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## **Report of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-WOMEN and WFP held on 31 May 2019**

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## **REPORT OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARDS OF UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-WOMEN AND WFP HELD ON 31 MAY 2019**

### **I. MORNING SESSION: OPENING**

1. The President of the Executive Board of WFP opened the joint meeting of the Executive Boards (JMB) on 31 May 2019, welcoming the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, participants from the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP, and the principals of the six United Nations agencies. He encouraged all present to reflect on the ultimate goal of the United Nations reform: to improve how the funds and agencies served people on the ground, whether through greater efficiency, increased coherence or innovative thinking. In this respect, the recent joint field visit of the Executive Boards to Colombia had been particularly valuable, giving participants insight into what it meant for the United Nations to work jointly, coherently and in partnership with the government.

2. In her opening address, the Deputy Secretary-General noted that reform efforts were well under way and recognized contributions from each of the heads of agency present. She was encouraged by discussions at the recent High-Level Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, which had been the first joint opportunity to reflect on progress made since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 72/279, exactly one year previously. Among the highlights from the session, the Deputy Secretary-General described the broad recognition of the implementation of all reform mandates; the documentation drawn up to support reform processes, such as the management accountability framework; the high expectations of Member States, particularly in areas such as the reporting of efficiency gains and oversight; and the commitment to engage in dialogue with Member States on how to strengthen regional assets and country offices.

3. She urged Executive Board members to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the reform as they explored the topics on the agenda for the JMB. She noted that Member State guidance would be crucial on many issues related to the reform, such as the design of reporting systems and country progress systems; entity-specific discussions on the funding compact; support for sustainable cost contributions for the resident coordinator system and the 1 percent levy; and recruitment of the best candidates for the resident coordinator posts. In closing, on behalf of the Secretary-General, she acknowledged the huge workload faced by the Executive Boards in the run-up to the General Assembly meeting in September. She encouraged all present to continue the momentum towards achieving Agenda 2030, working together to meet the aspirations of people around the world.

4. In his remarks, the Executive Director of WFP characterized the JMB as a valuable opportunity for all present to inspire each other towards making the United Nations the best it could be. He underscored the importance of removing silos as part of the reform process, noting that many silos could be traced back to stipulations imposed by the Member States themselves, and he called on everyone to engage in open, honest communication in order to allow the funds and programmes to work together as effectively as possible. He urged participants not to lose sight of the biggest global challenges, such as ending conflict and wars, while they examined opportunities to improve collaboration between the various Executive Boards. In closing, he pointed out the power of employing easily understood, jargon-free language when talking about the multiple positive impacts of the work carried out by the United

Nations, noting that direct, effective communication was the route towards unlocking increased funding for this vital work.

## **II. MORNING SESSION: TOPIC 1**

### **Working methods of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP**

5. The President of the Executive Board of UNICEF presented the first topic, observing that considerable work had been done to improve and streamline the work of the Executive Boards over the past few years. As a recent example of this progress, the Core Group of Member States on working methods of the Executive Boards had been founded in January 2019 in response to the decisions on working methods adopted by the respective Executive Boards at their 2018 second regular sessions. The group was tasked with leading the joint consultative process with Member States to examine the efficiency and quality of the current Executive Board sessions as well as the functions of the JMB. The President thanked the Coordinator of the Core Group, the Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, and all participating Member States and Secretariats for their constructive engagement in the group.

6. The President reminded the joint meeting that the overarching objective of the discussions of the Core Group was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the working methods of the JMB and their respective governing bodies while preserving their executive guidance and oversight without duplicating the functions of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) operational activities for development segment and the respective Executive Boards. The President highlighted that the Core Group recognized that improvements in the working methods had to be made respecting the different mandates and characteristics of each agency. In the written account of its work, the Core Group recommended several actions that could be taken by each Board immediately, all of which UNICEF had indicated its readiness to support, or was already taking action on: making the Executive Board sessions more interactive; increasing gender parity in the composition of panellists participating in Executive Board sessions; and institutionalizing the meeting of the Presidents of the Boards for enhanced harmonization of common issues and strengthened coordination among the agencies.

7. The President noted that improving the working methods did not mean taking a 'one size fits all' approach, and he emphasized that each agency and Executive Board should strive to make individual progress towards improving their working methods wherever they could.

8. The President affirmed that the Executive Board of UNICEF was fully engaged in the process to advance its working methods and enjoyed the full support of the Executive Director of UNICEF in its efforts. Nonetheless, he noted, there was still work to be done. He highlighted the lack of an effective mechanism for taking decisions on matters that concerned all the Executive Boards. Such issues were discussed and decided by each Executive Board individually, which resulted in duplication and fragmentation. He called on Member States to revisit proposals on how the Boards could handle joint matters without delegating decision-making power or affecting the autonomy and independence of the Boards. He noted that joint action could be discussed and agreed collectively, while decisions could continue to be adopted individually by each Board. Issues that would benefit from such treatment included cost recovery, the common chapter of strategic plans, implementation of the repositioning of the United Nations development system and working methods. These were examples of joint issues that should be addressed in concert with the Executive Boards in order to promote inter-agency efficiency and collaboration.

9. In closing, the President emphasized that the working methods of the Boards were a means to an end, and not an end in themselves. He underlined the need to work together, noting that Board members and the secretariats needed to do their part. The President observed that it was important to

avoid the Boards becoming entangled in the minutiae that should be handled by the secretariats, allowing them instead to focus on the strategic issues that could help to advance the common and individual agendas of each Board while recognizing and respecting the unique mandates and characteristics of each agency. Finally, the President noted that the process to improve working methods was now well under way; the work ultimately sought to ensure that working methods fully supported the achievement of Agenda 2030; and better working methods would bring efficiencies for the Boards and gains for all, collectively and individually.

10. The Coordinator of the Core Group presented the written account, highlighting the main findings and recommendations related to discussions on the working methods of the JMB; the working methods of the respective governing bodies; and rules, documentation and decision making. He emphasized that throughout the discussions, the Core Group had recognized that any changes to working methods had to respect the mandates and particular characteristics of each agency.

11. The written account divided the Core Group findings into areas of convergence and areas of non-convergence. The Coordinator highlighted eight areas of convergence, including joint informal briefings on topics for the JMB, the institutionalization of the Presidents' meeting, increased long-term planning of the joint field visits, and the drawing up of an overview table to compare the rules of procedure of the respective Executive Boards. Among the areas of non-convergence, he cited three proposals: elevating the JMB to a decision-making body, introducing one-day special meetings to approve country documents (thereby reducing the workload for Board sessions) and harmonizing the structure of the rules of procedure of the four Boards.

12. The Core Group recommended that each Board consider how to act on the areas of convergence identified in the written account, including by incorporating them into decisions on working methods. As Member States currently held diverse positions regarding the areas of non-convergence, these could be revisited at a later date to explore potential ways forward. The Coordinator also noted that the Core Group had prepared a draft template for decisions reflecting joint informal discussions at the JMB. The template could be used as a basis for negotiation and adoption of decisions at each respective Executive Board session taking place immediately after the JMB.

13. The Member States expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Core Group, echoing the need to respect the individual mandates and characteristics of the Executive Boards and to ensure that any changes made did not dilute the oversight function of the Member States. Several delegations observed that changes should focus on areas identified as problematic in order to avoid altering working methods that were already efficient. One Member State noted that discussions should include all United Nations Member States, not just those on the Executive Boards, and suggested that ECOSOC might therefore represent a more suitable forum in which to address these issues. The delegation also voiced concern over the proposal to increase the number of Board sessions held annually. Member States agreed with the proposal to focus initially on the areas of convergence and to leave those of non-convergence for future discussions.

14. The President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS reassured the Member States that the Presidents of the Board would take swift action on the findings of the Core Group, not least on the proposal to hold the meeting of the Presidents more regularly. The recent joint field trip to Colombia, which had brought together all four Presidents, proved how productive it was for the Presidents to work closely on issues of common concern. He also highlighted issues raised at the recent ECOSOC operational activities for development segment, which addressed aligning system-wide and entity-level governance for improved accountability. These issues merited Board attention and included the link between ECOSOC and the Executive Boards and the need to shift from an individual agency approach to an integrated approach that would allow agencies to work smoothly together at the country level. There was also a call for building on best practice related to the common chapter and look at common text for other issues.

15. In response to the comments from Member States, the Coordinator of the Core Group agreed that there should be an emphasis on avoiding duplication and overlap in all changes to working methods. He noted that in general the Core Group was not in favour of increasing the number of Board sessions and had agreed that it would be the prerogative of each Executive Board to fix the number of sessions held each year. While he was not in a position to comment on the proposal to use ECOSOC as a forum to discuss working methods, he did appreciate the agreement among the Member States that the current focus should be on the areas of convergence.

16. The President of the Executive Board of WFP shared the perspective of the WFP membership on efforts to improve working methods. While WFP was unconditionally committed to improving its working methods and supported the joint consultative process, as confirmed by a decision taken by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2019, the WFP membership felt that they were underrepresented in the discussions, which they perceived as being focused on resolving challenges faced by the New York Boards. Many of the proposals put forward to improve working methods were not clearly relevant to WFP because of its humanitarian mandate, its different operational governance and oversight needs, and its dual parentage with ECOSOC and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. WFP's institutional environment differed from that of the New York based agencies, and its calendar was synchronized with that of the other Rome-based agencies. The agency also faced very particular challenges – such as a multiplication of needs and resources over the past few years due to a rising number of conflicts and food emergencies around the world. In the context of these challenges, the WFP membership was very happy with the way the Executive Board was currently managed and there was little perceived need for deep reform or convergence with other Boards. The President stressed that WFP and its Executive Bureau in no way sought to impede the process to improve working methods and would actively contribute whenever they meaningfully could, but he noted that there was a need to reassess the view that WFP should be treated as if it were a New York based organization to be treated equally with other New York based funds and programmes.

17. In his closing remarks, the President of the Executive Board of UNICEF noted that just as the broader United Nations reform effort sought to create agencies better placed to serve those in need, the respective Executive Boards also needed to know how to adapt to contribute to this goal. He urged the Boards to act on the areas of convergence, mindful that these were recommendations, not decisions, and that no changes were being imposed. At UNICEF, work was already under way on the areas where UNICEF could improve how it operated, from increasing the attention paid to gender parity to examining how to optimize the use of Board session time.

18. He agreed with Member States that it would take time to address the areas of non-convergence and that respect for mandates should underpin all efforts to improve working methods. Nonetheless, he described coordination between agencies as paramount and said that it was imperative to break down silos and other barriers to effective collaboration in the field. New working cultures were needed to achieve this, both within the respective agencies and within the Member States themselves, who should encourage reform in their own institutions. Change would take time, but it was necessary to adapt in order to respond to the challenges faced by people in need around the world.

### III. MORNING SESSION: TOPIC 2

#### **Harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination, and sexual exploitation and abuse**

19. In her opening remarks, the President of the Executive Board of UN-Women described the discussions at the JMB as a reaffirmation of the commitment of all participating Executive Boards to ending sexual abuse and to engaging in the cultural change needed to create a world free from abusive behaviour.

20. The Executive Director of UNICEF thanked the members of the Executive Boards for their engagement and support and reaffirmed UNICEF's commitment to ending sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), sexual harassment and all forms of discrimination, abuse of power and harassment in the workplace. She emphasized the trust placed in the agencies – by beneficiaries, staff members and partner organizations alike – that they would provide safe programmes and a respectful environment with no place for harassment or abuse of any kind.

21. UNICEF had taken several steps to strengthen its internal systems to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse. UNICEF was also taking action to improve its workplace culture, introducing simpler reporting mechanisms and strengthening investigations. All allegations of SEA involving UNICEF staff, contractors or personnel of implementing partners were systematically reported to the United Nations Special Coordinator for SEA. The Executive Director had commissioned an independent report into UNICEF's internal culture, and a new strategy was being drawn up to address workplace issues. She noted that while similar efforts were under way within agencies, a collective approach was needed across all agencies and partner organizations to ensure cohesive and effective response to these issues at the country level.

22. In her capacity as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Champion on SEA and Sexual Harassment, the Executive Director was heartened to see the level of commitment and engagement across the agencies to work together on these issues, including the dedication of human and financial resources to support accelerated action on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) at the country level. Efforts were under way to share common data on SEA and sexual harassment, and to improve investigation capacities.

23. In terms of PSEA within communities, the agencies were working together to strengthen reporting mechanisms, improve support to survivors and increase accountability across the United Nations system. A new plan adopted by IASC in December sought to accelerate efforts to strengthen PSEA focusing on safe and accessible reporting mechanisms; support for SEA survivors, to help them reintegrate into their communities; and better accountability and investigations. Nonetheless, challenges remained as there was massive underreporting of SEA among communities and of harassment and abuse of power within the agencies themselves. Response services were still uneven and there were large gaps in ensuring criminal accountability for those who committed these acts.

24. The Executive Director of UN-Women emphasized the vital role of senior leadership in changing organizational culture and instilling zero tolerance for SEA, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination. Organizations had to take a victim-centred approach, protect whistle-blowers and exercise due process in a timely way. She noted that in many cases, investigations in United Nations bodies were lengthy, particularly in comparison to other organizations where an issue could be concluded within a week of the allegation. In general, it was important for the United Nations to look to trends in the outside world in order to tap into best practice that could improve the effectiveness of its response to these issues.

25. UN-Women sought to place women's experience at the heart of all work to combat sexual harassment, ensuring that system-wide processes were in place and best practice was shared. To this end, the organization had appointed an Executive Coordinator and Spokesperson on Sexual Harassment

and Discrimination, who worked with all United Nations agencies. UN-Women was also active in the Spotlight Initiative and in the taskforce set up by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to address sexual harassment. The organization worked with the private sector, academia and civil society on initiatives to prevent and tackle sexual harassment.

26. Last year, the United Nations System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment was endorsed by the High-Level Committee on Management and subsequently by the CEB. The adoption and implementation of the policy was being monitored. A recent workplace survey across the United Nations had revealed worrying trends in the incidence and nature of sexual harassment within the system and showed a strong correlation between sexual harassment, exclusion and incivility. Workplaces characterized by incivility created a fertile ground for abuse of power, bullying, racism and other forms of harassment and discrimination.

27. The Executive Director thanked the governments of Israel, Kenya, France and the Netherlands for their proactive approach in setting up a new Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment. In addition to efforts to prevent sexual harassment within UN-Women itself, the organization also held regular capacity-building sessions for gender focal points from other United Nations agencies. Other activities included the development of the recently launched enabling environment guidelines, and work to prepare a victims' rights charter on sexual harassment. In conclusion, the Executive Director underlined the importance of fostering a safe environment for junior and subordinate staff and contractors to report any issues related to harassment or abuse. Specifically addressing the Member States, she invited them to consider the issue of diplomatic immunity to evaluate whether it was a privilege they wished to retain while demanding different levels of behaviour from the United Nations agencies.

28. Member States reaffirmed their support for the work carried out by all the agencies to tackle SEA and sexual harassment. Several offered to share best practices distilled from experience within their own institutions. Member States identified investigative capacity as a key issue, acknowledging the difficulty in accessing investigators specialized in cases of SEA and sexual harassment. One delegation proposed introducing a pool of investigators that could be drawn upon by the different agencies, which could also increase the impartiality of investigations.

29. Regarding country-level coordination, one Member State requested more information on the role of the resident coordinators and the country teams. The delegation also asked for more details on how agencies were tracking their progress, how the Clearcheck database was being implemented, and how Member States could best support efforts to prevent and respond to SEA and sexual harassment. Another Member State sought clarity on how the various agencies were sharing their expertise.

30. The Executive Director of UNICEF thanked the Member States for their support. Regarding the issue of investigators, she described the difficulty in accessing those with the right skills, adding that it was particularly hard to find women investigators. UNICEF had recently expanded their number of investigators from 10 to 17, which would make a positive difference. However, she thought the pool idea should be explored, noting it would need to expand and contract according to agency needs. UNICEF had begun considering a fast-track approach to investigations of different types and the Executive Director encouraged the Executive Boards to give agencies the authority to introduce such an approach, even potentially piloting a one-week procedure for certain cases.

31. The Executive Director echoed the words of her counterpart in UN-Women regarding the obstacle presented by diplomatic immunity, which prevented bringing perpetrators to justice. Member State engagement was needed to overcome this issue. In response to questions about monitoring progress, she noted that as part of the IASC proposal for accelerated PSEA action at the country level, a monitoring framework had been developed to benchmark progress against the three priority areas of reporting, access to services and investigations. Member States could certainly contribute with financial support, also to ensure that victims of SEA in the communities where United Nations agencies worked

had access to the right support to safeguard their mental health and facilitate their reintegration into society. There were insufficient resources to sustain access to services for SEA survivors based on their individual needs.

32. The Executive Director also noted the value of national campaigns to eradicate the social acceptance of violence within relationships – another potential way in which Member States could contribute to the elimination of SEA and sexual harassment.

33. In her response, the Executive Director of UN-Women thanked the Member States for highlighting the issue of cultural change, and she welcomed all efforts to share best practice. Regarding country-level coordination, she noted that the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women required all agencies to facilitate cultural change as part of their work to embed gender equality in their work at the country level. However, she welcomed the suggestion to explore how the resident coordinators could contribute to coordination on these issues. In terms of support from the Member States, she noted the need for greater investment in investigative capacity and for policy harmonization between the United Nations agencies and Member States. Coupled with a better use of technology, these efforts would contribute to preventing the movement of perpetrators between organizations, as well as strengthening the climate of zero tolerance. In closing, she mentioned a new initiative by the Government of New Zealand to use taxpayers' money to compensate victims of SEA and sexual harassment; it would be interesting to see whether such an approach would give institutions greater incentive to prevent misconduct.

34. The President of the Executive Board of UNICEF strongly condemned any instance of SEA in United Nations operations. He felt that efforts to respond to SEA should be prioritized in terms of securing funding and removing technical barriers such as in the recruitment of investigators. He suggested ECOSOC as the forum for addressing these obstacles and called on the other Presidents of the Board to support these efforts. He supported the idea of common solutions, such as a common database for sharing best practices, a shared pool of investigators and common evaluation and response frameworks. He was personally in favour of lifting diplomatic immunity and believed many countries would hold the same position in response to reports of SEA. He agreed that the timescale of investigations needed to be reduced, noting that the Government of Morocco had established the best practice of including a police officer with its troops, enabling investigations to commence immediately upon the report of misconduct.

35. The President of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS raised the issue of collaboration over victim support, noting that support should be provided regardless of the agencies involved. He asked whether this flexible approach was in place to allow, for instance, victims to receive support through UNFPA even if that particular agency was not involved in the incident.

36. The Executive Director of UNICEF welcomed the clear commitment to addressing SEA and sexual harassment. She suggested that the goal of starting an investigation immediately upon receiving a report could be something the agencies could work towards in the long term but would require additional resources. Regarding coordination mechanisms, she pointed to the IASC, which included non-governmental organizations and all agencies working in the humanitarian sphere. A protocol on assistance to victims of SEA was being finalized; it would be critical to secure resources for its implementation at the country level.

37. The Executive Director of WFP shared his views on the issues of SEA and sexual harassment. He echoed the call for senior leadership to embed a culture of zero tolerance and foster a sense of trust among staff and contractors. WFP had seen an increase in reports of harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination over the past six months, which revealed an increased level of confidence in the organization's ability to handle cases effectively. Anonymous staff surveys had also given insight into potential problem areas, and WFP had recently increased the level of resources dedicated to investigations by USD 4 million. A joint WFP management/Executive Board working group



had been established to gather best practice from Member States and response times for handling reports of harassment or abuse had been reduced. The organization would continue to work on eradicating misconduct in every way it could.

38. In her remarks, the Executive Director of UNFPA noted that tangible progress had been made in tackling SEA and sexual harassment. At UNFPA, this work included the drawing up of a PSEA accountability policy, improved outreach initiatives and the introduction of a global PSEA focal point system. In 2019, the organization was taking steps to improve communication with at-risk groups, to encourage bystanders to take action and to increase access to and trust in reporting mechanisms, particularly in remote locations. The organization was taking a holistic approach, working together with its partner organizations and striving to achieve a workplace free from any kind of abuse.

39. In its capacity as the lead coordinating agency in the area of gender-based violence, UNFPA was conducting a global mapping to establish how gender-based violence referral mechanisms were being used, when available. In terms of future challenges, she highlighted the need to improve victim support and to strengthen the accountability of implementing partners. There should be a focus on designing practical tools to deliver assurance, particularly in humanitarian settings. In closing, she affirmed the commitment of UNFPA to changing its organizational culture, creating a safe environment for everyone to voice concerns and engaging in open, transparent communication on the progress it made towards achieving these goals.

40. The Executive Director of UN-Women gave her closing remarks, noting that her agency hoped to take full advantage of the discussions to devise recommendations for consideration by the end of the day. Regarding coordination, she pointed to the system-wide taskforce and the network of gender focal points that worked together. Much remained to be done, such as harmonizing the 20 investigative bodies within the United Nations, particularly with a view to removing the burden of proof on the claimant. The Executive Director highlighted the coordination between UN-Women and Member States, through police forces around the world. The organization was examining the issue of police training, with the ambition of introducing gender sensitivity into every police force in the world. She also noted the need to invest in changing social norms related to male behaviour, affirming that everyone had a role to play in eradicating SEA and sexual harassment.

41. The Administrator of UNDP expressed his alignment with the comments made by his counterparts, noting the clear sense of responsibility and commitment present throughout the discussions. He observed that the increase in reporting was not a sign of increased incidence but rather of the greater credibility of the agencies. He noted the challenges involved in expediting cases, as an increase in the number of investigators had to be matched by an increase in the lawyers available to examine cases. He called for increased investment, at least in the short term, to allow the agencies to clear the backlog of cases that were now coming forward.

42. The President of the Executive Board of UN-Women brought the discussions to a close, highlighting the following points: the underlying issue of power inequalities and their role in perpetuating harassment and abuse; the importance of cultural change; the role of Member States; diplomatic immunity; the need for increased investment and capacity building for investigators; the harmonization of policies and standards; and the importance of collaboration and the sharing of best practices.

#### **IV. AFTERNOON SESSION: TOPIC 3**

##### **Implementation of United Nations development system reform, and innovative financing for the Sustainable Development Goals**

43. In his introduction, the President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS noted the timeliness of the topic, given the ECOSOC meeting of the previous week, which had addressed follow-

up actions to the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the General Assembly resolution on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. Financing was a key element of this.

44. He observed that thus far, discussion on the reform had focused on setting up new institutions and the new resident coordinator system, with the ultimate aim of improving how results were delivered on the ground. In this regard, the recent joint trip to Colombia had offered valuable insight into what was happening at the field level. While there was general appreciation of the importance of the reform process, the President noted that the United Nations country team in Colombia did not yet have access to the road maps and guidance needed to implement change. He suggested that greater engagement with those in the field could help them to better reflect the content of New York-level discussions in their operations.

45. Moving to the subject of innovative financing for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the President noted an abundance of interesting ideas, such as strengthening partnerships with the private sector, implementing the common United Nations development system due diligence approach, exploring further use of the SDG Joint Fund, and generating system-wide lessons learned and best practice. He asserted that the private sector should not be seen simply as a source of income to fill in funding gaps. Instead, the United Nations should use its convening power to redirect private-sector resources to achieve the SDGs; examples of this approach could be found in the SDG Impact fund of UNDP and the Social Impact Investment Initiative of UNOPS.

46. The Administrator of UNDP traced the connection between the United Nations development system reform and innovative financing, noting that beyond the drive to create new coordination mechanisms, the reform also sought to facilitate new ways of thinking together to achieve Agenda 2030 and prepare for the future. The unprecedented levels of investment required to do this should be seen as investing the wealth of today into the economy of the future, which was described by the 17 SDGs. This connection was clear in Secretary-General's road map for financing the 2030 Agenda, which examined the alignment of global financial resources and economic policies for the 2030 Agenda; sustainable financing strategies at the regional and country levels; and new technologies and digitalization.

47. At UNDP, a number of task teams had been set up to explore financing the 2030 Agenda. It was clear there needed to be a focus on new sources of funding such as green bonds, blended finance instruments and the sukuk bonds found in Islamic finance. The United Nations was in a position to help governments reduce risk and create mature domestic markets in order to attract investment. The reform represented a vital opportunity to bring together different capabilities within the United Nations family to develop a more contemporary set of inputs for countries seeking to make private financing part of their strategy to achieve the SDGs – an approach that was different from privatization.

48. In her remarks, the Executive Director of UNOPS emphasized that innovation was key to successful reform. She noted that official development aid was far from sufficient to achieve the SDGs; the shortfall of USD 6 trillion would have to come from the private sector. It was clear that development depended on the active, responsible participation of the private sector and it was imperative that the United Nations found ways to support this.

49. At UNOPS, the Social Impact Investing Initiative sought to address this challenge, focusing on three areas of sustainable infrastructure: affordable housing, renewable energy and health infrastructure. The result was an innovative platform supporting partnership between governments, UNOPS and private partners. Agreements had already been signed with governments in Kenya, Ghana and India to finance the construction of affordable housing, while in Mexico, the initiative was coinvesting in a project to revitalize a 22-mW wind farm to deliver low-cost, renewable energy to 50,000 people in underserved communities. The projects would also generate thousands of local jobs by using local supply chains and local contractors and would support technology transfer.

50. In conclusion, the Executive Director emphasized that the focus should not be on the scale of these current projects but rather on the establishment of a successful funding model. The initiative worked by partnering with the private sector, taking a share of the financial risks and going to market together. The United Nations system needed to embrace partnerships with the private sector to tap into investment and new and better technologies.

51. Member States welcomed the discussion on reform and financing, describing it as both timely and useful. Several delegations thought the topics would require further examination in the future, potentially even at the next JMB. One Member State asked how the new resident coordinator system could support agency innovation, emphasizing that private sector collaboration could be a valuable source of expertise as well as financing. Other questions related to the main challenges faced by the agencies when seeking to work with the private sector and how Member States could help, and how the United Nations reform process was impacting the core funding of the agencies and whether innovative funding could help offset any reduction in this funding.

52. In response, the Executive Director of UNOPS noted that the business model of UNOPS represented an advantage in working with the private sector. As the agency did not receive core funding but was simply paid for services rendered, it had a structure that private-sector entities could relate to. A lot of procurement involved buying goods and services from the private sector, facilitating an exchange of technology and expertise. In terms of lessons learned, it was important to bear in mind that the private sector was looking for financial sustainability, ahead of social and environmental sustainability. The time to market was another important factor, particularly for small and medium sized companies.

53. On the subject of the resident coordinators, the Administrator of UNDP said they had a role to play in engaging with governments to establish the degree to which they wished to work with the United Nations on different aspects of financing. The resident coordinators should also ensure that during the country assessments and the development of the cooperation framework, the question of financing was an integral part of the offer of the United Nations development system and the United Nations country team. The resident coordinators could also tap into the expertise of agencies that were not resident in their respective country. The Administrator emphasized that the resident coordinators did not replace the capacities and roles of the programmes and funds, noting that the agencies and Member States needed to learn to work within the new system to avoid duplication.

54. He agreed that the private sector also had much to offer in terms of expertise, citing the example of digital financial technology. Contrary to what could perhaps be imagined, some of the most advanced uses of this type of technology were to be found in developing countries, as the regulatory inertia in established economies often hampered innovation.

55. He identified a number of challenges faced by the United Nations in seeking to work with the private sector, some of which arose from the United Nations' fiduciary integrity and its occasionally antiquated systems. UNDP was working on improving 152 business processes, which in many cases meant changing the guidance on how to engage with the private sector and creating new legal instruments and platforms to support this type of collaboration.

56. In terms of the impact of United Nations reform on core funding, he estimated the effect on UNDP would amount to USD 25 million, generated by the doubling of the contribution and the 1 percent levy. This shortfall could not easily be made up through innovative financing alone.

57. In closing, he warned that it was unrealistic to think that private organizations were keen to fund United Nations work. While there were opportunities to collaborate where interests coincided, it was unlikely that the private sector would become an alternative source of financing for the United Nations.

58. In her remarks, the Deputy Executive Director (Management) of UNFPA described a costing and impact estimation initiative under way in her agency, which examined the financial investment needed

to achieve the three transformative results of UNFPA: ending preventable maternal death; ending unmet need for family planning; and ending gender-based violence and all harmful practices. The initiative also supported efforts to fill the financing gap of USD 2.5 trillion per year needed to achieve the SDGs in developing countries, and it facilitated the establishment of new partnerships and the strengthening of existing ones. Highlighting examples of the work, the Deputy Executive Director mentioned an exercise by UNFPA Ukraine to calculate the economic cost of violence against women and a costing and gap analysis for achieving the transformative results conducted by UNFPA El Salvador.

59. In terms of private sector partnership, she described an initiative with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, with support from McKinsey, which sought to develop a guarantee mechanism for the sexual and reproductive health commodity procurement capacity of UNFPA. The fund was also working with the Islamic Development Bank on insurance in Cameroon and with the ministries of health and finance in Guatemala on a scheme to use taxes collected on the sale of alcohol to replenish a revolving fund used for emergency procurement.

60. In her remarks, the Executive Director of UNICEF reported that her agency had been co-chairing the public-private partnership section (the Strategic Partnerships Results Group) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, which had set up a common due diligence screening system and was facilitating efforts to modernize and streamline United Nations rules, as well as acting as a platform for agencies to share their expertise and experience. She suggested that resident coordinators could tap into host country companies, helping to overcome the system-wide problem of a lack of suppliers to the United Nations in the Global South. Following on from comments by the UNDP Administrator, the Executive Director agreed that public-private partnerships helped to reduce risk for governments, but she also noted the scope for finding completely private solutions to challenges faced by governments and United Nations agencies, for example, in emergency situations when a mobile phone operator might be the entity best placed to trace people who had been left homeless by a natural disaster. In response to a question about core funding, she noted the difficulties associated with earmarked funding. She referred to the UNICEF project *Conceptos Plásticos* as an example of an innovative way of working: the project used plastic waste collected by communities and transformed it into bricks that could be used to build schools.

61. Noting that both UNDP and UNICEF received generous support from Member States for innovation, she saw the potential to graduate from the current network of innovation labs to a more collaborative approach between the two agencies, whereby UNDP could be the lead in searching for and identifying innovations and UNICEF could play a role in developing and scaling up solutions. She stressed that innovation was being sought in all areas but that innovative financing could not help the agencies with their basic core financing.

62. The Executive Director of UN-Women underscored the importance of addressing the regulatory measures within the United Nations that made it impossible to attract innovative financing. An example of these challenges included accessing funding from companies who sought tax benefits when they donated; in such cases, donations often passed through intermediaries, who took a big cut of the money. Companies were also unhappy with this system, preferring to be associated directly with UN-Women. The Executive Director observed that for investment in gender equality, there appeared to be a psychological barrier that prevented Member States from donating above a certain threshold, which therefore restricted the progress that could be made. This was in contrast to the rhetoric in favour of gender equality, which was much stronger than the financial backing it received.

63. As an example of positive private-sector partnership, the Executive Director described the Unstereotype Alliance, a platform for the marketing departments of private companies to access and implement a programme designed by UN-Women to combat stereotypes in advertising campaigns with a view to shaping a more inclusive culture for the future. She noted that as the United Nations could never dream of having the resources of major multinationals, the approach was to ask these companies

to implement change themselves, with UN-Women adopting the role of Ombudsman to check they were following up on their commitments. The initiative was reinforced by Cannes Lions, which was using the standards set by UN-Women for acceptable unsteretyped advertising as one of their criteria for selecting award-winning campaigns. The initiative therefore extended the influence of the work of UN-Women far beyond what it could achieve alone.

64. The President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS brought the topic to a close, expressing his hope that the agencies could build upon the discussion to strengthen partnerships with non-state partners, especially the private sector, and to share best practices. He paraphrased the Secretary-General, observing that the resources were already out there to achieve Agenda 2030, it was a question of joining the dots.

## **V. AFTERNOON SESSION: CLOSING**

65. Bringing deliberations to a close, the President of WFP gave the floor to the Executive Director of UN-Women, who gave a follow-up on the discussions of the morning session regarding the potential fast-tracking of investigations and a speedier settlement of reports of SEA and sexual harassment. She called on the other agencies to support UN-Women by asking their respective heads of investigations to come together to define a costed inter-agency proposal to improve the investigative function, ensure timelier investigations, pool their resources and elaborate on the standards for a victim-centred approach, including ensuring there was support and protection for victims against any type of retaliation, particularly at the country level, acknowledging that services, especially for SEA survivors remained limited. UN-Women also called for United Nations support in harnessing the resident coordinator system and the country teams to implement a coordinated inter-agency response to SEA and sexual harassment at the country level.

66. The President of the Executive Board of WFP thanked all present for their active participation in the discussions, recalling that in all deliberations, it was vital to remember the needs and priorities of the people served by the respective agencies. He observed that the United Nations was on the brink of a new era, with new infrastructure that could better respond to global challenges. He called on all present to embrace the opportunity presented by the United Nations reform, working together and listening to governments and people on the ground in order to make it a success.

# Annex

## Joint statement following the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-WOMEN and WFP held on 31 May 2019

- Following the closing of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP held on 31 May 2019, the Principals of the agencies welcomed Member States' ongoing attention and support to ending sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment.
- In order to truly implement "zero tolerance" for SEA and sexual harassment and to embed victim-centred approaches, the Organizations are committed to focusing on the following:
  1. **Strengthening investigation and accountability functions** by exploring options for ensuring speedy and robust investigations with victim-focused communications, procedures and guidelines; greater coordination and consistency across investigation teams; and commensurate and speedy internal accountability mechanisms.
  2. **Strengthening victim-centred approaches throughout the entire process** by ensuring ease of access for those who have experienced SEA and sexual harassment to high quality and timely support, including in relation to investigations and access to justice. Services for those who have experienced SEA, in particular, are scarce. Confidential services for those who have experienced sexual harassment are also limited.
  3. **Systematically embedding efforts to eliminate SEA and sexual harassment/workplace abuse into the Resident Coordinators' agenda** by leveraging the role of the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations country teams, thus ensuring the coordinated implementation of prevention and response activities as well as adjustment to local contexts and cultures.
  4. **Ensuring continued discussion and coordination on these issues** among the United Nations Representatives of Investigations (UN-RIS), as well as through the Office of Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to SEA, the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate and other appropriate avenues.
- We reaffirm our strong commitment to improving this work as discussed at the Board and to consulting with other agencies on how to further strengthen inter-agency coordination on this agenda. We stand ready to work on joint detailed costed proposals on the above issues. We estimate that USD 40 million<sup>1</sup> will be needed over the coming two years to take this work forward collectively, with the bulk of the investment to be made into victim-focused work on (a) prevention, (b) ensuring the availability of services for victims and (c) strengthening investigation capacities as well as strengthening a victim-centred approach in existing policies, processes and procedures. We count on Member States to make sure resources are made available to deliver on these collective priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> UNOPS needs no further resources for investigations.

- We welcome steps taken by Member States in response to General Assembly resolutions on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission, and we will provide support to strengthen the efforts of Member States to ensure accountability for all forms of sexual misconduct – including those that may amount to criminal acts – by Member States taking all appropriate measures including by establishing jurisdiction over crimes committed by their nationals while serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission while simultaneously respecting due process; cooperating with each other in the exchange of information while respecting privacy and confidentiality; and facilitating the conduct of investigations in compliance with applicable procedures.