There is no doubt that this approach has required a heavy lift from entities across the system to put us back on track in our efforts to generate efficiency gains on the order of \$310 million by 2022,<sup>5</sup> as initially estimated. I am grateful for the efforts of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Business Innovations Group, co-chaired by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and WFP, for the progress made in developing a clear

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<sup>5</sup> See explanatory note No. 10 on efficiencies, available at [www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/10\\_%20Efficiencies%20in%20UNDS%20repositioning.pdf](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/10_%20Efficiencies%20in%20UNDS%20repositioning.pdf).



strategy to deliver and report on efficiencies across the system, which is a critical component of the repositioning process. While efficiencies are not an end in themselves, any savings emanating from a more collaborative way of working would translate into more resources benefiting development activities, rather than covering the administrative costs of United Nations entities.

90. The strategy of the Business Innovations Group builds on the areas I have outlined in my two most recent reports to the operational activities segment, namely improved common business operations strategies for United Nations country teams; the establishment of common back offices for all United Nations country teams; more United Nations common premises; and the identification of services that could be better organized through shared service centres managed by different United Nations entities at the global level (see figure VIII). There has been progress in all of those areas.

91. The global strategy, as outlined in the document entitled “Business operations strategy: 2019 guidance”, that was launched by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group in October 2019, allows us to deliver on our commitment to ensuring that all United Nations country teams develop an enhanced common business operations strategy by the end of 2021. As part of the effort, 72 United Nations country teams already have a common business operations strategy in place (up from 63 in 2018). The newly introduced business operations strategy digital platform, developed with support from UNDP, will also improve reporting on implementation across countries and regions. The benefits of common services are becoming increasingly evident as the Business Innovations Group helps specify their scope and a road map for their implementation. In late 2019, for instance, United Nations development system entities endorsed a concept for the pooling of vehicle fleets that could potentially yield a one-off cost avoidance of over \$200 million and another \$26.5 million in annual cost avoidance after the first year.<sup>6</sup> We are also providing close support to United Nations country teams to ensure that we leverage the business operations strategy to meet the target set for all United Nations country teams to establish common back offices by 2022. It is an ambitious effort that will see the establishment of a single team to support services for the entire United Nations country team in areas relating to administration, finance, human resources, information and technology, logistics and procurement. Only four countries – Brazil, Cabo Verde, Eswatini and Viet Nam – have piloted common back offices to date.

92. To catalyse such efforts by United Nations country teams, the Business Innovations Group has also worked with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the High-level Committee on Management to identify specific services that can be provided remotely to United Nations country teams by at least one entity, through arrangements known as Global Shared Service Centres. The potential is vast. Shared service centres are not only cost-effective but also provide significant quality improvements. While various entities already adopt global shared services for their own operations, only a small share of them are shared across the system. As a result, less than half of the entities currently rely on services by sister entities to reduce their operational costs. The Business Innovations Group has already mapped out 163 services that could be offered by at least one United Nations entity to United Nations country teams and will proceed, in 2020, in brokering inter-agency agreements in that regard.

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<sup>6</sup> The estimate is derived from a model for the consolidation of fleets as a service line, which underlines the potential for continuing work by individual members of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group in business operations. The figure is a high-end estimate of a range of potential efficiencies from a common fleet service. A more precise efficiency range that could be generated in one-off savings and recurrent savings will require further analysis.

93. In addition, the Business Innovations Group has established three key enablers to take the efforts by United Nations country teams to the next level. They include common definitions for services and quality standards, and common costing and pricing principles. Without the common parameters, the efficiencies agenda would remain elusive. The Business Innovations Group has also facilitated a landmark agreement on mutual recognition, which allows United Nations entities to use or rely on another entity's policies, procedures, system contracts and related operational mechanisms without further evaluation, checks or approvals being required. Nineteen United Nations development system entities have already signed the agreement, including the Secretary-General on behalf of all entities of the Secretariat. The Development Coordination Office is now working with United Nations country teams to ensure that all entities effectively tap into the potential offered by the new agreement, to expand the range of administrative services that can be undertaken jointly.

94. Common premises remain another critical pillar of our strategy. The direct impact of common premises in monetary savings is, at first sight, not as significant as expected. There are, however, several indirect benefits that underline the importance of meeting our ambitious target of 50 per cent of common premises by the end of 2021. Common premises help maximize the impact of common services. Experience shows that they also help strengthen programmatic coordination and a unified United Nations image and can lead to a reduction in carbon emissions. However, we are not currently on track, and some entities remain concerned with one-off costs related to the costs of moving and the early termination of existing rental arrangements, especially when several United Nations country team members are now in rent-free locations. I am working with the Business Innovations Group to explore creative measures to allow United Nations country teams to access seed capital that can be used to initiate common premises. I also count on the support of all host Governments, including in-kind support, to make our shared vision for common premises a reality.

Figure VIII  
Status of work streams for business operations



Source: United Nations, 2020, Business Innovations Group update 10, February.

95. We have also made strides in establishing a system to report on efficiency gains across the United Nations development system. It is a significant step in enhancing transparency, especially considering that even a few months ago – in 2019 – over half of United Nations development system entities reported that they were still not able to estimate their efficiency gains due to the lack of comparable data. Under the leadership of the Business Innovations Group, we are in the final phase of design of a first-of-its-kind platform to track efficiencies across the United Nations development system. In the second half of 2020, we will start reporting regularly to Member States on efficiencies achieved across the United Nations development system, through both qualitative and quantitative data.

96. As we continue to move forward, I count on the strong determination of the principals of the United Nations development system and on the continued support of the respective United Nations governing bodies to take the efficiency agenda head-on, investing the necessary efforts, fast-tracking new policies, procedures and approvals, and moving ahead with implementation. Building block after block, together with entities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, we are moving forward to respond to the high expectations of Member States, which are understandably keen to ensure that their investments in the United Nations development system are used in the most efficient manner possible, and to maximize the delivery of development results.

### **III. Enhancing transparency, accountability and oversight for system-wide results and efficiency**

97. The continuous enhancement of the United Nations development system's transparency, accountability and results-oriented approach is essential to better support countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda. In the present chapter, I provide an update on progress made and further work needed to strengthen transparency through improved results-based management, data and system-wide evaluation and to enhance accountability through Executive Boards and the operational activities segment.

#### **A. Improving system-wide results-based management, evaluation and reporting**

98. The repositioning of the United Nations development system has put us on a firm path in strengthening transparency and accountability for results in everything we do, together, in support of sustainable development efforts. Over the past year, improving the quality of results-based management and of the evaluation and reporting of system-wide activities has received priority focus.

99. At the country level, the new Cooperation Framework offers a new reference point to track and assess the work of the system on the ground. At global level, the system-wide strategic document presented by the United Nations development system at the operational activities segment in 2019, in line with General Assembly resolution [72/279](#), which remains to be considered by Member States, could help set the strategic vision at the global level for the system to best support Member States in advancing the 2030 Agenda. I count on the Economic and Social Council to provide further guidance to the system on the way forward in the implementation of the system-wide strategic document.

#### **Tracking and reporting on country-level results**

100. In responding to the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, I underscored the importance of strengthening accountability for system-wide results. Our first accountability is to the countries we serve. That is why I have requested all country teams to ensure that they provide annual reporting on their results to the host Government. Only half of programme country Governments reported in 2019 that they had received an annual report on United Nations country team results in the last annual cycle. I expect a 100 per cent compliance rate this year.

101. I also agree with many government partners and resident coordinators who have indicated in the surveys that the quality of the annual reports of United Nations country teams must be improved, including to provide more information on the support provided by United Nations country teams to mobilizing partnerships and financing for the Goals. I have instructed the Development Coordination Office to work with colleagues across the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to prepare further guidance on reporting by United Nations country teams to address the expectations of host Governments and to build on the early lessons learned since the transition to a new resident coordinator system.

102. It is also critical to ensure that we continue to strengthen and harmonize the system's approach to data. We must be coherent in our strategies and methodologies if we are to effectively help countries track progress towards achieving the Goals. To ensure that we are up to the task, I have initiated the development of the first-ever system-wide United Nations data strategy. Designed to help everyone in the United

Nations family deliver more value from data, it will set out my vision for the data-driven transformation of the Organization.

103. At the country level, UN-Info – a new data tool for tracking results – has helped deliver on another of my earlier commitments: enhancing the availability of system-wide data on support provided by the United Nations development system to efforts to achieve the Goals. In 2020, UN-Info became mandatory for all United Nations country teams embarking on a new Cooperation Framework.

104. We are moving firmly towards our objective of ensuring robust system-wide reporting by 2021 on our support to efforts to achieve the Goals. With better data and capacities in resident coordinator offices, it has also been possible to enhance the visibility and transparency around United Nations country team activities. The Development Coordination Office and the Department of Global Communications are working hand in hand to provide enhanced communications support and toolkits to colleagues in United Nations country teams. In 2019, we also launched more informative websites of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and – progressively – United Nations country teams. United Nations information centres also began migrating their websites to United Nations country team-wide web platforms.

### **Strengthening results-based management in our collective support to the 2030 Agenda**

105. With the Goals as the ultimate guide, 22 United Nations development system entities have developed common methodologies for planning and reporting on results, taking important and somewhat overdue steps to harmonize approaches, definitions and indicators. UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN-Women have committed to collaborating on six common results areas and related indicators in their respective strategic plans for the period 2018–2021. WFP has also made similar efforts to align with the United Nations harmonized terminology for results-based management. Such approaches help facilitate engagement with national Governments and allows for better measurement of the system's joint contribution to achieving the Goals.

106. The progress is clear. The vast majority (91 per cent) of resident coordinators reported in surveys an improvement in the system's focus on common results in the past year. Data also suggest strong national ownership, with 86 per cent of host Governments reporting that they have a national system in place to report, together with the United Nations country team, national progress towards achieving the Goals. Some 78 per cent of Governments also reported that a joint national-United Nations steering committee (or similar body) was in place to jointly oversee the Cooperation Frameworks.

### **System-wide evaluation to advance shared learning and accountability for the 2030 Agenda**

107. In my December 2017 report ([A/72/684-E/2018/7](#)), I stressed the critical role of independent system-wide evaluation to strengthen oversight, transparency, and accountability and to incentivize joint work and collective learning among the United Nations development system entities. The evaluation is a key commitment by the United Nations development system as part of the funding compact. In response to my report, the General Assembly welcomed “the strengthening of independent system-wide evaluation measures by the Secretary-General, including improving existing capacities” in its resolution [72/279](#).

108. Guided by that mandate, I have further detailed the approach to strengthen the quality and independence of system-wide evaluations. I have done so in close consultation with Member States, entities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and the United Nations Evaluation Group – the inter-agency

professional network that brings together evaluation offices of the entities of the United Nations system. We have also carefully reviewed the lessons from previous efforts in piloting independent system-wide evaluations.

109. The analysis and consultations have revealed specific gaps that continue to hinder our ability to provide high-quality system-wide evaluations to inform oversight by Member States, in line with Joint Inspection Unit statutes that encourage the strengthening of internal oversight mechanisms (see figure IX). The analysis and consultations also helped refine our plans to strengthen the existing architecture.

Figure IX  
**Gaps that the proposed measures seek to address to strengthen system-wide evaluations**

Existing gaps	Effects and risks of the gaps
Evaluation of the system’s collective support to the Sustainable Development Goals remains fragmented and not in line with broader efforts towards greater collaboration	Inadequate accountability and learning on the United Nations development system support to the Sustainable Development Goals, also leading to insufficient incentives for inter-agency collaboration
Lack of clear institutional function and leadership for evaluations of Cooperation Frameworks/United Nations Development Assistance Framework	Country-level Cooperation Framework/United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations are dispersed and not credible to inform a more effective United Nations country team response to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals during the decade of action
There is a lack of institutional mechanisms to discuss system-wide strategic implications from evaluations and issue management responses	Risk that joint United Nations efforts do not inspire full confidence as system-wide evaluative evidence is missing from the project cycle management

110. To address those gaps, I have decided to proceed with the establishment of a dedicated capacity to help coordinate system-wide evaluations. It will be named the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-wide Evaluation Office to ensure clear anchoring in the United Nations development system and reaffirm its country orientation.

111. The office will help conduct system-wide evaluations designed to complement, not replace, the evaluative work of United Nations entities. In other words, they will focus on joint activities that cannot be adequately addressed through other existing United Nations accountability mechanisms.

112. At the country level, the focus will be on the evaluation of the Cooperation Framework and related joint activities. At the regional level, system-wide evaluations will focus on collective support to the Goals and knowledge management activities coordinated within the respective regional collaborative platforms. They will also cover regional-level engagement to support country-level Cooperation Framework evaluations. At the global level, the focus will be on the planning, conducting, reporting and resourcing of system-wide evaluations and sharing knowledge across them. Multi-partner trust funds, such as the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the multi-stakeholder trust fund of the Spotlight Initiative, and the multi-partner trust fund for COVID-19 response and recovery, in which a

large number of United Nations entities are working towards a common objective, will be evaluated. System-wide evaluations at the three levels will be mutually reinforcing.

113. As the system-wide evaluations will rely on existing capacities, it is crucial that United Nations development system entities proceed in their efforts to strengthen respective evaluation functions. In 2019, 89 per cent of entities that responded to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey reported that the evaluation unit of their organization met United Nations Evaluation Group standards for independence, compared with 73 per cent of entities in 2014. Close to 90 per cent confirmed having an evaluation tracking system on the status of evaluations and management responses. In addition, 82 per cent reported that there was a management response for over 75 per cent of evaluations. Fewer (68 per cent) reported that those management responses were available online.

114. I have considered various options for the location of the system-wide evaluation office and how best to respond to evaluation report findings and recommendations. We must continue to rely on the critical mandates and expertise of existing evaluation offices, such as the Office of Internal Oversight Services or the Joint Inspection Unit, which perform crucial independent oversight. The work required on system-wide evaluation complements the remit of those offices. The system-wide evaluation office will become an integral member of the United Nations Evaluation Group, fully leveraging the work of evaluation offices of individual entities, maximizing existing capacities and minimizing additional costs. Steps will be taken to ensure that the office is functional in 2021 to help provide the much-needed system-wide evaluative evidence for learning and accountability during the decade of action.

115. To ensure full independence and credibility, I find it necessary for the office to report directly to me, with the authority and discretion to submit reports at the appropriate level of decision-making. The office will collaborate closely with the Development Coordination Office to ensure direct access to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and United Nations country teams, which is particularly important for evaluations of Cooperation Frameworks. Operating with full freedom to perform its functions, the office will have the prerogative to share reports directly with the Economic and Social Council. I encourage Member States to make full use of the new mechanism and request that the evaluation reports be shared with the Council during its operational activities segment to complement, with an independent perspective, the reports on system-wide activities provided by the Secretariat.

116. It will be a lean office, led at the Director level, and resourced through extrabudgetary resources and secondees from various United Nations entities, with a total annual cost not exceeding \$2.5 million. I will keep Member States fully informed as we move ahead in establishing the office and as we seek any necessary legislative approval for creating the position of Director.

## **B. Strengthening executive guidance and oversight of the United Nations development system**

117. I have underscored from the early days of the process that cohesive guidance by Member States would ultimately define the success of the reforms. At the time, Member States preferred not to move ahead with the option of merging some of the United Nations development system governing bodies. They committed instead to ensuring consistency in their guidance across Executive Boards and improving their functioning. I am grateful for Member States' efforts in that regard. As a result, there

has been steady progress in improving the work of the Executive Boards, both jointly and individually.

118. It was impressive to see Member States coming together across governing bodies around the globe to support the United Nations development system repositioning and enable cost-sharing payments. Many governing bodies issued decisions to facilitate the implementation of reforms by each agency. The joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP also played a central role in advancing efforts towards coherence and collaboration, building on the precedent of the “common chapters” by UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women to guide joint support to the 2030 Agenda.

119. Significant progress has been made in ensuring more effective and harmonized working methods across the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP. Beginning in 2017, the Presidents of the respective Boards initiated discussions on how to enhance system-wide coherence and efficiency, reduce duplication and build synergy across the governing bodies of the United Nations development system. Actions included improving transparency in Bureau and Board meetings, identifying new ways to brief regional groups on Bureau proceedings, limiting and promoting a better balance in participation in field visits and using the joint meeting of the Boards to discuss issues of common interest.

120. Implementation is well under way. The Presidents of the Boards continue to meet regularly and respective Bureaux are playing an increasingly important role in driving decision-making by consensus. There is a clear trend towards joint and group statements by Member States at Board meetings and streamlined handover between bureaux. UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP have developed a stronger, more efficient approval process for country programme documents. Informal consultations and briefings have grown in number. By deliberately choosing themes of common interest, Member States now show greater ownership and the volume of documentation has fallen while PaperSmart usage has risen. To further improve the structure and scheduling of the Executive Board sessions, the Boards are expected to consider later in the year ways to rearrange the 2021 workplan and to reflect harmonized common agenda items across the Boards.

121. The above-mentioned steps are important, and I will continue to count on the support of every governing body to ensure all entities forge ahead and maximize the opportunities offered by the reforms to transform the way we support countries.

### **C. Transforming the operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council into an effective accountability platform**

122. In General Assembly resolutions [72/279](#) and [72/305](#), Member States decided to strengthen the operational activities segment as a platform to ensure accountability for and acceleration of system-wide performance and results to advance the 2030 Agenda, providing guidance and oversight to the United Nations development system, which is essential to ensure that system-wide guidance by Member States is well implemented on the ground.

123. The Bureau of the Economic and Social Council has taken several actions in that direction. Between 2017 and 2019, the segment served as a key forum for Member States and other stakeholders to advance the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review and my proposals to reposition the United Nations development system. The segment has also provided opportunities for the Deputy Secretary-General and me to directly address Member States on those issues. The



segment continues to offer space for Member States to hold the system accountable for progress in better servicing the 2030 Agenda. By requesting the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to report annually to the Council at its operational activities segment, Member States have confirmed the natural role of the Council as the oversight body for the resident coordinator system.

124. As of 2021, as part of our annual reporting to the Economic and Social Council during its operational activities segment, I will also provide information “on system-wide support to the Sustainable Development Goals” and “system-wide results”, as was mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/279 and which constitutes a commitment by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group as part of the funding compact. It will ensure that the reporting on the system’s activities is clearly linked to the ultimate test of the reforms: results for people.

125. We must continue to work together to strengthen the operational activities segment as an accountability platform. It is also critical for the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to jointly ensure that the bodies are synergistic in their action on sustainable development, making full use of their prerogatives as set by the Charter of the United Nations. As the reforms consolidate and we head towards a new quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycle, I envision an operational activities segment that is better positioned to hold us accountable, push us further and capitalize on the ongoing reforms to strengthen its policy guidance on implementation of the Goals.

## **IV. Implementation of the funding compact and related funding trends**

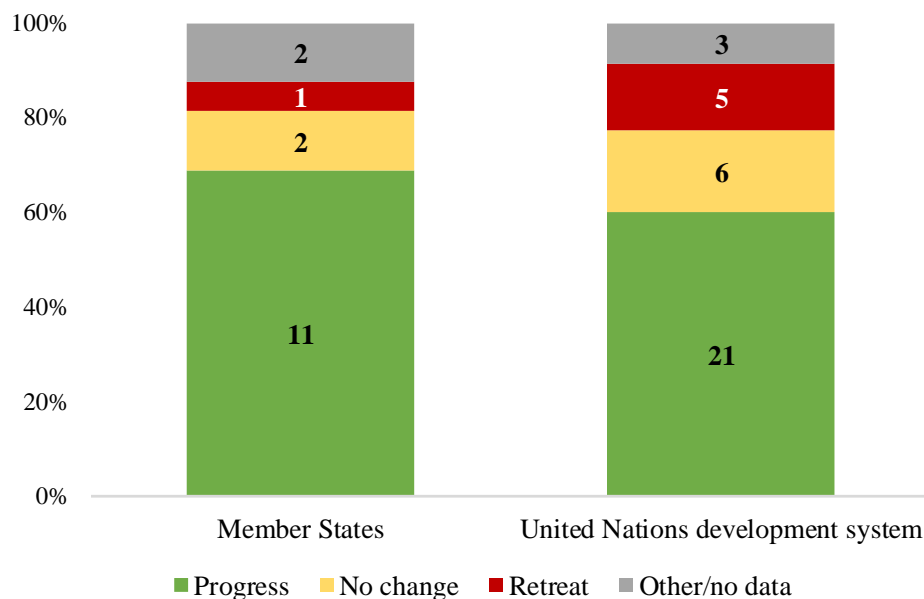
### **A. The road thus far in implementing the funding compact**

126. The endorsement of the funding compact between Member States and the United Nations development system in 2019 marked a milestone in our efforts to transform the United Nations development system. The compact establishes mutual commitments to help improve the funding base of the United Nations development system and provide further incentives for collaboration. At its heart lies the recognition that a fundamental shift is required by both the United Nations and Member States to enable the transformative, collaborative action needed to help countries achieve the 2030 Agenda.

127. The funding compact aims to address high levels of earmarking and fragmentation in funding – patterns that are proven to increase transaction costs and competition within the system, ultimately compromising the multilateral nature of the United Nations development system. In turn, the compact includes a set of commitments to ensure a more transparent and accountable deployment of resources by the United Nations development system.

128. With the funding compact still in its initial steps, there are some early positive signs. There has been progress on 69 per cent of indicators under Member State commitments and 60 per cent of indicators under United Nations Sustainable Development Group commitments (see figure X). It is premature to conduct any robust analysis on the funding compact’s impact on the quality and quantity of funds entrusted to the United Nations development system, as 2019 and 2020 data are not yet available, but there are positive developments, particularly regarding the quality and flexibility of earmarked funds, which we will continue to monitor closely.

Figure X  
Progress on funding compact commitments



Source: Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Notes: The “other/no data” group includes: yes/no indicators with a future expected completion date; indicators that are not yet measurable, as methodology is still being developed; and indicators with no previous/baseline data point with which to compare the current value.

129. Overall, funding for operational activities for development by United Nations entities increased in 2018, totalling \$36.4 billion, an increase of 8.2 per cent compared with 2017. About half of that amount funded development-related activities, while the other half was allocated to humanitarian activities, consistent with the trend since 2015. What is encouraging is that core funding is also increasing, albeit only slightly (see table 2). In 2018, 28 per cent of funding for development activities was in the form of core resources – those funds that are not earmarked to any particular programme or project. Excluding assessed contributions, only 21 per cent of voluntary funding for development activities was core. We still have a long way to go to meet the funding compact commitment of 30 per cent of core resources by 2023.

Table 2  
Funding compact: Member State commitment 1  
To increase core resources for the United Nations development system

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Latest value	Trend
MS. 1.1. Core share of voluntary funding for development-related activities	19.4% (2017)	30% (2023)	20.8% (2018)	↑
MS 1.2. Core share of funding for development-related activities (including assessed contributions)	27.0% (2017)	30% (2023)	28.3% (2018)	↑

130. It is clear that meeting the funding compact target on core resources will require a different pathway for each funding partner. When looking only at voluntary contributions, 71 Member States already provide at least 30 per cent of their contributions as core resources, including 8 of the top 20 contributors to the United

Nations development system. I count on others to follow that example. The funding base for core resources remains too narrow, with the top three providers of core resources (Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America) accounting for 34 per cent of all core contributions made by Member States in 2018. Yet, I am encouraged that close to 70 per cent of United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities saw an increase in the number of contributors of voluntary core resources compared with 2016 (see table 3). Overall, core funding by developing countries has risen by 85 per cent since 2015, taking the share of total contributions from developing countries to core resources from 16 to 23 per cent.

Table 3

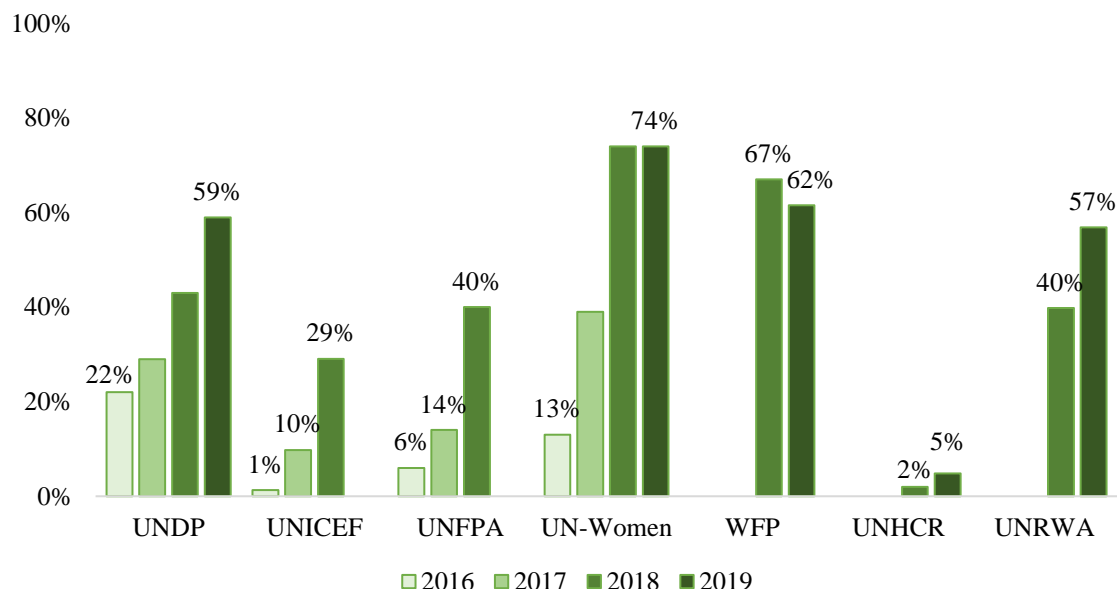
**Funding compact: United Nations Sustainable Development Group commitment 3****To broaden the sources of funding support to the United Nations development system**

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Latest value</i>	<i>Trend</i>
UN 3.1. Percentage of United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities reporting an annual increase in the number of contributors of voluntary core resources	67% (2017)	100% (2023)	69% (2018)	↑
UN 3.2. Number of Member State contributors to development-related inter-agency pooled funds and to single-agency thematic funds	59 and 27 (2017)	100 and 50 (2021)	46 and - <sup>a</sup> (2018)	↓
UN 3.3. Number of Member State contributors to the resident coordinator system budget	28 (2019)	100 (2021)	36 (2019)	↑

<sup>a</sup> Number of contributors to single-agency thematic funds not available for 2018.

131. A noticeable improvement can also be observed in multi-year core funding, which is critical to improving the predictability of funding. Figure XI shows the recent trend in multi-year core funding received by seven entities that account for over 85 per cent of all voluntary core funding received by the United Nations development system. Six out of the seven entities have seen a recent increase in the proportion of core funding that is part of a multi-year agreement. In several cases, the increase has been significant.

Figure XI  
Share of the core voluntary contributions portion of the multi-year agreement



Source: Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

132. There are initial signs that the shift required to double the share of earmarked non-core contributions to pooled funds, as called for in the funding compact, is beginning to take hold. It is early to establish a definite correlation, but the increase in contribution to pooled funding compared with individual projects may be a response to the adverse incentives provided by the 1 per cent levy on earmarked funds that forms part of the resident coordinator system hybrid funding model. The trend will become clearer as future data become available. Contributions to inter-agency pooled funds totalled \$2.46 billion in 2018, an increase of 19 per cent compared with 2017. About 38 per cent of those contributions went to funds with a development focus. Funding to development-related inter-agency pooled funds has increased by 78 per cent since 2016 and now represents 7.1 per cent of all non-core funding to United Nations development-related activities, compared with the funding compact target of 10 per cent by 2023 (see table 4). Overall, 27 Member States provided at least 10 per cent of their non-core funding to inter-agency pooled funds, including 16 of the top 20 contributors.<sup>7</sup>

133. We are also seeing an increase in funding to agency-specific thematic funds. In 2018, an estimated \$720 million was contributed to such funds, representing an increase of 36 per cent compared with 2017. That amount included \$452 million for funds with a development-related theme, which translated to 3.4 per cent of all non-core funding to development activities in 2018. The funding compact sets a target of a 6 per cent share by 2023.

134. The funding compact also includes dedicated targets relating to the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Peacebuilding Fund. Disappointingly, with only slightly increased contributions in 2019, those 2020 targets will not be reached. In 2019, contributions to the Joint Fund for the 2030

<sup>7</sup> See online statistical annex for details at [www.un.org/ecosoc/en/content/2020-secretary-general%E2%80%99s-report-implementation-qcpr](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/content/2020-secretary-general%E2%80%99s-report-implementation-qcpr).

Agenda for Sustainable Development amounted to \$55 million, a slight increase over 2018, but well short of the funding compact target of \$290 million annually in 2020. In 2019, contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund, currently supporting 200 projects in 51 countries, amounted to \$135 million, a modest increase from \$129 million in 2018 and well short of the 2020 funding compact target of \$500 million. I call on all partners to step up in support of those critical complementary funding tools, which produce results on the ground while fostering United Nations coherence and collaboration.

Table 4

**Funding compact: Member State commitment 2****To double the share of non-core contributions that are provided through development-related pooled funds and single-agency thematic funds**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Latest value</i>	<i>Trend</i>
MS 2.1. Percentage of non-core resources for development-related activities channelled through inter-agency pooled funds	5.0% (2017)	10.0% (2023)	7.1% (2018)	↑
MS 2.2. Percentage of non-core resources for development-related activities channelled through single-agency thematic funds	2.6% (2017)	6.0% (2023)	3.4% (2018)	↑
MS 2.3. Annual capitalization of the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	\$43 million (2018)	\$290 million (2020)	\$55 million (2019)	↑
MS 2.4. Annual contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund	\$129 million (2018)	\$500 million (2020)	\$135 million (2019)	↑

135. The funding compact is fundamentally about mutual accountability. On its side, the United Nations development system is taking steps to enhance transparency and incentivize investments by partners. The Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office has redesigned its digital platform, Gateway, and the new version will be launched in 2020. It will include a results-based management system that financially links all interventions to Sustainable Development Goal targets and provides better reporting on programmatic and operational performance. Entities receiving resources from pooled funding, including multi-partner trust funds, are also taking measures to improve visibility for funding partners and results.

136. We have also made headway in improving reporting on system-wide funding flows, which has traditionally been hampered by a lack of clear definitions and harmonized classifications for the different types of funding United Nations development system entities receive. As part of a “data cube initiative”, in early 2019 the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination jointly developed a set of data and reporting standards that apply across all United Nations entities. The new data standards were designed to fully align funding data with the Goals, as part of the broader reform efforts. They represent a key step forward in delivering on the funding compact target for all entities to allocate their expenses by Goal by 2021. Currently, only 10 United Nations development system entities do so. The new data standards also align with the reporting requirements of the International Aid Transparency Initiative and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Another positive development was the holding of structured funding dialogues by several governing bodies with their respective United Nations entities to help accelerate progress on funding compact commitments (see table 5).

Table 5

**Funding compact: United Nations Sustainable Development Group commitment 6**

**To improve the clarity of entity-specific strategic plans and integrated results and resource frameworks and their annual reporting on results against expenditures**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Latest value</i>	<i>Trend</i>
UN 6.1 Fraction of United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities that, in their respective governing bodies, held structured dialogues in the past year on how to finance the development results agreed in the new strategic planning cycle	62% (2018)	100% (2021)	57% (2019)	↓
UN 6.2. Centralized, consolidated and user-friendly online platform with disaggregated data on funding flows in place at the entity level and system-wide	No (2018)	Yes (2020)	Methodology roll-out in 2020 <sup>a</sup>	↑

<sup>a</sup> Methodology is under development, led by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

## B. Delivering on our collective commitments

137. Overall, I am encouraged by the progress made. One year after its endorsement, advances towards the compact's targets have inevitably been uneven, and a more complete overview of progress on implementation can only be provided once data is available for 2019 and 2020. It is already apparent, however, that implementation is taking place across the United Nations development system and we are on the right path. We must now move ahead with the same determination we have shown thus far in meeting our commitments. The monitoring of the funding compact must be regular and rigorous.

138. The first stocktaking of the compact's health has shed light on the gaps we must close. I call on all entities to continue to take all required steps to deliver on their respective commitments. All entities must also do whatever is necessary to adjust reporting systems, address consistency gaps and report funding data in a timelier fashion. I count on the Development Coordination Office to facilitate regular follow-up with United Nations Sustainable Development Group funding partners.

139. I call on all Member States to continue implementing the funding compact and holding us accountable for our commitments in the Economic and Social Council and across all governing bodies. During the last quarter of 2020, the quadrennial comprehensive policy review will be instrumental in sustaining the momentum of the funding compact and in ensuring we stay on track to deliver on our mutual commitments.

## V. Reinforcing support in multi-country office settings

140. Countries and territories serviced by multi-country offices have called for additional and better support that is more tailored to meet their needs with respect to the implementation of the Samoa Pathway and the achievement of the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. This includes increasing physical presence, policy resources and technical resources, facilitating deeper engagement in global and regional intergovernmental forums, strengthening data capacities and enhancing access to financing for sustainable development and South-South and triangular cooperation.

141. In response to those calls and pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/279](#), I conducted a review of the multi-country offices and, following extensive consultations in all 41 countries and territories covered by those offices and with all

partners, presented recommendations in my 2019 report to the Economic and Social Council ([A/74/73-E/2019/14](#)). The Council took note of the report and looked forward to further inclusive consultations with all countries concerned on the multi-country office review for its conclusion and to guide its implementation (resolution [2019/15](#), para. 9).

142. Between September 2019 and March 2020, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States facilitated intergovernmental consultations in order to guide the implementation of measures to improve multi-country offices and ensure that they are fit to deliver the necessary support that each country needs to advance the 2030 Agenda.

143. Over the course of the consultation process, Member States benefited from the engagement of the United Nations development system and the Development Coordination Office, which examined my 2019 recommendations and provided further details of proposed enhanced substantive support and coordination measures.

144. A United Nations Sustainable Development Group inter-agency working group on the multi-country office review, comprising 25 entities and co-convened by UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme, looked into specific ways in which to enhance United Nations development system capacities in order to provide tailored, technical and policy support, more coherent, effective and efficient coverage and substantive collaboration in countries covered by multi-country offices. In addition, the Development Coordination Office mapped and costed the increase in coordination capacities and resources required to improve the ability of the resident coordinator system to help national Governments to gain access, navigate and benefit from the United Nations offer.

#### **A. Improving the United Nations development system offer in countries serviced by multi-country offices**

145. To address requests made by Member States, and, on the basis of work carried out by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, I recommend a number of detailed commitments in six areas of action.

146. First, to ensure technical and policy support that is more tailored to countries and territories serviced by multi-country offices, United Nations development system entities will review and adjust their programme responses and resource allocation in support of the priorities of small island developing States.

147. The United Nations development system will review its specific programmatic assistance to small island developing States and develop new or updated offers and programmes for them by the end of 2020. In parallel, United Nations development system entities will revisit existing entity resource allocation models, in consultation with their respective governing bodies, to explore the possibility of going beyond country typology and national income, and incorporating vulnerability aspects into the allocation criteria for core resources.

148. The system will also establish priority theme groups specific to small island developing States in order to provide easier and faster access to integrated and tailored policy expertise; will “crowd in” internal and external expertise; will strengthen analysis, policy development and the establishment of partnerships; and will serve as a substantive resource point for Governments, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, in coherence with United Nations regional assets.

149. Those measures will contribute to the development of individual country plans for all countries serviced by multi-country offices, as I recommended in 2019, and ensure that national Governments understand and agree on collective and entity-specific activities tailored to the needs of each country. The measures will also build on existing intergovernmental processes and capacities in support of small island developing States, including those supported by the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in their respective regions.

150. Second, to enhance and align capacities and physical presence in multi-country office settings, United Nations development system entities will take concrete steps to review their expertise and organizational arrangements on the ground.

151. United Nations development system entities will reprofile, strengthen and/or increase their expertise on the ground by the end of 2021. As I recommended in 2019, entities which have not yet done so will also review and delegate authority to staff at the country level by the end of 2020.

152. In parallel, entities will establish focal points for small island developing States at the subregional, regional and/or headquarters level to ensure tailored and coordinated follow-up to the Samoa Pathway, in line with cross-cutting and horizontal priorities.

153. Entities will also review and take concrete steps to align entity coverage and presence with multi-country office arrangements, in order to provide optimal support to countries and territories by the end of 2020, and will take immediate concrete steps to align and better utilize United Nations regional assets, in line with Member States' decisions with regard to the regional review.

154. Third, to leverage financing for the Goals, improve access to finance, sustain official development assistance, mobilize private investment, support debt sustainability and ensure adequate and predictable financing for sustainable development priorities and the Goals, the United Nations development system will strengthen policy support with regard to financing for development and provide instruments and tools to address the specific financing needs of countries and territories serviced by multi-country offices.

155. This includes supporting Governments in estimating how much investment is needed to achieve particular development results to "crowd in" additional domestic resources, harness private sector financing mechanisms and further mobilize development assistance. It will also include advocating and supporting development of debt swap initiatives, social bonds, social impact investment and other innovative financing tools, and partnering with international financial institutions and regional development banks. It allows for the United Nations development system to further promote and strengthen the role of the United Nations to generate private sector and large-scale financing through sustainable financing models.

156. The United Nations development system will also continue to provide, strengthen and reaffirm consistent support and guidance to Governments, civil society and private actors on innovative financing mechanisms, including by conceptualizing and exploring the possibility of setting up an innovative finance facility to address costing of the Goals, develop investment pipelines, catalyse large-scale integrated investment options and identify ways, specific to individual regions and subregions, to gain access to private sector financing for the Goals.

157. Fourth, the United Nations development system will work to strengthen data systems, data collection and data use for informed, disaggregated decision-making on priority issues for small island developing States.



158. This includes strengthening and initiating the roll out of national capacity-building programmes, in collaboration with regional economic commissions. It also calls for improved inter-agency and region-specific coordination mechanisms on data and statistics in support of countries and territories serviced by multi-country offices, in line with proposals to reprofile and restructure United Nations regional assets, and for increased support for collecting data and statistics and for using it for evidence-based policymaking on issues prioritized by small island developing States.

159. Fifth, the United Nations development system will facilitate better integration and participation of States serviced by multi-country offices in intergovernmental forums and processes.

160. This will include enhanced support in preparation for, and for participation in United Nations-led processes, such as the high-level political forum on sustainable development, sessions of the Human Rights Council and intergovernmental meetings, including on climate change, disaster-risk reduction and development finance. It will also support investment in information and communications technology infrastructure and webcasting, wherever it is relevant and feasible to facilitate virtual participation, including for meetings of governing bodies.

161. Finally, to foster South-South and triangular cooperation and cross-regional learning in line with the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, the United Nations development system will map and share good practices relevant to small island developing States; facilitate knowledge exchanges; provide cross-peer learning in preparation for intergovernmental processes; and connect countries and territories serviced by multi-country offices with potential partners, including other developed and developing countries, international financial institutions, development banks and the private sector.

## **B. Improving the coordination capability of multi-country offices**

162. To help to maximize the impact of the United Nations development system substantive offer to all countries and territories serviced by multi-country offices, a number of measures will need to be taken to increase the coordination capacities and presence of multi-country offices.

163. The Development Coordination Office will ensure that resident coordinators posted in multi-country offices and staff deployed in resident coordinator offices have the suitable profile and skill sets, including through multi-country-office-specific selection and induction. It will also provide specific support to resident coordinators, resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams in multi-country offices to develop country plans and tailor multi-country Cooperation Frameworks to the specific development context, as stipulated in the guidance developed by the Development Coordination Office in consultation with United Nations entities in late 2019.

164. In addition, 16 coordination officers will be deployed to countries not hosting a multi-country office hub (seven in the Caribbean, eight in the Pacific and one in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea region). As primary United Nations coordination focal points under the leadership of resident coordinators, coordination officers will help to increase access by Governments to the United Nations development system offer. Similarly, two regional coordination officers will be deployed. One of them will be in the multi-country office based in Fiji and one in the multi-country office based in Barbados, to help resident coordinators and regional directors of the Development Coordination Office to build stronger synergies with intergovernmental regional and subregional organizations and facilitate the access of small island developing States to United Nations regional assets.

165. The Development Coordination Office will also allocate additional coordination resources to multi-country offices for travel and other coordination activities, such as support for the development of country plans for all countries and territories serviced by multi-country offices. These resources will be in addition to the funding base allocation for coordination and travel that all resident coordinator offices worldwide receive. No resources will be diverted from one region to another for this. All multi-country offices will receive the same allocation base from the special purpose trust fund and funding will only vary according to the number of countries and territories covered.

166. Finally, following consideration by Member States, I will take the legal, administrative and management steps to establish a multi-country office in the North Pacific. It is estimated that the establishment of a new multi-country office and the deployment of the first dedicated multi-country office staff member, will take place within six months of a decision by Member States. It may require an additional three to six months to bring the multi-country office to near total operationalization, including by bringing on board a resident coordinator and establishing a legal agreement and dedicated premises.

167. The cost of strengthening multi-country office coordination will be drawn from the special purpose trust fund. These changes will be budget-neutral, with costs offset by savings made from transitioning most United Nations information centres into communications officer posts as part of the standard resident coordinator office staffing structure. The posts will continue to be covered by the budget of the Department of Global Communications, which will free up funds in the special purpose trust fund that were originally allocated to such communications officers.

168. Additional resources for coordination in territories serviced by multi-country offices will need to be funded outside the special purpose trust fund. Existing multi-country offices currently cover 29 States Members of the United Nations and 12 territories, which are either Non-Self-Governing Territories, constituent countries of Member States or countries in free association with Member States. The 12 territories will continue to be serviced by their respective multi-country office hubs, but territories will not have in-country coordination officers funded from the special purpose trust fund. Any coordination presence in situ will need to be funded from other sources, such as contributions by the Member States to which the territories relate and/or other funding partners.

169. Member States can count on my commitment to ensure that the implementation of these recommendations will be closely monitored and, where necessary, that adjustments will be made in consultation with the countries concerned.

170. I am encouraged by the leadership and full commitment of the principals of the United Nations development system to implement measures to enhance the substantive and coordination offer to multi-country offices immediately. By tailoring the assets of the United Nations development system and maximizing their impact through stronger coordination, the measures will deepen the support and extend the reach of the system to all countries covered by multi-country offices, particularly small island developing States. Ultimately, this will translate into stronger policy support to countries as they deal with complex trade-offs to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; find ways to expand fiscal space, dealing with debt challenges and mobilizing financing; and seek more robust operational support on the ground. Decisive action by Member States on the recommendations outlined above will enable us to take critical steps to accelerate action to achieve the 2030 Agenda and advance the Samoa Pathway in multi-country office settings.

## VI. Harnessing the regional assets of the United Nations development system to achieve the 2030 Agenda

### A. Leveraging the regional value of the United Nations for country, subregional and regional support

171. A strengthened United Nations response at the regional level is essential to maximizing the impact of support for the 2030 Agenda in every country. This simple but important aim has remained at the core of the regional review process over the past two years, while we have pursued greater cohesion, a larger impact and more transparency for United Nations regional assets, to support results on the ground. My previous report (A/74/73-E/2019/14) provided extensive data on the United Nations development system capacities at the regional level, including an unprecedented overview of functions, staff numbers and budget envelopes throughout the United Nations.<sup>8</sup>

172. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2019/15, the regional review process has focused on the urgent need to enhance transparency, reduce the fragmentation of our policy work in the regions and better connect assets to the country level. The rationale is clear: the heightened demands of the 2030 Agenda and the cross-border, subregional and regional challenges that countries face in their journey mean that a more collaborative United Nations regional presence is required. This is the key to unlocking the wealth of expertise at the regional level.

173. For the first time ever, we are seeing the emergence of a single coordination system with buy-in among all United Nations development system entities in the regions to promote United-Nations-wide coherence and avoid duplication in our support for the Goals. In doing so, we are addressing a historic deficit. Indeed, the regional level still operates with an architecture that was loosely defined in the late 1990s, while previous attention and the reform efforts since then have largely focused on coordination at the country and global levels. We cannot afford to continue to ignore the regional level, especially at a time when countries expect optimal support from the United Nations, without exception.

174. I am encouraged to see that the support provided to countries by regional commissions is now better coordinated among resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, which ensures a more coherent and transparent collective response to country demands. Moreover, with resident coordinators serving as a conduit, United Nations country teams have more ability to leverage the extensive expertise of regional commissions, including with regard to economic development, to support country action. There is now a systematic effort to ensure that resident coordinators and all new regional directors of the Development Coordination Office pay a familiarization visit to relevant regional commissions. Cooperation in support of country priorities has increased significantly and feedback by resident coordinators and programme country Governments on the benefits of this new form of collaboration is positive. Several entities are also looking at ways in which to realign their regional approach to enable a more collaborative regional architecture. UNV, for example, moved staff managing its regional portfolio from headquarters to the regional hubs in Amman; Bangkok; Dakar; Istanbul, Turkey; Nairobi; and Panama City, in pursuit of synergies with other United Nations entities.

175. We now have an opportunity to institutionalize the progress made and take it to the next level. I remain convinced that the best way forward is to advance in line with the five transformative areas that I put forward to Member States in 2019, following

<sup>8</sup> See Cepei, *A Sustainable Regional UN* (April 2019).

consultation with United Nations development system entities and drawing on the independent insight provided by external sustainable development experts from different regions and coordinated by Cepei, a think tank from the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

176. The five transformative areas are as follows:

(a) Creation of United Nations regional collaborative platforms that would absorb existing duplicative coordination mechanisms and foster collaboration on sustainable development among United Nations development system entities operating at the regional level;

(b) Establishment of strong knowledge management hubs in each region by pooling policy expertise currently scattered across various entities;

(c) Enhanced transparency and results-based management at the regional level, including through annual reporting on United Nations system-wide results at the regional level in support of the 2030 Agenda;

(d) Launch of a region-by-region change management process to consolidate existing capacities with regard to data and statistics;

(e) Identification of administrative services that could be provided more efficiently to regional offices through common back offices (e.g. human resources, procurement and common premises), similar to efforts that have been made at the country level.

177. Under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General and supported by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Reform, an internal review team, with the participation of the regional commissions and United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities, held robust discussions on each of the transformative areas and on ownership of the way forward. In each region, dedicated inter-agency teams, co-led by executive secretaries of the regional commissions and the UNDP regional directors, acting as chairs of the regional teams of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, provided recommendations on how to implement measures identified for the five transformative areas on a region-by-region basis. The regional offices of the Development Coordination Office have supported that process to ensure coherence with broader reform efforts.

178. In its resolution [2019/15](#), the Economic and Social Council looked forward to inclusive, intergovernmental consultations for the finalization and implementation of the regional review, on a region-by-region basis (para. 8). Consultations have been held with Member States in different formats, including regional groupings and plenary meeting. The consultations revealed that there was general support for moving from the current loose coordination to more effective collaboration of regional assets. They also allowed for robust dialogue and clarification of the expected benefits of all envisioned change measures. I am grateful to all Member States for engaging in a spirit of partnership, asking the hard questions and helping us to fine-tune the proposals, which they enriched with their viewpoints along the way. Today, I can confidently say that reform has been embraced at the regional level. We must seize this momentum and move forward together.

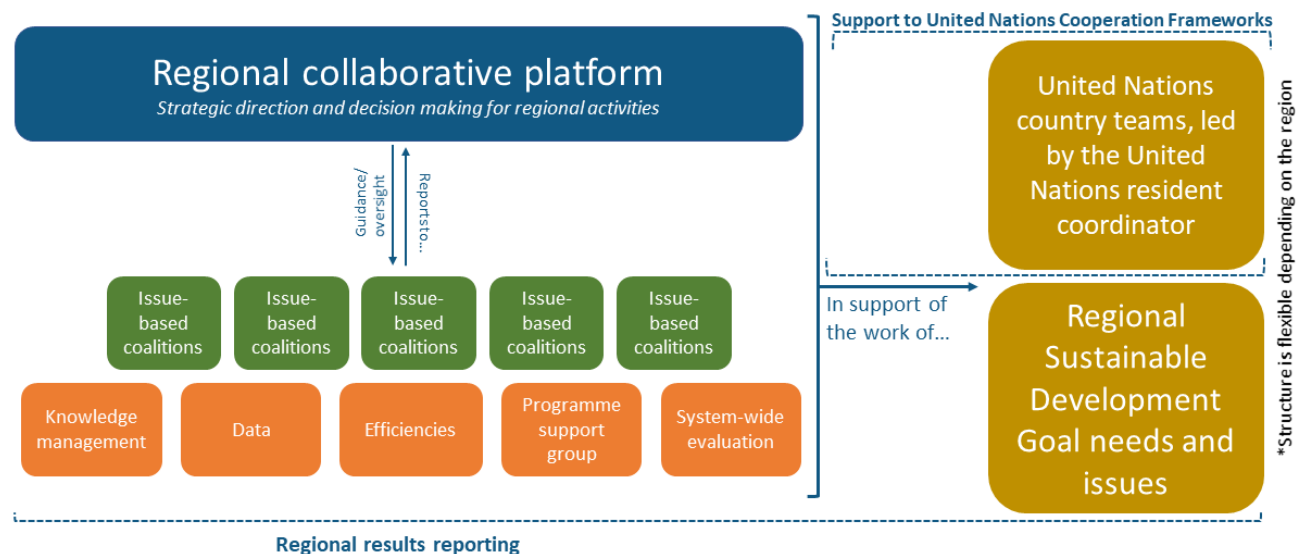
## **B. Common elements in strengthening the regional architecture of the United Nations development system**

179. The regional collaborative platforms will bring together the existing structures of the regional coordination mechanisms and the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group, which have coexisted in previous years with obvious

duplications of composition, and often, activities (see figure XII). The platforms will be for internal inter-agency collaboration, akin to United Nations country teams or the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. It is important to be clear on a few parameters. First, the platforms are not intergovernmental forums. Second, they are not designed to create new regional initiatives, but to optimize what already exists. Third, the platforms are not a new oversight mechanism for United Nations country teams or resident coordinators, which continue to report directly to me. They have a clear and simple objective: in a cost-neutral way, to ensure coordination, collaboration and the best use of United Nations expertise and assets across United Nations development system entities at the regional level. This is important, so that we do not duplicate our efforts horizontally (across regional entities) or vertically (with regard to global or country activities). Ultimately, the platforms will bring leadership, accountability and clarity to system-wide goals, activities and results in the regions, to amplify the support provided to countries by United Nations country teams.

180. The Deputy Secretary-General, in the capacity of Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, will be Chair of the regional collaborative platforms, and the Under-Secretary-General of the respective regional commissions and the UNDP regional directors, at the Assistant Secretary-General level, will be Vice-Chairs. The platforms will convene in several configurations, including once a year in a meeting chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, back-to-back with the regional forums on sustainable development, which remain the intergovernmental platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the regional level. The secretariat of the regional collaborative platforms will be provided by the regional offices of the Development Coordination Office, the regional commissions and UNDP, under the overall direction of the Chair and the two Vice-Chairs of the platforms. In addition, regional commissions and UNDP will provide the necessary logistical support for regional collaborative platform meetings, drawing on their strong expertise and operational capacities. The Development Coordination Office will provide the main support for the chair in organizing the annual planning meetings of the platforms, at which the agenda for the year is established and the progress made over the previous year is reviewed. It will also provide support to the vice-chairs throughout the year, alongside the other members of the secretariat.

Figure XII  
Proposed regional architecture of the United Nations development system



181. The regional component of the management and accountability framework will be developed to ensure consistency with its country-level component and to capture the relationships within and across the regional collaborative platforms.

182. Most existing mechanisms currently part of the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group and the regional coordination mechanism will be realigned through timebound issue-based coalitions, which will bring together the existing expertise of the regional United Nations development system entities to foster collaboration on issues that transcend national borders, such as trade, global health, trafficking in persons and climate change, or issues for which multiple resident coordinators and United Nations country teams seek regional support and guidance. They will be led by no more than two or three members. In all regions, issue-based coalitions will be demand-driven and will respond to the specific needs and priorities of countries or to the demand of the respective United Nations country teams. Issue-based coalitions will vary according to the policy priorities in each region.

183. An analysis of the current thinking across regions shows that each regional collaborative platform will take a unique approach in establishing its issue-based coalitions (see figure XIII). Climate change, resilience-building and human mobility in its different forms are common issues for which dedicated issue-based coalitions are being considered in all regions. Urbanization is a focus area among European and Central Asian, Asia-Pacific and Arab States, but there are not dedicated issue-based coalitions for this in the other regions. Gender, human rights and youth issues are being considered in all regions, although in some regions they would be mainstreamed while in others there would be specific issue-based coalitions for them. A strong focus on economic transformation is also visible in all regions, albeit with different entry points. Other issue-based coalitions are unique to their regions, for example, there is a focus on crime and violence in Latin America and the Caribbean. While only Europe and Central Asia has considered an issue-based coalition on health at this stage, others are currently examining ways to reflect a COVID-19 lens for all issue-based coalitions.

Figure XIII  
Current thinking on issue-based coalitions

<b>LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human mobility</li> <li>• Equitable growth</li> <li>• Crime and violence</li> <li>• Governance and institutions</li> <li>• Climate change and resilience</li> </ul>	<b>EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Gender equality</li> <li>• Adolescent and youth</li> <li>• Social protection</li> <li>• Large movements of people, displacement and resilience</li> <li>• Data and statistics</li> <li>• Environment and climate change</li> <li>• <i>Sustainable food system</i></li> <li>• <i>Sustainable urban development</i></li> </ul>	<b>ARAB STATES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migration</li> <li>• Urbanization</li> <li>• Humanitarian/development nexus</li> <li>• Food security, climate action and the environment               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate action and energy efficiency</li> <li>• Water, food security and nutrition</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Adolescents and youth empowerment and inclusion</li> <li>• Gender justice and equality</li> <li>• Macro-economic management and social protection               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic management: FFD, trade, debt</li> <li>• Social protection</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Quality social services and community resilience               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and well-being</li> <li>• Education and technology</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>AFRICA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data and statistical systems</li> <li>• Macroeconomic management and economic transformation</li> <li>• Demographic dividends (youth, gender)</li> <li>• New technologies, digital transitions</li> <li>• Climate change, resilience and energy transitions</li> <li>• Peace, security and human rights</li> <li>• Displacement and migration</li> </ul>	<b>ASIA-PACIFIC</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change mitigation</li> <li>• Building resilience</li> <li>• Inclusion and empowerment</li> <li>• People mobility and urbanization</li> <li>• Human rights and gender equality</li> </ul>	

184. In line with the second transformative area proposed for the regional level, all regions have also detailed their plans for pooling existing overlapping expertise into common knowledge management hubs. That is a pragmatic way to address duplication in existing activities and capacities and to transform those into opportunities for establishing synergies. These hubs will allow countries to better identify and gain access to available regional assets in order to respond in real time to national needs and priorities. The hubs will be accessible to Member States for monitoring implementation of the Goals, among other things, and will facilitate the sharing of good practices. Interoperability of the hubs across the different regions is being assessed.

185. We have also moved ahead in consolidating data and statistical capacities in each region. Sustainable Development Goal gateways are being developed in all regions, under the leadership of the regional commissions, which are working with other United Nations development system entities that have data collection responsibilities to provide consolidated data on regional progress with regard to the Goals. The gateways will act as a one-stop-shop for data on the Goals and will help to disseminate data consistently at the global and regional levels. They will be budget-neutral, since they consolidate existing capacities with regard to data and statistics.

186. All of the regions have also defined the format of the annual regional reports on system-wide activities that they will produce for the first time ever. While the content of each report will reflect regional specificities, the scope will be identical. All regional reports will focus on collective contributions by regional-level initiatives, including transboundary programmes in the thematic areas of their respective issue-based coalitions. The reports will capture support by the regional level to country results. They are not meant to duplicate country-level reports and will not cover agency-specific work; they will reflect the collective value proposition of the United Nations development system in the region. The reports will be shared with Member

States in each region ahead of the respective regional forums on the Goals. They will also inform reports submitted to the Economic and Social Council at the global level, providing Member States with the opportunity to better guide the efforts of the United Nations development system at all levels, including at the regional level.

187. To deliver on our vision for more efficient operations at all levels, all regional collaborative platforms will develop regional-level business operation strategies. They will look into the potential for common services among regional offices, hosted in the same city, and will complement United Nations country team business operation strategies, including by comprehensively mapping demand for common operational services in order to match that demand with potential suppliers using cost-efficiency and quality of services as guiding principles. Regional operation management teams have been reactivated to develop and implement, together with the Development Coordination Office, regional business operation strategies in line with specific regional need. This is the first time that the system has engaged in a collective exercise to identify services that can be handled jointly in order to ensure that our regional presence is also more efficient. In the medium term, I am certain that the regional repositioning will not only prove beneficial for the advancement of the 2030 Agenda, but also for the cost-efficiency of the operations of the United Nations development system.

### **C. The next steps in each region: an overview of the region-by-region approach**

188. In Africa, the United Nations development system has a total annual budget for regional activities of close to \$300 million,<sup>9</sup> of which 20 per cent is allocated through regional commissions and 80 per cent through other United Nations entities. In the Africa region, the United Nations development system has taken a unique approach to ensure that the new regional architecture nurtures and reinforces the already strong collaboration with the African Union. To that effect, the work programme of the regional collaborative platform will include dedicated sessions with the African Union to reinforce collaboration and track progress in implementing the United Nations-African Union framework for the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. Initiatives for collaboration between the African Union and the regional collaborative platforms are already being discussed. The issues that will be subject to issue-based coalitions<sup>10</sup> in Africa align with the key priorities defined with the African Union, including a special focus on improving data and statistics for the Goals; enhancing economic transformation and diversification; helping Governments in Africa to harness the demographic dividend and leverage new technologies for inclusive development; and strengthening natural resource governance and energy transition in order to fight climate change. Issue-based coalitions on displacement and peace and on security and human rights are also being considered, which underscores the critical interlinkages between development, humanitarian action, peacebuilding and human rights in a region in which many countries still face conflicts and large-scale emergencies. All issue-based coalitions in Africa are expected to produce draft workplans in early 2020 for implementation, following consideration of the regional review by Member States.

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<sup>9</sup> All budgetary figures in this section are estimated on the basis of available data and are complemented by surveys shared with all United Nations development system entities as part of the mapping exercise conducted by Cepei in 2019. The full mapping information was shared with the Economic and Social Council in the lead-up to the 2019 operational activities segment.

<sup>10</sup> In Africa, the term “opportunities/issue-based coalitions” is being adopted to explicitly reflect a focus on helping the continent leverage opportunities to achieve its aspirations.



189. The Africa knowledge management hub will serve as a one-stop-shop hosting multisectoral data, publications, learning resources and a roster of experts. It is expected, initially, to focus on the regional priorities reflected by the issue-based coalitions. The hub will help to identify, select, organize, disseminate and transfer important information, knowledge and expertise scattered across the system. It is intended as a connector for Governments, United Nations entities, the private sector, civil society organizations and academia. The Africa Sustainable Development Goal gateway will be built on the basis of the Economic Commission for Africa integrated planning and reporting toolkit to strengthen tracking of Goals for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. A first-of-its-kind effort in piloting a regional business operation strategy will commence in Nairobi.

190. The total annual budget for regional United Nations development system activities in the Arab States amounts to approximately \$450 million, with regional commissions receiving around 10 per cent of the budget and other United Nations development system entities receiving the remaining 90 per cent. In Arab States, the United Nations development system is considering establishing a number of issue-based coalitions that would build on working groups that had previously been split between the regional coordination mechanism and the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group. The coalitions will cover issues such as migration, urbanization, the strengthening of social services for health, education and technology, as well as macroeconomic management (social protection, financing for the Goals, trade and debt management). Similarly to Africa, the United Nations development system in the Arab States would also set up an issue-based coalition dedicated to the nexus between humanitarian and development activities, so as to enable action by United Nations country teams in specific crisis countries. The United Nations development system also foresees the establishment of dedicated issue-based coalitions for gender equality and youth-related issues.

191. The Arab region is well advanced in the development of its knowledge management hub, which will be called “Manara” (meaning “lighthouse” in Arabic). Already at the prototype phase, Manara builds on the United Nations development system data hub hosted by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), but also includes assets from other entities in the region. It will use artificial intelligence to synthesize information on the Goals from a vast array of knowledge products. In the Arab region, the Manara hub has also been chosen to be the one-stop-shop for data on and monitoring of the Goals, as well as for pooling knowledge products, learning resources, expert rosters and policy simulation tools. It will provide access to data and knowledge products across the United Nations system, national statistics offices and various non-conventional sources, including “big data” sources. The methodology for the roster of experts has been developed and could be finalized shortly after the operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council. In advancing more efficient operations, ESCWA is already offering services and is helping to establish common services in Beirut, where it is located. It currently hosts the resident coordinator’s office in Lebanon, in addition to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations information centre and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon. This is a preliminary but encouraging achievement on which to build.

192. The United Nations development system in the Asia-Pacific region has a total annual budget of close to \$290 million, with regional commissions representing approximately 26 per cent of the total and other United Nations development system entities representing the remaining 74 per cent. In making the transition to a new regional architecture, the United Nations development system in that region has identified five issue-based coalitions for which there is strong demand from countries and for which several entities have existing capacities and resources. This includes

climate change mitigation, with a focus on driving decarbonization and addressing the region's air pollution challenges; resilience-building, with a focus on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and the prevention of biological hazards; the promotion of inclusion through scaling up social protection and cash transfers in the context of COVID-19, especially for the most vulnerable populations; human mobility and urbanization; and the mainstreaming of human rights and gender equality. All issue-based coalitions are prioritizing actions in support of COVID-19 assessment and response.

193. The Asia-Pacific regional knowledge hub is already in place and will be fully operationalized once we make the transition to a new regional architecture. It will support United Nations development system entities in the Asia-Pacific region, bringing together knowledge and expertise and providing coherent policy advice to countries and United Nations country teams. The hub will be rapidly operationalized by building on the existing Sustainable Development Goal help desk developed by ESCAP, which will in future draw on resources of the broader United Nations development system. A roster of experts and specialists in different areas of the 2030 Agenda from across the United Nations development system will be added to the knowledge hub, starting with those in fields for which support is most commonly requested from United Nations country teams. The hub will be accessible to both United Nations country teams and Governments and will also provide access to the Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goal data gateway that was launched in 2019. Drawing on official data on the Goals from global databases, the gateway provides data on progress in the achievement of the Goals, visuals and assessments and will be expanded to reflect national progress assessments of the Goals. The United Nations development system in the Asia-Pacific region is leading the way on results reporting and has already piloted the production of a system-wide report on United Nations regional results, which will also be shared with the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. The United Nations development system in the Asia-Pacific region also established a regional operational team in early 2020 to develop a common business operation strategy, drawing on existing services provided by ESCAP to over 20 United Nations entities in the region.

194. In Europe and Central Asia, the United Nations development system has a total annual budget of over \$150 million, with close to 30 per cent of that budget being channelled through regional commissions and the remaining 70 per cent through other United Nations development system entities. Moving forward, the United Nations development system team will anchor the transition to a new regional architecture that builds on its already good track record for collaboration. The region was already ahead of the curve on account of the collaboration between the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), and, since 2016, it has been the first to adopt a mechanism like the proposed issue-based coalitions. United Nations development system entities in the region have reviewed the existing issue-based coalitions and are planning to maintain seven coalitions, covering health, data, gender equality, youth and adolescents, social protection and, like in other regions, climate change and large movements of people. The United Nations development system in Europe and Central Asia is also considering creating two additional issue-based coalitions to address issues relating to sustainable food systems and sustainable urban development, building on the long-standing work of ECE in defining transport standards for the region. Workplans for each issue-based coalition are being developed in consultation with resident coordinators in the region.

195. The knowledge management hub in Europe and Central Asia will cluster expertise and knowledge products that will be made available in digital repositories and libraries. The hub will also include a component on statistics for the Goals, rather

than a separate Sustainable Development Goal gateway needing to be established, like in other regions. The hub will be leveraged for data and statistics by a dedicated issue-based coalition, which will help to channel the data to support countries through resident coordinators and United Nations country teams. To advance common back offices, a regional operations management team is currently being established to conduct, in close collaboration with the regional Development Coordination Office desk, a thorough assessment of potential common services in two locations where the United Nations presence is concentrated, Geneva and Istanbul.

196. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations development system regional activities total approximately \$365 million a year, with ECLAC representing around 20 per cent of that total and the other United Nations development system entities representing the remaining 80 per cent. The consultations held in the context of the regional review confirmed a strong sense of ownership and wide appreciation among Member States in the region for the policy support received in previous years, in particular by ECLAC. The new regional architecture will build on that strong foundation, by focusing on the connection between ECLAC and the rest of the United Nations development system. The initial set of issue-based coalitions reflects a balanced prioritization effort that leverages the comparative advantages of all entities. There is a strong focus on increasing equitable growth to address the region's historically high inequalities; advancing Goal 16, with a focus on policy support to reduce crime and violence, including violence against women and girls; and ensuring risk-informed support for the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on more ambitious nationally determined contributions and the identification of nature-based solutions for enhanced climate action. An issue-based coalition on governance would help the United Nations development system to provide joined-up responses to the increasing number of requests for support, and to ensure just, responsive and accountable institutions and efficient public service delivery systems. Finally, the issue-based coalition on human mobility would ensure a development perspective to address root causes of unregulated mobility in specific subregions and implications for national and regional development strategies. The region will prioritize gender equality, women's empowerment and youth issues as cross-cutting issues throughout all issue-based coalitions.

197. The United Nations development system in Latin America and the Caribbean aims to roll out a Sustainable Development Goals gateway in the first half of 2020 that will also serve as a knowledge hub for the Goals. It will be coordinated by ECLAC and supported by a steering committee involving other United Nations entities. The gateway will be open to United Nations country teams, Member States and the public. A roster of experts reflecting the full range of expertise in the United Nations development system regional presence will also be available, organized according to the issue-based coalitions. The prototype for the gateway was already presented to Member States in November 2019 at the ECLAC Statistical Conference of the Americas. In Latin America and the Caribbean, a regional operations management team will also be convened to prepare an inter-agency plan to advance common services. As a first step in that direction, ECLAC is already carrying out a joint procurement process for travel services in Chile on behalf of the United Nations development system.

#### **D. Seizing the momentum to move forward decisively**

198. The regional review has been one of the most complex endeavours of the reforms, but is also one of the central components. I am convinced that if we can find common ground in aligning expectations among Member States, we can transform the regional level and reassert its considerable value. The work carried out in the

regions can have a real impact on people's lives, if we ensure that the resulting policy work draws on the expertise scattered across the system and is channelled to countries. The establishment of a new resident coordinator system has created an optimal channel for connecting those efforts and clarifying demand; we must now organize the regional work to strengthen the offer.

199. Member States have asked me to present options to maximize the impact of United Nations development system regional assets and I have responded with a package of interlinked activities that offer a practical, yet impactful, solution. I do not consider the status quo to be a valid option. That would be another significant missed opportunity. The tangible steps described to finally address a historic deficit of collaboration, accountability and strategic guidance at the regional level is the result of extensive research and intensive discussions within the United Nations family, as well as an unprecedented dialogue with Member States and regional and subregional organizations on the value proposition and role of the regional level. Together we have come a long way, and we now have the basis and momentum to forge ahead.

200. At the end of the day, we all share the same objective: to leverage the United Nations regional assets to deliver better results for people on the ground. Implementation of that change package will generate clear benefits and provide lessons that will allow us to continue to adjust and improve as we move forward. Deployment of the new regional architecture can be done within existing budgets, drawing on the capacities of United Nations development system entities. The substantive work by the regional entities and the issue-based coalitions will continue to depend on extrabudgetary support. I trust that we will pass the market test.

201. I count on Member States during the 2020 operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council to support my overall efforts to reposition the United Nations development system regional assets. I am confident that we now have all the expected elements to make that happen and must not let the opportunity pass. We are seeking, specifically, support to proceed with the establishment of a new regional architecture in line with the direction that I have outlined in the present report. That would allow us to commence implementation and correct our course, as necessary and with guidance from Member States, as we move forward. I remain committed to ensuring a transparent and consultative implementation process for Member States.

## **VII. From repositioning to results: mobilizing an integrated whole-of-system response in support of the decade of action**

202. At this early stage, it is clear that the United Nations development system reforms are bringing us closer to our common objective and that some results are already tangible. Looking ahead to the next quadrennial review, I invite Member States to provide guidance to the United Nations development system not only on how it should work, but also on the kind of integrated policy and programmatic support they expect it to provide to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

203. The analysis that informed the Sustainable Development Goals Summit demonstrated that after four years of efforts, we are not yet on track to deliver the Goals by 2030. Now, because of the profound negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable development efforts, our collective challenge during the decade of action is even greater (see figure XIV).

Figure XIV  
Effects of COVID-19 on the achievement of selected Sustainable Development Goals



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

204. The response of Governments and their partners, including the United Nations development system, must be commensurate with that challenge.

205. It must be geared both to protecting recent development gains and, crucially, to addressing the massive implementation gaps that the current crisis has brought to the fore: chronic underinvestment in essential services, such as universal health coverage, water and sanitation, quality education and Internet connectivity; a global economic system that leaves billions of people, including the working poor, on the edge of financial ruin and without access to social protection; the continued destruction of biodiversity and the profound inadequacy of the global response to the climate emergency; deeply rooted power dynamics that entrench gender inequality in almost every realm; and challenges to the protection of human rights and the resolution of devastating conflicts.

206. The increasing risks to the achievement of the Goals resulting from the large-scale human crisis occasioned by COVID-19 shines a spotlight on the vital and urgent need for governmental partners such as the United Nations development system to continuously evolve to respond to contemporary challenges. From its early days focused on institution-building and service delivery, to the global agendas of the 1990s, the Millennium Development Goals, and most recently the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations development system has continually demonstrated its capacity to reinvent itself to deliver as a multilateral leader, coordinator and facilitator of a rights-based approach to development.

207. Maximizing the promise of a repositioned United Nations development system to accelerate implementation of the Goals is the next step in this evolution. That objective must be front and centre as we prepare for the quadrennial review at the end of 2020. In the present chapter, I will outline a number of areas in which Member States can guide the development system to deliver on the responsibilities with which you have entrusted us.

### **Providing integrated policy advice and programmatic support to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals**

208. At its core, sustainable development is about advancing development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need. In light of this, the 2030 Agenda promotes development in a way that achieves balance across the economic, social and environmental dimensions. Each of the Goals are deeply interconnected and interdependent. Achieving the Goals therefore requires integrated policies that effectively manage trade-offs and synergies among important priorities.

209. Since 2015, Governments have made significant progress incorporating the Goals into national planning processes and strengthening cooperation across sectors. In their voluntary national reviews, however, they point to persistent challenges in forging integrated policies, including the siloed nature of ministerial responsibility in most countries; coordination costs; the absence of horizontal policy and of procedural and budgetary mechanisms; and difficulties reaching political consensus on policies of a broader scope. National audits in a number of countries have also shown that there has been less emphasis on vertical policy coherence and inclusive dialogue with stakeholders.<sup>11</sup>

210. The commitment of the United Nations development system to providing integrated policy advice, as elaborated in the system-wide strategic document, can take many forms. That commitment will be delivered through the new generation of United Nations country teams and revamped programming instruments, especially the

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<sup>11</sup> International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions, “Are nations prepared for implementation of the 2030 Agenda? Supreme audit institutions’ insights and recommendations” (July 2019).

Cooperation Framework and tools such as the common approach for mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support. Since 2016, more than 50 mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support engagements have been deployed in response to government requests for alignment of their national systems with the Goals. In 2019, agencies worked together under the leadership of UNDP, UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to adapt this approach through updated analytical tools, a greater focus on vertical policy coherence and inclusive dialogue, and broader United Nations participation across pillars. To respond to country-specific challenges, we must also be able to draw on the input of development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding partners.

211. In addition, it is important for the United Nations development system to provide both policy and programmatic support in a manner that shows its full cognizance of the interconnections between different sectors and the potential knock-on effects of different policy and programmatic interventions. That does not mean that each United Nations agency should work on everything. Rather, it emphasizes the need for a strong and deliberate focus, under the leadership of the resident coordinator, to ensure that there is cooperation on issues where there are strong synergies and interlinkages.

212. The entry points for transformation identified in the 2019 *Global Sustainable Development Report* are illustrative of the cross-sectoral emphasis that is required from all development actors, including Governments.<sup>12</sup> In combination with four levers for change – governance, economy and finance deployed with purpose, behaviour and collective action at the individual and societal level, and science and technology – the entry points are based on vastly different approaches to organizing how we identify, analyse, govern and finance sustainable development responses.

213. Such thinking will be critically needed by Governments and United Nations country teams as they develop plans to recover from the COVID-19 crisis and accelerate implementation of the Goals throughout the decade of action.

### **Evolving our offer to meet country demand**

214. The United Nations development system reforms are geared towards ensuring that host Governments can draw on the extensive capacities of the United Nations development system, not only the capacities that are provided by entities with a country presence, but also those beyond the traditional focus of resident country teams. As illustrated in chapter II, the shift is already under way and now needs to be accelerated. I am convinced that the reforms will support that objective.

215. A survey conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs asked programme country Governments to reflect on the top five Goal areas in which the United Nations contribution has been particularly significant in the past two years, and the top five Goal areas in which United Nations assistance will be required over the next four years.

216. Programme country Governments reported that the United Nations contribution at the country level over the past two years has been particularly significant in health and well-being (Goal 3), gender equality (Goal 5), food security, nutrition and the eradication of hunger (Goal 2), education (Goal 4), and poverty eradication (Goal 1). They indicated that for the next four years, support will be needed first and foremost

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<sup>12</sup> Independent Group of Scientists appointed by the Secretary-General, *The Future is Now: Science for Achieving Sustainable Development – Global Sustainable Development Report 2019* (United Nations, New York, 2019).

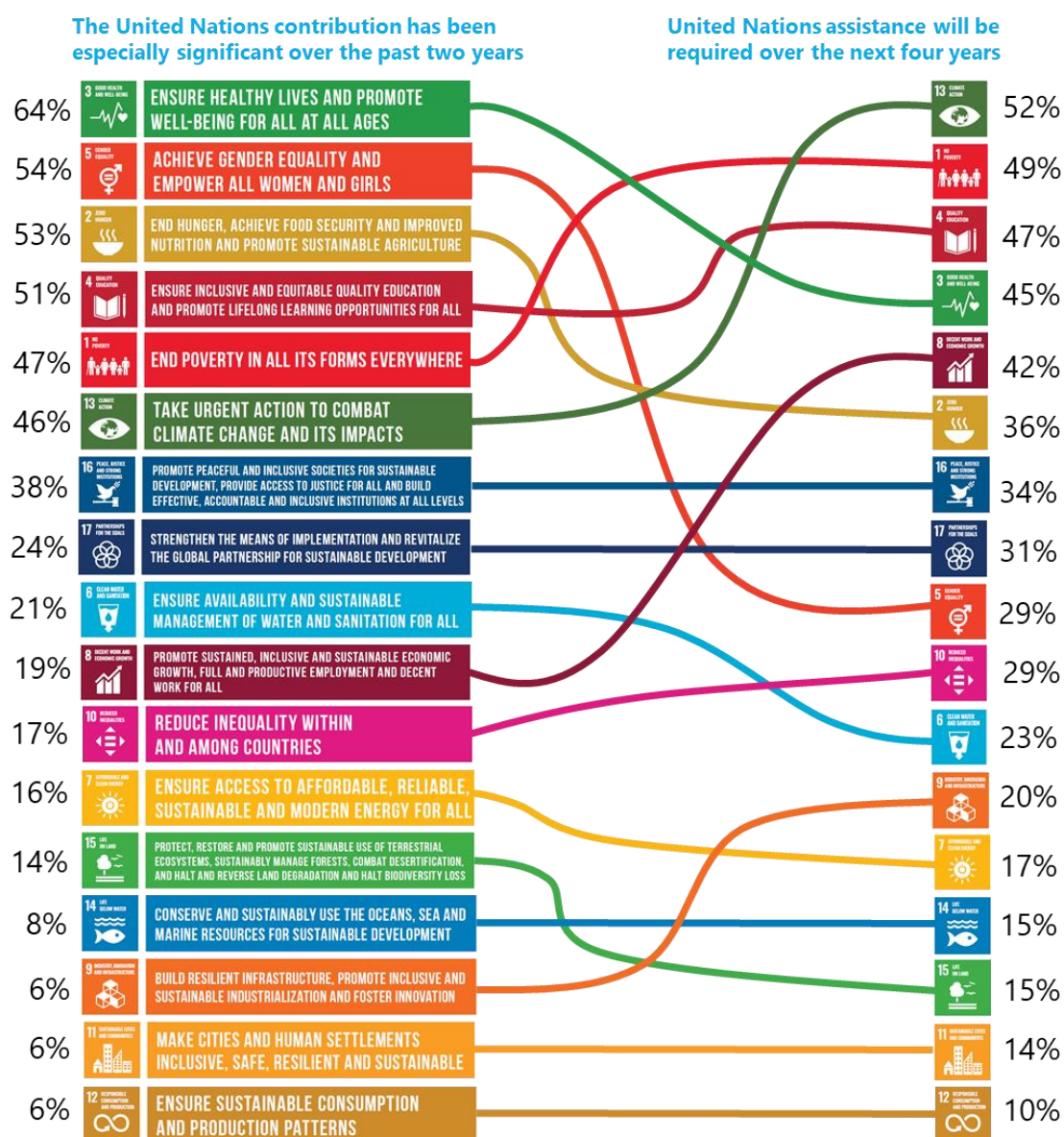
to combat climate change (Goal 13), while demand for support on productive employment and sustainable economic growth is expected to double (see figure XV).

217. The United Nations development system is taking steps to enhance its offer and skill set to effectively support Governments in each of those areas.

218. With regard to economic transformation, the United Nations development system is working hard to advance a stronger and more unified offer. The professional economists recruited to work in resident coordinator offices will help to address this issue, as will the United Nations Economists' Network, coordinated by the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist. The appointment of a Special Envoy on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a Special Envoy on Climate Action and Finance will boost our capacity and extend our reach and influence globally. The Cooperation Framework companion piece on economic transformation provides a conceptual framework explaining what type of economic transformation will boost the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Goals and why. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development is a mechanism for supporting the integrated national financing frameworks, which aim to improve alignment between planning and financing and help mobilize and align financing from all sources for the purpose of comprehensive management and more effective targeting of resources. The Task Force, which is chaired by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is currently developing a methodology, scheduled for publication in 2020, for integrated national financing frameworks and guidance material. To date, close to 20 countries have already agreed to pioneer the integrated national financing framework approach, working closely with United Nations country teams, the Bretton Woods institutions and key bilateral partners, under the coordination of the resident coordinator and with technical support from UNDP. Their experience in informing the guidance materials, ensuring that country-level lessons are integrated into the global methodology and supporting pioneer countries is essential. In recent months, we have also seen the critical importance of effective collaboration between the United Nations and international partners on key macroeconomic issues, including debt and fiscal space.



Figure XV  
United Nations contribution/assistance related to the Sustainable Development Goals



219. With regard to climate change, the United Nations country teams, under the leadership of UNDP, are currently focusing on supporting enhanced nationally determined contributions, strategic partnerships with businesses, shifts in supply chains towards low emission trajectories and the development of the capacity to raise catalytic financing. In addition, biodiversity loss and the nature economy are deeply connected to climate change and, as the COVID-19 crisis has shown, those issues need to be elevated to the country level and addressed with greater urgency.

220. It would be helpful to receive guidance from Member States during the 2020 quadrennial review in relation to these and other areas in which the United Nations development system must continue to sharpen its offer, including with regard to issues featuring at the lower end of the priority list, such as sustainable cities and sustainable consumption and production.

### **Strengthening our support for poverty eradication and leaving no one behind**

221. The eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions is central to achieving the 2030 Agenda. With some 1.3 billion people estimated to be multidimensionally poor in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic threatening the incomes and welfare of hundreds of millions more, we must step up our efforts to rid the world of poverty. The repositioning exercise is empowering the United Nations development system to put the eradication of poverty and the building of sustainable and inclusive economies back at the very heart of our collective offer.

222. Almost all programme country Governments report that the United Nations has assisted their country to identify (95 per cent) and reach (93 per cent) the furthest behind. At the individual entity level, all United Nations development system entities that responded to the headquarters survey, except the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the World Tourism Organization, confirmed that their strategic plans defined concrete approaches for reaching the furthest behind.

223. A major effort has been made by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to ensure that the guidance for the new Cooperation Framework addresses structural, institutional and other barriers that perpetuate inequalities and disparities. The new companion pieces of the Cooperation Framework emphasize the need for countries to reframe economic policies and practices for inclusive, diversified and job-intensive economic transformation that leaves no one behind, protects the planet and strengthens the ecological foundations of economies.

224. The common country analysis and the operational guide on leaving no one behind both provide a conceptual framework and detailed guidance to operationalize the commitment to leave no one behind. The common country analysis assesses five factors of the principle of leaving no one behind: discrimination, geography, vulnerability to shocks, governance and socioeconomic status (see figure XVI).

Figure XVI

**Factors of leaving no one behind: assessing the evidence of who is left behind and to what degree**

Source: United Nations Sustainable Development Group, “Leaving no one behind: a United Nations operational guide for United Nations country teams” (March 2019).

225. On the basis of that analysis, the Cooperation Framework is expected to capture how the United Nations development system will help, in particular, to strengthen the resilience of people through social protection and redistributive policies that reduce vulnerability and preserve gains made in respect to poverty and inequality. It will also help to strengthen economic resilience through appropriate macroeconomic and structural policies, an area in which cooperation with international financial institutions is again essential. The COVID-19 crisis is drawing renewed attention to the importance of strengthening social protection while addressing the looming recession.

226. In addition to these efforts, and in keeping with my 2020 call to action for human rights, new United Nations system-wide strategies on youth and disability inclusion are being rolled out at both the entity and country level. Over the course of the next quadrennial review cycle, Member States should expect to see a measurable improvement in our engagement with, and support for, those critical constituencies as part of our broader commitment to leave no one behind.

227. Last, the COVID-19 crisis is illustrating very clearly the importance of assessing unforeseen and transboundary risk and building resilient public service delivery and access. Access to universal health care, clean water and improved sanitation, social

protection, quality education and a consistent electricity supply remains at alarmingly low levels in many programme countries.

228. During the next quadrennial review cycle, the United Nations development system must redouble its efforts to support Governments to deliver access to quality public services and accelerate progress on poverty eradication and leaving no one behind.

### **Rallying the system for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls**

229. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a timely reminder of the distance we still have to travel to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Despite advances, the state of women's rights remains dire. Inequality and discrimination are the norm everywhere. Progress has slowed to a standstill and in some cases been reversed. The United Nations development system has put in place many tools to strengthen its offer in that area, but we can and must go further.

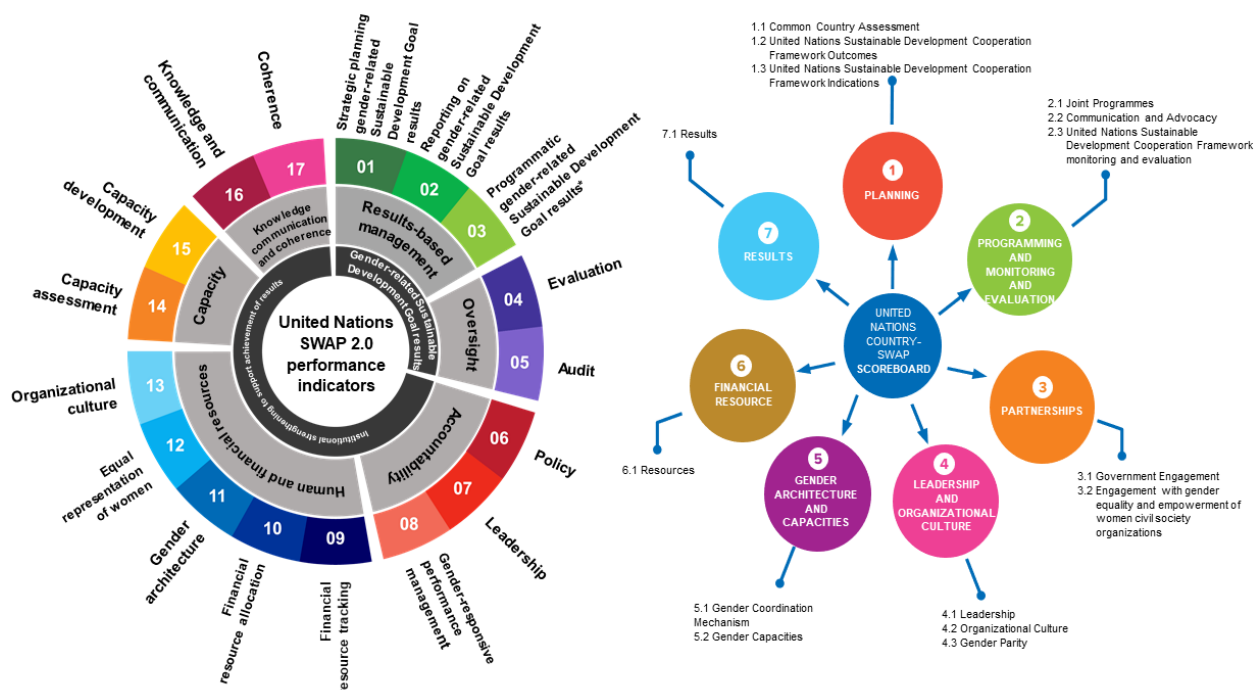
230. The United Nations development system has made significant strides to implement the 2016 quadrennial review mandate to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, as evidenced by an increasing number of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and Cooperation Frameworks featuring specific outcomes on gender equality (72 per cent). Gender equality is also the most common focus area of joint programmes. Those positive results are driven in part by the increased implementation of the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and its country-level equivalent, the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women,<sup>13</sup> which was formerly called the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan gender equality scorecard (see figure XVII).

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<sup>13</sup> See [unsdg.un.org/resources/unct-swap-gender-equality-scorecard](https://unsdg.un.org/resources/unct-swap-gender-equality-scorecard).

Figure XVII

**United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2.0 and United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women performance indicators, 2018**



Source: Information available from UN-Women website at [www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability](http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/promoting-un-accountability).

231. At the entity level, the number of United Nations development system entities reporting has increased from 35 in 2012 to 39 in 2019. The reports of these entities indicate that system-wide efforts to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment are predominantly clustered into specific socioeconomic areas, with areas relating to energy and infrastructure receiving less attention. In terms of its internal arrangements, the United Nations development system performed best in the areas of audit and gender responsive performance management in 2019, but its weakest performance was in the areas of resource allocation and equal representation of women.

232. At the country level, an updated version of the gender scorecard, renamed the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, was rolled out in 2018. The number of United Nations country teams conducting periodic comprehensive reports as part of the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women more than doubled from 23 in the period 2012–2015 to 48 in the period 2016–2019. Of these United Nations country teams, 16 submitted annual reports for the first time and 17 prepared a periodic report.<sup>14</sup> In line with the new

<sup>14</sup> Periodic assessments of the comprehensive United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women are conducted at the planning stage of Cooperation Frameworks. Performance is assessed across all 15 indicators of the Action Plan and recommendations are made that require follow-up by United Nations country teams. Annual progress reports provide updates on a select number of indicators and on actions undertaken to improve performance.

guidance on Cooperation Frameworks, all United Nations country teams are now required to implement the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan.

233. With regard to the financing of gender equality, a 2017 external review indicated that United Nations development system expenditures related to gender equality and women's empowerment were estimated to account for merely 2.03 per cent of all United Nations development system expenditures, and that only 2.6 per cent of United Nations personnel work in that area.<sup>15</sup> In response, I established the High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality to review and track United Nations budgets and expenditures across the system. The recommendations of the Task Force will be implemented in 2020.

234. In terms of achieving gender parity, the system-wide strategy on gender parity that I launched in 2017 shows that solid progress is being made. As of 1 January 2020, for the first time in United Nations history, we have achieved gender parity across our most senior ranks of full-time Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-Generals two years ahead of schedule. We are also sustaining the gender parity of our resident coordinators and now have a record number of women heads and deputy heads of peace operations. The overall representation of women in the professional and higher categories of the United Nations system has reached 44.2 per cent. More needs to be done to change the organizational culture to attract and retain more women. I am equally committed to making 2020 a year of meaningful progress for greater and more equitable geographical diversity among United Nations staff. In early 2020, the Secretariat launched the Geographical Diversity Strategy,<sup>16</sup> which will be one of the cornerstones of a diverse workforce.

235. As we look ahead to the next quadrennial review cycle, we must be clear that only by transforming the balance of power and upholding the rights of women and girls can we achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It will be critical, therefore, that United Nations development system entities pay more attention to integrating gender considerations into technical and non-technical areas of work where gaps and challenges remain. I will also request all United Nations development system entities to meet or exceed the requirements of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2.0 by 2023; all United Nations country teams to undertake the United Nations country team System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women assessment on an annual basis; and the entire United Nations system to fully implement the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System.

### **Strengthening national and local capacities as an integral part of our support**

236. In accordance with the 2016 quadrennial review, United Nations development system entities are called upon to strengthen their support for national institutions in planning, management and evaluation capacities, while the COVID-19 crisis illustrates the central importance of effective leadership, governance and institutions.

237. The survey conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs indicates that national institutions are typically involved in programme design and implementation, but less so in programme evaluation. The United Nations development system has, however, made great strides to strengthen the statistical capacities of programme countries, with 70 per cent of programme country Governments reporting that, compared with four years ago, United Nations entities have worked more closely together to support capacity-building on disaggregated

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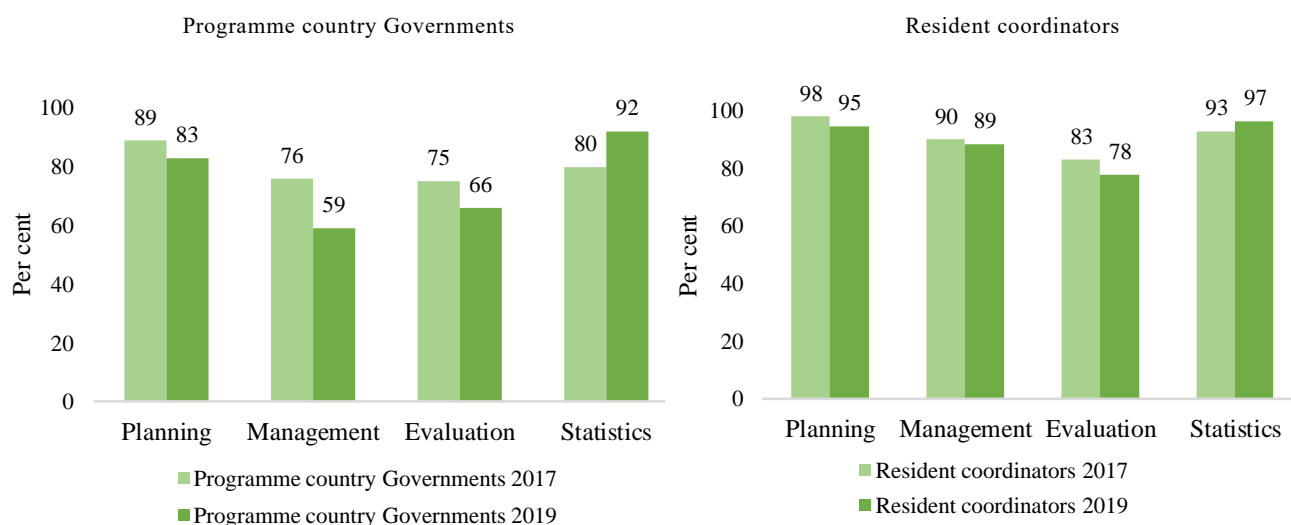
<sup>15</sup> Dalberg, "Consultant's report: system-wide outline of the functions and capacities of the UN development system". The estimates are based on development funding commitments made for gender equality, where entity data are available.

<sup>16</sup> See [hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/OHR%20Geographical%20Diversity%20Strategy\\_EN\\_0.pdf](https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/OHR%20Geographical%20Diversity%20Strategy_EN_0.pdf).



data collection and analysis (see figure XIII). At the headquarters level, robust mechanisms are in place to enable entities of the United Nations system to work together on data and statistics.

Figure XVIII

**United Nations contribution to the strengthening of national capacities**

Source: 2017 and 2019 Department of Economic and Social Affairs surveys of resident coordinators and programme country Governments.

Note: Affirmative responses only, including “strongly agree” and “agree” combined.

238. Member States also requested the United Nations, where possible, to maximize the use of local systems and processes in the work of United Nations country teams for common procurement. However, nearly 60 per cent of United Nations country teams report that the programme country Government does not currently have the capacity to assume more responsibility for procurement in projects funded by the United Nations. Many operations management teams noted that the United Nations procures on behalf of the Government, owing to limited capacity, limited authority or challenging processes.

239. Overall, to be sustainable, capacity development must be demand-driven and focused on actual change rather than on activities to strengthen capacities. This shift away from a supply-driven focus on inputs is embedded in the new Cooperation Framework guidance. This guidance features capacity development as one of three mutually reinforcing modes of implementation, together with results-focused programming and coherent policy support.

240. Strengthening underutilized national government capacities and systems, such as those for finance and procurement, implies that the host Government and relevant United Nations development system entities must identify the strengthening of the capacities as priorities for action in the Cooperation Framework, with a corresponding sustained investment of attention and resources.

241. It is also critical for the United Nations development system to support enhanced city and local government capacities and strengthened alignment between the national and local levels in policy design and implementation. Consultation with, and the provision of support to, local governments varies widely by country and needs to become a consistent business practice for all United Nations country teams.

242. In addition, we must look more closely at using the increased analytical and partnership capacities in resident coordinator offices and the new generation of

country teams to strengthen the capacities of national authorities on critical issues, such as integrated policy analysis and design, domestic resource mobilization and the securing of investment from multiple national and international sources.

243. Over the course of the next quadrennial review, we will need to ensure that efforts to strengthen the capacities of national and local government partners address areas that are most critical in accelerating the achievement of the Goals and are tracked clearly and in a consistent way, with a focus on outcomes and results.

**Working across pillars to achieve the 2030 Agenda in crisis or emergency settings**

244. We have taken a number of steps during this quadrennial review cycle to strengthen coordination across pillars and ensure that United Nations country teams can draw on assets from all the United Nations pillars to service the 2030 Agenda. The first critical step in that direction was the strengthening of the United Nations development system itself and the repositioning of sustainable development at the heart of the Organization. After all, implementing the Goals universally is the most effective strategy for mitigating risks, preventing crises and building resilience. At the same time, preventing crises and accelerating the transition back into sustainable development will be essential if we are to leave no one behind on the road to 2030. In the previous four years alone, 55 per cent of Governments reported that their countries had faced a humanitarian emergency and 52 per cent had engaged in peacebuilding activities.

245. That is why I launched several workstreams to strengthen coordination across pillars and ensure integrated responses in countries facing or emerging from crisis or responding to humanitarian emergencies. The anchoring of the resident coordinator system in the Secretariat has greatly facilitated collaboration between humanitarian and development activities and helped to strengthen linkages to peacebuilding. The fact that the development coordination pillar is now hosted by the Secretariat, where humanitarian coordination and peacebuilding support also reside, has helped remove operational hurdles relating to administrative and operational systems. There is, for example, increased collaboration in the development of guidance and policy support tools for double- and triple-hatted resident coordinators. The Development Coordination Office also collaborates very closely with the peace pillar and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the planning process of countries in which sustainable development activities coexist with humanitarian and peacebuilding activities. As the United Nations presence in Haiti transitioned to a new presence in 2019, a number of joint missions were deployed, with visible improvements in collaboration and the development of joint strategic objectives to help the country consolidate its trajectory towards stability and sustainable development.

246. The creation of the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration has helped to bring together key humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors, including the World Bank, to address systemic and country-specific bottlenecks. By focusing on specific countries, the Joint Steering Committee has also helped United Nations country teams to overcome challenges of working across pillars and mobilizing the necessary resources to sustainably reduce needs, vulnerabilities and risks in specific contexts. The Joint Steering Committee, which is co-chaired by UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is supported by a secretariat, including the Peacebuilding Support Office, and is anchored in the Development Coordination Office. Since its establishment in 2017, the Committee has focused on supporting United Nations country leadership in eight focus countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, and the Sudan) to ensure that United Nations country teams engage in joint analysis and that joined-up planning and programming contribute to strengthening the United



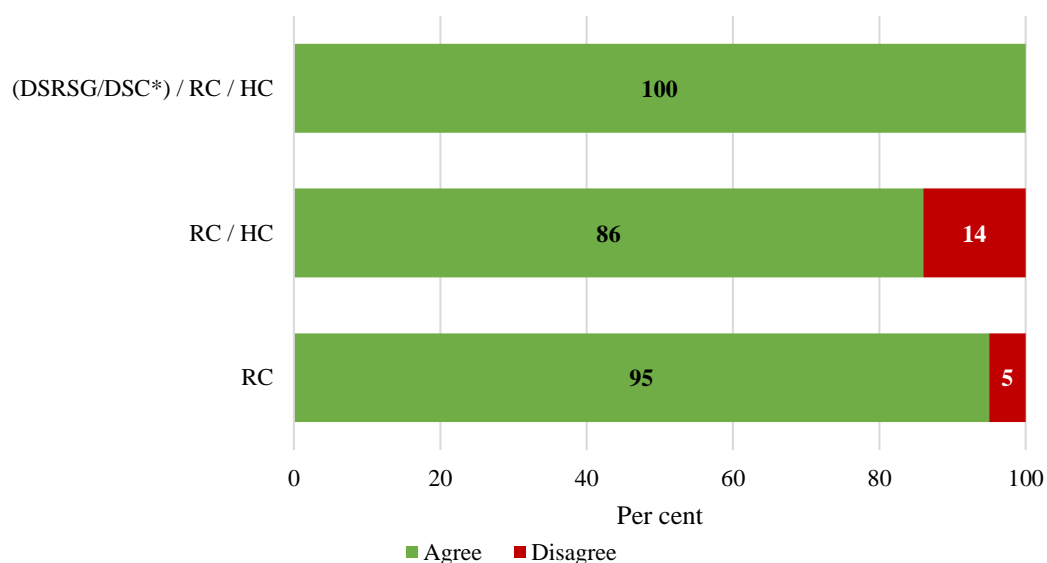
Nations response. Looking forward, the Joint Steering Committee will continue to support national leadership to reduce and address vulnerabilities, meet needs and prevent their recurrence. It will also leverage cooperation with humanitarian, development and peacebuilding partners to support resident coordinators and United Nations country teams in mobilizing programmatic and financing support to countries in a timely, complementary and mutually reinforcing manner.

247. In addition, UNDP and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs have expanded the number of peace and development advisers from 49 in 2018 to 54 in 2019. WFP is setting up a peace and conflict sensitivity network, working with peace and development advisers to ensure maximum synergy. Another example of action in that area is the recovery and peacebuilding assessment partnership framework supported by the European Union, the United Nations and the World Bank. The framework is designed to ensure that interventions for recovery are integrated and aligned, by helping countries to assess, plan and prioritize requirements over the course of time, as part of a joint process.

248. Current efforts to boost cooperation include the establishment of the Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding and Partnership Facility under the Peacebuilding Fund, which is designed to advance the strategic priorities of the United Nations-World Bank Partnership Framework for Crisis-Affected Situations. It includes an allocation of \$400,000 for country and policy priorities to consolidate United Nations capacities in crises, which could be important for strengthening collaboration between resident coordinators and the World Bank. The new fragility, conflict and violence strategy of the World Bank, launched in March 2020, will also be implemented in partnership with the United Nations and other actors, on the basis of comparative advantages.

249. Data from the survey conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs confirms that overall, we are making progress. Over 80 per cent of programme country Governments reported close collaboration among United Nations entities engaged in more than one area of development, disaster and risk reduction, humanitarian action and sustaining peace activities. Similarly, 95 resident coordinators reported close collaboration among United Nations entities engaged in one or more programmatic area related to humanitarian action, development or peacebuilding, with none mentioning no collaboration at all (see figure XIX).

Figure XIX  
**United Nations country team members provide the resident coordinator with sufficient and timely information to ensure strong coherence of development and humanitarian activities**



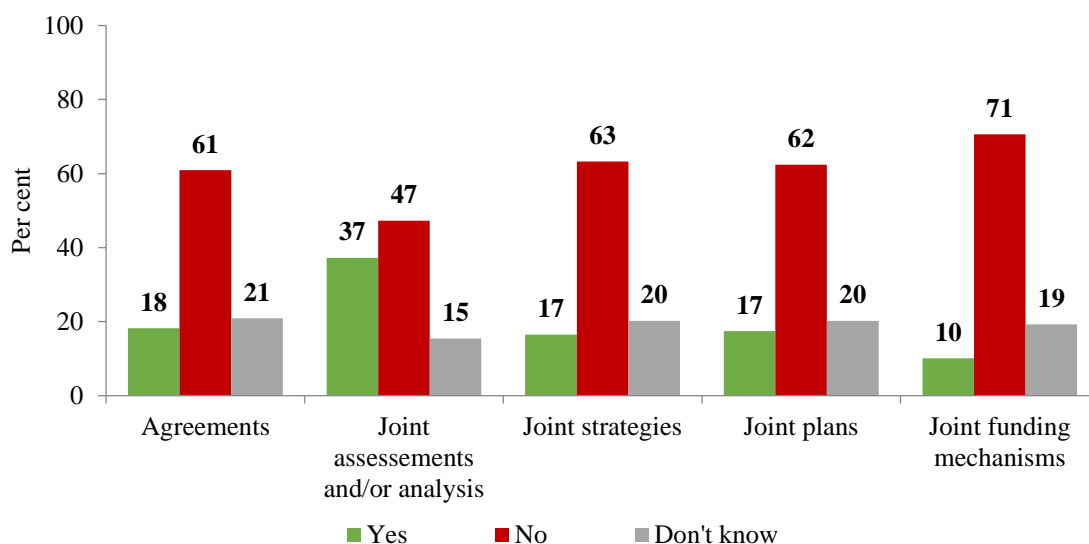
*Source:* 2019 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of resident coordinators, based on 89 responses to the question.

*Abbreviations:* DSRSG = Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, DSC = Deputy United Nations Special Coordinator in Lebanon and Palestine, RC = resident coordinator, HC = humanitarian coordinator.

250. On the other hand, the majority of United Nations organizations reported some kind of difficulty in advancing collaboration between pillars in crisis settings (see figure XX). This most commonly relates to articulating complementary results, agreeing on accountability frameworks and/or assessing impact, and mobilizing financing for collective action. I count on resident coordinators to help bridge those gaps, including by working with the Joint Steering Committee to address gaps that may exist in skill sets and capacities within United Nations country teams to advance that critical agenda.

Figure XX

**Types of cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions in the period 2018–2019 to strengthen complementarity among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts**



Source: 2019 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of resident coordinators.

251. However, to ensure that these ongoing efforts bear fruit, we must accelerate progress. There is a need, for instance, for donors to adapt processes and instruments to ensure coherent combined financing by increasingly funding multi-year humanitarian plans. Four donors now provide more than half of their humanitarian financing on a multi-annual basis, and two have entered into a multi-year agreement to support the Central Emergency Response Fund for the period 2018–2021. I encourage other partners to follow those examples.

252. In addition, many United Nations entities highlight the fact that the largely separate development, humanitarian, peace and environment funding streams impede complementary action. The International Accounting Standards Committee is currently working to advance implementation of financing solutions to drive closer collaboration. Moreover, the Development Coordination Office, with the support of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, will soon issue new guidance on country-level pooled funds for the Cooperation Framework.

253. Finally, at the intergovernmental level, closer cooperation between the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, in accordance with their mandates, would help to drive progress. That could take the form of enhanced dialogue to promote coherence and complementarity between United Nations peace and security work and its development, human rights and humanitarian work.

254. Overall, I am pleased with the commitment of the United Nations development system and our partners to strengthen collaboration across the peace, development and humanitarian nexus. In the next quadrennial review cycle, it will be critical for challenges to be tackled head-on and for our commitment to increasingly translate into improved results on the ground.

## Supporting Governments in leveraging partnerships, including South-South cooperation

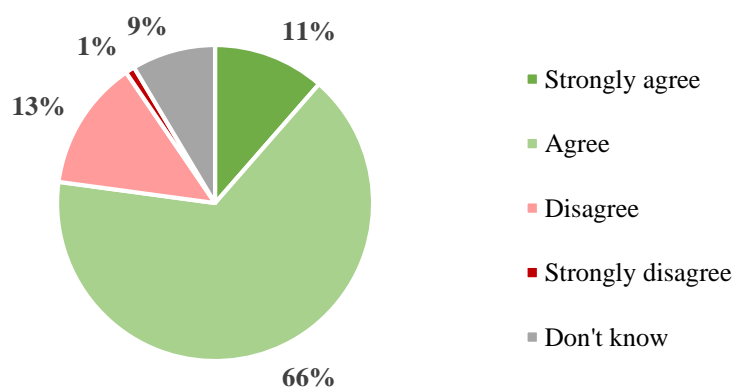
255. The scale and pace of the progress needed to achieve the Goals by 2030 will simply not be possible without robust partnerships. The requirements are just too vast for any Government to deliver alone. It will require leveraging the expertise, ideas, know-how and resources of all sectors of society, including local governments, parliaments, the judicial sector, businesses, civil society and academia. The ambition of the 2030 Agenda means that an all-hands-on-deck approach is required. In responding to that paradigm shift, I launched several workstreams to scale up United Nations development system capacities to help Governments leverage partnerships for achieving the Goals. From the redesign of the resident coordinator function to the steps taken to strengthen the ability of the United Nations to enter into partnerships at all levels, we have made good progress during the current quadrennial review cycle.

256. The 2016 quadrennial review highlighted the fact that one of the core functions of the United Nations system was to assist Governments in leveraging partnerships. While programme country Governments consistently report that the United Nations lives up to that mandate, additional steps are being taken to further boost our capacities in that area at all levels, while mitigating associated risks.

257. Most Governments indicate that the United Nations has contributed to building the capacity of their country to engage in partnerships to some extent, while more than three quarters (77 per cent) agree that the United Nations plays a catalytic role in facilitating partnerships (see figure XXI). These positive results from 2019 are consistent with the results achieved in 2017.

Figure XXI

**Response to the question “Does the United Nations plays a catalytic role in facilitating partnerships?”:**



Source: 2019 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of programme country Governments.

258. At present, the majority of resident coordinators (82 per cent) report that the United Nations country team does not have a common approach to partnerships. Of those, 83 per cent report that there are plans to develop one.

259. To further boost the United Nations development system capacities in that area, several actions are being taken. We will work to operationalize new guidance to

harmonize principles and operational standards for due diligence on partnerships through the Common Minimum Standards for Multi-Stakeholder Engagement on the Cooperation Framework and the Common Approach to Prospect Research and Due Diligence for Business Sector Partnerships. The development of these tools in 2019, under the co-leadership of UNICEF and ILO, was a critical milestone in our efforts to achieve a common methodology for due diligence within the United Nations development system. We will continue to ensure that United Nations country teams lead the way, supported by resident coordinator offices that have dedicated partnership capacities and by resident coordinators who reassert their roles as conveners in system-wide partnerships. In 2020, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group will work with the United Nations Office for Partnerships, the United Nations Governance Centre and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to take that effort to the next level by developing a system-wide approach to partnerships, with a threefold aim: to encourage diversity of actors and partners for the 2030 Agenda and the Goals; to enable the development of a decentralized approach that respects existing partner relationships and encourages new partnerships; and to ensure that partnerships are consistently aligned with core United Nations values, objectives and purposes.

260. Building on the outcomes of two internal exercises on the clarification of roles and responsibilities in the global partnership ecosystem of the United Nations development system, the United Nations Office for Partnerships has now been designated as the global partnership gateway of the United Nations development system and is stepping up its mobilization role in respect of the Goals. The United Nations Global Compact will continue to serve as the primary vehicle for driving responsible private sector engagement and scaled-up support for the Goals, and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is being tasked to convene intergovernmental, multi-stakeholder discussions on partnerships, enhance stakeholders' capacity to develop effective partnerships, prepare related policy guidance, compile data, and develop analysis and tools to support partnerships for the Goals.

261. In addition, I will continue to prioritize strengthening partnerships with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, regional multilateral development banks, the African Union, the European Union and other regional groupings of Member States and intergovernmental organizations.

### **Supporting South-South cooperation**

262. The year 2019 saw the holding of the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation in Buenos Aires, which provided the world with an opportunity to reaffirm the unique value of cooperation among developing countries. In complement to North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation is essential for enabling the horizontal exchange of know-how, technologies and resources to help countries to respond to challenges when implementing the 2030 Agenda. Echoing calls made during the 2016 quadrennial review, participants of the Conference encouraged the United Nations development system to continue to incorporate South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation into policies, programmes, strategic frameworks and other planning instruments. We are responding decisively and, there has already been important progress in that area in 2019.

263. At the corporate level, 12 of 28 United Nations development system entities confirmed that they now have a specific unit dedicated to South-South cooperation, and 21 of 27 entities included South-South cooperation in their most recent annual report. Emphasis is placed on South-South cooperation in over 80 United Nations

Development Assistance Frameworks and Cooperation Frameworks<sup>17</sup> and the majority (86 per cent) of programme countries that engaged in South-South cooperation report that the United Nations development system has undertaken in-country South-South cooperation activities. Overall, over two thirds (69 per cent) of programme country Governments indicated in 2019 that their country provides development cooperation to other countries through South-South cooperation or other peer-to-peer exchange platforms. Slightly fewer (63 per cent) said that they exchange information and best practices with Southern partners on science, technology and innovation.

264. From 2014 to 2019, a lack of dedicated resources and capacity was identified as the most common challenge in efforts to step up support for South-South cooperation,<sup>18</sup> followed by the need for a corporate strategy and policy. Resident coordinators also said that support for South-South cooperation tends to be ad hoc and that United Nations development system entities have their own policies and strategies. Several mentioned the lack of policies and capacity on the government side. One resident coordinator, echoing several others, commented that the United Nations country team and resident coordinator office have not received training, nor are they familiar with South-South cooperation tools, while another said that because South-South cooperation is part of the common country analysis, the approach has been more coherent. Governments made very similar comments, while noting the lack of monitoring and evaluation of South-South cooperation.

265. The United Nations is taking a number of steps to strengthen its work in the area of South-South cooperation. In 2019, the United Nations Office for South-South cooperation launched a new global knowledge-sharing platform and a one-stop shop called South-South Galaxy that will serve as a centralized node for the dissemination of knowledge and information and for taking stock of United Nations development system efforts with regard to South-South cooperation. We are also working to increase the scale and scope of funding for South-South cooperation, including for the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation and the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for South-South Cooperation. Those funds have contributions totalling \$49.8 million, \$25.2 million, \$36.8 million and \$15 million, respectively. In addition, guided by an inter-agency mechanism, a system-wide strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation has been developed and will be presented to the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation in May 2020. The strategy is expected to galvanize a coordinated and coherent approach for a system-wide South-South cooperation policy and programme. A dedicated action plan will bring the commitments of the strategy to life in the activities of the United Nations development system at all levels.

266. Moving forward, it will be essential for the United Nations development system to intensify its partnership work with all actors, including through South-South cooperation. We have seen a new spirit of collaboration, communal solidarity and ingenuity emerge in response to the COVID-19 crisis. To bring implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to scale during the decade of action, we must nurture and build on that experience. We must also increasingly focus on demonstrating clearly the tangible results that partnerships are helping us to achieve at the country level.

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<sup>17</sup> These data are sourced from the information management system of the Development Coordination Office.

<sup>18</sup> On the basis of the number of resident coordinators who most often recognized this as a challenge in the 2019 survey.

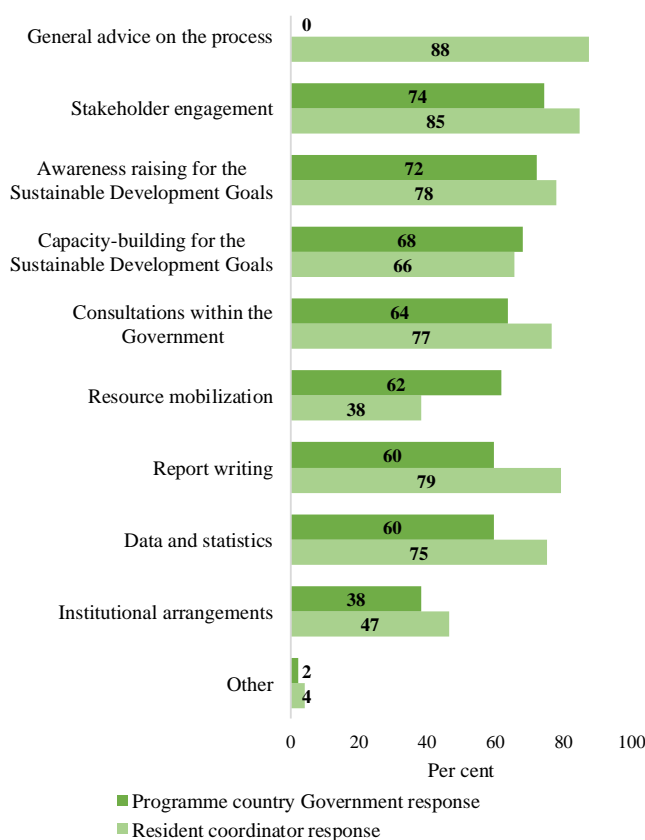
### **Strengthening the link between the follow-up and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals**

267. The 2030 Agenda underscores the critical importance of follow-up and review of implementation, both as a means of strengthening accountability and maximizing progress. A key tool in that regard is the voluntary national review, which is conducted nationally and presented at the high-level political forum on sustainable development of the Economic and Social Council.

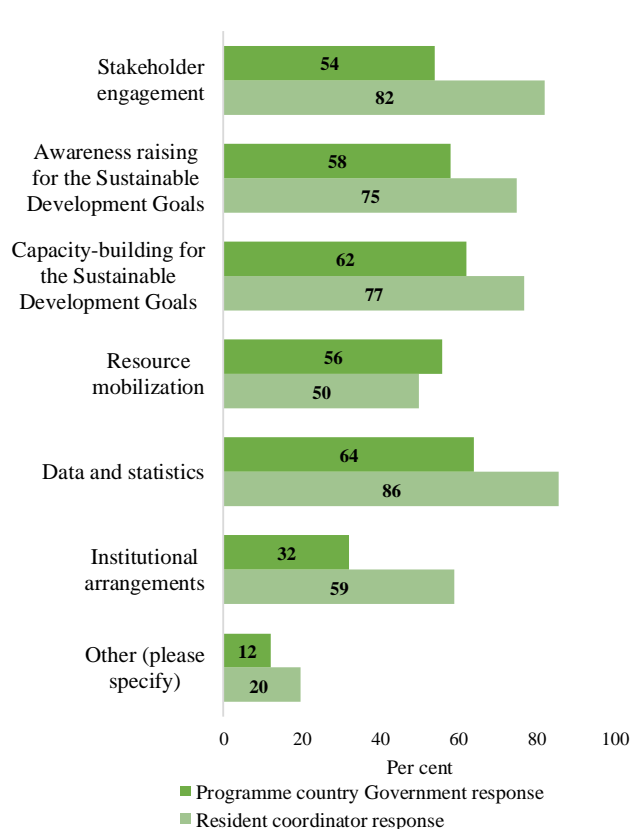
268. Voluntary national reviews have thus far provided Governments and their partners at the country level with a unique opportunity to take stock of progress in the achievement of the Goals, assess policy lessons and challenges and seek solutions and support from the global community. The fact that 142 countries, 102 of which are programme countries, have presented voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum since 2015 is a clear illustration of the global commitment to the 2030 Agenda. In the same vein, 25 programme countries will present a voluntary national review for the very first time in 2020 or 2021. As illustrated in figure XXII, programme country Governments and resident coordinators both report that conducting a voluntary national review has helped to strengthen country implementation efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Almost all programme country Governments that presented a voluntary national review in 2018 or 2019 received United Nations assistance in the preparation of the review. United Nations support for preparations and follow-up actions of voluntary national reviews is provided in a range of areas.

Figure XXII

**United Nations support for the voluntary national review process**



**United Nations assistance in follow-up actions**



Source: 2019 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of resident coordinators and programme country governments.

269. The data demonstrate that there is certainly scope to improve the United Nations development system support to Governments conducting voluntary national reviews, both during and after reviews. In line with the Cooperation Framework guidance, voluntary national review analysis and follow-up actions should feed back into the common country analysis and the Cooperation Framework, as well as the annual, midterm and end-of-cycle United Nations Development Assistance Framework and Cooperation Framework reviews. United Nations country teams could also play a more proactive role in supporting Governments to use the voluntary national review process to identify measures that can be taken to accelerate implementation at scale in the context of the decade of action. The United Nations country team role in facilitating stakeholder engagement should continue to evolve to bring in the full breadth of stakeholders that have a role to play in the delivery of the Goals.

270. As they approach the next quadrennial review cycle, United Nations country teams should work to strengthen their support to countries conducting the reviews and ensure that the key findings of reviews inform the common country analysis and the Cooperation Framework.



## **VIII. Conclusion: looking ahead to the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycle**

271. We are at a critical point in the history of the United Nations and of humanity at large. Precisely at a time when world leaders have committed to accelerate action to achieve the transformative promises of the 2030 Agenda, COVID-19 requires that we raise the bar even higher. I am convinced that the reforms that Member States mandated in 2018 have repositioned the United Nations development system to help the world stay on track. The United Nations development system has been deeply transformed within the period of a single quadrennial review.

272. Nevertheless, while we have set the course and are moving along that new path well, changing the direction of a large and very complex organization takes time. Over the course of the next cycle of the quadrennial review, we should reach our destination: scaled-up results on the ground to help countries recover better from COVID-19 and to accelerate action to achieve the Goals. The next quadrennial review must reflect that shift, not only in terms of the architecture and processes of reform, but also the ambitious strategic and policy guidance on how Member States wish to leverage a stronger United Nations development system in their transformative journey. We need another historic quadrennial review that provides clear strategic direction and accountability, to guide the system in the next four years.

273. My commitment to change remains strong; as always to deliver better results on the ground where it matters the most: in people's lives. Some of the key next steps in the repositioning include fully realizing the changes in the resident coordinator system and Cooperation Framework on the ground, implementing the multi-country office reform and conducting the regional review, and continuing integration to embrace a truly whole-of-system response in support of the decade of action.

274. I will continue to inform and engage with Member States during our transformative path and I will continue to periodically report on the progress we make, to help inform transparent oversight by Member States. To that end, I will fully overhaul the monitoring of the quadrennial review and reporting framework to ensure alignment with the next cycle and to visibly integrate the commitments made under the funding compact.

275. I ask Member States to continue to support the ongoing transformative process. I also count on Member States to endorse the direction of the regional review and of our efforts to strengthen support through multi-country offices. The time has come to deliver on the unfinished business of the quadrennial review and to show the world once again that the United Nations development system remains determined to deeply transform its ability to support the 2030 Agenda.

276. We must keep our foot on the pedal and our eyes on the future we want for the world by 2030. Let us deliver on all mandates, from resolutions to results, to leave no one behind.