



# Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda<sup>1</sup>

### Field visit

## Report on the field visit of the UN-Women Executive Board to Ecuador 2022

### I. Introduction

1. A UN-Women Executive Board delegation undertook a field visit to Ecuador from 23 to 29 October 2022 as mandated/encouraged by the Executive Board decision 2017/18. The last field visit of the Executive Board was undertaken to the Caribbean in May 2019. The delegation was led by Muhammad Abdul Muhith, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations in his capacity as the President of the UN-Women Executive Board, and included the Vice-Presidents and additional members of the Executive Board (see annex for full list of delegation).

2. The purpose of the field visit is to provide the Executive Board with increased knowledge and understanding of the impact of the programming portfolio of the UN-Women Country Office in Ecuador, and how it contributes to the implementation of the host country's national development priorities. Furthermore, the visit aimed at enhancing the Executive Board's understanding of the extent and ways in which the United Nations organizations work together and contribute to the achievement of national development plans and global development agendas. The delegation sought to gather knowledge and insights into the extent of UN-Women's collaboration and partnership with the Government of Ecuador, development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders in fulfilling its mandate. The visit was also aimed at enhancing the Executive Board's understanding of UN-Women's role, through its Strategic Note and as part of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), in supporting Ecuador to deliver on its national development agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and evaluating best practices of United Nations programming in Ecuador and its transferable value to the system at large.

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<sup>1</sup> UNW/2023/L.3

Note: the present document was processed in its entirety by UN-Women.

3. The delegation would like to thank the Government of Ecuador for the warm welcome and for providing ample opportunities to engage in fruitful discussions with the Head of Government, Ministers, and other high-level dignitaries. The delegation would also like to express its appreciation to UN-Women Country Office in Ecuador for the preparations and successful implementation of the field visit and for its warm hospitality extended to the delegation. The delegation also wishes to express its appreciation to the United Nations Resident Coordinator, participating agencies and other partners for their cooperation and availability for useful exchanges.

## II. Agenda/visit details

4. The delegation's agenda included a whole range of meetings and engagements in the capital, Quito, and field visits to Ibarra and Cuenca. The delegation was received at the highest level, including by the President of Ecuador, Ministers and senior Government officials,<sup>2</sup> senior representatives of the National Assembly, National Electoral Council and Council of the Judiciary, and leaders of local government and municipalities. In addition, a series of engagements was arranged with United Nations organization representatives, UN-Women's programme partners, donors including International Cooperation Roundtable for Gender (MEGECI), the Steering Committee of the Spotlight Initiative, and representatives from civil society organizations,<sup>3</sup> private sector, and media.

5. The programme included a day-long field visit to Ibarra which offered the delegation an opportunity to learn about the Caminando project which is focused on human mobility. The delegation members participated in a game using the toolbox developed under the initiative Masculinidades en Movimiento,<sup>4</sup> i.e. the Masculinities in Movement Initiative of the Caminando project, which conceptualizes gender equality, prevention of violence and co-responsibility of care. The delegation also interacted with a migrant woman running a restaurant who received training and seed capital as part of the intervention of the Caminando project, attended a viewing of short films made by and starring nomadic women, and exchanged views with representatives of local government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

6. The delegation also carried out a visit to the city of Cuenca in Azuay Province to learn about a number of projects, including the Spotlight Initiative, Safe Cities and the Safe Public Spaces Initiative, and the *páramos* project (details provided below). The agenda included an exchange of views with the Mayor of Cuenca, civil society organizations and academia at Universidad del

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<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade, Investments and Fisheries, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ministry of Sports, Secretariat of Human Rights, and National Equality Council.

<sup>3</sup> The delegation met with 25 representatives from civil society organizations including Afro-Ecuadorian women, indigenous women, refugees, diverse communities, young women, representatives of academia, and members of the Civil Society Advisory Group, in which they discussed wide range of issues on which UN-Women has provided support.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://portal.trainingcentre.unwomen.org/product/masculinidades-en-movimiento-ecuador-2021/?lang=es>.

Azuay, and a walk to the Vivas Nos Queremos bridge which has been dedicated to the memory of femicide victims.

### **III. Gender equality in Ecuador: Current situation and key challenges**

7. Ecuador is an upper-middle-income country with a population of more than 17 million. Ecuador is rich in human capital with a relatively young population (median age being just under 28) and a high level of entrepreneurship. It is also rich in environmental resources and cultural diversity, with 184 recognized indigenous groups and 14 indigenous nationalities. An estimated 500,000 thousand Venezuelans live in Ecuador. Overcoming the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country is now on a path to steady recovery. Since 2021, the Government led by President Guillermo Lasso has initiated some reforms focusing on vulnerable segments of society, such as women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Ecuadorians, with a view to promoting inclusive and sustainable development in the medium- to long-term.

8. Women constitute 50.4 per cent of the total population in Ecuador. The country has demonstrated strong political commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, evident in its national and international normative frameworks. Ecuador is party to all core human rights instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which form the basis of its national policies and actions on gender equality. It has also prioritized the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda for its upcoming non-permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council.

9. Progress has been made in legal and policy frameworks in Ecuador to promote women's political and economic empowerment. In 1929, Ecuador was the first Latin American country to grant women the right to vote. The President of the National Electoral Council is a woman and 53 of 137 (39 per cent) seats in the National Assembly are held by women. The registration of women candidates in the sectional elections has seen more than a 30 per cent increase, surpassing the rate currently required by law for these elections. Remaining challenges in this regard include addressing violence against women in politics and women human rights defenders and enhancing efforts to increase indigenous women's participation in politics.

10. Despite good progress regarding the legal and policy frameworks, women in Ecuador continue to face challenges that seriously impede the country's gender equality agenda. Violence against women is recognized as the most serious challenge among them, which the President himself has termed as a "second pandemic". Statistics show that more than six out of ten women in Ecuador have suffered some type of violence throughout their lives. Outrage over the high number of femicides and other violent deaths of women<sup>5</sup> reached new heights after the tragic death of María Belén Bernal, likely committed by her police officer husband on 21 September 2022 inside the Superior Police

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<sup>5</sup> According to data from the Ministry of Government, between 2020 and 2021, violence rates increased by 80 per cent and the homicide rate nearly doubled from 7.77 to 13.95 per 100,000 inhabitants.

School. The incident led to nationwide demonstrations and helped put the gravity of violence against women and femicides on the national agenda. Sexual violence is also considered one of the key factors for the high teenage pregnancy rate in Ecuador, which reached 63.6 per 100,000 women between the ages of 15 and 19, ranking third in the Andean region. Every day, 137 adolescents between 15 and 19, and 5 girls under 14, become mothers.<sup>6</sup>

11. Ecuadorian women also remain vulnerable to multidimensional poverty and inequalities. Three out of four women in Ecuador are unemployed or underemployed. Women also face discrimination in matters of wages, working conditions and in accessing social security benefits. Gender gaps are wider for rural, indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian women due to their limited access to education and employment opportunities, natural resources and social security measures.<sup>7</sup> Women's greater participation in the informal sector, gendered wage gaps, and unequal access to land and natural resources make women in Ecuador vulnerable to economic discrimination. Moreover, unpaid care work at home, 76 per cent of which is generated by women, is excluded from production accounting and hampers women's equal participation in all aspects of society.

12. The Government continues to demonstrate political will to bring positive changes to a wide range of issues in order to ensure timely achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) and other gender related targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The priority areas include preventing and eliminating violence against women, strengthening justice mechanisms for survivors of violence, promoting political participation of women, and advancing employment and livelihood of women, especially rural women and women in human mobility, improving access to reproductive health and education and tackling child malnutrition.

#### **IV. UN-Women's presence and focus areas in Ecuador**

13. The UNCT in Ecuador is comprised of 21 agencies, funds and programmes. By working together, they support the country in developing comprehensive solutions to the major problems they face including in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment under the auspices of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2022–2026 (UNSDCF) signed between the UNCT and the Ecuadorian State. The new UNSDCF, developed through wide consultation (43 national institutions participated) and in accordance with the principles of the reformed UN development system, provides a much more streamlined and structured framework for cooperation and partnership.

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<sup>6</sup> According to information from the Statistical Registry of Deaths of the National Institute of Statistics and Census, between 2008 and 2020, the average number of live births to mothers under 15 years of age was 2,087, which must be added to an average of 55,349 live births to adolescent mothers between 15 and 19 years of age.

<sup>7</sup> According to the Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment Survey 2021 conducted by INEC; 58 per cent of indigenous women, 43.8 per cent of rural women and 38.4 per cent of girls and adolescent women live in income poverty, compared to 26.8 per cent of men living in such a situation. Compared to men (34.7 per cent), less women (30.24 per cent) have access to social security services. Rural (27.45 per cent), indigenous (15.4 per cent) and young women (12.14 per cent) face further exclusion in accessing social security services.

14. As the lead agency for SDG 5, UN-Women provides necessary advisory and technical support to Ecuador in achieving its targets. Within the United Nations system, UN-Women in Ecuador leads the Inter-Agency Gender Group, and co-leads the Interagency Social Protection Group, the Humanitarian Country Team's violence sub-cluster, and the UNSDCF's socioeconomic equality and social cohesion outcomes. It also ensures the inclusion of gender perspectives in the management and performance of the UNCT in Ecuador.

15. UN-Women's advisory support and programmatic actions in Ecuador are guided by the new Strategic Note developed under UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2022–2025. To help national stakeholders and partners take informed decisions based on facts, figures and joint analysis on the situation of women in Ecuador, the country gender profile was launched on 27 October 2022 during the visit of the Executive Board delegation to Ecuador. The report provides a wealth of gender equality data analysis in Ecuador in terms of labour gaps and political participation, unpaid care work, violence and femicide against women and girls. This document is the first country gender profile produced as an inter-agency product led by UN-Women through the inter-agency Gender Theme Group on gender and human rights.

16. UN-Women works with other agencies on cross-cutting thematic issues. Ecuador is one of the countries in the region that has the highest number of joint programmes, involving the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Labour Organization (ILO), UNHCR, IOM, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, World Food Programme, and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), focusing on the prevention and eradication of gender-based violence and the protection of women in vulnerable situations including rural women and women in human mobility. UN-Women's other engagements include resource mobilization, policy support for increased political participation, capacity-building of civil society, and partnerships with media and academia, among others.

17. The strategic focus of UN-Women in Ecuador includes, inter alia:

(a) Normative support: Supporting the Government of Ecuador in fulfilling its international gender equality commitments such as the implementation of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review and CEDAW, and developing a National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

(b) Eradicating violence against women: Eradicating violence against women and girls in domestic settings and in public spheres including through the strengthening of information and alert systems, the police, justice and protection institutions, and encouraging cultural change based on non-violent masculinities.

(c) Strengthening economic and social rights: Strengthening gender equality in labour rights and decent work, access to productive resources particularly financial and sustainable livelihoods, with emphasis on the rural sector, young women, and migrants and refugees, implementing ILO Convention No. 190 and consolidating a national care system.

(d) Combating climate change: Promoting women's leadership in combating adverse effects of climate change and the management and use of natural resources with a focus on rural and indigenous women.

## **V. UN-Women's cooperation and partnership with the Ecuadorian State**

18. UN-Women works with the Government of Ecuador, including the Secretariat of Women and Human Rights, in tackling violence against women. After the tragic Bernal case, the President decided to upgrade the Secretariat into a Ministry with a budget and efficient public policy. The Government solicited UN-Women's support in the transition process of the new Ministry. UN-Women is also providing technical support to the police on gender-sensitive policing, to build capacity and raise awareness of police forces in preventing and addressing violence against women. The cooperation includes revision of the curriculum of the police academy and the training of police academy instructors and senior police commanders. UN-Women's support is solicited for the realization of public policies in relation to gendered wage gaps and safe working environments in addition to creating more employment opportunities for women. The Ministry of Labour is working on the implementation of ILO Convention No. 190 and has also established a separate office to address barriers to gender equality.

19. UN-Women provides advisory and policy support to the parliamentary group on women's rights. The Assembly's new legislative agenda for 2023 will emphasize women's social and economic rights issues, which will include updating laws on violence against women to include new forms of violence, and formulating the care law by the labour committee. In addition to the existing support provided by UN-Women to the parliamentary group, cooperation was solicited for training of Assembly members on gender issues and legislation, public policies, violence, gender-sensitive budgeting, capacity-building for women's organizations and the protection of women human rights defenders. UN-Women has also been invited by the Vice-President of the National Assembly to join the parliamentary group as a permanent adviser.

20. UN-Women works with the National Electoral Council and supports initiatives to promote women's political participation and prevent political violence against women. As a result of these actions, an increase of more than 40 per cent has been achieved in the registration of women candidates for positions in the sectional elections. To address remaining challenges including greater participation of indigenous women in politics, the National Electoral Council plans to institutionalize a political training school for women, strengthen training processes for women within political organizations and increase advocacy through capacity-building of civil society.

21. At the meeting with the Judiciary Council, the Executive Board was informed of various actions concerning implementation of the Organic Law to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women and other laws related to the protection of women. Ecuador has an expedited procedure for cases of contraventions of violence against women; these cases make up 80 per cent of the complaints of violence and 40 per cent of them are resolved quickly. The process of delivery and ratification of protection measures to victims has been

faster with the automation of approval systems, which generate alerts for approval by judges. The delegation was informed that the number of reports of trafficking in person has decreased significantly, which presumably is attributable to increased awareness and training of border guards and use of identification technologies.

22. With UN-Women's assistance, the Municipality of Quito is implementing the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative, the Spotlight Initiative and the Caminando project, to address harassment and violence in public transport and public spaces and strengthening the team that works in the Casa de la Mujer shelter. UN-Women has provided technical support for the development of guidelines of protocols for addressing harassment in the subway under the Municipality's Stop Harassment campaign. The Quito Metro, with the cooperation of UN-Women, established a labour parity policy with a total of 57 women on the payroll (out of 115 employees) and with 50 per cent of leadership and management positions for women. UN-Women is also to sign an agreement with the municipality on a social memory and women's cultural entrepreneurship project, which is oriented to cultural processes in rural areas, such as women's collectives. The municipality established two shelter homes in response to the escalation of violence and for the prevention of femicides where victims are provided with psychological support and counselling before they leave the shelter to start an economic life of their own. The delegation undertook a visit to one of those shelter homes, where UN-Women provided technical strengthening of services.

23. In Ibarra, the delegation had an opportunity to learn about UN-Women's work for the protection and empowerment of women in human mobility. During an interaction with the Executive Board, the Patronato Provincial de Imbabura of Ibarra explained the services they provide in human mobility, and that they received training in non-violent and co-responsible masculinities from UN-Women. The Board for the Protection of Rights provides protection measures for victims of violence and priority groups. UNHCR reported that it works in a coordinated manner supporting communities in human mobility such as prevention of human trafficking and people smuggling. The delegation was also briefed about the process of migratory regularization by UNHCR, which is being conducted through visa VIRTE, a special visa for a two-year temporary period.

24. In Cuenca, the Mayor's office is supported by UN-Women within the framework of the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative and the Spotlight Initiative to strengthen victim protection systems at the local level and strengthening capacities of the municipal teams. The Municipality of Cuenca have generated an ordinance to allocate an annual fund of \$500,000 for psychological care for women and work on masculinities, strengthening the economic empowerment of women victims of violence, supporting the use of technology for early warnings and scholarships for children of women who have been victims of violence. The Municipality has developed training content for their personnel to address violence against women. They also acknowledged the need for working on masculinities, particularly targeting male aggressors, to reduce violence. Within the framework of the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative, nine such centres have been established in Cuenca near the markets so as to help the women vendors. Women are being trained in "non-traditional" trades such as plumbing and masonry-related activities.

25. In the Prefecture of Azuay, UN-Women's partnership is centred around two processes:

(a) Sustainability in the Páramo areas where UN-Women supports women's capacities to adapt to the impacts of climate change on ecosystems through environmental sustainability and gender equality, and women's leadership and resilience.

(b) Equity communities, which is a work methodology for building equity houses. With UN-Women's support, the prefecture made progress in community engagement to create space for women, and work in teams to strengthen women and communities. The representatives of the prefecture solicited support from the partners for the establishment of a shelter house for rural women in need of shelter and protection.

## **VI. UN-Women's cooperation and partnership with civil society and other partners**

26. UN-Women supports civil society organizations in a range of areas that include violence against women, inclusion of indigenous women and other minorities, protection and participation of women in the context of climate change, prevention of political violence against women, the contributions of empowerment projects and programmes aimed at women and girls, and advocacy on public policies related to women's rights including their reproductive health and rights. In an interaction with 25 representatives of CSOs, needs for institution-building at the local level, increased political participation of women including indigenous women, collection of data on minority women and eliminating racial discrimination were highlighted. The Spotlight Initiative and Caminando are the two most important projects of UN-Women that support civil society organizations in addressing violence against women and are universally recognized for their participation and potential for community-building.

27. In Ibarra, UN-Women supports various gender equality projects targeting people, including women and men, in the situation of human mobility. The Executive Board of UN-Women paid a visit to the site of the Masculinities in Movement Initiative of the Caminando project, implemented by a non-governmental organization called CORAPE. This is a gender equality and social cohesion initiative targeting men in human mobility (60 per cent) and locals (40 per cent). The delegation learned that so far 58<sup>8</sup> men have been trained under this project on positive masculinities. The Executive Board participated in activities developed by the project such as games related to the topic and the planting of seeds as a symbolic act of transforming patriarchy through new and positive masculinities. The delegation also watched a community film produced under the Caminando project, featuring women in human mobility, women from the host community and indigenous women, showcasing the difficult journey that migrant and indigenous women make, and how they have been victims of discrimination and xenophobia. The Executive Board also visited the enterprise

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<sup>8</sup> In the first phase of the Masculinities in Movement Initiative of the Caminando project, 800 men were trained. Later, work was done with 58 men to strengthen their knowledge to train other men based on a cascading methodology in four towns on the northern border, including Ibarra.



of Mireya, a migrant woman who in 2020 received seed capital from UN-Women under the economic empowerment programme. Through the implementing partner Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Mireya was trained in economic, administrative and gender-based violence prevention issues, being herself a survivor.

28. In the city of Cuenca, civil society is working on violence against women under the Spotlight Initiative and the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative. The work includes: training for men in healthy masculinities; mapping of professionals to support women who have experienced sexual violence; a digital manual on what to do in cases of violence that has been distributed in a QR code on Cuenca streetcars; shelter services for women victims of violence, highlighting that the shelter is built from an ecological point of view; campaigns aimed at adolescents to prevent violence; reflection processes on the media and discriminatory marketing; and the planning guide for public spaces such as parks and markets with a gender approach. UN-Women supported virtual training modules on protection from gender-based violence, masculinities and diversity which have so far provided training to 450 people. Results have also been achieved in reducing teenage pregnancy in Cuenca, the only city in Ecuador to do so.

29. In addition to these, the delegation had interactions with other partners of UN-Women in Ecuador including donors and the private sector. In a meeting with MEGECI, which is the only permanent space for coordination among the international community in Ecuador, the donors and international organizations such as the embassies of Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America, plus Care International, ChildFund International, the German Agency for International Cooperation, IOM, the National Democratic Institute, Plan International, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and UNFPA, noted the importance of collaborating with UN-Women, particularly around violence against women. The other key challenges prioritized by this group are gender policy, decent work, teenage pregnancy, child marriage, gender-based violence and political violence. The Executive Board also met with the main private sector partners,<sup>9</sup> where the partners reported on the work developed with UN-Women to promote the signing and application of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). The private sector representative opined that the reasons for the very low percentage of women in managerial positions (only 10 per cent) include the overload of care work and the violence and harassment experienced in the workplace.

## VII. Key findings and recommendations

30. The Executive Board found that the technical and advisory support provided by UN-Women at national and local levels is greatly valued both by the Government and other partners. Indeed, UN-Women's areas of support cover almost all the nationally determined priorities<sup>10</sup> of Ecuador and securing greater

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Global Compact, the Chamber of Industries and Production of Pichincha, the Chamber of Commerce of Quito, the British Ecuadorian Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Women for Women, Banco Pichincha, Chubb Insurance, and Arca Continental.

<sup>10</sup> Preventing and eliminating violence against women, strengthening justice mechanisms for survivors of violence, promoting political participation of women, and advancing

legitimacy for the work of UN-Women in Ecuador. During interactions with the delegation, the Government and other stakeholders expressed their satisfaction at UN-Women's partnership and sought further support in their priority areas.

31. The gender equality agenda in Ecuador is founded on a strong human rights footing, with the country being party to all human rights instruments. The new Ministry which will be responsible for the gender equality agenda will also be responsible for the fulfilment of Ecuador's human rights obligations. UN-Women's ongoing technical support for the update of the police human rights manual for the Ecuadorian police academy is a very encouraging step that will potentially help better protect women's human rights. Ecuador also has a political commitment, as an incoming member of the Security Council, to implement the WPS agenda through a National Action Plan. These priorities further enhance opportunities for UN-Women to extend the necessary normative and policy support to its government partners.

32. At the provincial, local and municipality levels, the delegation found that UN-Women's advocacy and technical support provide good results. Through its ongoing Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative, UN-Women has successfully demonstrated a model where locally-led interventions generate positive outcomes with replicable values. UN-Women's innovative projects under the Caminando project, such as positive masculinities are transforming patterns of inequality between men and women, contributing to the fight against gender stereotypes and fostering cultural transformation in the mindset of Ecuadorian society as regards the role of women, in addition to advancing social cohesion among different communities including migrants and Afro-Ecuadorians. The delegation also emphasized working more on the "narratives" so that the awareness projects against femicide and other forms of violence do not end up demonizing men, rather encouraging them to join the fight for gender equality.

33. UN-Women has made good progress in its advocacy efforts in strengthening the economic and social rights of women including in the field of labour rights. There is also increased awareness of the need to formalize the national care system. UN-Women needs to enhance its advocacy and policy support, both at the local and central levels, to highlight the importance of having self-sustainable care services<sup>11</sup> so that women can be incorporated into this area of work, formalizing these women in the labour field and strengthening the tax collection system. There is also need for broadening the partnerships with the Government, lawmakers and other stakeholders including the private sector, to invest more in addressing discrimination against women from rural

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employment and livelihood of women, especially rural women and women in human mobility.

<sup>11</sup> In the context of the SDG Social Protection project carried out from 2018 to 2020, UN-Women developed four pilot models of local care systems based upon the needs, actors and social infrastructure of the territories. One of these models was developed in Guayaquil, where UN-Women proposed a community-based care service to be managed and sustained with the contributions of the beneficiaries for covering the costs and employing young fathers and mothers of the community to be the main caregivers. This is accompanied by a training process in care service skills, co-responsibilities, masculinities and business. The model builds up a self-sustainable local circuit. This pilot will be replicated in other projects such as the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund project with migrant women in two other territories during 2023.

and indigenous communities, Afro-Ecuadorians and migrants. In this regard, the delegation emphasized the importance of regularly updating the country gender profile and ensuring its wide circulation among all stakeholders with a view to encouraging affirmative action for those women who are left behind.

34. On violence against women and femicide, the UN-Women's advocacy and technical support is well recognized by all – the Government, Parliament, National Electoral Council, civil society and academia. The delegation's visit to the shelter homes provided an opportunity to see first-hand the benefits of UN-Women's wide-ranging protection support extended to the victims of violence, including psychosocial and livelihood support. There is undoubtedly a great demand for more shelter homes. In several meetings, including at the meeting with the President, the Executive Board members were urged to help mobilize more resources for shelter homes. There is also scope for enhancing advocacy on the issue of the reproductive health of women and girls specially to address the high number of teenage pregnancies, a large part of which is attributable to sexual violence. Potential areas of support include the training of police, prosecutors and border guards (to combat human trafficking) and increased investment in the protection and welfare of victims.

35. UN-Women has a strong and effective engagement with civil society in Ecuador, both at the capital and local levels, supporting them with advocacy and with direct project support at the field level. UN-Women also serves as a facilitator for substantive dialogue between policymakers, civil society organizations, and international partners with a view to integrating CSO perspectives in planning processes at the national level. MEGECI is a good example of such platforms. However, more needs to be done to include national- and local-level organizations in such platforms. UN-Women should continue to strengthen its role in creating these platforms, by undertaking policy advocacy and providing technical, financial and capacity enhancement support to women's networks and their organizations.

36. More focus is needed to streamline evaluation of UN-Women's field operations and shift to more evidence- and results-based outcomes. Often the benefits were not substantiated by concrete data. Also, more needs to be done on strengthening gender statistics and collection of sex-disaggregated data, advocacy and capacity-building towards effective implementation of programmes through maintenance of databases prior to and after the implementation of its projects through online platforms. This will also help in the research and documentation of good practices, and their replication at the national and regional levels.

37. UN-Women needs to do more towards diversifying its partnership portfolio to include non-traditional allies such as the private sector and other non-traditional donor States to secure support towards its interventions. UN-Women in Ecuador currently has more than 100 enterprises in its WEPs initiative. This is particularly important to secure financial and non-financial support for its operational, normative and coordination mandate. The private sector as the main employer in the country, and UN-Women must also increase advocacy with it, with a view to strengthening the analysis of its value and supply chains to avoid informal labour and promote decent work principles with its partners and suppliers. The delegation learned that to address unemployment

of young women, the Government of Ecuador has announced tax incentives for companies who employ more women.

38. With regard to UN-Women's coordination role in Ecuador, the delegation observed the significant role played by UN-Women in coordinating the United Nations system's work on gender equality and ensuring accountability for commitments to women through regular monitoring of system-wide progress in Ecuador. The work of UN-Women in Ecuador is guided by the sustainable development framework signed between the Government and the UNCT. The Strategic Note and the country gender profile add further context for UN-Women's engagements in Ecuador. There are also a good number of joint programmes implemented by UN-Women in partnership with UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, IOM and ILO, among others, securing desired coherence in the work of the United Nations system in fulfilling SDG 5 and other gender equality goals of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Ecuador. The delegation noted that the country team is very efficiently led by the Resident Coordinator and gender equality remains at the heart of the overall work of the United Nations in Ecuador.

39. UN-Women in Ecuador also faces numerous challenges including in terms of resource and capacity of the team. The UN-Women office in Ecuador is in need of greater resources to continue working on issues of gender equality and empowerment of women in a country as diverse, especially where despite sustained economic growth, inequalities and sociocultural discrimination against women persist. The field visit further showcased good examples of how support for monitoring of normative commitments with multiple stakeholders (Government, civil society and the United Nations) can contribute to strengthening the formulation and implementation of national laws, policies and programmes for gender equality and women's empowerment. The Executive Board agrees that more financial and human resources are essential to move UN-Women from a small- to a medium-sized office (from \$1.8 million to \$2.6 million per year).

40. There are also opportunities to expand coordination, cooperation and coherence at the regional level. The work of UN-Women in Ecuador covers areas, many of which are either common across the region or cross-border in nature, such as care systems, human mobility, violence against women and girls, issues concerning indigenous and people of African descent, and climate change. In this regard, the role of the UN-Women regional office was recognized by the delegation.

41. With regard to the organization of the field visit, while expressing its appreciation to the overall planning of the visit, the delegation suggests holding regular debriefing sessions among the delegation and the UN-Women team, preferably on a daily basis to discuss the results of the activities and reflect on views or potential food for thought, based on the experiences in the field visit. The delegation also strongly recommends the UN-Women Regional Coordinator to be closely involved in these discussions.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

42. The field visit to Ecuador demonstrated the unique and effective triple mandate of UN-Women, delivering on normative commitments, operational response at country levels and coordination of the United Nations system on gender equality. The delegation witnessed first-hand how UN-Women's wide-ranging collaboration with a broad spectrum of stakeholders in Ecuador helps the country advance its gender equality commitments. The positive collaboration between UN-Women and the State of Ecuador across all organs and the mutual trust and strategic partnerships between the two aided greatly in making the field visit fruitful. The objective of the field visit has been fulfilled beyond expectations.

43. The insights and understanding of the delegation gathered through this field visit will hopefully allow UN-Women to refine its engagements in Ecuador. The Executive Board would also like to see its observations and recommendations used as a reference for future discussions of the Executive Board.

44. The delegation is confident that the meaningful cooperation between Ecuador and UN-Women will continue in both normative and operational levels in Ecuador and will help strengthen the capacity of the Ecuadorian Government to fulfil its international and domestic commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and help the country reach its national aspirations of leaving no one behind.

## Annex: List of participants

<i>Region/Agency</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>
Asia-Pacific	Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith	Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations
Asia-Pacific	Ms. Mosammat Shahanara Monica	Minister, Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations
Eastern Europe	Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya	Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations
Latin America and the Caribbean	Ms. María del Carmen Squeff	Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations
Western Europe and other States	Mr. Thordur Aegir Oskarsson	Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of

<i>Region/Agency</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Title</i>
Africa	Mr. Alhaji Fanday Turay	Iceland to the United Nations Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations
Africa	Ms. Roselynn Finda Senesi	Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations
Western Europe and other States	Mr. Derek Lambe	Deputy Director, Department of Foreign Affairs of Ireland
UN-Women	Ms. Sarah Hendriks	Director, Programme, Policy and Intergovernmental Division
UN-Women	Ms. María-Noel Vaeza	Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean
UN-Women	Mr. Jean-Luc Bories	Secretary of the Executive Board
UN-Women	Ms. Miwako Hirota	Executive Board Secretariat Programme Analyst
UN-Women	Ms. Shirin Lindseth	Executive Board Secretariat Programme Analyst