

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 72/279 ON “REPOSITIONING OF THE UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM”

INFORMATION NOTE

UNICEF Executive Board – Annual Session 2019

I. Introduction

1. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, and UN-Women are pleased to provide their Executive Boards with “harmonized agency-specific information” on their respective implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 in accordance with UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board decision 2019/4, UNICEF Executive Board Decision 19/8 and UN-Women Executive Board decision 2019/1. Under the principle of collective ownership, we **remain fully committed to a repositioned United Nations development system**, optimally equipped to support countries achieve the 2030 Agenda. We are unwavering in working together to drive United Nations development system reforms forward, under the primary objective of delivering more and better collective development results for the people we serve.

2. Much of the collective implementation of UNDS reform is being undertaken jointly by the UN Sustainable Development Group, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General and with the support of UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) and the Transition Team. Our entities are very closely engaged in these ongoing system-wide processes. Meanwhile, there are also **elements of the reform which impact us individually as agencies, and which may require specific adjustments and actions**, in consultation with respective Executive Boards. This background note focuses on these elements.

3. UNICEF’s commitment to the reform can be seen in our **contribution of experience and leadership** to a number of key elements of the reform. The head of the DSG’s Transition Team, Gunilla Olsson, is a UNICEF secondee, and we have also seconded staff to work on business innovations; system-wide evaluation; and the Joint Fund for the SDGs. Executive Director Fore co-chairs the UNSDG Results Group on Strategic Partnerships, together with ILO Director-General Guy Ryder. With UN agency partners, UNICEF technical experts co-chair various important UNSDG workstreams, including integrated policy support; country-level data and statistics; private sector partnerships; and fiduciary oversight and management. And UNICEF staff have been closely engaged in the processes to develop the new UNDAF guidance, the Funding Compact and the Management and Accountability Framework, and involved in the Regional and Multi-Country Office Reviews.

II. Supporting the new Resident Coordinator system

4. An independent, empowered Resident Coordinator (RC) system is a key enabler for more coherent and integrated support to national government’s sustainable development priorities. UNICEF is fully committed to supporting the RCs to play a strong leadership role to achieve collective results outlined in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF – previously UNDAF).

5. Since late 2018, UNICEF has engaged actively in the consultations to draft the **Management and Accountability Framework** (MAF). In April, a provisional version of the country-level section was agreed by the UNSDG, defining the respective roles and accountabilities of both RCs and UN Country Team (UNCT) members. This document is now being implemented at country level and will be reviewed in the third quarter of 2019 to consider lessons learnt from the first phase of repositioning implementation. UNICEF stands ready to constructively engage in the development of the regional and global sections of the MAF which the DSG’s Transition Team will lead.

6. In support of MAF implementation and improved mutual accountability within UNCTs, UNICEF is close to finalizing a **revised Job Description (JD)** for its Representatives. A draft has been shared with a number of UN agency partners to ensure common language is used as much as possible. The revised JD includes the responsibilities of a Representative as a UNCT member and outlines their formal relationship with the RC. In line with the MAF, Representatives are accountable to the RC for their roles and responsibilities as UNCT members, while retaining accountability for programmatic, budgetary and management decisions in line with UNICEF's accountability framework. Additionally, UNICEF has taken the opportunity to update other parts of the JD in light of the SDGs, particularly in strengthening the role of the Representative in partnerships and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

7. **Performance indicators** have been updated accordingly in UNICEF's performance appraisal templates for 2019, which will be the basis for the inputs to be provided by RCs, in line with the MAF.

8. UNICEF is aiming to **support and encourage UNICEF staff when they have aspirations to become RCs**, and to support them in preparing for these assignments. In March 2019 ten UNICEF staff were cleared for the RC Assessment Center (RCAC) nomination list; of these, three candidates were put forward for the Spring RCAC (27 RC Posts were advertised). UNICEF is currently awaiting feedback from DCO on these nominations. Candidates selected as RC must be ready to start in 2019. Currently, there are 3 UNICEF staff holding RC positions (in Belize, Eritrea and Sri Lanka) while 12 other UNICEF staff are already in the RC pool.

9. UNICEF is also supporting the reform of the Resident Coordinator system through funding. In line with the requests of the General Assembly and the Executive Board, UNICEF has **doubled its cost sharing contribution** for 2019, to a total of US\$8.3 million (paid in November 2018). We expect the global cost-sharing formula to be renegotiated later in 2019.

10. Additionally, UNICEF is operationalizing the **1% coordination levy** in accordance with the guidance provided to agencies and donors by the DSG's office. We are starting to collect the levy from applicable public and private sector contributors, wherever the donor has not indicated that it will administer the levy directly (as in the case of at least one member state). The potential implications of the levy on UNICEF are threefold:

- I. UNICEF estimates that in future years its annual income for which the levy is applicable could be up to US\$2 billion, leading to an **annual leviable amount of up to US\$20 million**. These funds will not be recognized as income to UNICEF, and will be transferred in full to the Secretariat. The leviable income for 2019 will be significantly lower, as many donors have elected for a date of entry into force in April/May, or later.
- II. Administration of the levy comes with **transaction costs** for UNICEF. Already, establishing internal operational guidance, setting up separate financial management structures, engaging in partnership discussions with donors and renegotiating agreements has had a moderate impact on UNICEF staff time. We expect this to continue as the levy begins to be implemented more systematically. In close coordination with other UNDS entities, UNICEF will aim to quantify as best as possible the additional transaction costs associated with the levy for the information of member states.
- III. It is too early to determine whether the additional 1% cost for coordination has resulted in any potential donors **changing their funding behavior** – either positively (ie: incentivizing more thematic or core funding, for example) or negatively (shifting contributions to humanitarian funding and away from sustainable development or selecting other non-UN development partners). UNICEF will also monitor this to the best of its ability and keep the Board informed of any evidence to an impact on funding behavior.

11. A further possible impact on UNICEF funding is if donors were to reduce agency core contributions to contribute voluntary funding to the RC system. This would, of course, impact future projected UNICEF income to Regular Resources, but any such impact may not be clear until the end of the calendar year.

III. Strengthening system-wide analysis, planning & reporting

12. The new guidance for the **UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework** (UNSDCF – previously UNDAF) was agreed by the UNSDG on 8 May 2019. UNICEF has actively participated in the drafting of the document, which includes guidance on the Country Analysis (CA), as a member of the drafting team led by UNFPA and UNESCO.

13. Guidance developed for the CA and internal UNICEF guidance for its **Situation Analysis (SitAn)** have been developed largely in tandem with each other, with a view to mutual reinforcement. The CA will provide an independent, impartial and collective assessment and analysis of the country situation on the one hand, while the SitAn provides more specific analysis of the situation of children. The two documents are complementary in their approach to engagement with relevant stakeholders, through continuous and inclusive dialogue, to address, among others, issues of inequality and exclusion.

14. Both the CA and SitAn aim at analyzing disaggregated data and qualitative analysis in order to identify excluded or discriminated groups of the population and to understand “how and why” as well as “who” is experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities. The CA will rely and draw on data and analysis established and made available at country level by UN entities across the system, including from UNICEF and the SitAn.

15. Now that the UNSDCF guidance is finalized, UNICEF is **reviewing its procedural guidance for planning frameworks**, the Programme Strategy Note (PSN) and Country Programme Document (CPD), order to ensure a seamless and aligned process. Provisions for a best possible alignment with UNSDCF outcomes – with an aim towards a high-level and strategic character for the UNSDCF – will be included in the new UNICEF guidance, which is expected to be finalized by Summer 2019.

16. Likewise, the new UNICEF country programme guidance will rely on and benefit from the ambition of the new UNSDCF to programme and leverage enhanced financing for SDG-related targets and goals, which are directly related to achieving and realizing children’s rights, hence increasing the effective outreach and impact of UNICEF’s programming and results.

17. UNICEF is engaged with and supports the introduction of **UN INFO** as the flagship UNDS planning, monitoring and reporting platform at country level. UNICEF is working closely with sister agencies in its design and roll out and is promoting the key principles of single data entry, national ownership, and multiple utility of data captured in UN INFO. UN INFO is currently being piloted only in some countries – full implementation will take time.

18. UNICEF’s systems already have upwards of 50% of the information required by UN INFO and we have undertaken an assessment of potential integration points between inSight - our corporate performance management and reporting tool, and UN INFO. This is being done with a view to informing adjustments that may need to be made to inSight and the appropriate design of UN INFO, so as to reduce the duplicative nature of data entry work it has introduced for staff at country office level.

19. As the requirement for better visibility of Member States’ contributions to core, thematic and pooled funding increases, UNICEF continues to strengthen its own resource planning and tracking systems to be able to effectively contribute to system-wide requests for data and evidence, joint review, and reporting. UNICEF continues to provide financial reporting in line with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standards and via the harmonized UN Financial Reporting Standards known as the “**Data Cube**”, agreed by UNSDG entities.

IV. Strengthening joint implementation & support to the SDGs

20. UNICEF is fully committed to deepening efforts to ensure coherent policy and technical support to national governments on the SDGs, and joint UN results at country and regional levels. We continue to work with UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women on implementation of the **Common Chapter of our Strategic Plans**, including through introducing a common set of SDG indicators in the Integrated Results and Resources Framework to monitor collaborative contributions to the SDGs. At the same time, we are looking at broader system-wide mechanisms for integration and collaboration, with an aim to providing holistic and comprehensive SDG support to governments as articulated in the draft System-wide Strategic Document.

21. As previously indicated to the Executive Board, UNICEF has been closely involved in the work of the UNSDG in developing more **system-wide and integrated approaches to the SDGs**, including the preparation of a 'Mainstreaming Reference Guide', an online 'SDG Acceleration Toolkit' and an 'Operational Guide on Leaving No One Behind'. The latter is currently being implemented in a pilot phase. Additionally, UNICEF has participated in Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) country missions, where the focus has been on ensuring children's rights are adequately included.

22. As co-chair, with UNDP, of the UNSDG workstream on Integrated Policy Support, UNICEF is continuing to work towards strengthening integrated SDG support by UNCTs. The next step for this group is to discuss a **MAPS 2.0 effort** which would comprise a suite of **online Technical Training Packages** for UNCTs and UN agency experts to share hands-on training, implementation lessons and the latest tools on an ongoing basis. These Training Packages will align with and complement the 'SDG Primer' being developed by the DSG's office, and will include modules on (1) Understanding national policy, political and planning cycles; (2) Leaving No One Behind; (3) Assessing SDG alignment; (4) Identifying SDG accelerators; (5) SDG metrics and data; and (6) Financing the SDGs. The training will support integrated and whole-of-SDG approaches, and application of a "next generation" of MAPS.

23. UNICEF will utilize and draw from this interagency training approach. We will aim to provide relevant, experienced technical capacity to MAPS country missions, including drawing on regional assets for this purpose. And, UNICEF will aim for full support for any SDG mainstreaming and acceleration efforts at country level, including accountability processes.

24. Another area of focus is the establishment of an inter-agency "**Integrated SDG Policy Support Group**" which will enable greater levels of interactivity among experts and across participating agencies. This will encourage the sharing of cases across participants and offices, and discussing opinions, best practices, and instructor-led and peer feedback. The continually shifting contextual landscape and technical complexity for providing SDG support at the country level make it essential to provide mechanisms for ongoing interactive dialogue among technical experts to share lessons learned and for updating approaches and tools used on a regular basis.

25. In addition to UNICEF's role in co-leading this interagency process with UNDP, we are also establishing an **internal "SDG Practitioners Group"** to mobilize and coordinate UNICEF's programme and regional/country office experts, drive participation in the Training Packages, and encourage participation in the interagency Policy Support Group. This will include a regional and sub-regional focus to coordinating integrated SDG policy support across UNICEF that considers the characteristics of each geographical area and can be attune to national contexts.

26. In early 2019 UNICEF undertook an agency-wide consultation to inform an **internal strategic approach on strengthening integrated SDG support at country level**. Work to develop this strategic approach is underway, and expected to be finalized in the second half of 2019. We will ensure appropriate linkages and

complementarity between UNICEF's internal approach and the broader system-wide vision to be outlined in the System-wide Strategic Document.

27. The **Joint SDG Fund** has been launched with a call for concept notes focusing on Social Protection and Leaving No One Behind (LNOB). To support country offices in designing their proposals, UNICEF has provided orientation sessions to almost 120 technical staff members across all regions. With ILO, UNICEF played a central role in developing the social protection focus and the corresponding theory of change, providing a framework for collaboration across UN agencies. As member of the technical team and the Operations Steering Committee, we have also made significant contributions to shape the Integrated Policy Support and the SDG Financing domains, determining priorities for the Fund, and establishing guidelines and criteria to ensure quality of results with regional balance. UNICEF technical experts will assist in the technical review of proposals from UNCTs to ensure quality of those selected for funding.

28. Additionally, UNICEF has shared its experience on Joint Programmes with other agencies, with the objective of understanding the pros and cons of such instruments, while setting priorities and delivering results in line with the current call for proposals. UNICEF takes part in the annual stakeholder consultations on the Joint Fund, advancing issues like donor recognition and resource mobilization.

29. With regards to **UNICEF's data expertise and efforts** for the 2030 Agenda, one of the main improvements of the SDGs is that they have come with a very clear governance framework for data and indicators. However, what is still lacking is a plan or governance framework for the statistical system as a whole and for building capacity. This is where present discussions of reforms are now focused.

30. An unprecedented demand for Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) likely reflects the fact that it covers more SDG indicators than any other household survey programme, and is designed to be as low-cost as a high-quality survey can be, and to build national capacity. This round of MICS will be the largest ever with, likely, 70 countries undertaking the survey 2018-2020. Quality assurance and technical assistance is still undertaken by UNICEF, as is leading work on innovation in MICS, which creates great demands on UNICEF resources. Going forward, we hope to find a way to share the financial burden of this global public good for children.

31. Since January, UNICEF has continued its active role as co-chair (with DESA and ECLAC) of the UNSDG workstream on **Country Level Data and Reporting**, with its focus on assisting UNCTs with their support to Governments in measuring and reporting progress on the SDGs. The web-site created at the end of 2018 continues to be strengthened, and its content tied to the 'SDG Primer'. Plans for the remainder of 2019 include integration of a calendar for better-coordinated SDG monitoring and reporting support from across the UNDS, a 'best practices' paper, and guidance on choosing SDG monitoring platforms and similar tools.

32. In this regard, UNICEF is preparing an **analysis of SDG nationalization** (the extent to which countries have a national set of SDG targets and indicators, particularly with reference to children) as a basis for gauging the kind of support needed by National Statistical Systems in respect to monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. The report is expected in the summer of 2019.

33. UNICEF has continued active participation in the Committee of Chief Statisticians of the United Nations, and the related (but broader) Committee for Coordination of Statistical Activities. Particular focus was placed on the work to make sure all UN agencies (including UNICEF) adhere fully to Open Data principles, and to contribute to and guide the pushes for **reform of the statistical system** which is underway in parallel to UNDS reform initiatives, under the guidance of the UN Statistical Commission. This includes the proposal to have a Chief Statistician for the UN who would ensure better coordination of statistical activities. The ideas have much merit, but not all will lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness, so UNICEF is continuing its advocacy for a strong and harmonious system, including through strengthening of existing mechanisms.

34. In the context of the Regional Review, one of the areas of focus is the harmonization and coherence of **regional work on data and statistics**. UNICEF has contributed a number of ideas on how to improve this, in

particular highlighting the excellent collaboration and coordination on statistical issues at regional level. UNICEF is convinced that close collaboration is more effective and efficient than merging of statistical and data assets, given the many continued obligations and orientations of the different UN entities.

35. UNICEF is continuing to develop and tailor its support to countries on finding a useful **SDG Monitoring Platform**, especially given it is no longer supporting DevInfo. Thinking has evolved from identifying or providing a particular software tool, to recommending a set of principles to guide countries as they consider a tool, and still further to a fundamental review of data storage and reporting. This has in turn led to a recognition that building capacity in countries on SDMX (Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange) will be the most sustainable and country-owned way not only for them to maintain and monitor national databases, but to respond to the call for a “federated system of national and global data hubs” in the System-Wide Strategic Document. UNICEF has been piloting this work in Cambodia, and is exploring in Ghana, Senegal and Ethiopia, in conjunction with UN Statistics Division, PARIS-21 and (in Africa) the African Development Bank. The model in Cambodia will be adapted to also be able to have a data hub and display to accompany their Voluntary National Report being presented at the High-Level Political Forum in July 2019.

V. Achieving efficiencies through shared business operations & premises

36. UNICEF fully supports the SG’s commitment - first outlined in his report to the General Assembly of December 2017 and recently reiterated in his report to ECOSOC - to realize **efficiency gains** that can be redeployed to development activities. Most of the important groundwork has been developed by the UNSDG Business Innovation Group (BIG).

37. UNICEF remains fully committed to supporting all BIG initiatives that will introduce efficiencies, reduce costs and improve the quality of UNICEF’s programme implementation. UNICEF has committed two dedicated staff members to the BIG multi-agency project team. In this context, we particularly support the BIG’s work on business cases which show which interventions have a clear potential for efficiency gains (as opposed to interventions with little or no potential for such gains).

38. In addition, UNICEF has set up an **internal governance mechanism** to support the UNDS reform process with a dedicated steering committee to develop proposals for increased efficiencies in business operations.

39. UNICEF has also funded an **internal global study** to assess opportunities where we can benefit from the BIG initiatives to reduce costs of business operations and premises. This will be supported by a team of headquarters and regional/country-based experts who will make proposals to the UNICEF steering committee and provide advice on potential solutions to the BIG project team.

40. With UNICEF having signed the agreement on **mutual recognition**, we are actively looking to leverage the success of that initiative in procurement by extending its application to other areas, including HR, IT and Finance. Specific revisions to UNICEF’s policy and guidance will be proposed to take full advantage of mutual recognition with other agencies. Already incorporated into UNICEF’s Supply Policy, the principle of common UN procurement and mutual recognition has been widely adopted for procurement of shelter and security items, vehicles and construction among other things. UNICEF has also led the establishment of a global third-party logistics and freight forwarding services contract on behalf of other UN agencies. By means of mutual recognition, the outcome of the UNICEF-led tender is now used by 12 agencies to manage their international transport of supplies. This has led to savings in freight fees and rates as well as improved contractual terms and conditions.

41. UNICEF has also formally recognized global implementation of the **Business Operations Strategy (BOS)** in its offices and has already implemented it in 57 countries with another 23 countries having put a roadmap in place amounting to approximately 2/3 of all of UNICEF’s offices. We have also been actively supporting the BIG project team work on simplifying the BOS methodology with more robust tools to measure cost savings,

reducing time for BOS framework completion from 36 weeks to 8 weeks, thereby making it much easier for offices to implement.

42. Finally, UNICEF has taken several steps to achieving efficiencies through **common premises**. UNICEF is the co-chair of the Task Team on Common Premises (TTCP), which is now targeting 8 priority countries and 130 other offices. UNICEF is also providing financial support to 6 offices for construction/renovation of buildings to accommodate other UN Agencies in the common premises. Currently, UNICEF shares common premises in 46% of its office locations at national and sub-national levels (167/364 offices) up from 39% at the end of 2018.

VI. Review of agency assets at country & regional level

43. The UNDS reform is expected to drive changes at regional and country level, in terms of UNCT and regional arrangements, how agencies structure their **physical, representational and programmatic presence**, and how **regional assets** are organized. The purpose of such changes would be to strengthen UNDS support to governments and the delivery of results with regards to the SDGs.

44. UNICEF is committed to ensure its assets are used to **maximize results** and are **tailored to context**. We remain proud of our global coverage and deep field presence in many countries. With accountability to our Executive Board, we will continue to review the structures and profiles of UNICEF offices as part of each four-year Strategic Plan period, and during the mid-term review in 2020. We also stand ready to discuss these questions with governments, where necessary and on a case-by-case basis.

45. UNICEF has been closely engaged in the **Regional Review**, as part of the Internal Review Team. We will continue to engage closely in the next phase, following feedback from ECOSOC and dialogue with UN partners on next steps and operationalization. We will continue to keep the Executive Board well informed of any specific implications for UNICEF's regional assets as a result of the reform. In the meantime and in consultation with other funds and programmes, UNICEF is developing a clear value proposition for its Regional Offices, to outline the invaluable roles that they play with respect to oversight and support of Country Offices and results delivery, as well as the roles they play on issues of regional and sub-regional importance.

46. In line with the outcome of the **Multi-Country Office (MCO) Review**, UNICEF will work with UNSDG partners to identify specific actions to “ensure a more coherent, effective and efficient coverage and collaboration for results vis-à-vis MCO settings”. In the Pacific, this will include assessing the Joint Presence Office structure co-administered by UNICEF with UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women, with a view to strengthening programme delivery and maximizing resources available in each country.

VII. Funding Compact

47. UNICEF welcomes the **Funding Compact and the clear commitments** from both Member States and the UN development system. Funding to the UN development system is a fundamental driver of a more strategic, coherent, effective and efficient approach. UNICEF is fully committed to implementing the UNDS commitments, both those to be implemented and tracked collectively as a system, and those that require action by each individual agency.

48. UNICEF will **monitor and track progress** on implementation of all relevant commitments. Some areas will require UNICEF to provide data as input to DESA and UN DCO, as contribution to system-wide tracking and reporting. Additionally, in many areas of the Funding Compact (in terms of both UNDS and Member State commitments) UNICEF will report to the Executive Board on progress and implementation. This will happen as part of the **Structured Funding Dialogue**, held annually in the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board.

VIII. Conclusion

49. Alongside our UNDS Partners, UNICEF continues to strongly support the vision and objectives of the UNDS reform – that is, strengthening the UN’s **collective support to the SDGs** in order to drive better results at country and regional levels, while also improving **system-wide transparency and accountability** and increasing **efficiencies**. The success of the reform can only be measured in these terms – above all, in the **impact on peoples’ lives**. Coordination and integration must be an important part of the way we do business – but it is not an end in itself.

50. We expect many elements and details of the reform to continue to be rolled out over the summer and into the second half of 2019. UNICEF looks forward to continuing its close engagement and dialogue with the Executive Board in June and September 2019, and into 2020, on all aspects of reform implementation.