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Summary of the work of the 2020 second regular session of the Executive Board

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Draft summary of the work of the 2020 second regular session of the Executive Board

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Current and future strategic issues

2020/EB.2/1 Opening remarks by the Executive Director

1. After agreeing to hold its 2020 second regular session remotely, the Executive Board marked WFP's receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize with a celebratory video. A new member of the Executive Board Bureau representing List C and a rapporteur for the session were appointed.
2. In his opening remarks the Executive Director paid tribute to the WFP field staff who served the world's poor and vulnerable people, often putting their own lives at risk and facing challenges that were being exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Nobel Peace Prize reflected recognition of the contribution of WFP's work to peace and stability and encouraged WFP to raise the world's awareness of, and resources for addressing, the hunger pandemic that the current health pandemic was creating through income and job losses and the contraction of national economies. He thanked the Board for its support in ensuring that WFP reached and maintained the high standards that had made the award possible. He and the President of the Board would attend the award ceremony with representatives of WFP field staff from around the world.
3. While total funding for WFP would be between USD 8.2 billion and USD 8.5 billion in 2020, the economic effects of the pandemic had reduced the funds that donors would have available in 2021 and left many middle- and low-income countries facing reduced food security and increased hunger and malnutrition. With 7–8 million lives already lost to hunger in 2020, the Executive Director called on donors to act immediately to avert the large-scale famines that threatened many parts of the world. WFP's projected income in 2021 was currently USD 7.8 billion, but requirements were likely to reach USD 15 billion; there was a need for increased funding, more flexible contributions and alternative forms of financial support such as deferral of debt repayment to enable countries to divert funds to national social safety net programmes.
4. WFP's contribution to the global COVID-19 response had included the provision of air transport for medical and humanitarian personnel and equipment when commercial airlines ceased operating in the early months of the pandemic. As airlines resumed flights, WFP was ready to share its experience and expertise in operating in difficult environments, including for the distribution of vaccines when they became available. With systems ready for handover to the private sector, WFP could focus on other emergency responses. By enhancing WFP's credibility with existing and potential partners and donors, the Nobel Peace Prize opened up new ways of working, including with the private sector. The Executive Director urged governments to approve a proposal to exempt humanitarian cargo from export restrictions on foodstuffs, which would be presented to the General Council of the World Trade Organization on 16 December.
5. There was some positive news from Yemen, where the Houthi group controlling the Sana'a region had at last approved a pilot project for the biometric registration of 150,000 WFP beneficiaries. WFP's ultimate aim was to distribute cash-based transfers to its 13 million beneficiaries in Yemen, but funding gaps had led to the halving of rations for 9 million people in April and five governorates faced famine. WFP urgently needed USD 1.9 billion for 2021. In Central Sahel, the pandemic had exacerbated the effects of conflict, economic deterioration and climate-related disasters, leaving 1.6 million people displaced and 7.4 million acutely food-insecure. WFP supported about 3.4 million people in the Sahel and needed USD 164 million for the next six months.

6. Over the previous year WFP had purchased USD 600 million worth of food commodities through local and regional procurement in developing countries, distributed USD 1.6 billion in cash-based transfers and provided take-home rations and food vouchers for more than 7 million children affected by pandemic-related school closures.
7. The pandemic had also created challenges for monitoring and control systems, meaning that country offices needed to be extra vigilant to deliver on their internal control commitments. Headquarters was working with country offices to assess their oversight needs and establish the minimum controls required. A report on that would be presented to the Audit Committee at its December meeting. Continuing work to enhance workforce culture and address harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination (HSHAPD) demonstrated WFP's ongoing commitment to looking after its people.
8. The Executive Director ended his remarks by emphasizing the cost-saving benefits of advance funding in enabling WFP to purchase food when prices were low and pre-position it for future use.
9. Board members echoed the Executive Director's praise of WFP staff and expressed their sympathy for the families and friends of employees who had lost their lives in the line of duty. WFP was a strategic ally for governments seeking to prevent hunger and malnutrition, and WFP assistance was essential for the millions of people who relied on it. Members applauded the Executive Director's successful efforts to raise awareness of the links between food insecurity, conflict and migration. The Nobel Peace Prize enhanced WFP's credibility as a contributor to peace, providing opportunities to scale up operations with government, non-governmental and private sector partners and to increase contributions from traditional and non-traditional donors.
10. Members commended WFP's flexible and effective response to the pandemic, which had reaffirmed its role as a first responder and provider of logistics services for the humanitarian system. WFP staff and partners had demonstrated their commitment to serving the world's vulnerable people despite unprecedented challenges and hardships, expanding life-saving programmes to reach more people than ever while providing additional support for the wider COVID-19 response. Members shared the Executive Director's concern regarding the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic on the economies of both donor and host countries and applauded his efforts to secure funding for WFP and for all humanitarian assistance activities. They joined him in calling on Member States to avoid the imposition of export fees on humanitarian food transfers.
11. With food insecurity increasing even before the pandemic, and the international community already off course for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, members expressed concern about WFP's funding gap, which persisted despite increased contributions from many donors. They encouraged WFP to continue its efforts to diversify its funding base, including by strengthening partnerships, streamlining procedures and using opportunities at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. In particular, members encouraged greater engagement with the private sector and international financial institutions. One member also recommended engagement with public development banks. The pandemic had underscored the need for more flexible and predictable funding that allowed strategic prioritization based on needs and facilitated preparedness activities, thereby improving the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. While recognizing that the effects of the pandemic forced governments to prioritize domestic challenges, members urged existing and potential donors to make all efforts to ensure continued assistance for the world's poor and vulnerable people.
12. Members joined the Executive Director in calling for closer interaction and sharing of knowledge among countries and partners. The pandemic response had demonstrated the value of collaboration, and achievement of the SDGs required, particularly given the worsening situation, increasing needs and the risk of famine in 2021. The ongoing reform of

the United Nations development system offered opportunities for streamlining collaboration among United Nations agencies, and members welcomed the COVID-19 global humanitarian response plan and WFP's provision of logistics services for the humanitarian community as successful outcomes of the reform. New models of collaboration were needed, and members recommended enhanced engagement with the private sector, whose expertise and financial support could contribute to the development of local economies and the improvement of livelihoods; facilitation of South-South and triangular cooperation, including through WFP centres of excellence around the world; the building of alliances for health, security, peace and sustainable development; and the holding of high-level meetings involving United Nations agencies and international and local assistance actors. The Global Network Against Food Crisis and the high-level panel discussion on breaking down institutional silos to be held that afternoon provided good examples of such proposals in action.

13. Members also welcomed WFP's enhanced focus on building resilience and preparedness with regard to food crises. Such work was in line with the priorities set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and would contribute to ending poverty and malnutrition and reducing inequalities. Members commended WFP for combining its humanitarian food assistance activities with development action; developing early warning systems, including in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); and articulating its work at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. They encouraged WFP to continue its strategic shift to capacity building and anticipatory action. Members observed that engagement with young people was key to the promotion of peace and urged WFP to consider how its mandate related to SDGs other than SDGs 2 and 17, particularly SDGs 12, 13 and 16, when developing its new strategic plan for 2022–2026.
14. Looking ahead, members observed that WFP's new policy on protection and accountability to affected populations and its disability inclusion road map would help to uphold the dignity and integrity of beneficiaries, making them stronger agents for the positive change that drove development and peace. Members looked forward to continuing involvement in the development of WFP's new strategic plan and welcomed the ongoing review of internal oversight during the pandemic, saying that adequate controls were essential for donors' confidence in WFP as a reliable partner in humanitarian and development action. They applauded WFP's scaling up of cash-based transfers and school feeding programmes, work with governments, local authorities and other partners on exploring new ways of supporting and building capacity in governments and local civil society and continuing efforts to improve workplace culture and ensure staff well-being.
15. Members congratulated WFP for adopting the objectives of United Nations development system reform, particularly in synchronizing its country strategic plans (CSPs) with the new United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks (UNSDCFs). The reform would bring efficiency gains throughout the United Nations system. They urged WFP to participate actively in preparations for the 2021 United Nations food systems summit in coordination with the other Rome-based agencies. The summit offered opportunities for transforming food systems in ways that strengthened food security, resilience and the conditions for peace.
16. The Executive Director thanked Board members for their comments and reiterated WFP's commitment to serving people in need, including through participation in the food systems summit, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in WFP programmes, and engagement with the private sector.

High-level segment

17. The current session included a high-level segment that took place on the afternoon of 16 November. The segment featured a keynote address by Mr António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, who spoke from United Nations headquarters in New York, followed by a high-level virtual panel session – with six high-level representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank Group, the European Commission, the African Union Commission, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – on the theme “breaking down institutional silos and ensuring more integrated programming, funding and implementation”.

Keynote address by the Secretary-General

18. The Secretary-General began his address by recalling his years with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, working alongside WFP colleagues who were bringing life-saving assistance and hope to the most vulnerable people around the world, not just by meeting their food and nutrition needs but also by working in partnership with countries and communities to enable them to change their lives. WFP had built a robust organization that maintained its neutrality and applied humanitarian principles in an exemplary way in charged political settings. The award of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize to WFP was recognition of those attributes and was particularly special because it sent the message that food was peace and hunger an outrage. WFP richly deserved the award, and the countries that so generously supported it deserved enormous appreciation.
19. COVID-19 was having an enormous impact around the world. Hunger was rising again, with 130 million at-risk people being pushed to the brink of starvation by the end of 2020, in addition to the 690 million who lacked enough to eat. Several dimensions of the common effort to address the current crisis were worth highlighting:
 - i) **Pandemic recovery:** The humanitarian community had been working together in asking for a massive rescue package for the most vulnerable people and countries. It was essential to ensure that the recovery addressed inequality and fragility, and all actors were essential for that. Health systems and social protection must be strengthened, with food systems a key part of the picture. At the same time, healthy diets must be ensured for all, food waste must be minimized and food systems must provide decent and safe livelihoods. The question of food was clearly central to a sustainable and inclusive recovery.
 - ii) **Gender equality:** The role of WFP in fostering gender equality was crucial, and the planned 2021 food systems summit would be an important opportunity to address the many challenges faced in the pandemic recovery.
 - iii) **Climate action:** The United Nations was fully committed to building global coordination to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and to ensure that all States, cities, businesses and companies established their own transition plans to achieve that goal. Food systems, and thus WFP, would be essential in that effort.
 - iv) **Peace:** WFP was a messenger of peace and thus an essential messenger in the call to achieve a global ceasefire. When considering the future of multilateralism and the need for an inclusive network of multilateralism, WFP could be considered the very symbol of the reset of global multilateralism in line with the declaration commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations.
20. Mr Guterres thanked the donors who financed WFP but pointed to the huge shortfall that remained, currently USD 5 billion, and pledged his support for WFP funding. It was essential for the international community to ensure that WFP was at the right place, at the right time and thus able to provide the needed support. He acknowledged in particular the important role of the non-governmental organization partners that enabled WFP to deliver to the

people it cared for, as well as the essential support of international financial institutions including the IMF and the World Bank. He was, he said, counting on all of them to support WFP.

21. Thanking the Secretary-General for his praise of WFP the President said that the entire WFP family was gratified by its being honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize, which he believed would give renewed impetus to international collaboration and cooperation. Peace could not be achieved without ending hunger, and hunger could not be eradicated in the absence of peace, and thus the Secretary-General's powerful call for a universal ceasefire during the pandemic must be heeded by all.
22. For his part the Executive Director said that WFP and the other organizations of the international system must always ask how they could render themselves obsolete. Their siloed roles and ways of working, designed decades earlier, might not be ideal for achieving that in an era when need was driven by conflict and climate change and, currently, exacerbated by COVID-19. Early action to prevent famine and its attendant destabilization was critical to preventing massive and massively expensive refugee movements, something that could well result from current circumstances in the Sahel. Especially in moments of constrained resources such action required effective and efficient collaboration, and thus the subject of the high-level panel discussion was of great relevance. He was confident that the discussion would be useful, as the greatest reforms were achieved when the leaders of organizations themselves came together to work out problems.

High-level panel on breaking down institutional silos and ensuring more integrated programming, funding and implementation

23. Following the keynote address by Mr Guterres, the President opened the high-level virtual panel session on the theme of "breaking down institutional silos and ensuring more integrated programming, funding and implementation".
24. Introducing the topic for discussion, the President characterized it as systemic, far transcending the mandate of WFP. The parallel overlapping crises created by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, conflicts, the rising numbers of food-insecure people worldwide, water scarcity and the socioeconomic downturns caused by the pandemic called for a rethinking of the entire humanitarian and development system and the dismantling of silos to achieve breakthroughs rather than merely improved collaboration from within silos. He then posed a number of questions to the panellists, asking them to consider ways to deliver more integrated policy and implementation support, address gaps in critical programmes and enhance analysis, planning and coordination across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence, including specifically how the organizations represented by the panel members could best collaborate; how to deal with such countries' debt burden; how the European Union could best contribute to a green, digital, just and resilient recovery, including with regard to the role of the private sector; how the international community could work more effectively with the African Union and African governments; and how enhanced collaboration between the United Nations, international financial institutions, multilateral organizations like the European Union and the African Union and national governments would intersect with the work of United Nations country teams under the reinvigorated resident coordinator system and the United Nations framework planning processes. The goal was to start a conversation that would rapidly gain momentum, within and beyond the United Nations system, particularly at the country level, and lead to action.
25. The ensuing discussion reflected the recognition by all participants of the devastating impact that COVID-19 was having across the globe, particularly on women and other vulnerable groups and particularly in Africa.

26. Ms Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the IMF, offered the IMF perspective on the best path for joint impact by the entities represented by the panel participants, as well as the most effective way for them to join forces to protect lives and livelihoods and build more resilient, inclusive economies. WFP, the IMF and the World Bank Group had been created with the common objective of improving people's lives and, in her view, the best way for them to collaborate was for each to bring its comparative strengths to achieving that objective. The strengths of IMF resided in three unique aspects of its mandate: it was the organization that kept a finger on the pulse of the world economy, analysed conditions in countries and globally and provided advice on how best to use resources at the country level; it was the world's first responder in times of crisis; and it helped to prioritize spending, a role that was particularly visible when it collaborated with partners like WFP to define social safety nets and priorities and identify the most vulnerable people and how to reach them. In 2021, set to be a very difficult year, IMF would focus on the pressing need, particularly in low-income countries, to provide governments with the fiscal space needed to buffer and recover from the impact of COVID-19. To achieve that the IMF, with the World Bank, had called for, and the Group of 20 had embraced, debt service suspension measures. Debt service suspension would not be sufficient for all countries, however, and the World Bank and IMF had also been making case-by-case arguments for debt restructuring. It was also important to provide financial support on a scale commensurate with the impact of the crisis, and it was crucially important to target the most vulnerable countries and the most vulnerable people within those countries. The success of joint efforts would be judged by their immediate effectiveness but also by their effectiveness in building resistance to coming shocks; the most basic of lessons to be drawn from COVID-19 was that prevention was better than a cure. Multilateral institutions had to work together at every level, from community to country to global, to invest in resilient people, meaning healthy, educated people with the skills needed for the economy of tomorrow; a resilient climate, meaning oceans, land and forests able to sustain people's aspirations and a healthy agricultural system that could feed the world's population; and resilient finance, meaning financial sustainability on par with the action taken on people and the planet.
27. Mr David Malpass, President of the World Bank Group, focused his remarks on food systems, debt and fragility, conflict and violence. While the current unprecedented global emergency required international cooperation at every level, the longstanding problems in the world food system were a key focus. Food systems were a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss and water and air pollution. In East Africa, the triple crisis of the pandemic, economic collapse and the largest desert locust outbreaks in decades was stark proof of the vulnerability of harvests and the urgency of putting food systems on a more healthy, sustainable and prosperous track. International cooperation was key to addressing such problems, with a well-coordinated effort at the country level of particular importance; the bank was seeking flexible, mission-driven partnerships led by developing countries and leveraging the comparative mandates, expertise and resources of partner organizations, prioritizing the ability to move quickly and effectively in response to country needs. On-the-ground coordination was particularly important in settings of fragility, conflict and violence, where no single organization could meet the challenge alone, and the World Bank was eager to work with others at the country level.
28. With regard to debt burden, a Group of 20 debt service suspension initiative had provided much needed breathing space for countries, with a debt payment moratorium in place through 30 June 2021. In most cases, however, the moratorium postponed payments but did not reduce the debt burdens. At the World Bank and IMF annual meetings in October 2020, the World Bank Development Committee had asked the World Bank and the IMF to propose actions to address low-income countries' unsustainable debt burdens. The two were thus seeking debt reduction and debt resolution solutions, with an eye to avoiding the sort of protracted debt restructuring processes that had delayed past recoveries and created cycles of unsustainable debt. International cooperation was critical, as was increased transparency,

- to better balancing the interests of people with the interests of those signing the debt and investment contracts.
29. In terms of resources the World Bank had moved rapidly to deploy its full financial capacity and was on track to commit a record USD 160 billion over 15 months, including grants and concessional financing. A fast-track COVID-19 response was being used for the purchase of health supplies and fast-track financing for vaccine procurement and distribution, supported by technical advice from the bank. In response to the global food security crisis, the bank had stepped up investments to strengthen food security in client countries, especially in those marked by fragility, conflict and violence, and had developed the International Development Association's Crisis Response Window early response financing earlier in the year for slow onset crises, including food insecurity in low-income countries. Mr Malpass closed his remarks by saying that despite the daunting challenges he was optimistic that solutions were possible, even likely, and was encouraged by the bold actions being taken.
 30. Mr Guterres, who had to withdraw from the session due to the press of his duties, offered his thoughts before departing. In his view, multilateralism was moving away from being essentially intergovernmental and silo-organized, with each entity focused on its own problems, mandates and rules. Governments no longer had a monopoly on political action; in a digital world, a multi-stakeholder approach was clearly needed, and the intergovernmental dimension of multilateralism had to move towards work with civil society and the business community. It was also clear that the siloed approach no longer worked. If multilateralism could break silos, become inclusive and have everyone work toward a common objective it would have a key role to play in the needed global governance. The world needed softer, more agile and more comprehensive multilateral forms of governance to be able to respond to pandemics, climate change, lawlessness in cyberspace, inequality and the many other threats facing society.
 31. Congratulating WFP for receiving the Nobel prize, which she said showed how much the international community valued its work, Ms Jutta Urpilainen, European Commission Commissioner for International Partnerships, said that COVID-19 had exacerbated hunger and malnutrition around the world and revealed the unsustainability of the world's food systems, affecting in particular vulnerable groups such as women and children. Only through cooperation and dialogue aimed at addressing root causes could the situation be reversed. She then outlined Commission plans to that end. The top priority was to reconcile people, planet and economy under the European Green Deal. The deal was heavily weighted towards sustainable agriculture and sustainable consumption, with a "farm to fork" strategy at its heart, setting out a transformational agenda for food systems. The policy themes for the next European Union budgetary cycle would be sustainable agriculture, nutrition, human development and biodiversity. Those priorities would also be addressed through three important building blocks: transformative initiatives related to food and nutrition security and sustainable agrifood systems, with a "Team Europe" approach, meaning the European Union and its Member States working together; continued work with multilateral actors for effective partnership and coordination, for which events like the United Nations food systems and nutrition for growth summits would be important opportunities to define ambitious outcomes beyond SDG 2; and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, critical for preventing and dealing with devastating food crises at the national, regional and global levels.
 32. Ms Josefa Sacko, African Union Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, addressed the question of how the international community could better support Africa. Building a resilient economy would be key to Africa's recovery from the current economic, social and humanitarian crisis, which, while caused by COVID-19, was compounded by conflict, civil unrest, terrorism, climate change and locusts. The continent needed to develop plans and incentives to preserve employment and wages; develop and implement social protection policies and programmes to protect the informal sector and most vulnerable populations;

strengthen and develop the capacity of the African productive sector to meet its own needs in alleviating the economic and social impacts of pandemics; develop policies enabling agricultural innovation to promote appropriate technologies and practices for farmers, rural youth and women; fully utilize the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area as a means of boosting intra-African trade and mitigating the decline in African gross domestic product (GDP); and end conflict. Africa needed to strengthen its partnerships and work with all its development partners to achieve its development objectives; however, enhanced understanding of the local political and economic reality of African nations was a critical basis for any support to African Union Member States, and development partners were asked to step up financing for national priority initiatives through both existing programmes and new investments. The African Union Commission was calling for enhanced coordination and cooperation to avoid duplication and ensure the efficient use of available resources; the strengthening of national and local institutions, guided by the principle of subsidiarity for ownership and sustainability; and the strengthening of mutual accountability mechanisms. Africa's growth was important for Africans and for the world, but a peaceful Africa required a prosperous Africa and vice-versa.

33. Mr Achim Steiner, Vice-Chair, United Nations Sustainable Development Group, and Administrator, United Nations Development Programme, began his remarks by pointing out that humanitarian interventions addressed an absence of normality, the antithesis of which should be a normal development pathway. Part of the answer for a new form of collaboration and interaction within the United Nations family, including its partners like the African Union and the European Union, was the recognition that development cooperation had fundamentally changed: the world had been moving from an era of development aid to an era of development cooperation, with each entity playing a different role and humanitarian organizations stepping in when conflict or natural disaster disrupted normal delivery processes. The United Nations system and its partners still needed to look to a future in which development cooperation was not just a function of per capita GDP but was embedded in an understanding of how societies arrived at consensus in the choices they made. It was important to remember that before COVID-19 struck many societies had been seeing political protests against inequality, sustainability, climate change and vulnerability. In such a setting, the tools established 30 or 40 years earlier were in large part anachronistic. There was a distinct role for humanitarians, and humanitarian principles, but it was time for a multilateralism "reset". Having a resident coordinator that could act as both a United Nations country team lead and a humanitarian lead was a significant step forward in making institutional inertia less of an issue, but more emphasis was needed on the upstream aspects of the process – common country assessments, planning and financial arrangements – to lay the groundwork for implementation. There was a yearning within the United Nations, "We the Peoples", to redefine the focus and context of, and contemporary approaches to, working together as an international community.
34. Mr Mark Lowcock, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, sounded an alarm: the human species' greatest achievement, which was to eradicate famine as a feature of the human experience, was at risk – not because of a shortage of food, of which there was plenty, but because of climate change, conflict and the economic contraction arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Immediate action was required on four fronts: first, shareholders of the international financial institutions needed to enable them to provide more, faster and more effective support to the most vulnerable countries; second, because some countries, even if relatively well-resourced, did not have the institutions or capabilities to reach the people in need of assistance, billions of dollars were needed for organizations like WFP and the Red Cross to operate in places where tragedies were looming like Yemen and South Sudan; third, because disease killed more people during famines than hunger did, investment was needed in basic health services and sanitation and for organizations like United Nations Development Programme,

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and Médecins sans Frontières; and fourth, peace and stability needed to be established, as recognized by the Secretary-General in his call for a global ceasefire. The bad news was that rather than the calming that was needed to create the space to avoid multiple tragedies, conflicts were expanding. The good news was that the problems were not expensive to solve – a mere 20 to 30 cents a day could save a child. Unless something changed, however, multiple global tragedies were set to play out over the next 12 months, with huge loss of life. The 2021 Global Humanitarian Overview, to be released on 1 December, set out in detail what needed to be done to prevent millions of children from losing their lives. Immediate action would at least buy time, after which the world's focus could return to promoting resilient development.

35. Members welcomed the panellists' insights and the prospect of improved collaboration within the international community. Including international financial institutions and bilateral government development partners in the effort would unify the message to countries, streamline planning and potentially reduce the administrative burden for governments. Better cooperation and collaboration would help shift the focus to strategic planning, mobilization of resources, implementation and the grounding of programmes in the needs of communities and households.
36. COVID-19 was an economic, social and hunger crisis as well as a health crisis. Members noted the shortfall in the funding needed by the United Nations, including WFP, and called for worldwide solidarity to tackle the crisis; the strengthening of institutions, including by turning the WHO into a world pandemic centre and convening a global crisis council; debt restructuring to supplement the debt service moratorium; and renewed political will to achieve SDGs 1 and 2.
37. The panellists were asked for their views on how best to balance emergency humanitarian requirements with programmes aimed at building long-lasting change; the role of the private sector in achieving the goals articulated; the reasons that global leaders had failed to heed the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and whether the proposal had any chance of being honoured in the future; the changes needed to ensure that a collaborative approach would produce better results; whether merging siloed, sectoralized agencies would help reduce fragmentation and harmful competition for scarce resources; the best way to ensure that collaborative programmes demonstrated increased transparency and accountability regarding the roles of participating agencies; and how collaboration could be achieved in countries where working with local and national governments to build their capacity proved impossible.
38. Concerns were expressed regarding how relations between United Nations agencies and national governments would work under a single channel approach, including how resident coordinators would collaborate with governments to prepare and implement country plans; how a country's option to choose could be reconciled with breaking silos; and what the roles and responsibilities of governments would be in the new framework of arrangements.
39. Members also asked how the various partners could be harmonized and put on an equal footing given that each organization had its own set of rules and bureaucratic procedures, including in the case of the 450 public development banks operating at various levels around the world.
40. Finally, the panellists were asked what single change they would wish to see in the way donors financed their organizations to ensure the maximum impact of funding.
41. Responding to the questions and comments, Ms Georgieva said that for the IMF taking decisive action to address the current crisis meant recognizing where the needs were greatest: in low-income countries and emerging market economies that were particularly hard-hit by the crisis. Large-scale support had to be directed where it would make the biggest difference. In her view, the IMF could achieve maximum impact by significantly expanding

its capacity to provide concessional financing. The IMF had asked its members to lend unneeded special drawing rights, through the IMF, to countries in desperate need of liquidity. The IMF also needed subsidiary resources to provide concessionality at the level required. In addition, a very simple but important action for low-income countries with debt obligations toward the IMF was to suspend, and even waive, to prevent them from having to choose between saving lives and servicing debt, as well as from falling into arrears and worsening their financial positions. Finally, there was a need for transparency, in particular debt transparency, because it was difficult to make the best use of financial resources if it was not clear who was borrowing from whom, why and under what conditions.

42. In terms of the role of the private sector, an obvious lesson from the current crisis was that countries with transparency, accountability and few obstacles to private sector growth were more resilient. Consequently, the IMF was implementing programmes to strengthen such fundamentals in countries, seeking to ensure that economies were well managed and that the private sector could contribute to growth and well-being. That would not work, however, unless countries avoided the trap of increased inequality, which IMF research had shown to increase in the wake of pandemics. The IMF therefore supported tax systems shaped for the twenty-first century, allowing for progressivity where it could be achieved without harming growth, enhancing tax collection to improve the mobilization of public revenue and aiming for revenue of at least 15 percent of GDP to enable governments to perform their social functions, including investment in infrastructure that supported growth and social spending. The IMF also aimed to work with other institutions on the design of social safety nets, which ideally would include “social safety ropes” that helped people help themselves.
43. Turning to the question of how development organizations could work together in a harmonized manner given that each had its own set of rules and bureaucratic procedures, Ms Georgieva offered a vision of each organization operating on the basis of its comparative strength with due regard for the others’ mandates, avoiding a “me too” phenomenon and working inclusively to avoid duplication. Mr Malpass picked up on her point, reporting that the need for development agencies to cooperate and avoid duplication of effort had been extensively discussed by the Group of 20. He favoured a robust process of country platforms that fostered international coordination that best served countries, particularly given the varying challenges that countries faced. He underscored the need for country programmes to truly engage governments regarding their countries’ needs, a point that was subsequently echoed by Ms Sacko, who stressed the importance of governments owning their country programmes and, in the context of COVID-19 recovery work, taking the lead in advancing their national development priorities in order to achieve a more resilient and sustainable recovery.
44. Mr Malpass also responded to the question of how to maximize the impact of resources, expressing appreciation for ongoing International Development Association contributions, which enabled the World Bank to provide badly needed grants and deeply concessional financing, particularly to the poorest countries. From the perspective of the World Bank, the focus should be on specific programmes to address the greatest challenges, including clean water, particularly given its connection with nutrition and health; electricity; and food systems, including the choice of crops, seeds and fertilizer systems. The movement to create systems that were nationalistic, with the idea that a country’s output production could only be locally generated, was of concern. In Madagascar, for instance, the prevalence of rice and subsidies for its production created downstream challenges. He also drew attention to dual exchange rates in some countries, which were costly and impeded the impact of resource flows. Finally, social safety nets provided a system through which resources could be provided to families for nutrition and health, and viable social safety net systems still needed to be developed in many countries.

45. Mr Steiner, addressing the question of what single change should be made to maximize the impact of funding, said that while more core financing was always needed the tools developed for measuring performance in a results-based management context were sometimes not effective at assessing whether an investment in core financing was actually delivering value or effectiveness on the ground. While he and his colleagues took results-based management very seriously, in his experience governance by results was challenging for governing bodies, and it was high time to revisit the approach.
46. He agreed that siloed, sectoralized agencies could be merged to help reduce fragmentation and harmful competition for scarce resources, provided it was done to improve international cooperation in the long term rather than merely opportunistically in reaction to a crisis of the moment.
47. Regarding the concern that a single United Nations delivery channel might restrict a national government's options, he said that a sustainable development cooperation framework was not intended as a single channel, but rather as a sovereign negotiation between a country and the United Nations development system about the country's top priorities and how the various agencies, funds and programmes could align behind a jointly developed programme and commitment to work together. Agencies, funds and programmes were globally mandated, and individual ministries would not lose their access to them. In addition, given the reality of how institutions were financed and national partnerships were created within the donor community, a single funding channel was not likely. The goal was greater cohesiveness, better coordination, joint planning and assessment, less waste and, above all, joint delivery, which, as intended by the Secretary-General's reform of the United Nations development system, should benefit development cooperation overall, both for countries and the donor community.
48. Reacting to a call from members for the international community to pull together to achieve greater action, particularly to achieve SDGs 1 and 2, Mr Steiner said that maintaining the ability to act as an international community required particular focus under the current circumstances. The experience of the first wave of the pandemic, while not entirely reassuring, had included heroic efforts but currently the gap between what was needed and what was being provided was growing; the harsh reality was that the world was headed in a direction where famine and hunger would grow worse for hundreds of millions, even in middle-income countries, simply because of a failure to pull together.
49. Wrapping up the panel discussion, the President expressed the hope that it would be the first of many on where change at the country level needed to be accelerated. He highlighted points made, including that practical collaboration among international partners was needed to improve results on the ground, including through regular meetings of the organizations participating in the discussion; that there was a need for increased domestic and international resources, including for debt relief and fiscal space; that communication needed improvement and mixed messages should be avoided; that it was necessary to focus on prevention in violence-affected and otherwise fragile countries and to promote national leadership and ownership; that the private sector and public development banks should play larger roles; that health services should be strengthened to address the disease that during crises often had a greater impact than hunger; that beneficiaries should be targeted according to need rather than status; that the ceasefire called for by the Secretary-General was indispensable to the stability required for countries to recover; and that achieving a world free of hunger was no less than a moral imperative. He called on the organizations participating in the high-level segment to designate focal points to facilitate further discussion and to prepare concrete proposals for discussion and action in the near future, perhaps during meetings of the IMF and the World Bank set for April 2021.
50. Providing the last word at the invitation of the President, the Executive Director said that after 200 years of progress the world had slipped backward in the previous five years. Given the accumulated wealth of nations and the right of every human on earth to food there was

no reason that hunger could not be ended. There was thus an urgent need for the international community to collaborate more practically, realistically and strategically. He was confident that it would, and WFP was committed to doing its part.

Resource, financial and budgetary matters

2020/EB.2/2 WFP Management Plan (2021–2023)

51. The Director of the Corporate Planning and Performance Division outlined minor changes to the WFP management plan for 2021–2023 since its publication for the current session, which had been shared with the Board the previous week. The previous submission included increases in operational requirements and projected funding for 2020 and 2021 as well as in the programme support and administrative (PSA) budget for 2021. The document had been reviewed by the FAO Finance Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations, both of which had raised no objections.
52. Much of the Board's ensuing discussion focused on funding issues and members' concerns regarding persistent funding gaps, particularly given the outlook for 2021. Members commended the fundraising efforts of the Executive Director and his team, including the increased use of digital tools such as the ShareTheMeal mobile application. WFP's receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize was likely to generate increased support for its work.
53. With the budgets of traditional donors expected to face growing constraints in coming years, members called for continued efforts to diversify WFP's funding base, including through strengthened cooperation with the private sector, international financial institutions and United Nations bodies and through alternative funding mechanisms such as debt swap arrangements, South–South and triangular cooperation and fundraising from private individuals. They looked forward to continued reporting on the cost/benefit ratios of these activities and to the establishment of targets that would facilitate improvement in the quality, predictability and flexibility of funding.
54. Resource challenges underscored the value of ongoing work on enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of WFP operations through the use of internal advance financing mechanisms, strengthened internal control mechanisms, the pursuit of internal savings and enhanced coordination with partner organizations.
55. Members expressed support for the PSA budget allocations directed to oversight functions, the Innovation Accelerator, a new data protection function, emergency support activities, policy development and the establishment and leadership of a workplace culture division. Several members cautioned against further increases in the PSA budget and called on the Secretariat to inform the Board of all proposed changes. One member said that the decision on the management plan to be adopted by the Board should commit the Secretariat to providing the Board with regular updates on operational requirements, funding forecasts and progress in the bottom-up strategic budget exercise.
56. Turning to other themes covered by the plan, members encouraged management to prioritize investments in areas that would contribute to addressing long-term food insecurity, such as activities relating to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and social protection, nutrition and school feeding programmes undertaken in collaboration with partners. They welcomed the consistent growth in the use of cash-based transfers and the piloting of a system allowing better definition and tracking of expenditures on and performance in implementation of the gender policy and gender action plans.
57. Management provided additional details on the PSA budget, which had increased by 5 percent and accounted for 6 percent of WFP's total expenditures. As well as funding governance, oversight and transactional work – much of which had been requested by the Board or addressed recommendations from a Joint Inspection Unit review and other

oversight reports – the PSA budget also generated savings in other areas. The proposed increase included expenditures on activities that had previously been funded from extra-budgetary sources, some of which could be funded from country portfolio budgets in the future. A qualitative assessment of how activities funded from the PSA budget benefited operations was provided in the annual performance report.

58. Responding to other points raised, management said that individual giving and support from international financial institutions were increasing. Debt swaps, blended financing and multilateral co-financing were among innovative financing mechanisms that WFP was exploring. Donors were increasingly willing to provide predictable long-term funding in line with the Grand Bargain. The regional breakdown of expenditures depended on donor and host country contributions and, for the 5 percent of funding that was not earmarked, management's priorities.
59. WFP contributed to social protection through its own programmes and by building the capacity of national partners to design and deliver sustainable and inclusive social protection systems. Its role in peacebuilding was grounded in its 2013 peacebuilding policy, and a peace and conflict team had been established in 2019 to mainstream conflict sensitivity throughout the organization's programmes and compile evidence of its contribution to peace. WFP shared its concerns regarding humanitarian access and sought diplomatic assistance in addressing them during regular briefings of the United Nations Security Council.

2020/EB.2/3 Process for the selection and appointment of the WFP External Auditor for the term from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2028

60. The Secretary to the Executive Board presented a document outlining a proposed process for the selection and appointment of a WFP External Auditor for the term from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2028. The document had been reviewed by the WFP Audit Committee, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations and the FAO Finance Committee, and the process was based on one that had been approved by the Board in 2014.
61. A request for proposals would be sent out in March 2021. The proposals received would then be subject to a preliminary evaluation carried out by a group of senior staff members from WFP's audit, finance and procurement divisions before being passed on to an evaluation panel composed of the 2021 Executive Board Bureau members for review, shortlisting and selection, with technical advice from the Audit Committee. The panel's final recommendation was due by the end of August 2021 and would be presented to the Board for approval at its 2021 second regular session.
62. The Board approved the process without discussion.

Policy issues

Update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system)

63. Noting that COVID-19 had tested the collaboration, coordination and coherence of the United Nations development system, the Deputy Executive Director reported that reform was being implemented rapidly. In July, Member States had adopted a resolution endorsing the final pieces of United Nations development system reform, namely, the regional review, the multi-country office review and system-wide evaluations. In addition he welcomed recent developments, including the continuation of a humanitarian exemption within the United Nations Sustainable Development Group cost-sharing mechanism and the streamlining of the group's working arrangements. He noted that the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) would build on progress achieved thus far and would incorporate a post-COVID-19 "building back better" element, with the ambition of creating a more effective, efficient and streamlined United Nations development system.

64. Board members thanked management for its regular and comprehensive updates on United Nations development system reform, noting that COVID-19 had made the imperative for reform even stronger. They encouraged WFP to play a key role in the QCPR and asked for elaboration on the organization's priority areas for the QCPR currently being negotiated.
65. Members asked for more information on the operationalization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in crisis-affected countries; the relationship between the joint intersectoral analysis framework managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNSDCFs; the progress made and challenges encountered in multi-country office reviews; and the reasons why relatively few WFP staff members had been appointed resident coordinators and what incentives had been put in place for potential candidates to fill forthcoming positions. One member asked whether future CSPs would only be presented for Board approval once their respective UNSDCFs had been finalized to ensure full alignment
66. Several members called for comprehensive reporting on the funding compact, including baselines and targets for each indicator. One member underscored the general importance of agency-specific information on the progress of implementation. Another asked for information on efficiency gains resulting from reforms, particularly shared services and common premises. Further information was requested on the three criteria put forward in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group cost-sharing agreement review as part of the resident coordinator funding mechanism mentioned in paragraph 10 of the update document (WFP/EB.2/2020/4-E).
67. Noting the small increase in WFP presence in common offices, one member asked for details of the baseline and insight into how WFP was ensuring that any move to common premises brought added value.
68. One member said that management should ensure that reforms did not adversely affect Executive Board governance mechanisms. He also noted that in the framework of the current QCPR negotiations the protection of civilians was not part of WFP's mandate and asked where WFP stood on that issue. In addition, he requested details of WFP involvement in the review of the 1 percent levy, expressing the view that the levy should not be increased and that resident coordinators should limit themselves to their direct responsibilities and refrain from interfering in the performance of United Nations agencies. Another member asked for more information on the amount raised through the levy.
69. Noting that further information on UNSDCFs and CSPs would be provided under agenda item 4 f and would address the questions raised, the Deputy Executive Director confirmed that WFP waited until UNSDCFs were complete before submitting CSPs for Board approval, an approach that had been applauded by 14 Member States in a letter to the executive heads of the UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. He agreed that more WFP staff should be nominated for the resident coordinator pool, adding that several very promising candidates were being considered.
70. The Director, United Nations System and Multilateral Engagement Division, reported that WFP was following the QCPR discussions closely and that Member States' guidance was vital to overcoming the setbacks in development gains brought about by COVID-19. WFP was paying close attention to COVID-19 build-back-better, climate, gender and nexus issues and was hoping to see progress in substantive areas rather than on processes.
71. Regarding common premises, the Chief Financial Officer explained that the data on common premises had been drawn from the United Nations Department of Safety and Security; for WFP, the baseline included all offices in capitals and sub-offices but excluded WFP warehouses and guesthouses. Paragraph 20 of the report compared the baseline with 2019 data, when WFP had moved to common premises in the Dominican Republic, Mozambique and Tajikistan. He cautioned that such office moves often involved considerable upfront

investment, for which additional funding was lacking. He added that some organizations were reluctant to move to common premises because they had excellent host country agreements and sometimes free premises with partner organizations; however, virtual collaboration platforms could potentially deliver some of the benefits sought by reform in such cases.

72. Turning to the issue of cost-sharing, the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the decision to limit the formula to development projects only was the most favourable outcome for WFP; WFP's cost-sharing estimate for 2021 was USD 2.9 million.
73. He added that WFP would work with other United Nations agencies on the reporting of the funding compact indicators; the reporting of efficiency gains was similarly a work in progress, although the methodology was improving and information on efficiency would be shared in the 2020 annual performance report. WFP could split efficiency savings across the value chain and by themes such as strategic innovation, digital transformation, operational optimization and simplification. Inter-agency collaboration with gains quantified for WFP and for other agencies was also foreseen; both types of savings needed to be taken into account. For example, WFP already had an optimal fleet management model and would not necessarily achieve savings through inter-agency collaboration in that area; other agencies, however, might well benefit.

Oral update on the implications for WFP of the guidance on the United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks and common country analyses

74. The Director, Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, reported that 14 new UNSDCFs had started since January; a further 29 would begin in 2021; 117 country-specific socioeconomic response plans for COVID-19 had been finalized and should be included in the UNSDCFs from 2021 in order to mainstream relevant activities.
75. WFP continued to play a lead role in the response plans and many country offices were leading or co-leading food security and nutrition results groups, shaping common country analysis (CCA) and UNSDCF processes. The organization was also engaged in United Nations system-wide discussions on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and collective outcomes and was contributing to Development Coordination Office (DCO) task teams related to the implementation of United Nations development system reform.
76. WFP continued to strengthen internal coordination to support CSP design and engagement in the UNSDCF process. The Programme and Policy Development Department would soon launch a second generation CSP working group to provide tailored and timely support to country offices.
77. Internally, WFP was improving the coordination of CSP design support and had updated its own guidance on CCAs and UNSDCFs to reflect interim technical guidance released by DCO on the operationalization of the UNSDCFs.
78. The timeframes for new CSPs were closely aligned with those of their respective UNSDCFs. It had been agreed with DCO that agencies would have up to one year after the UNSDCF start dates to align their documents with the UNSDCFs. WFP would use this grace period where appropriate to anchor its CSPs in national and United Nations priorities.
79. Of the four CSPs presented at the current session, two were aligned with the relevant UNSDCFs and one would be aligned one year after the start of the UNSDCF, within the stipulated grace period. The fourth was an interim plan that due to its short duration was not aligned. All new CSPs presented in 2021 were expected to be aligned with the relevant UNSDCFs or within the grace period.
80. The Director assured the Board of WFP's continued commitment to contributing to United Nations development system reform at all levels and to learning from experience in each country in order to optimize the operationalization of all aspects of UNSDCFs.

81. Board members welcomed the new WFP guidelines and praised the UNSDCF as a governance process that brought together United Nations agencies, civil society and national and international bodies.
82. Some members called for greater resources for regional and country offices and increased cooperation with resident coordinators regarding the sharing of resources in order to ensure programme implementation. They underscored the importance of South–South and triangular cooperation and encouraged continued collaboration between the Rome-based agencies in the delivery of technical assistance and the sharing of best practices in order to strengthen civil society and maximize sustainable development.
83. The Director thanked Board members for their support and assured them that WFP intended to expand South–South and triangular cooperation, including in the area of CSP design, following guidance from the Board as much as possible.

Oral update on the people policy: a vision for WFP’s workforce and workplace of the future

84. The Assistant Executive Director of the Workplace Culture Department thanked Board members for their engagement in and contributions to the development of WFP’s people policy. Building on comments and feedback received at the second informal consultation on the policy, held on 6 November, her update provided further information on stakeholder engagement, the main considerations guiding policy development and the next steps in the process.
85. Consultations involving more than 500 employees from all areas and levels of WFP, the staff representative bodies and the policy development steering committee had been held at headquarters and particularly in each of the six WFP regions and the field, and an online platform launched on 15 September, already used by 2,000 employees, provided access to updates and background information. During the consultations, employees had shared their experiences of good workplaces and suggested policy priorities. The next steering committee meeting was scheduled for 27 November, and management would consult the two staff representative bodies before finalizing the draft policy paper for presentation to the Board at its 2021 first regular session.
86. Development of the policy and a people management system was guided by consideration of five main elements: a vision statement calling for a healthy and equitable work environment where diverse, committed, skilled and high performing teams, selected on the basis of merit and living WFP values, worked together to make zero hunger a reality; a mutual commitment to complying with agreed standards of behaviour and conduct by managers and staff; tools for policy implementation, including strategic objectives, milestones, key performance indicators and estimation of the resources required; increased accountability for people management and revision of the risk management, performance planning, results, monitoring, reporting and oversight frameworks; and people management for a workforce that reflected the four priorities of the policy by being “nimble and flexible”, “caring and supporting”, “performing and improving”, and “diverse and inclusive”. Each of these priorities was linked to three focus areas, and all 12 elements were interrelated and interdependent.
87. The next steps in the process included a third informal consultation; finalization of the policy document and a background paper outlining the related theory of change and implementation and communication plans; and revisions of the strategies and other frameworks that supported the policy.
88. Board members welcomed the development of a people policy, saying that the policy would provide the overall guidance needed to address longstanding and structural issues such as workforce planning and contractual modalities. They expressed satisfaction with the involvement of management and staff in the policy’s development and with the planned alignment of the workforce size and capabilities with projected programme needs, country strategies and annual performance plans.

89. Members encouraged management to continue efforts to improve workplace culture, address all forms of discrimination, harassment and fraud and promote gender equality and disability inclusion, ensuring that those were reflected in the performance and competency enhancement system. Other recommendations included the development and dissemination of strong messages about the benefits for all when WFP employees and management acted with integrity and in accordance with WFP core values; the development of flexible and responsive people management systems that could be adapted to new challenges, such as those posed by the pandemic; and clarification of how managers and employees would support and be mutually accountable for action in their respective areas. There were also calls to make multilingualism an integral part of the policy.
90. The Assistant Executive Director welcomed and took note of the recommendations made and in particular agreed that the behavioural aspect of the policy had to be very clearly communicated. Work was under way to produce a timetable with the deliverables and the deadlines that would enable the implementation of the people policy and related initiatives such as the anti-racism action plan and the staffing framework.
91. Highlighting the speed of recent progress in addressing workplace culture issues, including the establishment of the first workplace culture department in the United Nations system, the Executive Director thanked Board members for their support and encouragement.

2020/EB.2/4 WFP protection and accountability policy and implementation plan

92. The Assistant Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department, presented WFP's protection and accountability policy, which had been developed in consultation with affected populations, local authorities, WFP field personnel and the Executive Board as well as members of the protection cluster and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. Featuring a theory of change and enhanced data and context analysis, the new policy placed protection at the centre of all WFP functions and recognized the importance of partnerships to successful implementation. As requested by the Board, WFP would provide an implementation plan for the policy with budget estimates by June 2021 at the latest.
93. Board members welcomed the policy and WFP's commitment to the centrality of protection in all areas of operation. They praised the policy's focus on gender and disability inclusion and the integration of protection and accountability concerns into the people policy, enterprise risk management tools and the strategic plan.
94. Some members said that there was a need for a system-wide approach in order to achieve collective protection outcomes, calling on WFP as a major aid agency to promote the centrality of protection in the field and to ensure that protection considerations were integrated into all its operations. Others said that it was important to listen to beneficiaries in order to identify risks and mitigation strategies, adding that constant monitoring was required to track risks and countermeasures, with data disaggregated by sex, age and disability.
95. Members urged WFP to develop clear guidance to ensure the full implementation of the policy in the field and to design an ambitious capacity building plan for staff. Several stressed that WFP's duty of care extended to its own employees. Others called for WFP to work with partner agencies on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and asked how WFP would hold its partners to the same protection and accountability standards.
96. Board members sought further information on the potential impact of the policy, beneficiary data protection measures and WFP interaction with governments for the protection of beneficiaries and WFP staff.
97. Management confirmed that implementation of the policy had begun; guidance materials on aspects such as data collection, context analysis, targeting and community engagement with community feedback mechanisms were already being piloted. WFP was studying the cost of implementing the policy at the country office level in order to establish parameters

and guidance and hold country offices accountable for incorporating relevant costs into their plans; the bottom-up strategic budgeting exercise would also clarify costing. The current management plan proposal included some of the costs of mainstreaming protection capacity, especially at the regional level.

98. Work to strengthen beneficiary data protection was also under way. Standard operating procedures and guidance would be issued, covering privacy impact assessments and agreements for sharing data with other United Nations agencies and national governments.
99. WFP was working with governments to identify the protection risks faced by populations in vulnerable situations and how governments in partnership with WFP could best support affected populations through inclusive programming.

2020/EB.2/5 WFP disability inclusion road map (2020–2021)

100. The Director of the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division outlined progress made since WFP began to implement elements of its disability inclusion road map in February 2020 following consultation with the Board. Achievements included the establishment of a steering committee and working group on disability inclusion and enhanced disaggregation of data for use in reporting on disability inclusion through WFP's corporate results framework.
101. Board members expressed satisfaction with the road map, its coherence with the 2019 United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and the establishment of a high-level steering committee to oversee implementation of the strategy. The inclusion of persons with disabilities was a fundamental human right and essential to achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and WFP's objectives. Saying that success depended on corporate-level commitment, knowledge and skills, dedicated resources and accountability for outcomes, members commended WFP's commitment to maintaining attention to disability inclusion beyond the two-year timeframe of the road map.
102. Welcoming WFP's determination to engage beneficiaries and staff members with disabilities in the formulation of the road map, members emphasized the importance of taking into account the diverse abilities, capacity and experiences of persons with disabilities and the impact that external events such as conflict or the COVID-19 pandemic had on the challenges they faced. Other causes of exclusion and vulnerability, such as those related to gender and age, had an impact on persons with disabilities, and members urged management to take such causes into account in the design and implementation of policies and strategies. Crisis-affected people facing multiple barriers were often the least visible, and assessments, monitoring and programming must direct sufficient attention to them.
103. Members called for harmonization of the road map with other WFP initiatives – such as the protection and people policies and initiatives addressing all forms of exploitation, abuse, harassment and discrimination – with a view to creating synergies and eliminating duplication of effort. All headquarters and field offices should receive the support they needed in mainstreaming disability inclusion into all WFP activities, and members observed that annual reporting to the Secretary-General would foster accountability for such mainstreaming.
104. Members endorsed the phased approach to implementation of the road map, with each phase planned according to the available resources. The forthcoming strategic plan and corporate results framework for 2022–2026 should include disability inclusion as a cross-cutting element with dedicated budgets and reporting on expenditures and performance.
105. Management took note of Board members' comments and recommendations and undertook to provide updates on progress in data disaggregation and other elements of the road map. The Director, Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, confirmed that additional investments were needed to enable implementation of the road map.

Update on collaboration among the Rome-based agencies

106. The Director, Rome-Based Agencies and Committee on World Food Security, presented a report on collaboration among the Rome-based agencies, which had been submitted to the Programme Committee of FAO and would be presented to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Executive Board in December.
107. Board members recognized the progress made despite challenges that included the diverse funding and operational models of the three agencies and the COVID-19 pandemic. They expressed satisfaction with the structure of the report and the presentation of information on collaboration at the global, regional and country levels and in various thematic areas, including the joint provision of operation services.
108. It was said, however, that the document did not provide all the information requested at the informal joint meetings of the governing bodies of the Rome-based agencies in 2019 and 2020. In particular clarification was requested regarding progress in the formulation of a joint action plan for the Sahel, especially as regards the joint plan's coherence with ongoing operations of the three agencies; the diversity of needs according to age, gender and other factors and the added value of joint action in addressing those needs; and the relationship between the joint action plan and the programme entitled "Emergency and Rural Development in the Sahel: A Joint RBA - G5 Sahel + Senegal Response to the 3C Challenges (COVID-19, Conflicts and Climate Change)" (the "SD3C programme"). One member encouraged management to consider reducing or waiving the indirect support costs linked to implementation of the joint plan.
109. Turning to other areas of collaboration, members urged the three agencies to accelerate their efforts to assess the feasibility of merging certain administrative and oversight functions, including the investigation of alleged cases of HSHAPD; facilitating inter-agency staff exchange programmes; and developing a joint results framework and joint evaluation and resource mobilization plans. There were also calls for improved country-level collaboration in the design of country strategies and programmes and greater incorporation of guidelines and recommendations issued by the Committee on World Food Security into WFP policies, strategies and engagement with the private sector.
110. Management replied that the SD3C programme replaced the agencies' joint action plan for the Sahel, which had been rendered infeasible by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 4 percent indirect support cost rate applied by WFP for its contribution to the SDC3 programme was in line with the rate in the latest management plan approved by the Board earlier in the session; any waiver would have to be agreed by the three agencies, and the WFP Board would have to approve a waiver. To ensure coherence with the wider United Nations system, development of joint operation services and joint administrative and other functions would accelerate following finalization of the implementation plan for United Nations development system reform. Documents providing further information on those and other points raised would be provided on request.

Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia portfolio

111. The Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director and President congratulated the Regional Director on his appointment as Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis and paid tribute to his achievements during his 28-year career at WFP.
112. Numerous complex challenges continued to afflict the region, which was also facing widespread job losses, rising food prices and a sharp drop in remittances as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. WFP had increased its caseloads for critical operations, scaled up support for government social protection safety nets and livelihoods recovery initiatives and introduced remote monitoring and analysis. Cash-based transfers and local procurement had been expanded and home-grown school feeding programmes had been adapted to provide take-home rations for 500,000 children.

113. WFP had responded swiftly following the explosion in Beirut in August, increasing cash-based transfers for affected people in Lebanon. Preparations were under way for a nationwide food security assessment in Armenia and a small WFP presence would be established in Azerbaijan, where WFP would work with other United Nations agencies. In Yemen, WFP had signed a technical agreement covering the implementation of biometric registration; however, food security had declined sharply and famine loomed in parts of the country. In the Syrian Arab Republic the price of the food basket had almost doubled in recent months. An estimated 9.3 million Syrians were food-insecure, yet WFP was reaching just half of those in need and the numbers were rising. Food insecurity was also of grave concern in the Sudan, affecting 9.6 million people in a context of economic hardship, soaring food prices and recently devastating floods.
114. Despite the multiple crises, WFP was also providing livelihood support to urban populations and smallholder farmers in countries such as Iraq. In Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia WFP was working with governments to strengthen social safety nets, emergency response, cash programming, school feeding and livelihoods support. In Libya WFP was providing backbone services to the humanitarian community, including emergency telecommunications, humanitarian air services and a common feedback mechanism, as well as supporting the national COVID-19 hotline.
115. Following an internal reorganization, responsibility for WFP operations in the Sudan would pass to the Regional Bureau for East Africa; operations in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan would be handled by the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific.
116. Board members congratulated the Regional Director on his new appointment, praising his dedication to the region and high degree of professionalism throughout his career at WFP.
117. Many Board members voiced concern over rising food insecurity, particularly in the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen; one asked for more details on the challenges faced in Libya. Several members welcomed the progress made towards the implementation of biometric registration in Yemen, commending WFP's continued efforts in that regard.
118. One member asked for more information about what could be done to keep the Bab al-Hawa border crossing in the north of the Syrian Arab Republic open, considering its potential closure in 2021. Another member sought details of how WFP was collaborating with other United Nations agencies such as WHO during the pandemic.
119. One member underscored the importance of supporting the future return of refugees to the Syrian Arab Republic and called on WFP to increase its support for the population of the State of Palestine in the face of COVID-19. Another member welcomed the focus on livelihood and resilience building in the region. He asked how the regional bureau had managed its oversight work under COVID-19 restrictions and how the pandemic had affected staff welfare given the difficulty of relieving staff in hardship duty stations.
120. The Regional Director thanked Board members for their support and reassured them of his continued commitment to the region. In his new role, he would be looking closely at the situation regarding the Bab al-Hawa crossing.
121. Preparations for the return of Syrian refugees had long been under way; working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other agencies, WFP had developed technological measures including blockchain systems to ensure that the organization was ready when people did start to return.
122. Significant advance funding had been received for WFP operations in Palestine. In Libya, WFP was examining the root causes of food insecurity, working with the other regional bureaux in Africa to understand the drivers of migration and implement an approach based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

123. The regional bureau had adapted its business continuity plan at the start of the COVID-19 crisis to ensure continued oversight and support for country offices. Additional counsellors and several doctors had been recruited to support staff welfare.
124. The Regional Director underscored the importance of taking a positive, constructive approach to work in the region, building on points of agreement rather than focusing on areas of difference, in order to provide a better future for new generations. In closing, he paid tribute to the national staff with whom he had worked during his career at WFP, describing them as the backbone of the organization and the key to its success on the ground.

Southern Africa portfolio

125. The Regional Director for Southern Africa described the situation in that region, where rising hunger, pervasive poverty, pronounced inequality, alarming rates of child stunting and the effects of climate-related crises and pest outbreaks had been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirty-two WFP staff members based in the region had contracted the virus, and the Regional Director commended them for their rapid return to work following recovery.
126. According to Integrated Food Security Phase Classification analysis from October, 51 million people in the region were food-insecure, nearly double the number forecast in pre-pandemic projections. WFP planned to assist 17 million of those in greatest need. The arrival of rain brought hope for a favourable growing season but also an increased risk of flooding in some areas, while damaging dry spells persisted in others. Desert locusts were damaging winter crops and threatening the planting season on 1.1 million ha, affecting 2.3 million smallholder farmers in five countries. WFP was deploying remote monitoring tools in 9 of the region's 12 countries and planned to introduce them in the remaining three countries by the end of 2020.
127. Hunger affected mainly rural areas, but the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had also hit urban areas, particularly informal settlements, generating government requests for WFP support in most countries. WFP had launched shock-responsive safety nets and urban operations using cash-based transfers in six countries and was supporting more than 1 million additional people through its pandemic response. The Johannesburg logistics hub operated by WFP since June 2020 had facilitated the transport of personnel and essential cargo throughout the region and elsewhere in Africa. The Regional Director thanked the Government of South Africa for hosting the hub. Monitoring of the impact of COVID-19 had found households spending more than 70 percent of their incomes on food in four countries, fewer than 10 percent of children consuming a minimal acceptable diet in three, and more than 70 percent of households resorting to negative coping strategies in two.
128. WFP's anticipatory action comprised forecasting of the likely locations of crises and adjustment of its programmes and logistics accordingly, including through the scale-up of activities in urban areas. Advance purchase and pre-positioning of 125,000 mt of food had saved more than USD 6 million and cut lead times for deliveries. Smallholder farmers benefited from cash transfers, training in conservation agriculture, improved post-harvest technology, and WFP's local purchases for school meals. WFP was also strengthening the forecasting capacity of national meteorological agencies.
129. With the pandemic underscoring the need for strengthened and expanded national safety net systems, WFP was rolling out large-scale school feeding, nutrition, shock response and social protection programmes with governments and partners and working with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) on the targeting and monitoring of interventions for addressing food insecurity in cities. WFP technology and digital platforms had been rolled out in ten countries, serving nearly 60 million people over the previous seven years. To address an increase in gender-based violence during the pandemic, and the

- disproportionate effects of violence, displacement and hunger on women and girls, WFP had engaged more protection officers and scaled up its hotline services and training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.
130. Building the resilience of fragile communities and fostering peace among traditionally rival groups were growing components of WFP's work in the region. Of the 22 million acutely food-insecure people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, WFP planned to reach at least 5.5 million and potentially increase pending needs assessments and resources.
 131. In Mozambique the number of displaced people had increased from 18,000 in January to nearly 400,000 in October. Despite access and security challenges, WFP had reached 318,000 of them in October and was preparing a major operation for the rainy season in which the provision of common air transport and logistics services would be an essential component. Funding requirements for the region over the following six months totalled USD 700 million, representing 60 percent of WFP's total needs and the biggest funding gap of any WFP region.
 132. Board members thanked the Regional Director and her team for their excellent work in the region and donors for their support. Highlighting the challenges and dwindling resources for WFP's activities, they called on countries and agencies to come together to address the root causes of hunger through coordination, cooperation and collaboration.
 133. In response to questions, the Regional Director said that the main cause of food insecurity in the region was climate change leading to loss of assets and leaving households unable to recover between one climate-related crisis and the next. To strengthen food systems, WFP was working with governments, national grain reserve agencies and smallholders, especially women, who needed support in improving production and acquiring access to markets. WFP and the Southern African Development Community had signed a memorandum of understanding on promoting the sharing of expertise and knowledge among countries, including through South-South cooperation. To address the funding gap, the regional bureau was seeking increased support from traditional donors and engaging international financial institutions in expanding social protection systems in urban and rural areas. WFP was working with governments to ensure that the desert locust outbreak did not expand.

2020/EB.2/6 Summary report on the evaluation of the interim country strategic plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2018-2020) and management response

134. The Director of Evaluation presented the main findings of the evaluation of the interim CSP for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, covering WFP strategy and interventions in the country from 2017 to the end of 2019. Overall, the evaluation had found the plan to be aligned with national policies and grounded in the SDGs, with assistance well targeted to those in greatest need and WFP showing the ability to remain flexible and to respond to new crises such as Ebola outbreaks. However, the growing emergency food assistance needs had only been partially met, and sometimes not met on time, mostly due to resource constraints. WFP's operations had been stretched to the limit because of insufficient human capacity, monitoring and risk management. The evaluation also concluded that stronger strategic partnerships were needed for WFP to help address structural vulnerabilities, in addition to its core mandate to provide life-saving support. The evaluation report set out three strategic recommendations for the next country strategic plan, which would cover the period 2021-2024, and three operational recommendations for immediate consideration.
135. Speaking on behalf of management, the Regional Director for Southern Africa said that the regional bureau and country office had welcomed the evaluation report, the first for a strategic plan in the region. Management had accepted all six recommendations and applied them in the design of the CSP for 2021-2024.
136. Members welcomed the evaluation report and management's positive response to the six recommendations. One member, while acknowledging the challenges WFP faced with its

cooperating partners, including short agreement terms, late payments and questions relating to beneficiary selection, said that the strong partnerships forged by WFP had been crucial to its geographic expansion throughout the country and encouraged it to strengthen its relationships with provincial authorities to ensure continued and successful implementation of its humanitarian interventions. Given the finding that WFP was often stretched to capacity in its operations in the country, he also asked how WFP would continue to bolster its capacity to meet growing needs.

137. The Regional Director explained that short agreement terms related to funding rather than commitments that WFP was unable to comply with; the country office would continue to seek unearmarked multi-year funding, which would solve many of the problems identified in the evaluation. In terms of beneficiary selection, WFP was working hard on monitoring and evaluation and on strengthening beneficiary targeting through increased presence on the ground and improved tools and methodologies.
138. The interim Country Director added that while WFP capacity in the country was frequently stretched the country office did the best it could and, among other things, was building capacity in logistics for provincial government health authorities. Although that was an unusual move for WFP, it was also an opportunity to use an intervention to create capacity that could be relied on when needed. Strengthening government capacity that could bolster WFP capacity was a priority.

2020/EB.2/7 Country strategic plan – Democratic Republic of the Congo (2021–2024)

139. The former Country Director for the Democratic Republic of the Congo presented the CSP for that country for 2021–2024, which reflected an explicit recognition of WFP's responsibility both to meet the needs of a population in crisis and, where possible, to contribute to a better future for the people of the country. Thus, while humanitarian efforts remained central, the plan also reaffirmed WFP's commitment to changing lives in even the most complex of emergency contexts; the plan thus included work with FAO and UNICEF to create opportunities to identify shared needs and build trust through practical cooperation on livelihood and asset creation activities, helping to nurture peaceful coexistence and social cohesion within and between communities.
140. Members expressed appreciation for what they described as a detailed and well-structured document, highlighting aspects such as an emphasis on tackling systemic and structural gender inequalities; a strategic focus on humanitarian assistance to meet basic food and nutrition requirements; strong focus on partnerships with the other Rome-based and other United Nations agencies, most notably FAO and UNICEF, as well as local actors and civil society; an evidence-based design approach, including incorporation of the evaluation recommendations; and a strong monitoring and evaluation agenda, including consideration of emergency and resilience-oriented indicators.
141. The plan's approach to strengthening the coherence of interventions across the humanitarian, development and peace dimensions was also highlighted, with one member suggesting that the CSP serve as a blueprint for translating the humanitarian-development-peace nexus into operational realities in other CSPs.
142. Members welcomed the increased focus on resilience building, noting that the CSP provided a solid framework that would enable WFP to more effectively address structural food and nutrition security vulnerabilities and lay the foundation for a potential transition to more government- and community-led responses, with one member stressing the importance of establishing clear engagement and exit strategies. The specific consideration given to gender equality and women's empowerment in all resilience activities was particularly appreciated. One member, however, suggested that climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, environmental protection and early warning and emergency preparedness were only superficially incorporated into the resilience building activities and asked that those

elements be taken into account more comprehensively at the programme design and implementation stages.

143. The school meals and school feeding activities planned in conjunction with the Government were said by members to be key, with the CSP highlighting the multifunctional aspects of the school feeding activities, extending beyond food safety and nutrition to education, social protection, food value chain development and market access. One member identified the mainstreaming of school meals and school feeding activities in the CSP as an entry point for donors and other partners.
144. One member, while acknowledging the importance of complaint and feedback mechanisms, called for greater attention to protection, including a clearer description of concrete mitigation measures to address the significant protection risks faced by conflict-affected communities. Particularly in view of the drawdown of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, WFP was encouraged to work with other agencies to uphold the dignity of beneficiaries and manage the risks they faced.
145. Members congratulated WFP for its swift COVID-19 response in partnership with FAO and UNICEF and encouraged the ongoing efforts to support the development of a national shock response social protection scheme.
146. The former Country Director confirmed that engagement with the Government had been difficult during the period 2017–2019, when the focus had been on the political situation in the country and the elections. Engagement had since been strengthened considerably and would be evident in a number of programmes being developed with the Government. Among other things, the President of the country had indicated that free school access was a top priority, further underscoring the potential impact of the school meals programme.
147. The country office took the allegations of sexual exploitation and fraud in the country very seriously. A strong compliance and risk management office had been set up and four protection officers had been hired. A network of 28 staff in various sub-offices had been trained to receive and report on complaints related to sexual exploitation and abuse, and vulnerability analysis and mapping and monitoring and evaluation capacity in the field had been strengthened through the addition of staff. Finally, WFP was set to strengthen its gender and protection work through new agreements to be signed with the United Nations Population Fund.
148. With regard to accountability to affected populations more generally, a feedback mechanism had been put in place and was providing more information and a better understanding of the situation in the field.
149. Regarding the environment and climate change, WFP was in the process of developing and mainstreaming an environmental and social safety framework globally, and resilience projects implemented throughout the country either already had or would have national resource management components, including reforestation, as well as land erosion control measures to be led by FAO.

Asia and the Pacific portfolio

150. The Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific reported that WFP had scaled up operations in the region to assist 12.5 million people and provide essential common services to governments and other actors in support of the response to COVID-19. He praised national responses to the pandemic, which had demonstrated the value of social protection measures for crisis response.
151. In Afghanistan WFP was responding to growing needs driven by conflict, COVID-19 and climate change. Support for the Rohingya populations in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh and Rakhine state in Myanmar had continued despite the pandemic, with WFP expanding cash-based transfers and e-voucher coverage while assisting the health response.

152. The region had also faced serious flooding, several major tropical cyclones, a desert locust infestation and the intensification of conflict in Afghanistan and Myanmar's Rakhine state. WFP had supported national responses, providing food, cash and logistical support.
153. Board members asked for details of how COVID-19 was affecting the region. One member praised WFP staff for continuing operations despite the pandemic and welcomed the scale-up of cash-based transfers. She asked how the regional bureau had managed its internal control processes during the pandemic, including how often processes had been waived or adapted.
154. Members requested more information on WFP's work in China and India. One member sought clarification on the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, noting several newspaper reports that the country was opening its borders with China periodically. Another asked WFP to share best practices distilled from the crisis response.
155. The Regional Director said that COVID-19 had had a profound impact on the region, warning that as countries were experiencing a second wave of infections the full impact was not yet visible. Preliminary data was very concerning, with estimates of up to 200 million job losses in Asia. Across the region the pandemic was expected to push an additional 100 million people into poverty and 20 million into extreme hunger.
156. Government economic stimulus and social protection measures, in particular cash-based transfers, were proving successful, however, and some could be considered to be best practices. Although universal social protection was unaffordable for many countries, such programmes should be scalable to provide support to the greatest practicable extent.
157. To overcome internal control challenges the country office had conducted remote monitoring via telephone, scanned documents and photographs; remote assessments in parts of the region were succeeding. Some in-person monitoring had continued, however, and in Cox's Bazar, for example, up to 30 WFP staff went into the camps every day despite the pandemic.
158. In India WFP worked with the Government in support of various safety net programmes, COVID-19 messaging and the provision of production units to increase the availability of nutritious food in certain areas. Good relations had been maintained with China throughout the crisis, with the WFP office in Beijing able to continue operations despite working remotely.
159. Borders remained closed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; although the Government had facilitated the exit of United Nations staff for medical reasons or rest and recuperation, WFP had not been able to bring in replacement staff. WFP food distributions continued in the country nevertheless.

2020/EB.2/8 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Indonesia (2017–2020) and management response

160. The Director of Evaluation presented highlights of the summary report on the evaluation of the CSP for Indonesia for the period 2017–2020, which had found the CSP to be appropriately aligned with national priorities and the UNSDCF. The evaluation had identified opportunities to improve engagement in national discourse and policy development, noting a need to strengthen country office capacity in that area, increase flexible funding and increase alignment with government systems in order to maximize the impact of WFP's work.
161. Management warmly welcomed the evaluation and its seven recommendations, which had informed the development of the new CSP. The new plan had a stronger focus on policy dialogue and expanded technical assistance in the areas of emergency preparedness, adaptive social protection and evidence generation. Partnerships would be strengthened to improve the tracking of long-term outcomes through monitoring and evaluation systems.

162. Work had begun on an in-depth stakeholder analysis, which would inform the partnerships and engagement strategy for the CSP and support enhanced inter-ministerial coordination. The CSP resource mobilization strategy would address the need for stable and flexible multi-year funding, which would also permit the recruitment and retention of experts in policy, communications and analysis.
163. Board members welcomed the timing and quality of the evaluation. Noting that the CSP was one of the first to guide a shift in WFP operations from direct intervention to capacity building and technical assistance, they praised the success of the plan despite funding shortfalls and other implementation challenges. They agreed with all the evaluation recommendations, particularly regarding the need for WFP to prioritize cooperation with the Government and other stakeholders. They encouraged WFP to consider opening a field office in eastern Indonesia in order to support local authorities in combatting inequality, preventing malnutrition and improving access to food and services.
164. The Director of Evaluation thanked Board members for their support and praised the positive engagement of country office and regional staff in the evaluation process and with the report recommendations. The Regional Director added that the evaluation offered useful advice on how WFP operations could be improved, not only in Indonesia but also in other countries that faced similar challenges. He expressed WFP's commitment to working with partners in the country, adding value where possible and working with other organizations that had skills and capacity that WFP did not have in the country.

2020/EB.2/9 Country strategic plan – Indonesia (2021–2025)

165. Before introducing the new CSP for Indonesia the Country Director summarized the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in that country, where up to 8 million people could be pushed into poverty in the absence of support. The Government had launched a USD 50 billion response package with USD 14 billion for social protection, but the scale-up had highlighted challenges in beneficiary database management and in making social protection systems more adaptive.
166. Aligned with the UNSDCF, the new CSP had been informed by stakeholder consultations, analysis conducted by a national research institute and the evaluation of the first CSP. It would continue the focus on policy dialogue and technical assistance in the areas of evidence generation, disaster and climate change risk mitigation and the prevention of all forms of malnutrition; no direct interventions were foreseen.
167. Board members praised the progress made by the Government in reducing poverty and food insecurity. They underscored the importance of continuing to address malnutrition, improve risk management and analysis and promote the empowerment of women.
168. Noting that Indonesia was a pilot country for Rome-based agency project collaboration, members praised joint efforts with FAO and IFAD to assess the impact of COVID-19 on food security and food systems as well as WFP collaboration with UNICEF and WHO. Several praised the alignment of the new CSP with national priorities and the UNSDCF and the integration of lessons learned from the summary evaluation.
169. Referring to recommendation 3 of the evaluation, members encouraged WFP to consider establishing a field office in eastern Indonesia to improve the monitoring and coordination of activities that addressed child stunting. They requested more information on the areas with the highest malnutrition rates, observing considerable regional disparities.
170. They also encouraged WFP to conduct a study of the impact of fuel subsidies on the poor and called for greater cooperation with Timor-Leste. One member said that strengthening social protection systems was key to overcoming current and future crises, adding that the huge number of indirect beneficiaries of the CSP more than justified the investment.
171. The Country Director reported that WFP already had a local presence in eastern Indonesia and that talks with FAO and IFAD on a potential joint sustainable food systems project in that

area were under way. Nutrition scoping missions had been conducted by the same expert in Indonesia and Timor-Leste; cooperation with the country would be extended to other areas such as nutrition-sensitive approaches, social protection and climate change adaptation.

172. Referring to beneficiary numbers, the Country Director said that WFP had indicated in the CSP how many vulnerable people could be reached through improvements to government systems. Indonesia's joint programme proposal to the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund focused on adaptive social protection; through this work, WFP would identify triggers for intervention and the targeting of population groups, which would contribute to improving management of the database of potential beneficiaries.
173. On the question of regional disparities, she said that indicators needed to be examined at the sub-provincial level and the drivers of malnutrition identified through on-the-ground investigation; to that end, WFP would assist the Government in holding local consultations. She added that food security and nutrition indicators were not always correlated, with factors such as water, sanitation and hygiene affecting nutrition in some food secure areas.

2020/EB.2/10 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Timor-Leste (2018–2020) and management response

174. The Director of Evaluation presented the evaluation report, which concluded that although the CSP was aligned with national policies and plans and focused on people's needs, significant funding shortfalls had hampered country office efforts to ensure adequate staffing, prevent pipeline breaks and achieve targets for nutrition and capacity building activities.
175. Management agreed with the evaluation recommendations, which related to sustainable funding, stronger partnerships, nutrition and food fortification, country capacity strengthening and the use of comprehensive capacity assessments in the CSP design process. The Regional Director observed that the country office would require a profoundly different resource base if it were to achieve those aims.
176. Board members welcomed the evaluation, highlighting the huge food security challenges faced in Timor-Leste. They urged WFP to establish a plan for securing long-term funding, to increase its focus on capacity building and to engage in South–South and triangular cooperation. One member underscored the importance of school feeding activities and support for smallholder farmers.
177. One delegation recommended actions to build country office staff capacity and attract international talent. They also asked why the funding contribution provided by the Government of China was not reflected in the evaluation report.
178. Another member urged WFP to ensure that lessons learned from the evaluation were incorporated into the next CSP and shared with country offices facing comparable challenges, particularly those seeking to implement capacity strengthening activities in lower-middle-income countries.
179. The Director of Evaluation clarified that the grant from China was referred to in paragraph 31 of the report. The Regional Director thanked the Board members for their appreciation of WFP's work and their emphasis on the need for long-term funding. He agreed that a more strategic and closer relationship with the Government was needed to prepare for a transition and handover of activities. He welcomed the recommendation related to South–South cooperation and reassured the Board that the lessons learned from the evaluation would be shared with other offices working in similar environments. He encouraged the Office of Evaluation to assist management in synthesizing lessons learned to ensure that the whole organization benefited from them.

180. The Deputy Executive Director highlighted the difficulties faced in securing funding for programmes in small countries such as Timor-Leste despite their concerning levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. He noted that as countries moved from lower-middle-income to middle-income status it was vital that food security interventions be embedded in national plans and budgets.

East Africa portfolio

181. The Regional Director for East Africa said that the region accounted for 4 percent of the global population but 20 percent of the world's acutely hungry people and 38 percent of the beneficiaries of WFP nutrition programmes. Conflict was the primary driver of hunger.
182. The COVID-19 pandemic had caused an increase in the number of food-insecure people, from 24 million to 41.5 million, exacerbated acute malnutrition and income and job losses, particularly in urban areas, and slowed growth in GDP. WFP had expanded its urban operations, strengthening its partnership with UN-Habitat. WFP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had established a joint programme excellence and targeting hub in Rwanda and were focusing on building the self-reliance of beneficiaries. Work with governments and FAO on addressing the desert locust outbreak had averted the loss of 1.5 million mt of crops valued at USD 500,000.
183. The region hosted 3.3 million refugees and 6.4 million internally displaced persons, with those numbers likely to increase in 2021. Funding constraints had forced WFP to cut rations for displaced people, and it needed USD 215 million to support refugees for the following six months. Resilience building was the future of WFP's work in East Africa; for example, it was developing tools that helped households and communities to prepare for and mitigate the impact of climate-related shocks such as the flooding that had affected 3.7 million people in 2020.
184. In Ethiopia, following the recent outbreak of fighting between the Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, WFP had evacuated all non-essential staff from Tigray. A United Nations humanitarian plan required USD 75 million for the next three months. UNHCR had declared an internal Level 2 emergency and WFP staff were on standby for deployment when needed. Food stocks for operations in Ethiopia were good, and securing humanitarian access was essential.
185. In South Sudan, 7.7 million people were forecast to be food-insecure in 2021, with at least 30 counties in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification level 4 or 5. WFP required USD 550 million for the next six months of operations.
186. The Regional Director noted that the Sudan had recently come under WFP's East Africa portfolio, which currently served 30 million beneficiaries and accounted for 30 percent of WFP's global workforce. Other positive developments included the launch of WFP's first regional innovation hub in Kenya, selection of the regional bureau to host WFP's new partnerships lab, and WFP's increased local procurement, which had injected more than USD 130 million into local economies.
187. Board members applauded WFP's work and successes in East Africa. Several members confirmed that their countries would continue to support WFP's operations in the region and called on other donors to join them. As shocks had particularly serious effects on women, children and vulnerable people, members emphasized the importance of implementing the recommendations from the recent gender policy evaluation and highlighted the value of the "16 days against gender-based violence" initiative.
188. In response to questions the Ethiopia Country Director said that his office had contributed to the formulation of a United Nations multisector plan for assisting an additional 1.6 million people in Tigray and 1.1 million elsewhere in Ethiopia. The office was carrying out further assessments to identify the local areas in greatest need and delivery routes for food

assistance. The humanitarian coordinator was working with the Government to secure access for implementation of the plan.

189. The Regional Director said that country offices in the region had maintained their monitoring and oversight obligations during the pandemic, with sufficient staff in place to allow the use of adapted food security monitoring systems for remote data collection, assessments and oversight missions. Country offices were implementing recommendations from audit and evaluation reports to the extent possible.
190. In the successful joint locust response, WFP had provided logistics and analysis support to FAO and governments. In urban areas, WFP supported governments' social security systems, including in informal settlements, and provided capacity building for local actors. The Regional Director undertook to provide an update on implementation of the recommendations from the gender policy evaluation.

**2020/EB.2/11 Revisions of country strategic plans and corresponding budget increases
- Burundi (2018–2020)**

191. The Burundi Country Director presented the interim country strategic plan revision for that country, which had the second highest prevalence of chronic malnutrition in the world and 65 percent of its population living below the poverty line. Border closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had hampered markets and supply chains, reducing food availability and disrupting livelihoods.
192. The country's first CSP had been due to start on 1 January 2021 but uncertainty following the Presidential elections held in May and the effects of the pandemic had delayed the preparation of a zero hunger strategic review and the drafting of a CSP was expected to start in early 2021. The proposed one-year extension of the interim country strategic plan would require a budget of USD 72.3 million to assist 1.2 million beneficiaries. Besides food assistance to refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, the promotion of home-grown school feeding and the use of cash-based transfers were very important features.
193. Board members said that the revision was essential in a country where 1.7 million people needed assistance. They welcomed the introduction of activities for the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition in children and pregnant and lactating women and girls; the provision of support for people receiving antiretroviral treatment; and the plans for building resilience and strengthening supply chain capacity.
194. Expressing concern that the effects of the pandemic could result in supply chain breaks, members urged the country office to maintain its focus on local procurement and to work with the Government with a view to keeping the country's borders open.
195. The Country Director took note of the comments made and thanked members for their support.

West Africa portfolio

196. The Regional Director for West Africa reported that the region's persistent challenges of exponential demographic growth, extreme poverty and lack of basic services had been exacerbated in the previous year by proliferating conflict, COVID-19 and the impact of climate change particularly on the fragile ecosystem in the Sahel. COVID-19 was causing declines in trade and foreign direct investment, global demand for primary commodities, remittances and income. The region expected a 3 percent economic contraction against an initial annual growth forecast of 3.4 percent, while the region's economic powerhouse, Nigeria, had seen its economy shrink by 6.1 percent year-on-year in the second quarter of 2020.
197. Seven of the 20 countries identified in the latest WFP/FAO early warning analysis of food insecurity hotspots were in West Africa (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone), and 8.6 million people were food-insecure in

- Nigeria alone - a 21-percent increase compared to March 2020 projections. New areas of vulnerability had emerged, particularly in the coastal countries, notably Sierra Leone. Food prices had started to fall but remained far above the previous year's levels.
198. The highest levels of food insecurity in the region were all related to conflict, including in the Central Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, the Central African Republic and Cameroon. The security situation on the border of Burkina Faso and the Niger had become markedly worse, while in the border region between Burkina Faso, Mali, and the Niger 13.4 million people needed humanitarian assistance, including 2.9 million children under 5 suffering from acute malnutrition. The crisis in northern Burkina Faso had become protracted, with a hunger catastrophe looming and over one million people displaced.
 199. Problems were also growing across the Lake Chad Basin with the expansion of Boko Haram in Chad and a deteriorating situation in Cameroon.
 200. WFP had been building its preparedness capacity for the worsening situation, including growing security concerns as a result of some extremist groups declaring aid workers to be legitimate targets. Amid greater preparedness efforts, WFP was building its assessment capacity, staff and partner capacity and country intra-agency coordination capacity in countries neighbouring the Sahelian conflict-affected countries, notably Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo.
 201. Elections had recently been held in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, in Côte d'Ivoire's case prompting the migration of a growing number of Ivorian refugees into Liberia. Elections would also take place in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Ghana and the Niger before year-end, and WFP was preparing in countries where there were concerns.
 202. WFP had scaled up its crisis response in the region, reaching 13 million people by the end of the third quarter, 2.5 million more than in the same period in 2019 but far from the estimated 57 million affected by food insecurity. Given the criticality of flexible assistance, WFP had scaled up cash transfer programming by 44 percent to some USD 187 million between 2019 and 2020.
 203. A lesson learned from COVID-19 was that a more systems-oriented approach was needed to reach the necessary scale and address root causes.
 204. WFP continued to scale up integrated resilience building to support communities, complemented by a greater focus on strengthening social protection systems to protect the most vulnerable.
 205. Another important lesson of the COVID-19 crisis was that working in partnership was critical. WFP had strengthened its partnership with the Economic Community of West African States and together with the West African Economic and Monetary Union had undertaken a recent study of the impact of COVID-19 and food security. WFP had launched an enhanced partnership with UNICEF in Chad, Mali and the Niger to scale up joint programmes on child wasting, school health and nutrition and resilience and with UN-Habitat had undertaken a study of food security and nutrition in urban areas in West Africa as part of efforts to expand urban programming. It had also launched a joint programme with FAO and IFAD to support the Group of Five for the Sahel and Senegal in responding to COVID-19, conflict and climate change in the Sahel. All these efforts had been undertaken as truly joint programming efforts, through joint planning, implementation and monitoring.
 206. WFP planned to ramp up resilience building with communities across the Sahel and beyond; seek more resources for root causes work, especially to support governments in building national social protection systems; work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to address root causes; and step up advocacy, particularly on access and national social protection systems.

207. The region faced a 55 percent funding shortfall of USD 553 million as of 11 November 2020, with the largest gaps in crisis response, particularly for Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic and Nigeria.
208. Members expressed appreciation for WFP's work in the region, including the provision of air transport services during the COVID-19 crisis. They welcomed in particular joint work with the other Rome-based agencies, Economic Community of West African States and the West African Economic and Monetary Union. Resilience work, including on soil restoration and local production, as well as efforts on social protection and school feeding, were highlighted as particularly important in the long term, and members expressed satisfaction that WFP's work was increasingly moving in that direction.
209. Members requested additional information on WFP's preparedness and contingency planning for elections across the region; adjustments made to internal control procedures by the regional bureau and country teams in response to the pandemic; and the most appropriate style of partnership for WFP in the region in terms of expertise and staff availability.
210. The Regional Director agreed that resilience work was crucial for solving the region's longstanding issues and underscored the importance in that regard of working with institutions like the World Bank to establish sustainable funding for the development of national social protection systems as part of the post-COVID-19 recovery.
211. Regarding preparations for forthcoming elections, WFP had focused on the coastal countries and such activities as helping them perform assessments, including rapid market assessments, in-depth emergency needs assessments and logistics capacity assessments; helping countries adopt common methods for data collection; providing classroom training for WFP and partner staff on minimum preparedness; and contingency planning.
212. In terms of adjustments to internal control procedures in response to the pandemic, WFP teams had been restricted with regard to travel and had scaled up remote oversight efforts, including for compliance missions.
213. The Regional Director raised the issue of constrained access in the Niger due to the security situation and asked the member from the Niger for assistance in negotiations with the Government.
214. The Executive Director noted that he had recently visited the region and had had very good meetings with leaders there but had also witnessed a deterioration in the situation. Immediate attention was clearly needed in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. Burkina Faso had seen a growth in activity of extremist groups in the vicinity and the security component was therefore critical; indeed, in the Sahel access was the biggest issue in connection with the growing famine risk. WFP needed substantial funds very soon to prevent the situation in several locations from deteriorating into famine and possibly further destabilization and migration.

**2020/EB.2/12 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for
Cameroon (2018–2020) and management response**

215. The Director of Evaluation presented the summary report on the evaluation of the Cameroon CSP for 2018–2020, which identified six recommendations to strengthen the strategic approaches to nutrition, resilience and national capacities; enhance strategic partnerships, funding and advocacy; invest in the evidence base to support the strategic focus and the CSP implementation strategy; strengthen human resources capacity to implement ongoing priorities and prepare for the next CSP; improve emergency preparedness, supply chain and programme implementation effectiveness and efficiency; and strengthen monitoring and evaluation, knowledge-sharing and communication regarding results. Management agreed with all six recommendations, which it was taking into account in the development of the next CSP.

216. Board members endorsed the report, particularly the recommendations related to strengthening operational partnerships; improving emergency preparedness, programme effectiveness and efficiency and food pipeline management; diversifying funding sources; and engaging donors in technical dialogue.
217. They encouraged WFP to strengthen its partnerships with UNICEF on nutrition and with UNHCR on targeting and food assistance in refugee settings. One member asked WFP to increase its participation in triple nexus coordination meetings and share its experience in conflict prevention and the building of social cohesion in conflict settings. Another member asked how WFP could provide better leadership and support to partners in managing security risks.
218. One member called for a change of approach in eastern Cameroon from sectoral emergency response to addressing basic needs, including through livelihood support for vulnerable people able to engage in economic activity. The delegation called for strict adherence to and advocacy of the humanitarian principles, underscoring the importance of independence and neutrality in securing continued access to affected populations.
219. Members welcomed the recruitment of monitoring and evaluation staff to improve the cost efficiency and effectiveness of operations. One member urged WFP to monitor the impact of livelihood support and resilience building activities under strategic outcome 4 of the current CSP and requested details of the funding for these activities. Other members encouraged WFP to strengthen country office and sub-office capacities, particularly for engaging with regional and local administrations.
220. For the next CSP, they urged WFP to operationalize the triple nexus, prioritize capacity building in support of the national ownership of programmes, refine targeting criteria, maintain funding for school feeding programmes and work with other aid organizations on improving accountability. They also called for a greater focus on risk management and gender transformative approaches.
221. The Director of Evaluation thanked the Board members for their keen interest in the evaluation function, noting that a synthesis of findings from decentralized evaluations on capacity strengthening would be presented at the next annual session of the Board. An evaluation on the South-South and triangular cooperation policy would be presented at the November 2021 session and at the February 2021 session an evaluation of the Bangladesh CSP would give more insight into how WFP balanced operations to save lives with those to change lives in terms of programme delivery, partnerships and fundraising.
222. Management said that work had begun on improving targeting in conjunction with the WFP and UNHCR co-funding targeting hub and through enhanced use of SCOPE, WFP's digital beneficiary information and transfer management platform. A food pipeline management committee and a supply chain working group had been set up to strengthen supply chain operations.
223. Additional security assistance including a second international security officer had been recruited and the country office had been working with the Resident Coordinator's Office, United Nations Department of Safety and Security and the Government on access issues. WFP also had armoured vehicles to facilitate access and the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service had provided access on occasions. With the Deputy Emergency Coordinator, WFP would continue to seek ways to improve humanitarian access in conjunction with other United Nations actors.
224. Partners were assisting with implementation and monitoring in order to extend WFP's reach and a gender and protection officer was working with the country office on improving gender transformative approaches and protection, with the support of the regional bureau. A gender advisor, protection advisors and two talent acquisition specialists had been recruited by the regional bureau to provide more support to country offices.

225. Sub-office capacities had been reinforced since the evaluation, especially in the north-west and south-west. Training courses organized with the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiations would be rolled out to WFP staff and partners in key countries in the region, including Cameroon.
226. The Regional Director assured the Board of WFP's uncompromising adherence to the humanitarian principles, adding that WFP was raising awareness of the principles among partners and local administration in the areas of Cameroon newly affected by conflict.

2020/EB.2/13 Interim country strategic plan – Togo (2021)

227. The Togo Country Director introduced the interim CSP for Togo, which built on technical assistance provided through the Government school feeding programme over the previous eight years. The plan mainly involved capacity strengthening relevant to food systems and school feeding but also included an emergency component to provide food and nutrition assistance to COVID-19 affected people and on-demand supply chain support services to the Government and humanitarian and development partners in the context of the health pandemic.
228. Following the approval of the interim CSP Mr Dindiogue Konlani, Cabinet Director, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development, Togo, speaking on behalf of the minister, conveyed the Government's strong support for the plan and for the involvement of any partners WFP might need to accomplish its important work in Togo.

Latin America and the Caribbean Portfolio

229. The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean reported on Hurricane Iota, which had struck Nicaragua a few days earlier and was passing through El Salvador and Honduras as a tropical storm, barely two weeks after Hurricane Eta had hit the same area. Food supplies had been pre-positioned in Honduras and Nicaragua and had been dispatched to the affected areas before hurricane Iota hit, allowing a rapid response. WFP needed USD 20.4 million to assist some one million people in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua over the next 30 days. In Colombia, Cuba, Belize and Jamaica needs were still being assessed.
230. WFP's financial needs for its emergency response to the hurricanes would be updated in the coming days and shared with donors. Meanwhile, a third phenomenon in the Caribbean Sea that was expected to at least cause significant additional rainfall in the path of the earlier hurricanes was being monitored closely.
231. Turning to the broader picture, the Regional Director said that the long-term impact of the hurricanes would still need to be assessed. Food availability could be severely affected over the next seven months in Central America, and crop losses would affect subsistence and smallholder farmers and seasonal workers in the agro-industrial sector, along with their families. In the Central America Dry Corridor, COVID-19 had already pushed the number of severely food-insecure people to an estimated 3 million and the impact of the hurricanes would push it even higher. A 2018/2019 survey had shown that 7 percent of households affected by the drought in the Dry Corridor were thinking of migrating, a percentage that had since doubled due to COVID-19 alone.
232. Prior to the hurricanes, WFP had assisted 45,900 people out of a targeted 200,000 people in El Salvador with cash-based transfers and 186,400 people in Nicaragua with school feeding and livelihood support but was facing a funding gap of USD 19.2 million in El Salvador and of USD 5.5 million to cover the next six months in Nicaragua. In Honduras, WFP had provided emergency support, resilience building, school feeding and nutrition assistance to 109,600 people in October but needed another USD 23.3 million to reach the target of 600,000 people over the next six months. In Guatemala, WFP had assisted over 29,000 people in September and aimed to reach 700,000 in the next six months, requiring USD 21 million.

233. COVID-19 was severely depressing income generation in the Latin American and Caribbean region, where 50–70 percent of workers were employed in the informal sector; job losses were expected to be worse in 2021. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean had estimated a 9.1 percent contraction of the regional economy in 2020, with rises of 37.3 percent in poverty and 15.5 percent in extreme poverty. Food insecurity had worsened sharply, with the number of severely food-insecure people in the countries where WFP was present rising from 3.4 million in January to 17 million in August.
234. WFP's regional financial needs for 2020 had risen 68 percent to USD 406.1 million, of which USD 332 million had been received, thanks to Canada, the European Union, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland and the United States of America, all of which had substantially increased their support in 2020. WFP's host governments had increased their contribution by USD 50 million each year, showing their willingness to support their own national programmes. Nonetheless, the financial gap up to February 2021 was USD 176 million, not counting the impact of the hurricanes.
235. South America had 5 million migrants, 2.2 million of whom were moderately or severely food-insecure. In Colombia, WFP supported a World Bank financed programme that assisted 19,000 households in urban areas and ran a pilot cash-based transfer programme covering 42,000 migrants in Arauca to test the potential for supporting the national social protection networks. WFP had assisted 470,000 people with food and cash-based support and another USD 73 million would be needed the next year to achieve the goal of 550,000. In Ecuador, WFP aimed to reach 370,000 people in the next six months, requiring USD 5 million. In Peru, direct support had been provided to 17,500 people and USD 3.4 million would be required to reach the goal of 98,400 people.
236. WFP was generating evidence on the cost of the double burden of malnutrition, with studies of seven countries already published. The Guatemala study indicated that the cost of malnutrition was 16.3 percent of GDP, showing the need for increased public spending on healthcare systems and increased access to a healthy diet, especially for children and adolescents.
237. WFP was strengthening its partnerships with UNICEF, supporting joint programmes. In countries with school closures, school feeding programmes had been adapted to offer take-home rations and cash-based transfer programmes were being strengthened.
238. Partnerships with financial institutions were also being prioritized, with contracts recently signed in Haiti with the World Bank to assist 200,000 people with cash-based transfers and with the Inter-American Development Bank to reach 540,000 people. WFP had assisted over 300,000 people in Haiti in the previous month and would need USD 6.5 million to reach another 200,000 during the next six months.
239. In the Dominican Republic WFP was working closely with the Government to distribute specialized nutritious food, reaching 130,000 people, and had worked with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to reach 280,000. In Cuba WFP had reached 188,800 people with food assistance and nutrition interventions since July and in order to assist 85,700 additional people in the next six months needed USD 3 million for regular operations and the COVID-19 response.
240. WFP's Barbados office was an important WFP presence for small island developing States in the Caribbean, mobilizing USD 16 million in humanitarian funds over the previous two years and playing a key role in facilitating partnerships, generating evidence and supporting the expansion of public assistance programmes in Barbados, Dominica and Saint Lucia. Five governments had requested technical support in vulnerability analysis and mapping, beneficiary targeting, strengthening of implementation mechanisms and other activities. WFP had provided direct assistance to 9,300 people in Dominica and Saint Lucia and aimed to reach 60,000 people in the next six months, requiring USD 13 million. The COVID-19 response had also included logistics coordination and supply chain management in Panama

and Barbados, assisting Caribbean Community countries through a subregional logistics hub.

241. Members thanked the Regional Director for his report and expressed deep concern regarding the consequences of the hurricanes and COVID-19 for the region, particularly in terms of their impact on food production, food security and nutrition. They applauded WFP for its work in the region, noting in particular the high level of preparedness in Central America that had enabled it to respond rapidly to the two hurricanes; its work in tackling emergency situations caused by the impact of climate change in the Dry Corridor and the Caribbean; its response to the COVID-19 pandemic; the emphasis placed on mass migration; its efforts to expand and enhance partnerships with the private sector as a way to mobilize financial and non-financial resources; and its work on strengthening social protection networks.
242. The Regional Director took the opportunity to reiterate WFP's commitment to working together with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to finalize the negotiations already under way aimed at ensuring that WFP could work in the country in accordance with humanitarian principles.

2020/EB.2/14 Country strategic plan – Guatemala (2021–2024)

243. The Guatemala Country Director said that the Guatemala CSP was designed to contribute to the national development plans and priorities established by the Government and under the UNSDCF for the country, taking into account the impact of COVID-19. It represented a shift for WFP from direct programme implementation to strengthening the country's capacity and institutions, proposing transformative approaches based on innovation and digitalization and fostering resilience and employment opportunities while providing technical support for government programmes and policies that fostered sustainable food and nutrition security.
244. Members voiced strong support for the CSP, noting that it reflected the needs of countries in the region, which despite being upper-middle-income countries faced challenges of hunger and inequality that were being exacerbated by COVID-19. They welcomed the dual focus on emergency response and resilience building and the focus on gender and vulnerable populations.
245. Members encouraged WFP to strengthen its national, regional and local partnerships with all relevant actors, as well as to pay special attention to children given the country's high incidence of stunting. They requested additional information on WFP's collaboration with FAO in the country; its plans to support the Government in developing a more robust and transparent social safety net system; its plan for ensuring accountability for the most vulnerable populations through advocacy efforts; and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the assumptions outlined in the plan.
246. The Country Director explained that social protection and accountability to affected populations were among the areas where WFP was strengthening government capacity, by supporting the Ministry of Development in establishing a unit in charge of shock responsive social protection and establishing a government platform for beneficiary management and transparency. The CSP also had a strong social and behavioural change element that entailed communication with communities on issues like social protection and nutrition, supporting beneficiaries' understanding of their rights and the systems available to them.
247. In terms of partnerships, the school feeding programme was a priority area of collaboration among the Rome-based agencies, although other United Nations entities were involved as well. A new FAO representative had recently been appointed and was working with WFP on a joint workplan for 2021 and on supporting the Government in preparing for the United Nations food systems summit to be held in 2021.

248. Child nutrition was a critical issue for Guatemala and was central to WFP's work, which was aligned with the Grand National Crusade for Nutrition that the President had launched on his first day in office.
249. The Regional Director confirmed that COVID-19 had had a strong impact in the region. WFP was in close contact with the Government to stay abreast of the situation. Regarding partnerships, he said that WFP had two agreements in the region for regional cooperation with IFAD and FAO and liaised closely with the regional directors of those agencies, particularly regarding strategic permanent coordination for United Nations development system reform and country evaluations. Notably, a joint FAO-WFP study was about to be launched on the impact of hunger and malnutrition in the region. More information was available in a recently issued report on the regional work of the Rome-based agencies.
250. Following approval of the CSP, Ms Maritza Méndez de Oliva, Secretary for Food Security and Nutrition of Guatemala, and Mr Luis Fernando Carranza-Cifuentes, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the Rome-based organizations, made brief statements underscoring the importance of partnership with WFP for Guatemala, a country highly vulnerable to natural disasters. Due to its status as an upper-middle-income country Guatemala had difficulty qualifying for development cooperation funding, yet still struggled with poverty and structural gaps that limited development. The CSP would support the Government's efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Other business

2020/EB.2/15 Progress report on the implementation of the comprehensive action plan on the recommendations of the joint Board/management working group on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination

251. The Assistant Executive Director for Workplace Culture presented the report, which detailed progress made in tackling HSHAPD at WFP through the implementation of the comprehensive action plan (CAP) for the implementation of the recommendations of the joint Board/management working group on HSHAPD. Full implementation of the plan would result in an improved, more inclusive and respectful workplace at WFP.
252. In the report, the assessment of progress was based on feedback gathered through an online "global pulse check" conducted with over 1,000 employees of the organization. Progress had been made in all six areas of the CAP, particularly those related to reaffirming values, employee engagement and communication. Improvement had been slower than envisaged in the areas of leadership role, policy and system revisions and disciplinary processes, although progress in those areas had been made since the release of the report. As to enforcement, it was explained that two people had been summarily dismissed due to sexual harassment and action taken in six cases of fraud. The review of a further two cases of sexual harassment and one of harassment and abuse of power were due to be finalized by the end of the year.
253. The Assistant Executive Director assured the Board that WFP was tracking all initiatives and plans to improve workplace culture whether included in the CAP or implemented as part of the anti-racism action plan or the disability inclusion road map.
254. Board members commended the Assistant Executive Director and her team for the progress made in implementing the CAP. They encouraged WFP to demonstrate the same level of commitment and vigour in addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and other protection issues for beneficiaries.
255. Members praised the "living the values" exercise, the digital well-being platform, the newly recruited family liaison officer and the revised internal communications strategy. They also acknowledged management efforts to continue implementation despite challenges

- presented by COVID-19, encouraging WFP to be ready to resume in-person activities as soon as circumstances permitted.
256. Some members underscored the importance of leadership in catalysing cultural change, urging WFP to provide people skills training to managers and to ensure that performance appraisals capture individual efforts to address HSHAPD. Members called for more progress in the area of policy review, saying that revisions should be informed by diversity, inclusion and anti-racism initiatives, and said that resources should be focused on key interventions that would drive significant change.
 257. Several members highlighted the additional resources allocated to the investigative function and welcomed the preparation of communication materials that would build trust in WFP's internal justice system. One member said that investigations should be carried out thoroughly and sensitively in conjunction with all relevant functions. The President sought to understand whether WFP was considering following the lead of IFAD in switching from the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization to the United Nations Dispute Tribunal, where the burden of proof was lower in cases of sexual harassment.
 258. Members also sought clarification regarding the implications of the revision of the WFP code of conduct and how such changes would be communicated to staff. One asked for details of the cost of implementing the CAP at the next update. Another urged caution over the use of surveys, observing that such tools should be complemented by others to ensure a broad range of perspectives were captured, and called on senior leaders to play a more prominent role in leading cultural change.
 259. The Assistant Executive Director highlighted some staff engagement activities under way, such as the new workplace culture webpage. The other initiatives included WFP's "Respect campaign", which was currently being digitalized, and the revised "Speak up" sessions with employees. Following a successful pilot in Colombia, the sessions would be rolled out globally.
 260. The Assistant Executive Director said that surveys were not the only tools used by her team to assess progress; a project management tool was used to track the progress of all initiatives, and notifications were sent to managers in the event of delays in implementation. She noted that online training for people management skills was available, although it was not specific to HSHAPD. A communications plan had been drawn up for the disciplinary process.
 261. She agreed with Board members regarding the need for swift implementation of the CAP. Referring to the jurisdiction of the International Labour Organization tribunal, she confirmed that the issue was being studied by the Legal Office and others.

Oral update on preparations for the 2021 United Nations food systems summit

262. The Director, Rome-Based Agencies and Committee on World Food Security, recalled that WFP was the United Nations anchor agency for action track 5 of the planned 2021 United Nations food systems summit, on building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress.
263. Five members of the scientific group had been tasked to work on action track 5, and WFP had been working with them to outline the solutions that should be identified at the end of the summit. Member States were expected to engage in the summit's five action tracks, both through the group of friends and directly, but some had yet to express interest. Valuable feedback had been received from members during a workshop organized by the group of friends, and a similar event would be held to obtain feedback from private sector, civil society and other stakeholders. A session at WFP's 2020 annual partnership consultation had been dedicated to the summit and action track 5.
264. Talks on financing for the summit were under way with the World Bank. Regarding private sector involvement in the summit, a focal point had been named in the summit secretariat

- to support private sector engagement, and a strategy was being developed and a guiding group organized. The private sector was represented on the summit advisory committee, on the action track teams and in the champions network. The Rome-based agency private sector teams had met twice with the focal point, and WFP was in discussions with the secretariat on joining the guiding group. Overall, the private sector strategy was aimed at engaging a wide range of private sector stakeholders and having them present and commit to solutions.
265. All five summit action tracks would have a representative from each Rome-based agency; the FAO and IFAD representatives for action track 5 had already been named.
 266. WFP considered the summit country dialogues to be key and had organized three information sessions between the regional bureaux and country offices to prepare them to support governments. Three areas had been identified: supporting the resident coordinators to encourage governments to nominate national dialogue convenors to prepare and organize the dialogues; helping to ensure that the dialogues included all food system stakeholder groups, including hard-to-reach groups more likely to experience hunger and food insecurity, with particular emphasis on women and children at the subnational and national levels; and presenting WFP's experience and expertise in contributing to sustainable and equitable food systems at the various stages of the dialogues, especially the development of the outcomes.
 267. The Director, Programme – Humanitarian and Development underscored that WFP was engaged on all the action tracks and the related cross-cutting areas, including naming subject matter experts for each track in areas such as nutrition, climate change, emergency transitions and livelihoods. WFP had also mobilized its partners, such as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, and had had preliminary discussions with networks that WFP either led or participated in, such as the food security cluster.
 268. During the summit process WFP would bring to bear its unique perspective of seeing food systems through the eyes of the people it served, its experience of dealing with such systems in hard to reach, complex and disaster prone areas, relevant research and learning and a commitment to working in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to offer game-changing initiatives across the action tracks, such as home-grown school feeding, which contributed to sustainable food systems and human capital development while promoting healthy diets, efforts to ensure that national social protection programmes were nutritionally sensitive and activities relating to smallholder capacity building, post-harvest losses, cash-based transfers and other matters. WFP would push for a people-centred approach that aligned with the Special Envoy's call for a "people's summit" and would strive to empower and mobilize marginalized voices in fragile settings where food systems had faltered to enable them to prepare for, withstand and recover from shocks through economic, social and environmental resilience.
 269. The President, speaking as a co-convenor of the group of friends, drew attention to a forthcoming group of friends briefing on the country dialogues and the pre-summit event planned for Rome, which promised to be a strong political event showcasing the Rome-based agencies. He also stressed the importance of all regions participating in the preparatory work for the summit.
 270. Members welcomed the work being done by WFP to prepare for the summit and expressed appreciation for the active role being played by the group of friends and the discussions and workshops that had been organized, recognizing the substantial effort involved. They encouraged WFP to continue its work to ensure that the summit achieved its objectives.
 271. Members advocated a strong role for countries in the summit process, as governments would be driving the implementation of the actionable outcomes. The group of friends meetings in Rome were important opportunities for members to participate in the discussion, but the group should not supplant the official bodies of the Rome-based agencies, including the Executive Board.

272. One member, seconded by another, proposed that the update on the summit at the Board's 2021 first regular session be presented for consideration rather than only for information.
273. One member expressed concern regarding the preparatory process, in particular the appointment of action track chairs perceived as non-neutral; a lack of balance and neutrality in the action track discussion starter documents; and a perceived pre-judgement of the summit outcomes.
274. There was a general call for the summit to be action-focused, with members saying that it should provide innovative options for achieving sustainable food systems that took into account the individual needs of countries and recognized that countries were well-positioned to determine the best solutions within their own circumstances. Similarly, outcomes and indicators should allow for the particularities of local production and reflect the heterogeneity of food systems, and international trade should be taken into consideration. It was suggested that politicized debate over competing agriculture systems and attempts to resolve multilateral debates under way in other forums should be avoided in favour of a discussion focused on "game-changing" and innovative solutions and proposals, with objective and evidence- and science-based analysis.
275. With regard to action track 5 one member asked that working groups not be organized based on sources of risk and suggested alternative areas of focus, including preserving and growing production capacity through early warning, access to financing, diversification, use of modern technologies and innovations and natural resource conservation; enhancing marketing and trade through reducing food loss and waste, adapting food supply chains and diversifying trade; increasing information-sharing and promoting affordability of new technologies; and social protection and human capital through ensuring access to food, providing food and nutrition and livelihood support, reducing dependency and accelerating the use of digital tools.

Oral update on WFP's response to COVID-19

276. The head of WFP's response to the COVID-19 pandemic said that the world continued to face unprecedented challenges as the pandemic exacerbated the effects of conflict, weather extremes, desert locusts and economic crises. Twenty countries were likely to see greater food insecurity within six months and four were at risk of famine. An estimated 271.8 million people in the 79 countries where WFP operated were food-insecure. Although WFP had deactivated the global Level 3 emergency for COVID-19, the organization would continue to support field operations and staff as long as needed.
277. Achievements under the WFP global response plan included USD 1.7 billion in cash-based transfers distributed to vulnerable people in 67 countries, 13 million children assisted through school-based programmes, real-time monitoring in place in 39 countries and government social protection schemes supported in 50 countries. Through its common services, WFP had dispatched over 92,000 cubic metres of cargo to 171 countries, performed 53 medical evacuations and transported over 25,000 passengers from almost 400 organizations, in addition to building field hospitals in Ethiopia and Ghana.
278. Common services were being phased down, but would be resumed if needed. The organization was upgrading cold chain infrastructure in preparation for vaccine distribution; WFP did not anticipate playing a role in vaccine supply chains but was liaising with key players such as Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, WHO, the Global Fund, the Clinton Health Access Initiative, Médecins Sans Frontières, the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNICEF to ensure that if support was needed it would be ready to respond.
279. WFP was conducting a lessons learned exercise for the COVID-19 response, and feedback would be provided to the Board in February 2021. It had already identified a need to improve and expand remote analysis and real-time data collection; invest in logistics, emergency preparedness and response; enhance analysis and early warning systems; and increase flexible funding. Preparation for more health emergencies was a priority.

280. He also gave an update on the corporate alert system, noting that the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia had been elevated to the highest alert level. Factors that could exacerbate the impact of COVID-19 in 2021 included conflict, extreme weather linked to La Niña and political tensions surrounding elections in several countries.
281. In closing, he reported that a management assurance review of WFP common services and COVID-19 response was under way, with positive findings from eight assurance exercises conducted to date.
282. Board members commended WFP for its COVID-19 operations, noting that the provision of common services had been critical to the global response to the pandemic.
283. Some members voiced concern over a continuing lack of clarity regarding the relaxing of internal controls during the COVID-19 response. They asked how WFP was mitigating and preventing risks including fraud, and they called on WFP to be clear about what constituted an “acceptable risk”. They welcomed the launch of the management assurance project and looked forward to receiving information on a centralized approval process for relaxing controls and a mechanism for informing the Board of related decisions.
284. Other members highlighted the huge impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition, particularly in Africa. They encouraged the United Nations to see the crisis as an opportunity to adopt a more ambitious and inclusive approach to food systems. They also highlighted the contribution of the Centre of Excellence Against Hunger and Malnutrition in West and Central Africa in tackling regional and global challenges.
285. One delegation called on members to support a proposal to exempt WFP-purchased food from export restrictions. Others sought more information on plans for a vaccine rollout, including to WFP staff, and asked how WFP planning and work with partners was affected by the continuing uncertainty. One member asked WFP to share lessons learned from the pandemic for crisis management.
286. The Deputy Executive Director reported that WFP was active in a series of inter-agency task forces that were examining preparations for vaccine rollout. As the global humanitarian response plan and associated trust fund were due to end at the end of 2020, discussions were under way regarding activities to be undertaken under country humanitarian response plans and direct appeals. He reassured the Board that the scaling back of common services was being conducted in full consultation with partners. He added that as the Level 3 status had been removed, the Board might wish to consider how it received further updates given that the response would be mainstreamed into country-level operations.
287. The head of WFP’s COVID-19 response also emphasized WFP planning for vaccine distribution, noting that 67 million people were thought to be outside the reach of internationally recognized governments. Transport, storage and distribution all presented major challenges, particularly for vaccines that had to be kept at very low temperatures. Continuous effort was being made to assess and improve emergency preparedness and response, but it was impossible to be completely ready for any scenario; WFP therefore had to remain flexible and agile enough to respond to unpredictable crises in unpredictable environments.
288. The Chief Financial Officer said that close attention had been paid to internal control and risk management throughout the COVID-19 response. He summarized the steps taken with regard to minimum controls, which included updated guidance on alternative controls for human resources, monitoring and other areas issued in May; minimum controls for managing third party risks that were distributed in May and June; field-level training on managing fraud in emergencies for almost 3,000 staff conducted throughout the summer; and best practices for remote and virtual oversight shared with regional bureaux in August. In October, WFP had clarified and distributed almost 90 minimum controls for the core functions of supply chain, finance, cash-based transfers, assessment and monitoring, management services, non-governmental organization partnerships, human resources and

technology. WFP required evidence of compliance with these minimum controls, with all regional bureaux and 35 high-risk country offices due to provide this information by the end of November. Questions for the second line of defence had also been sent to headquarters offices and regional bureaux for response by early December. Management would provide an interim report on internal controls to the Audit Committee in December. WFP continued to manage its corporate risk registers and hold regular risk register discussions, including for country office risk registers and the year-end annual assurance exercise, which had been launched a week earlier.

Organizational and procedural matters

2020/EB.2/16 Biennial programme of work of the Executive Board (2021–2022)

289. The Secretary recalled that, in accordance with a recommendation by the working group on governance approved by the Board in 2000, at each second regular session the Board approved its programme of work for the forthcoming biennium. Noting that the programme of work included both items required by the WFP rules and regulations and items requested by the Board as well as by management, he said that it was a living document that with the advice of the Bureau was updated as needed, including in response to Member State requests submitted through the List convenors, and that among other things it served as a basis for the scheduling of intersessional consultations, updates and similar events.

Summary of the work of the Executive Board

2020/EB.2/17 Summary of the work of the 2020 annual session of the Executive Board

290. The President reported that the Rapporteur for the Board's 2020 annual session had prepared the summary of that session and that a draft of it had been distributed to Board members in October 2020.

Verification of adopted decisions and recommendations

291. Introducing the item the President observed that the current session had proceeded notably smoothly despite being conducted remotely through electronic means, and he commended the decision to switch to a new online meeting platform. Praising the Secretariat and technical staff who had made it possible, he pledged to continue to discuss with the Secretariat ways to improve future meetings still more. He then highlighted some of the decisions and discussions of the session.

292. The Rapporteur then confirmed that the decisions and recommendations presented in the draft compilation of decisions and recommendations adopted by the Board at the current session corresponded to those that had been agreed during the session. The final versions of the adopted decisions and recommendations would be posted on the Board's website the following week and a draft summary of the discussions that took place during the session would be circulated for comment in due course.

Acronyms

CAP	comprehensive action plan
CCA	common country analysis
CSP	country strategic plans
DCO	Development Coordination Office
GDP	gross domestic product
HSHAPD	harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
PSA	programme support and administrative
QCPR	quadrennial comprehensive policy review
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks
WHO	World Health Organization