



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

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## Second regular session of 2016

1 and 2 September 2016

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

### Organizational matters

## Report on the annual session of 2016, 27 and 28 June 2016

### I. Organizational matters

1. The annual session of 2016 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) was held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York on 27 and 28 June 2016.
2. The Executive Board elected Kitty Sweeb (Suriname), representing the Latin American and Caribbean States, to the position of Vice-President for the remainder of 2016.<sup>1</sup>
3. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2016 (UNW/2016/L.3) and approved the report on the election of the Bureau and on the first regular session, held on 11 January and 9 February 2016 (UNW/2016/3). The Executive Board also approved the proposed provisional agenda and workplan for the second regular session of 2016, to be held on 1 and 2 September 2016.
4. The Executive Board adopted three decisions (2016/1, 2016/2, and 2016/3) as contained in the annex to the present report.

### II. Opening statements

5. The President of the Executive Board, Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Permanent Representative of Tunisia, opened the session by reiterating his country's as well as his personal commitment to strengthening the promotion of women's rights and gender equality. He stressed that all necessary measures must be taken to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls – by intensifying efforts and translating rhetoric into concrete actions. In this regard, he underscored the importance of organizing annual Executive Board field visits, mentioning his high appreciation for the joint field visit of the Executive Boards to the Kyrgyz Republic in 2016, where Board members had the opportunity to witness first-hand UN-Women's work at the country level, observe successes, and assess gaps and

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<sup>1</sup>Succeeded Miriam Macintosh (Suriname)

challenges. He noted that this visit transformed him and his fellow Bureau members into UN-Women Goodwill Ambassadors.

6. The President also spoke of his own country's efforts to strengthen the promotion of the rights of women and girls and called for individual and collective action to eliminate gender inequalities at the national, regional and international levels.

7. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, in addition to the Deputy Executive Directors, presented the progress report on the strategic plan and its midterm review. The Head of the Entity thanked the President for his leadership and the Bureau for their strong engagement in the work of the Board, as well as all Member States for their guidance and support. In highlighting the strengths of the midterm review of the strategic plan, she noted that the strategic plan inspired innovation and placed particular focus on results. Examples of new features included an annex of the report dedicated to the implementation of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, as requested by the Board, as well as an online interactive version of the midterm review. In response to the Board's request in its decision 2015/2, summarized information on progress made on the integrated results framework was incorporated. UN-Women provided more in-depth analysis of factors that drive or hinder performance and results. It was noted that the achievements were often a result of several years of engagement and advocacy, whereby the Entity played a supportive role in collaboration with partners such as Member States and civil society.

8. Examples of areas where effective collaboration had made a positive difference during the past two years were underscored. Mexico was commended for the fact that female parliamentarians comprise 42 per cent of the Mexican Government, while Bolivia was cited as the second country in the world to reach gender parity in parliament. Mention was made of the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General's recent announcement that the United Nations intends to increase the percentage of women at all levels and areas of its work by 40 per cent by the year 2020, and attain a 50 per cent fully balanced workforce by 2030.

9. Twenty-nine countries around the world adopted a gender-responsive policy framework for the economic empowerment of women. For instance, the UN-Women and Coca-Cola partnership in Brazil, Egypt and South Africa provided around 46,000 women with the necessary skills, equipment and access to credit that enabled them to successfully initiate and manage their businesses.

10. While ending violence against women and girls remains a challenging area, there had nevertheless been progress. The United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign<sup>2</sup> received increased public support. In 2015, approximately 70 countries participated in the "Orange the World" campaign during the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

11. Sixty-seven per cent of all National Action Plans now have indicators to monitor progress on women, peace and security. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director highlighted significant global breakthroughs in this area. More than 130 Syrian women overcame significant political divides to forge a unified coalition for peace during the Syrian Women Peacemakers conference held in Lebanon in May 2016. In addition, UN-Women managed the secretariat that supported the preparation of the Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/>

Resolution 1325, and the Entity has begun to implement the recommendations of this Study.

12. UN-Women offices engaging in humanitarian activities increased from 12 countries in 2014 to 34 in 2015. For example, the Entity supported a wide range of humanitarian assessments, including in Cameroon, Iraq, Jordan, Rwanda, Uganda and the Ukraine.

13. Speaking on institutional performance, the Head of UN-Women pointed to steady progress, whereby 66 per cent of targets were either achieved or on track. In its first five years of operation, the Entity built effective systems for performance management and reporting, financial accountability, audit, human resource management, risk management, operational infrastructure and strong evaluation function.

14. UN-Women has however faced several challenges such as resource constraints, the gender funding gap, and the need to support programmes with effective operational systems, to continue to allow for delivery that is on time, on scope and on budget — all necessary elements for the full and effective implementation of the strategic plan. Reaffirming the commitment of ‘leaving no one behind’, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director emphasized that collective and coherent results-based actions and innovative financial solutions are essential in ensuring gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

15. Many delegations took the floor in response to the opening statements to resoundingly commend UN-Women for the significant results achieved, as demonstrated in the progress report on the strategic plan and its midterm review. In this regard, one delegation opined that these accomplishments were a testament that the creation of UN-Women was the right decision. Another delegation stated, “UN-Women has shown a remarkable ability to be present where it matters: (i) Facilitating women’s participation and influence in the Syria peace talks; (ii) Supporting women successfully mediating and preventing local conflicts in Burundi; (iii) Making sure that the gender perspective is on the agenda at the World Humanitarian Summit; (iv) Assisting Members States in addressing violence against women and girls; and (v) Enabling governments to adopt gender-responsive laws and policies.”

16. Delegations commended UN-Women for its role in pushing a global agenda of gender equality and the empowerment of women, which is highly reflected in the adoption of the historic gender equality compact in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Beijing+20, the Paris Climate Change Agreement and 15-year Review of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. The Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations, former President of the Executive Board (2015), acknowledged UN-Women’s contribution to enhancing the normative framework for gender equality. He said that in 2015, “Member States adopted three major agreements that all embodied gender equality and women’s empowerment. While focus now will very much be on implementation, we wish to see UN-Women continue to provide leadership in setting the agenda on gender equality and women’s rights also in the years to come. If we are to deliver on goal five and indeed on the 2030 agenda in its entirety, the normative framework will have to be strengthened even further as we move towards 2030.”

17. Other speakers joined in expressing their appreciation for the work of the Entity in the area of women, peace and security, and on the refugee and migrant crises.

A delegation stated that Member States should more effectively integrate the human rights and development aspects of migrant women and girls into national, regional and international policies. Another speaker expressed strong support for the work of UN-Women on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, stating that the 2015 Global Study on implementation of this resolution showed the value of engaging women in all areas of work on peace and security.

18. One delegation pointed to the issue of tackling the root causes of multiple and intersectoral discrimination, as well as structural inequality, specifically with respect to mainstreaming disability into the gender equality agenda. The delegation was pleased that UN-Women was among the first to endorse the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, launched at the World Humanitarian Summit. It underscored that the protection of women and girls with disabilities from violence and abuse is an issue that should be addressed across all activities related to humanitarian action. While referring to the growing number of countries in which UN-Women had conducted humanitarian activities during 2015 another speaker urged the Entity to ensure that this work was coherent and undertaken with an integrated approach, taking into account the long-term development perspective. It stated that the work of the Entity to include gender analysis in humanitarian appeals and strategies is important and should be further pursued.

19. Several delegations expressed interest in UN-Women's work in the development of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks. One speaker urged the Entity to position itself as "THE lead institution to engender national implementation plans on the ground. This will be essential to ensure that women or girls are not left behind..."

20. One speaker referred to the recently concluded Comprehensive High-Level Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries, convened in Turkey. The emanating political declaration placed significant emphasis on the empowerment of women and gender equality. It was felt that UN-Women would have the key role in advocating and implementing the recommendations. Therefore, it would be important to provide the Entity with adequate resources to facilitate its effective contribution to this area in the world's Least Developed Countries. UN-Women would also need to be present on the ground to assist all Least Developed Countries in national and international efforts to achieve gender parity.

21. One delegation expressed its appreciation for the decision of UN-Women to strategically use its limited resources, by consolidating several small-scale, short-duration, projects into a small number of larger, multi-stakeholder transformative programmes, as outlined in the progress report on the strategic plan.

22. Information and Communications Technology was cited by a couple of delegations as one of the main elements required for the empowerment of women and girls. Together with digitalization, it helps create enhanced educational opportunities for youth in remote rural areas and in conflict zones, as well as supporting their economic empowerment as a whole. The delegation expressed its strong support for the efforts of UN-Women in spreading the knowledge and potential that information and communications technology offers with respect to the promotion of the rights of women and girls.

23. While one Member State commended the Entity for increased resource mobilization, several speakers called attention to the financial constraints faced by

the Entity, stressing the need for a significant increase in the volume of resources and long-term, predictable, flexible funding for the implementation of the strategic plan. One delegation cautioned that in the face of limited resources, UN-Women should ensure that activities at the country level were not so thinly spread as to be rendered ineffective. Another delegation reiterated that Member States had agreed that the decline in the share of core contributions in favour of strictly earmarked support had led to fragmentation within the United Nations, and urged UN-Women to ensure that incentives were in place that favoured core and other flexible resources. The delegation urged all donors to increase their core funding of the Entity.

24. One speaker saw potential in engaging non-traditional donors, the private sector in particular, and in strengthening the role of National Committees. Some delegations called on UN-Women for more focused efforts towards widening and deepening its partnership base in general, including with civil society, underlining the need to continue to seek innovative sources of financing. They reiterated their full support to the Entity in its quest to change the lives of women and girls across the globe.

25. Some delegations seized this opportunity to pledge their continued and/or increased financial support, such as Italy, with a 50 per cent increase in its core contribution in 2016; Japan's increase in its core and non-core contribution in 2016, amounting to USD 30 million; and the Netherlands' increase in its core contribution from USD 4 million in 2015 to 7 million in 2016. One delegation hoped that the structured dialogue on financing recommended by the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review would inspire the augmented flow of resources needed for implementation of the strategic plan.

26. One speaker noted that the demand for UN-Women's services was on the increase, and the Entity appeared to be flexible and willing to respond to new needs that may arise. However, this was a reminder that efforts should be focused. It was also an indication of why the coordination mandate of UN-Women was so essential. While noting the need for improvement, especially in leveraging relevant partnerships also at the country level, one Member State stated that the leadership of UN-Women in system-wide coordination and accountability efforts for gender equality were encouraging.

27. Many delegations welcomed the Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPIs) and their successful launch. Coordination was cited as an important element in rolling out the FPIs. One speaker hoped that this innovative mechanism would contribute to ensuring the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Another delegation expressed its expectation that the implementation of the FPIs would help enhance progress in the area of the economic empowerment of women, which appeared to have advanced somewhat slower than other areas.

28. As regards the tracking of the results achieved by UN-Women, some speakers opined that the articulation of the contribution of UN-Women, including its linkage to the results reported, needed improvement. This would in turn allow the cost-effectiveness of the work of the Entity to be more easily assessed.

### **III. Evaluation**

29. The Director of the Independent Evaluation Office presented the report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the

Empowerment of Women, 2015 (UNW/2016/5). The report provided information on the performance of the evaluation function at the corporate and decentralized levels, as well as the contribution of UN-Women to the United Nations system-wide coordination and national capacity development for gender-responsive evaluation. In addition, the report presented the 2016 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Office.

30. The evaluation function of UN-Women was guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and included support for the United Nations Evaluation Group and national evaluation capacity development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development included the call for follow-up and review mechanisms to be informed by country-led evaluation, and to strengthen national evaluation capacities. It also included the principles of gender-responsive evaluations. It was noted that the United Nations Evaluation Group and EvalPartners were both chaired by UN-Women. The advocacy strategy focused on declaring 2015 as the first ever International Year of Evaluation. Within this context, EvalPartners facilitated 92 events all over the world organized by Governments, international organizations, civil society organizations, parliaments and academia. This created a global bottom-up movement to develop capacities to demand, supply and use evaluation, including gender-responsive evaluations. In addition to strengthening an enabling environment for evaluation, EvalPartners enhanced the institutional capacities of 96 regional and national evaluation associations, through peer-to-peer mutual support initiatives.

31. The Executive Board requested in its decision 2015/1 that the Independent Evaluation Office and the Office of the Executive Director lead a review of the UN-Women evaluation policy (UNW/2012/12). The review, conducted from March 2015 to March 2016, was based on: (a) the findings of three external assessments conducted in 2014 and two conducted in 2015; (b) the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee report to the 2015 first annual session of the Executive Board and related Board decision; and (c) consultations with UN-Women senior management and the Executive Board. All of the aforementioned assessed the UN-Women evaluation function positively, leading to the conclusion that it was relevant and effective in its third year of implementation and provided a strong normative framework for a robust evaluation function.

32. The findings of the review of the UN-Women evaluation policy included the following:

- a) an evaluation function that was aligned with international norms and standards
- b) an adequate level of independence of the evaluation function given the organization's current stage of development
- c) a clear framework for a strong evaluation function
- d) the coordination role of UN-Women in the United Nations system was reinforced, with respect to gender-responsive evaluation
- e) the inclusion of national evaluation capacity development is reflective of the current global development context.

33. While there were areas that required improvement, the Entity was deemed to be strategically contributing to strengthening gender-responsive capacities within the United Nations system as well as at the national level. This should be intensified within the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Given the overall positive assessment of the UN-Women evaluation function, the Board

requested in its decision that the UN-Women evaluation policy be reviewed in three years.

34. The respective management response showed examples of positive corporate performance with respect to most indicators, in spite of a large and expanding portfolio. It was noted that while absorbing high volumes of evaluations had proven to be a challenge, opportunities for improvement were actively pursued in areas such as decentralized evaluation planning and implementation. The Entity embarked on several initiatives, such as the Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPIs) that were developed with explicit theories of change; and a Results Management System that tracks UN-Women expected results to complement existing systems, such as the Global Evaluation Oversight System, the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System, and the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use System. UN-Women was also working on strengthening the oversight function as well as enhancing national capacity. Looking ahead to the review of the Evaluation Policy in a time frame of between three and five years as concluded, the Entity would seek: continuous improvement of the Key Performance Indicators, including implementation, coverage and use of evaluations; further investment in systems; to work towards enhanced internal capacity and training of partners in the Sustainable Development Goals implementation framework; to use evaluation findings to strengthen corporate strategic planning; to ensure fully costed monitoring, evaluation and research plans and increased focus on compliance.

35. In response to the presentations of the report on the evaluation function of 2015 and the related management response, Member States expressed their appreciation for efforts made by UN-Women, the Independent Evaluation Office, and regional and national offices. They also highlighted the importance of effective evaluation functions in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as a stand-alone goal and integrated across all other goals.

36. Strong support was reaffirmed for UN-Women's partnership initiatives with development actors, Governments and national stakeholders to create additional capacity for gender-sensitive quality data collection and analysis. Member States also appreciated the development of practical guidance to support offices in the management of gender-responsive country portfolio evaluations and fostering quality assurance. One speaker highlighted that the evaluations had noted strong alignment of UN-Women programming with national priorities and the high level of national ownership for UN-Women programmes.

37. It was underscored that while overall the trends in key performance indicators were positive, management should focus its attention on where improvements are still required, particularly, the coverage of evaluation and the implementation rate. Member States called on the Entity to further analyse reasons for the delays, to find preventive measures and to strengthen the capacity, especially at the country level. UN-Women management was requested to pay more attention to the institutional or portfolio impact if key planned evaluations were not adequately planned, not implemented and/or cancelled. Recalling that UN-Women was reviewing how investment in evaluation was calculated and whether 3 per cent of the budget should be allocated to evaluation, they expressed interest in learning the view of management on the evaluation function's capacity and funding needs.

38. Delegations also mentioned that UN-Women had an important role to play in the promotion of gender-responsive evaluations and gender mainstreaming. They

welcomed the review of Corporate Gender Equality Evaluations in the United Nations system and strongly urged the Entity to lead the dialogue on the collective lessons learned, the gaps and the challenges for strengthening gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system.

## **IV. Audit**

39. The Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) presented the Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period 1 January to 31 December 2015 (UNW/2016/4). The report included information regarding the main results of the audits conducted during 2015 and the status of management's efforts to implement the audit recommendations made in the current and prior years' reports. Information was also presented relating to investigation activities, such as the number of new and continuing cases, the nature of the cases and the outcomes of investigations concluded during 2015.

40. For the full scope audits of offices, units and functions (excluding Direct Implementation Modality project audits), the Unit assigns an overall audit rating of "satisfactory", "partially satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" based on its assessment of the governance, risk management and control processes. For the six full scope audits issued in 2015, none of the offices or units audited were assessed as unsatisfactory. One (17 per cent) was assessed as partially satisfactory, meaning that one or more issues that might negatively affect the achievement of its objectives were identified. The remaining five offices or units (83 per cent) were assessed as satisfactory, with no issues identified that might significantly affect the achievement of their objectives.

41. The overall implementation rate of audit recommendations was 99 per cent as at 31 December 2015, which was 9 per cent higher than the performance target of 90 per cent set by UN-Women. This indicates sustained action by management on the audit issues raised and the recommendations made. This calculation was based on analysis of all reports issued by the OAI from 1 January 2013 to 30 November 2015. There were five recommendations that had not been fully implemented for more than 18 months — of which two were high priority. In 2014, no recommendations had been outstanding for more than 18 months. With respect to the two high-priority recommendations related to the UN-Women Training Centre, they required management to (a) perform an analysis to determine the centre's mandate, mission, role and optimal location; and (b) ensure its sustainability through the development and implementation of a resource-mobilization strategy. Management has indicated that implementation of these two recommendations is resource intensive. All of the medium-priority long-outstanding recommendations were either implemented or in progress in 2016. One was implemented during the first quarter of 2016. The remaining two medium-priority recommendations required UN-Women to develop a corporate policy on the use and management of Special Service Agreements and to address weaknesses in the Grant Management System used by a Fund.

42. In accordance with the Service Level Agreement, the OAI provides investigation services covering allegations of fraud, corruption or other wrongdoing (including workplace harassment, the abuse of authority or prima facie evidence of retaliation against whistle-blowers) by UN-Women staff members, non-staff personnel and contractors.



43. In 2015, the OAI closed 18 cases: 10 after a preliminary assessment (compared with 15 in 2014) owing to insufficient evidence of wrongdoing to justify an investigation or because an investigation was not warranted, and eight after investigation (compared with two in 2014). Of the eight cases closed after investigation, six resulted in a closure note, one case resulted in a closure report, and one case resulted in an investigation report. The case that resulted in an investigation report was transmitted to the Division of Management and Administration pursuant to the requirements of the UN-Women Legal Framework for addressing Non-Compliance with United Nations Standards of Conduct.

44. In the opinion of the OAI, based on the scope of work undertaken, the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and control in the audits issued in 2015 were in aggregate satisfactory, i.e. they were generally established and functioning well. However, the OAI called the Board's attention to the following: (a) the opinion is based on audit coverage of 20 per cent of the 2014 expenditures of UN-Women; and (b) 31 per cent of all audit recommendations were corporate in nature, relating to policy guidance and corporate support. This suggested that the focus needs to be on ensuring that such corporate issues are managed to avoid a negative impact on the Entity.

45. The annual report of the Audit Advisory Committee for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015 (UNW/2016/4/Add.1) in relation to UN-Women was presented by the Chair of the Committee. With respect to internal audit, the Committee reiterated the importance of regularly monitoring and assessing resource levels and capacity to ensure that they were appropriate and sufficient to address the overall assurance needs of UN-Women.

46. The Committee also reiterated its recommendation that UN-Women studies the options for the most appropriate model to deliver internal auditing — through outsourcing or an in-house function. As noted in the 2014 Audit Advisory Committee annual report, this should be fully supported by a comprehensive budget proposal for the consideration of the Executive Board. While the Committee understood that the UN-Women Audit Unit communicated its annual workplan to the Board of Auditors, it was also important that the Unit and the Board of Auditors engage in more ongoing communication and collaboration to ensure the complementarity of the audit functions. The Committee also understood that the UN-Women Audit Unit was considered operationally independent from UNDP. However, it remained concerned that there may be potential conflicts of interest because UNDP undertakes some administrative functions for UN-Women through other Service Level Agreements, such as those involving information and communications technology systems and the administration of payroll, benefits and entitlements. As a compensating control and in order to ensure transparency and best value for money, the Committee reiterated the importance of having an independent organizational focal point in UN-Women to oversee internal audit activities and ensure that results are integrated into the senior management structure.

47. The Committee concluded its report by expressing support for the continued strengthening of governance, risk management, internal controls and accountability at UN-Women. However, the Committee is concerned that the current funding situation of UN-Women may affect its ability to adequately resource key accountability functions and activities such as internal audit (including increasing audit coverage), enterprise risk management, and monitoring and oversight.

48. Following the presentations on audit matters, the Director of Coordination/Acting Director of Management and Administration Division briefed the Executive Board on the respective management responses.

49. Delegations welcomed the reports and UN-Women's attention to the need for better implementation of long-standing recommendations. They echoed the call for realistic resource-mobilization targets and noted that weaknesses were found primarily at the field level, including inadequate programme projects or result management oversight processes, weaknesses in the management of travel and lack of compliance with minimum Information and Communications Technology standards. UN-Women was urged to dedicate adequate attention to both recurring and outstanding audit recommendations.

50. In response to comments made, UN-Women reaffirmed its commitment to address all audit recommendations and to continue accelerating the implementation of the results. The enhanced Results Management System was also noted as a tool that would ensure greater transparency.

## **V. Briefings**

### **A. UN-Women's presence and work at the country and regional levels; and its operational response at the country level (Mali)**

51. The Director of Programmes briefed the Board on UN-Women's presence and work at the country and regional levels. Member States were apprised of several elements, including current office typology and changes in country presence (including transitions of subregional offices into regional, multi-country and country offices), since 2012; composition of the workforce; distribution of core programmable funding across regions; programme delivery, including expenditure on impact areas; and highlights of joint services and partnerships.

52. Per established practice to date, the Board was also briefed on the operational response of UN-Women at the country level – with a focus on Mali on this occasion. The UN-Women country representative in Mali gave an overview of UN-Women's operations and priorities in the country. He outlined the current context, including the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement and the effects the conflict continues to have on Malian women. UN-Women's programme in Mali focuses on three impact areas, all supported by UN-Women's normative mandate: i) *Women's Economic Empowerment*, which aims to enhance the productive capacity of women farmers and cooperatives, increase women's access to public procurement opportunities and develop local economic infrastructure to improve women's access to markets; ii) *Ending Violence Against Women and Girls*, whereby UN-Women aims to mobilize women, girls, men and boys at the community and individual levels in favour of respectful relationships and gender equality, and to reinforce the capacity of institutions to implement legislation to end violence against women and other forms of discrimination; and iii) *Women, Peace and Security*, which supports the socioeconomic recovery and political participation of women and girls in post-conflict situations and advocates for gender-inclusive and gender-responsive humanitarian response planning and programming.

53. Delegations expressed considerable interest and thanked UN-Women for these briefings.

## **VI. Closing of the session**

54. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director thanked the President for his leadership, the Vice-Presidents for their supportive guidance throughout the session and Board members and observers for their significant inputs. She appreciated that most delegations found the midterm review well-balanced and that they welcomed the achievements of UN-Women in the first two years of implementation of its strategic plan. She reaffirmed the commitment of UN-Women, in spite of challenges, “to support women and girls around the world to fulfil their potential, realize their dreams, and be game-changers for peace, development and prosperity.”

55. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director looked forward to engaging with the Executive Board on a highly consultative basis as in the past, as the Entity embarks on formulation of its new strategic plan, 2018-2021. Continuing to build on lessons learned from the midterm review, UN-Women would undertake further analyses to strengthen its impact, effectiveness and institutional performance.

56. She also thanked Member States particularly for their contributions to UN-Women, reiterating the need to close the current gap — a shortfall of USD 170 million — while noting the need to also enlist the support of the private sector and other types of donors. She mentioned, by way of example, UN-Women’s engagement of the Boston Consulting Group to assist the Entity in enhancing its capacity to reach its targets and close the funding gap. The Board was advised that at its second regular session in September 2016, in the context of the Structured Dialogue on Financing, the Board would be presented with an assessment of the Entity’s current level of funding. She expressed the hope that no gap would be reported at that time and looked forward to further engagement with the Executive Board later in 2016.

57. The Chair on behalf of the President expressed her appreciation to the Board for their collaboration. She thanked all those concerned for their presentations and particularly expressed her appreciation to the Secretary of the Executive Board and his team for their tireless and effective efforts in leading this session to a fruitful conclusion, before closing this annual session of the Executive Board.

## Annex I

### Decisions adopted at the annual session of 2016

**2016/1**

**Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the strategic plan, 2014-2017, including the midterm review of the strategic plan**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on progress made on the strategic plan, 2014-2017, including the midterm review of the strategic plan, welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the strategic plan, and commends UN-Women on its strong performance to date;

2. *Recognizes* the contribution made by the fulfilment of the strategic plan, 2014-2017, to the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and acknowledges the central role of UN-Women in supporting Member States, upon their request, in their implementation;

3. *Commends* UN-Women on effectively leveraging its mandate as a composite entity in assisting Member States, upon their request, and in ensuring coherence, consistency and coordination between the normative and operational aspects of its work; recognizes that UN-Women's support functions have increased; and reaffirms the important role of UN-Women in leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women and on gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system;

4. *Requests* that UN-Women improves its programmatic focus and strengthens its programme delivery and normative-operational linkages through multi-stakeholder partnerships, in particular within the Flagship Programming Initiatives and through synergies with the Fund for Gender Equality and the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women;

5. *Takes note* of the revised development results framework and organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework, contained in Annex II of the report, and notes with appreciation UN-Women's efforts in this regard;

6. *Takes note* of the financing strategy contained in the report and requests UN-Women to continue to improve its funding model, staffing structure and business processes in accordance with its regional architecture, in order to ensure the Entity's operational efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability;

7. *Takes note* with interest of the strategic initiatives contained in the report, including the Flagship Programming Initiatives contained in Annex VII of the report; requests UN-Women to inform on the results of their implementation in the context of the annual reporting on the strategic plan, 2014-2017, in 2017 and 2018; and encourages UN-Women to partner as appropriate with relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders in their implementation;

8. *Recognizes* the importance of strengthening the capacity of UN-Women, including through adequate funding, noting the ongoing funding gap in regular resources, and encourages countries in a position to do so to increase their voluntary contributions, especially to regular resources, to ensure the full and effective implementation of the strategic plan, 2014-2017;

9. *Takes note* of the information on cost recovery contained in the report and urges UN-Women and its contributors to fully adhere to the cost recovery policy by the Executive Board decision 2013/2, including the recovery of indirect costs and charging direct costs arising from the implementation of projects and programmes, funded from other resources and requests UN-Women to follow up, during the second regular session of 2016 of the Executive Board, on the joint UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP and UN-Women independent review of the cost recovery methodology, as agreed in decision 2013/2;

10. *Requests* UN-Women, in accordance with its mandate, to start early preparations for the next strategic plan, in full consultation with the Executive Board, while taking into account gender mainstreaming throughout the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, other intergovernmentally agreed outcomes, the outcome of the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system, and the findings and lessons learned from the midterm review; and further requests UN-Women to present a road map at the 2016 second regular session of the Executive Board for the consultations planned for the preparation of the next strategic plan;

11. *Decides* to transmit the report to the Economic and Social Council.

## **2016/2**

### **Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2015**

*The Executive Board,*

1. *Takes note* of the Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2015 and the programme of work and budget for 2016 of the Independent Evaluation Office;

2. *Welcomes* the efforts made by UN-Women and the progress achieved in systematic strengthening of the evaluation function and in leading system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts;

3. *Emphasizes* that evaluation should be country-driven and that programme countries' ownership and leadership should be ensured in the evaluation of all forms of assistance, and requests UN-Women, in cooperation with other United Nations system organizations, to continue its efforts to facilitate the building of national evaluation capacities, where applicable;

4. *Requests* UN-Women to enhance the coverage of evaluations, the implementation rate of planned evaluations, the financial resources invested in the evaluation function and the submission of management responses to the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use System and to use evaluation recommendations in its work;

5. *Requests* UN-Women to continue its gender-responsive evaluations of country programmes in order to improve programming at the country level;

6. *Requests* UN-Women, in particular the Independent Evaluation Office, to continue leading United Nations system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts and to foster innovative partnerships for national evaluation capacity development;

7. *Requests* UN-Women, in particular the Independent Evaluation Office, to make further efforts to meet the requirements of the Evaluation Performance Indicator of the UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women;

8. *Requests* UN-Women to carry out a review of the evaluation policy in three years.

### **2016/3**

#### **Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015**

*The Executive Board,*

1. Takes note of the Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015;

2. Takes note of the inclusion, as requested by Executive Board decision 2015/4 para 3a, of an audit opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of UN-Women's framework of governance, risk management and controls in the Annual Report of the Office of Audit and Investigations, and notes with appreciation the general satisfactory ratings in this regard;

3. Expresses its continuing support for the audit and investigation functions within UN-Women and requests UN-Women to include appropriate resourcing plans for increased audit and investigation coverage in the next budget to be presented to the Executive Board, for 2018-2019, to ensure that it is appropriate, sufficient and effectively deployed to achieve the desired internal audit and investigation coverage;

4. Notes several areas of recurring weakness, including the high number of audit recommendations that were corporate in nature, appreciates the information provided by UN-Women on the efforts to address these, and urges UN-Women to continue and intensify efforts in this regard, and to provide information on the impact of measures taken;

5. Requests UN-Women to provide a list of investigated cases, including information on the cases and UN-Women's follow-up, as part of the next annual reporting on the internal audit and investigation activities;

6. Takes note of the report of the Audit Advisory Committee for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015.