

**Remarks: Chief of Staff**

**Executive Board Informal. May 25, 2023**

**Topic: UN Women Management Response – ACO 2022 Report to the Executive Board**

Madame Chair,

I am pleased to present on UN Women's response to the ACO's 2022 report to the Executive Board.

UN Women continues to be thankful to the ACO for the time, support and guidance its members provide in shaping how we look at issues of governance, budgeting, finance, planning and other matters across the organization.

In 2023 the ACO issued its 11<sup>th</sup> report, which covers a range of issues from audit and evaluation functions, to investigations and ethics, to risk and how we plan and budget. My intervention provides our high-level reflections and responses to their guidance.

The ACO welcomed UN Women's Independent Audit and Evaluation functions, and called for us to continue to integrate feedback from these functions into our decision making, and into how we plan, budget, implement and communicate. We agree with this, and our work in 2022 with the Evaluation and Audit team to assess how some of our country typology's function are good examples of ways we will continue to proactively engage with these functions in helping us to deliver better on our mandate.

The ACO noted the importance of UN Women implementing independent audit recommendations which aim to strengthen corporate functions that support us in delivering high-quality technical and operational work. We agree, and will continue to prioritize the timely implementation of all audit recommendations provided by our independent audit functions. The implementation of these are, and will continue to be, regularly monitored through our Quarterly Business Reviews. We also note that some recommendations are complex and necessitate resourcing. We are looking at these, and how can continue to invest balances we have to address urgent areas for action. In particular this relates to investing in functions that serve

as a second line of defense and a strengthening of internal governance, to support our programmatic operations.

In strengthening these functions, we remain committed to promoting the organization's accountability framework, and therefore in particular welcome the ACO's recommendation to invest resources in the implementation of the Statement of Internal Controls, prioritizing high risk areas and assigning responsibility and accountability to a high-level manager.

We appreciate the Committee's acknowledgement of our 11<sup>th</sup> unqualified audit opinion from the UN Board of Auditors. This is a milestone as the United Nations newest Entity, and we note that we have no UNBoA outstanding recommendations prior to 2020.

In response to an ACO recommendation from 2021, we are pleased to now have our first in-house Ethics Advisor on board, as of 1 April 2023. The role of the Ethics Advisor is to assist the Executive Director in ensuring that UN Women personnel observe and perform their functions with the highest standards of integrity through fostering a culture of ethics, transparency, accountability, and mutual respect.

With respect to regular resources, we agree with the continued need for us to calibrate our operations and country presence in accordance with existing resources levels. We do this through our Presence Governance Framework, which offers strategic clarity to discussions around UN-Women's organizational footprint.

We are also cognizant of the Secretary-General's analysis of overall funding trends for the United Nations of bilateral donors growing non-core resources markedly more rapidly than regular resources. This trajectory means that UN Women, similarly to the rest of the UN System, must identify options to counter tendencies for imbalance in the core / non-core ratio. We believe that growth of individual giving offers one opportunity for growing regular resources.

Moreover, in complying with the QCPR Decision and Executive Board approved policy of core not to subsidize non-core, we are seeking to emphasis on justified direct project costs within the context of our approved cost recovery policy. Acknowledging the importance of a continued focus on raising regular resources, we also have the ambition of increasing flexible and loosely earmarked core,

including by increasing direct funding to Strategic Notes and thematic funding windows.

Like the ACO, we are concerned with challenges and delays related to the implementation of the new ERP system, Quantum, a system being rolled out by UNDP across a number of UN entities. Challenges in the roll out risk affecting our ability to track and report on resources. We are working quickly and diligently to address these, both with UNDP and in providing the necessary resources internally for roll out.

Finally, UN-Women is seeking, as championed by the Executive Director, to ensure a corporate pivot to the field and bolstering of UN-Women's integrated triple mandate, in the pursuit of enhanced results at country level. As part of this initiative, the organization is investing additional resources in critical field level functions, to enable offices to better deliver for women and girls. In doing this, we are seeking to put our integrated normative, operational and coordination mandate to full use to work towards the outcomes envisioned in our Strategic Plan, and will continue to advance organisational excellence and business transformation in the context of Strategic Plan implementation.

Thank you, colleagues.