

Background Brief

Progress on the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 72/279

UN-Women Executive Board, First Regular Session 2019

I. Purpose of the background brief

1. This document responds to the Executive Board decision 2018/5, paragraph 8, requesting UN-Women to continue to engage with the Executive Board by providing regular updates on the progress made and actions taken towards the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279. The document builds on the information provided to the Executive Board in the informal paper titled "[*Preliminary analysis of the financial and other implications of General Assembly resolution 72/279 for UN-Women*](#)" presented at the Board's second regular session in September 2018 and provides an update on the implementation of key actions identified by UN-Women in the paper.

2. The brief also outlines how UN-Women's responses to key evaluations and assessments, especially those in response to the corporate evaluation of the regional architecture (2016), complement and support the response to expected changes in the context of the repositioning of the UN Development System.

Box 1: Summary of updates since September 2018

- Updated guidance for country strategic notes to ensure full alignment with the UNDAF
- Contributed to the development of guidance on the new generation of UNDAFs
- Co-led, the development of common minimum standards for multi-stakeholder engagement in UNDAF development
- UN-Women participated in and made inputs in 23 UNSDG mechanisms
- Rolled out the new UNCT SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard
- Launched the UN-SWAP 2.0 with a focus on capturing agency-specific gender-related results aligned to the SDGs.
- Contributed to the development of the system-wide strategic document to ensure it further strengthens coherence on gender equality work across the system
- Signed a Mutual Recognition statement along with other agencies to allow for applicability of each other's policies, procedures and processes and continued to engage in interagency work to develop common business operations.
- Substantive engagement in the development of the new Mutual Accountability Framework for Resident Coordinators and UNCT members.
- Provided inputs for the development of the funding compact and co-chairs the High-Level Taskforce on Financing for Gender Equality to make recommendations on how to increase financing for gender equality.

- Continued engagement in inter-agency efforts to improve working methods of Executive Boards.
- Initiated an analysis of the current distribution of field presence to inform the types of presence and support provided by UN-Women to national partners and UNCTs, while aligning recommendations of the regional architecture with systemwide discussions on UNCTs composition
- Revised the portfolios of the Deputy Executive Directors/Assistant Secretary-Generals and currently recruiting its second Deputy Executive Director/ASG.
- Revised reporting lines of Regional Directors directly to the DED/ASG.
- Initiated a functional review of Headquarters to identify capacity that could be decentralized or relocated to strengthen regional and country levels.
- Initiated a business process review, including a review of workflows, to optimize operational support to field offices.
- UN-Women’s revised approach to knowledge management developed and to be presented to the Executive Board.

II. Implementing General Assembly Resolution 72/279: update on UN-Women’s key priorities and actions

3. UN-Women’s efforts in implementing GA resolution 72/279 focus on ensuring the integration of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the work and priorities of the UN Development System (UNDS). UN-Women actively participates in 23 mechanisms of the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) at global level to support the overall UNDS repositioning process and to bring strong gender perspectives in their work. UN-Women has been making necessary adjustments to be well prepared for changes in the UNDS, particularly those in place as of 1 January 2019, with a focus on four areas:

- A new generation of UN Country Teams, including a revamped UNDAF
- A reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system
- Funding for the UN development system
- Strengthened governance and strategic direction for system-wide results

1. A New Generation of UN Country Teams

(a) The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)

4. UN-Women is committed to ensuring that the UNDAF serves as the primary and definitive planning instrument for UN Country Teams. UN-Women country-level strategic notes are aligned to the UNDAF. The Entity is strengthening its internal guidance and identifying dedicated capacity to contribute to all CCAs and UNDAFs in 2019 and 2020, so that they adequately address gender equality and women’s empowerment and have appropriate implementation arrangements to achieve results in this area.

5. Within the UN Sustainable Development Group, UN-Women has contributed to the development of guidance on the new generation of UNDAFs and co-leads the task team on multi stakeholder partnerships under the UNSDG Results Group on Strategic Partnerships, which developed common minimum standards for multi-stakeholder engagement in the UNDAF. These provide minimum-level steps UNCTs should take to advance stakeholder engagement and strategic partnerships to deliver results in UNDAFs that support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

(b) UN system coordination, capacity development and accountability for gender mainstreaming

6. Building on its extensive experience in developing UN system-wide guidance, tools and the provision of capacity development and accountability on gender mainstreaming in UNDAFs and joint programming, UN-Women launched a capacity development programme to roll out the new UNCT SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard. The Scorecard supports country-level gender mainstreaming by UNCTs through a globally agreed set of minimum standards in the context of the UNDAFs and joint programming. Twenty-three UNCTs that plan to implement the UNCT SWAP Scorecard in 2019 were already trained by UN-Women on the accountability framework, with more UNCTs undergoing training in 2019.

7. UN-Women launched the UN-SWAP 2.0, to be implemented by all UN entities at corporate level. The new UN-SWAP supports greater acceleration and harmonization of gender mainstreaming practices within the UN system, including through the monitoring and reporting of agency-specific gender-related results aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals. It also supports the implementation of the Secretary-General's gender parity strategy. As they advance joint analysis and identify agency-specific comparative and collaborative advantages, this reporting will allow individual UN agencies at country level to enhance joint efforts and better support countries with more coherent programming to achieve results for women and girls.

8. In support of joint monitoring and reporting of results, UN-Women supports the piloting of "UN Info" by UNCTs, a digital platform aimed at strengthening transparency of UNCT contributions to the 2030 Agenda, including SDG 5 achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, as well as other gender-related work across the SDGs. UN Info features a standardized gender marker for UNCTs, which is expected to enhance transparency of UNDS financial data and capacity for gender-responsive budgeting.

9. UN-Women's participation on UN interagency teams at various levels (Executive Committee, regional UNSDGs, UNCTs, Gender Theme Groups, joint programmes and other relevant interagency platforms) continues to focus on advancing shared accountability, evidence and knowledge, capacities for gender mainstreaming, and catalyzing joint programming for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment, including through its Flagship Programming Initiatives. UN-Women will continue to leverage this expertise and UN system coordination role to further enhance the scale, resources, and delivery of results through joint programmes for gender equality and women's empowerment in a repositioned UNDS with the goal of implementing the majority of its programmes in collaboration with other UN entities. In

addition, UN-Women will leverage the 25-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and other anniversaries in 2019-2020 to galvanize a systemwide push for gender equality and women's empowerment in support of Member States and other partners and accelerated results on this agenda. UN-Women is actively seeking additional resources for this critical initiative.

(c) Common business operations

10. UN-Women has significantly engaged with other agencies to make progress on common operations. UN-Women has signed a Mutual Recognition statement with UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP to allow all partners to leverage each other's policies, procedures and processes. This will lead to greater agility of operations, lack of duplication of efforts and increased collaboration.

11. As part of the basis for elaborating a suitable common back office model that supports the principles of value for money, transparency and accountability, UN-Women intends to support the optimization of Business Operations Strategies (BOS). UN-Women actively contributes to interagency work in this regard, including to support gender-responsive BOS.

12. UN-Women continues to make progress on common premises and common services. To date, 57 percent of all UN-Women premises are shared with one or more agencies and more than half of UN-Women's needs at country level are met through common services. This share is set to grow further as new mechanisms and processes are put in place or enhanced.

2. A reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system

13. As highlighted in the paper presented to the 2018 second regular session of the Executive Board, UN-Women fully supports a strong, mutually accountable and effective Resident Coordinator System and sees this as vital for the implementation of UN-Women's mandate and achieving greater results for women and girls in the context of the 2030 Agenda. An effective Resident Coordinator system plays a key role in strengthening UN-Women's effectiveness in-country.

14. Further to the ongoing development of the new Mutual Accountability Framework, which will define the overall governance and accountability for the UNSDG, its member entities and its working mechanisms, UN-Women will further align, as needed, the terms of reference of its country-level representatives and ensure the implementation of matrixed reporting as defined by the new UNCT mutual performance appraisal system.

15. UN-Women reiterates that guidelines related to the participation in performance reviews of Resident Coordinators should factor in the different organizational contexts and sizes of UN entities to include their feedback irrespective of the levels of regional representation. UN entities such as UN-Women should not be excluded from contributing directly to the assessment of the performance of Resident Coordinators because their representation at the regional level is at the D1 rather than the D2 seniority level. In addition, UN-Women aims to ensure that the Mutual Accountability Framework and the New Performance Appraisal Tool for Resident Coordinators

and UNCTs adequately measure their performance in leading the provision of support that is gender-responsive. UN-Women welcomes the fact that gender parity was attained amongst Resident Coordinators for the first time in 2018.

16. UN-Women has also seconded one of its staff as gender specialist to the UN Development Coordination Office (UNDCO). The gender specialist will provide technical support towards ensuring that strategies, policies and guidance, and their implementation, are gender-responsive.

3. Funding the United Nations Development System

17. As highlighted in the paper presented to the second session of the Board in 2018, UN-Women supports the funding compact as proposed by the Secretary-General and welcomed by the General Assembly. In addition to actions taken within UN-Women to advance transparency, common results, pooled financing, cost-recovery, and visibility of core contributions, UN-Women works within the context of the UNSDG Strategic Results Group on Financing and other relevant bodies to ensure that the Funding Compact addresses the need to track and ensure adequate financing for gender equality work and gender mainstreaming.

18. In addition, UN-Women co-chairs the High-Level Taskforce on Financing for Gender Equality established by the Secretary-General to review UN budgets/expenditures for gender equality work across the system and make recommendations on how to increase financing for gender equality. Initial recommendations will be available in March 2019 and a final report will be published before September. These recommendations will be an important contribution to discussions on the Funding Compact from a gender equality perspective.

4. Strengthened governance and strategic direction for system-wide results

(a) Improving the governance of the UNDS through reviewing the working methods of the Executive Boards

19. At its second regular session of 2018, the Executive Board of UN-Women adopted decision 2018/7 on working methods to strengthen the system's governance through streamlining horizontal coordination and coherence of the working methods of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP, as mandated in General Assembly resolutions 71/243 and 72/279. In response, three main work streams were established:

- **the Core Group** of 10-member states from the four Executive Boards. The Group will assess the efficiency and quality of current Executive Boards sessions, the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards and the Joint Field Visits of the Executive Boards. The Core Group will brief the UN-Women Executive Board and Bureau regularly throughout 2019.
- **the Comparison of Common Agenda Items** will ensure further coherence of agenda items common to all Executive Boards but not encompassed in Joint Agenda Items, such as External

Audit, Internal Audit, Annual Report of the Executive Director, the Strategic Plan, and the Integrated Budget.

- **the Joint Calendar of the Executive Boards** lists all formal and informal meetings of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women and will be posted on a common electronic platform. This will strengthen coordination in the Executive Board processes. In addition, the Secretaries of the Executive Boards regularly meet for enhanced internal coordination between the Secretariats.

20. The preliminary analysis presented at the second regular session of the Executive Board in September 2018 noted the need for strengthening an open dialogue between the UN-Women Executive Board, its Bureau, and the executive leadership of UN-Women. These regular interactions between the Executive Leadership Team and the Bureau, which will continue and be enhanced in 2019, have ensured an ongoing direct and transparent dialogue on issues ranging from initiatives taken on UN reforms to addressing sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse.

(b) System-Wide Strategic Document

21. UN-Women has actively engaged on consultations on the system-wide strategic document. UN-Women is well positioned to contribute lessons learned from the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN-SWAP), as well as from its UN system coordination work more broadly, including efforts to bring greater coherence in gender equality programming across the system. UN-Women believes that the common chapter in the Strategic Plans of UN-Women, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF provides a good basis to build on for the system-wide strategic document.

III. Ongoing work and next steps

22. The "*Preliminary analysis of the financial and other implications of General Assembly resolution 72/279 for UN-Women*" introduces key adaptations required to UN-Women's regional architecture and Headquarters' structure in response to the UNDS repositioning process, as well as the recommendations of the corporate evaluation of the regional architecture (2016).

23. To implement these adaptations, UN-Women has developed an overarching change management plan, led by a Senior Advisor reporting to the Executive Director. This process enables UN-Women in designing, costing and assessing the scale of required changes within a defined timeframe. It also seeks to be transparent and inclusive for optimal results, involving internal and external stakeholders. The change management plan, which aims to optimize organizational efficiency and effectiveness to deliver on the Strategic Plan, consists of four interrelated workstreams.

Workstream 1: Regional Architecture and Country Typology

24. UN-Women is analyzing the convergences of the review of its regional architecture and country presence based on the recommendations of the 2016 evaluation of the regional

architecture, with more recent and ongoing changes in the UNDS to guide the way forward. Other recent evaluations have also highlighted the optimization of UN-Women's field presence with a focus on:

- (i) the importance of retaining a meaningful country presence, with full representation in UNCTs;
- (ii) ensuring adequate capacity of all UN-Women offices within existing resources, while identifying appropriate types of support;
- (iii) the need to determine the level and type of engagement of UN-Women based on an analysis of the extent of gender inequality and specific challenges faced by women and girls

25. The review of the regional architecture and country presence typology builds on the above points and on the principles described in the Strategic Plan (para. 122), reiterated in the paper to the Executive Board of September 2018. It also considers changes related to the new generation of UNCTs and reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system, revamped regional structures and opportunities for efficiency gains offered by common back offices. These changes will require UN-Women to flexibly calibrate its support based on:

- (i) evolving contexts and demands as agreed in UNDAFs, with a focus on priorities defined in UN-Women's Strategic Plan (2018-2021);
- (ii) increasing requests for support in mainstreaming, leading and coordinating gender equality efforts at country level, including of joint programmes, towards more collaborative and coherent delivery of results for gender equality and women's empowerment by the UN System;
- (iii) demands for the provision of high-level technical expertise to advance normative reviews (with emphasis on those related to CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UNSCR 1325, and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda) and the provision of integrated policy advice to national partners and UNCTs for the translation and implementation of international norms and standards at national level.

26. In line with the above principles, the following steps were undertaken to support the regional architecture and country typology review:

- an analysis of UN-Women's current regional and country level presence within the context of the overall level of resources available, to ensure an optimal distribution of capacity and support within a repositioned UNDS;
- further articulating the types of support UN-Women can provide as a non-resident agency to national partners and UNCTs, in particular from the regional level, in support of country-level demands;
- further clarification of the types of support that can be expected of UN-Women, as well as minimum capacities required for their execution in country and through regional offices or multi-country offices, where applicable; and

- preliminary review of potential efficiency gains related the roll-out of common back offices and other UNCT configurations.

27. As a result of this analysis, UN-Women will identify opportunities to maximize the types of support it provides in countries where its impact is the greatest, including through different country presence configurations, such as co-location or a joint representative with other agencies, in addition to full-fledged country offices. In other countries, UN-Women will work as a non-resident agency to ensure that UNCTs are supported to advance the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda, including by receiving targeted regional-level policy and programming support. This will entail a strengthening of dedicated technical expertise at regional level. UN-Women is also contributing to the systemwide review of multi-country offices.

28. This approach aims to ensure that UN-Women can meet the continuing and growing demands for support within existing resources and with adequate capacity at all levels. These proposals will be presented in conjunction with UN-Women's Integrated Budget 2020-2021.

Workstream 2: Headquarters functional review and structure

29. As described in the preliminary analysis paper and in response to related recommendations of the corporate evaluation of the regional architecture, UN-Women has revised the portfolios of its Deputy Executive Directors/Assistant Secretary-Generals, with one Deputy overseeing all divisions leading specific functions of the Entity's triple mandate (normative support, UN system coordination and operational activities), and another Deputy overseeing management and administration, including human and financial resources, as well as leading resource mobilization efforts. UN-Women is currently recruiting its second Deputy Executive Director/ASG. Regional Directors have started reporting directly to the DED/ASG and other changes described in the preliminary analysis will be finalized by mid-year.

30. In addition, UN-Women has started a functional review of Headquarter units to identify specific capacity that could be decentralized or relocated to strengthen regional and country levels. It may also lead to the streamlining of certain functions and the identification of capacity that could be re-prioritized. This review, to be finalized by the second quarter of 2019, will also allow UN-Women to further refine its HQ structure, clarify reporting lines and further strengthen coherence across the Entity. Proposed changes will be reflected in the UN-Women's Integrated Budget 2020-2021.

Workstream 3: Business processes reengineering

31. A business process review to optimize operational support to field offices, including regional offices, is underway. A review of workflows to clarify roles and responsibilities at all levels, reduce siloes and improve efficiencies will be completed by the end of the first quarter 2019. This is in line with recommendations of the corporate evaluation of the regional architecture. To date, changes have been made in the Programme Division to ensure better support to field offices, reduce overlaps and complement functions of regional offices.

32. The optimization of business processes and efficiency is furthermore expected to be achieved through: (i) further advancing Delegation of Authority, including to those offices where UN-Women has smaller presences; (ii) strengthening internal capacities for procurement and

project management, including in response to the rapid growth and increasing scale of non-core funded projects; (iii) consolidating, where possible, UN-Women's operations functions, including in line with the UNDS repositioning process (iv) improving decision-making and accountability functions to ensure decentralization and consolidated programme initiatives deliver greater results and value for money; and (v) reviewing how core resources are allocated across the organization in order to ensure that priorities are appropriately funded.

Workstream 4: Knowledge Management

33. This workstream aims to strengthen UN-Women's overall knowledge management capacities, while enhancing the Entity's effectiveness in the management of evidence-based information, data and the provision of policy/technical advisory services within a repositioned UNDS. The Executive Board will be briefed on UN-Women's approach to knowledge management at its first regular session in 2019, including in response to recommendations of the evaluation of the regional architecture.

34. To further enhance its relevance in a repositioned UNDS, UN-Women will need to demonstrate how it can add value to development proposals by providing timely evidence-based analysis, strategies and tools to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in different and complex environments and in a range of UNCT configurations. The focus of UN-Women's approach to knowledge management is therefore to enhance its position as a thought leader on gender equality and women's empowerment both through cutting-edge research and analysis of trends and gender statistics and through capturing and learning from its own work at global, regional and country levels.

35. UN-Women will ensure that knowledge is captured and disseminated in a strategic way across all its functions and priority thematic areas and responds to emerging or high priority issues. This will support UN-Women's ability to provide enhanced technical advisory services to national partners and UN Country Teams, as well as evidence-based advocacy to mainstream gender perspectives into national policies and initiatives. UN-Women will also leverage knowledge management to strengthen its capacity to engage in policy dialogue on gender equality and women's empowerment as a non-resident agency.

IV. Update on financial implications of Resolution 72/279 on UN-Women

36. As highlighted in the *preliminary analysis on financial and other implication of Resolution 72/279 for UN-Women in September 2018*, in line with Executive Board decision 2018/5, UN-Women has doubled its cost-sharing contribution to support the functioning of the Resident Coordinator system from 1.3 to 2.6 million USD in 2019. For 2019, this contribution did not come with additional financial support to UN-Women from its donors, thereby resulting in reduced core resources available for UN-Women programmes. The revised contribution to the functioning of the Resident Coordinator System will be included in the 2020-2021 Integrated Budget. UN-Women encourages its donors to increase and prioritize predictable regular (core) resources to UN-Women to ensure that UN-Women can meet these commitments while ensuring the full

implementation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021. In addition, UN-Women is actively seeking additional resources for high priority initiatives, such as the 25-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, to ensure that the review takes full advantage of a repositioned UNDS and results in accelerated action for gender equality and women's empowerment.

37. It is estimated that a P3 post is required to manage the additional work processes related to the 1 per cent coordination levy that General Assembly resolution 72/279 decided to be charged on tightly earmarked third-party non-core contributions to United Nations development-related activities. The additional post will be needed starting 2019 when UN-Women, along with other UN entities, is expected to collect, administer, transfer to the UN Secretariat and report on the new levy. At the outset, the post will develop work flows and systems covering donor communication, recording, transfer to UN Secretariat and reporting. The continuing need of this support will then be reviewed and justified in the context of 2020-2021 Integrated Budget.

38. Additional costs associated with the change management process within the UNDS repositioning are also currently being fleshed out and, to the extent possible, will form part of the presentation of the Integrated Budget at the annual session of the Executive Board in June 2019. Until now, UN-Women has absorbed any change related to change management within existing resources.

V. Conclusion and way forward

39. In the coming months, UN-Women will continue to proactively engage in systemwide processes to define the repositioning of the UNDS and ensure that they support the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. UN-Women will also continue to implement key adaptations to its architecture and workflows to optimize delivery on its Strategic Plan in line with what has been described in this note and the one presented at the 2018 second regular session of the Executive Board. Considering this, it is expected that the recommendations of the corporate evaluation of the regional architecture will be fully implemented by the end of the second quarter of 2019.

40. Key follow-up actions with the Executive Board in this regard in 2019 include:

- Presentation of the draft Integrated Budget 2020-2021 to the annual session of the Executive Board in June 2019, including consideration of support for change management;
- Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 presented at the 2019 annual and second regular sessions.