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Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2020

(11–13 February 2020)*

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I. Organization of the session

A. Election of officers of the Executive Board

1. The Executive Board elected as President the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Rabab Fatima and, as Vice-Presidents, the following Permanent Representatives to the United Nations: Omar Hilale (Morocco) and Audra Plepytė (Lithuania); and the following Deputy Permanent Representatives to the United Nations: João Genésio de Almeida F. (Brazil) and Dominique Michel Favre (Switzerland).

B. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF

2. The President welcomed the delegates and acknowledged the dedication of the global UNICEF staff. She also paid tribute to former UNICEF Executive Director James Grant, stating that his lifelong efforts advocating for a better world for children would always be remembered. A fitting tribute to his legacy would be to carry on his work with the same passion and commitment.

3. The President recalled the UNICEF mandate to protect the rights of children, and the centrality of the nurturing they needed to grow into happy, healthy and productive adults. They should also be imbued with the values of peace, non-violence and empathy. She looked forward to working with the Board and UNICEF to make progress towards a better present and brighter future for children.

4. The President noted that 2020 marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations; the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021; the negotiation of a new quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR); and the launch of the Decade of Action towards the Sustainable Development Goals, an effort intrinsically linked to children, as today's children were tomorrow's future. It was also the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It was important to remember that too many girls still faced discrimination and were being left behind.

5. The President cited examples of the significant progress achieved for children globally, including a sharp decline in under-five mortality and stunting, gains in antiretroviral treatment coverage for pregnant women living with HIV and, even in the face of humanitarian crises, millions of children accessing education and receiving vaccinations against measles.

6. The President also enumerated challenges, including child poverty; child labour; cybercrime; children out of school and unprepared for adulthood; and children and young people leaving their homes because of poverty, violence, conflict or climate change, many of them, especially girls, falling prey to violence and trafficking.

7. UNICEF needed to continue to strengthen the humanitarian-development continuum, especially as the number of protracted emergencies grew. Poverty, violence and emergencies disproportionately affected children. An effective response must include investing in preparedness and resilience, addressing fragility, building peace and strengthening accountability to affected populations. This work called for reliable, flexible funding and continual innovation.

8. The President highlighted that the United Nations development system reform process had provided a mandate for improving the Board's working methods. As an organization with profound significance and with operations in 190 countries, UNICEF must always be open to innovation and adaptive to change, building upon

the good progress made so far. The Board would continue to support the innovative approaches required for efficient service delivery. In this regard, the Board welcomed the progress made the previous week in the Executive Board session of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

9. The President commended the increase in 2019 in the diversity of voices it heard from the field during the sessions, especially those of children, and pledged to continue to incorporate such representation as a constant reminder that the Board's discussions made a difference on the ground.

10. The President highlighted some of the agenda items, including the update on the midterm review of the Strategic Plan and the country programme document (CPD) presentation around the theme of early childhood development (ECD). She also praised the efforts of UNICEF towards organizational culture change.

11. The President listed some issues that would take centre stage during her presidency, including the continued gender gap for girls; children with special needs and disabilities of all types; South-South and triangular cooperation; and capacity-building for sustainable development. Noting the vulnerability of her own country, Bangladesh, to climate change, she expressed satisfaction that the issue would be embedded into all future UNICEF work.

12. The President expressed confidence in the possibility of innovating and making a real difference for children in 2020 and she looked forward to a fruitful session. She acknowledged the dedication of the UNICEF staff around the world and thanked the participants for their support and commitment.

13. The Executive Director expressed her appreciation for the Board's planned focus on girls' empowerment and education, among other priorities. Support for the rights of girls and women, including SRHR, had been at the core of UNICEF work for over 70 years and remained at the heart of its programming and Strategic Plan. Citing the Decade of Action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, she emphasized the need for acceleration.

14. The United Nations reform was an important accelerator for working more efficiently and effectively as "one United Nations development system". UNICEF fully supported the resident coordinator system. The Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund had brought agencies together around common themes. UNICEF had received funds for 33 out of 36 countries to scale up protection programming in vulnerable communities, inspiring accelerated partnerships with its sister agencies.

15. Together with UNDP, UNICEF had been working on joint solutions built around youth programmes and innovation. With the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF was investing in programmes to prevent and reduce wasting. UNICEF was scaling up school health and nutrition programmes and strengthening the supply chain for ready-to-use food. A two-year collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 10 countries included helping refugees and returnees to access national services and providing technical, financial and programmatic support to host countries.

16. Despite increases in overall UNICEF income in 2019, regular resources had declined by 4 per cent. Those flexible, predictable unearmarked funds were critical to a swift emergency response and could provide seed capital for new programmes and for leveraging additional funds. The Executive Director urged Member States to strive towards achieving their funding compact commitments of 30 per cent of overall contributions for regular resources. She expressed satisfaction that the Board of Auditors had provided an unqualified audit opinion for 2018. UNICEF remained committed to earning the Board's trust through the sound management of its finances.

17. The Executive Director paid tribute to James Grant, the architect of the child survival revolution, and Dr. Peter Salama, who had passed away in January 2020, and who could be found within every health crisis working, convening, convincing and innovating to save lives. She called for efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals to be guided by the spirit of service and commitment that had defined the people of UNICEF for over 70 years.

18. The President opened the floor for general statements. Several delegations highlighted the launch of the Decade of Action and the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, with a delegation calling for the review to identify priorities for inclusion in the next Plan in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. Several delegations noted the upcoming negotiation of the new QCPR.

19. A group of delegations and several other delegations called for closing the gender gap by focusing on girls' empowerment, rights, education, economic opportunity and access to health care and the elimination of harmful cultural practices, with several delegations mentioning the upcoming Generation Equality Forum, organized by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, noted that UNICEF was collaborating on the initiative, focusing on education and skills for girls.

20. Two delegations called for a rights-based, holistic approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights, with one of the delegations noting that supporting the needs and rights of women and girls included providing access to sexual and reproductive health information and services.

21. Several delegations called for UNICEF to strengthen the development-humanitarian continuum, while a delegation commended UNICEF for its commitment to delivering emergency humanitarian assistance and helping to build longer-term resilience and development capacities. Other delegations commended UNICEF for adhering to a rights-based approach to humanitarian action, while a delegation called for more focus on the protection of children on the move. A delegation encouraged the organization to strengthen its leadership role to ensure that the sectoral clusters were effective tools for joint analysis, priority setting and response planning and called for UNICEF to build strong synergies with other agencies for efficiency gains and economies of scale to ensure that the maximum amount of aid reached beneficiaries.

22. Several delegations called for respecting national ownership of UNICEF country programming, while a delegation called for the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) and CPDs to be in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and countries' needs. Several delegations supported the notable progress achieved in implementing the new resident coordinator system and building stronger United Nations country teams equipped to focus on common goals and accelerate progress. Several delegations noted the significant impact that climate change would continue to have on the lives of children and urged a continuous focus on environmental sustainability and climate change-related issues, particularly at the country level.

23. A delegation expressed concern that the Fourth Industrial Revolution was likely to further widen existing disparities across the development divide and heighten the vulnerabilities of children. It encouraged UNICEF to work closely with Governments and all stakeholders to provide children with relevant knowledge and skills.

24. Two delegations highlighted the need to protect and promote the rights of children with disabilities, both physical and mental, who were more vulnerable and were often deprived of their basic rights.

25. Several delegations commended UNICEF for its leadership role in innovation, including in private sector engagement, and called for the organization to increase its collaboration and knowledge-sharing with other United Nations agencies, including on engagement with business, to speed up results on the ground. A delegation looked forward to learning how such engagement had improved internal operations, supply chains and results.

26. A delegation urged UNICEF to enhance its public communication regarding the achievements enabled by its regular resources to increase visibility and garner public support for public-sector contributions.

27. Several delegations commended UNICEF for its strong stance against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and for working towards organizational culture change.

28. The representative of World Vision highlighted the need to maintain the spotlight on children's rights following the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and urged seizing of opportunities in the Decade of Action towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

C. Adoption of the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work

29. The Executive Board adopted the agenda, timetable and organization of work (E/ICEF/2020/1/Rev.1).

30. The Secretary of the Executive Board announced that 28 observer delegations, including one intergovernmental organization, seven non-governmental organizations and seven National Committees for UNICEF had submitted credentials, in accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure.

D. Working methods

31. The President introduced the item, noting that there had been many recent discussions on working methods, including the informal briefing held on 7 February 2020 following requests from the Bureau for more information, as well as the joint informal consultation on working methods that had taken place in late January 2020. The Executive Board had before it the joint response of the Executive Board secretariats on the working methods of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP.

32. A group of delegations emphasized the importance of revitalizing the governance of the funds and programmes with action-oriented and strategic sessions. Flexibility was key in considering session effectiveness and the optimal exercise of the oversight function. The Boards should strive for quality oversight, not quantity oversight, an oversight rooted in what was required and the evidence of past sessions.

33. The group of delegations said that flexibility was also important in considering the role of the joint meeting of the Boards as a forum for exchanging views on issues of relevance to all the Boards, avoiding duplication and encouraging harmonized and holistic approaches. For items moved to the joint meeting, each Board could retain its individual decision-making capacity.

34. Some delegations expressed openness to the options outlined in the joint response as well as other configurations to achieve an appropriate level of accountability. One of the delegations said that moving to two sessions per year would cut costs and re-route savings to United Nations country teams, streamline a busy

United Nations calendar, maximize participation by capital colleagues and alleviate pressure on smaller missions. It said that coherence was necessary, but deliberations should remain responsive to the different strategic priorities and workloads of the respective Executive Boards.

35. Another group of delegations welcomed the improvement in working methods already achieved, with more interactive sessions and increased gender parity among panellists. The group commended UNICEF for its ongoing communication with the Board, its provision of timely, relevant information and its coordination with the Boards of its sister agencies. Improving the working methods did not always require a one-size-fits-all approach and each agency and Board should make progress where they could, in line with the principles and objectives outlined by the Core Group on Working Methods. The group regretted the lengthy process of related discussions that had replaced more substantive discussions and timely action. The working methods were not an end in themselves, but a means to an end, which was to obtain better results on the ground and improve the lives of billions of people around the world, especially the most disadvantaged and marginalized.

36. A group of delegations said that the effectiveness, oversight, efficiency and coherence of the Boards must be at the forefront of any decision-making regarding the sessions. The group thanked UNICEF for its leadership in the debate. The group added that moving agenda items from one session to another would not necessarily result in more efficiency and effectiveness, and more analysis was necessary. The periodicity of the sessions enabled Member States to interact constructively on important issues and it would be difficult for the group of delegations to accept a reduction in the number of sessions. Shortening and reducing the burden of the second regular session might be feasible, but the number of draft decisions to be considered in the remaining sessions could pose difficulties. The group noted that the joint meeting of the Boards did not have decision-making authority. It also opposed the establishment of a mega-Board, a proposal that had already been rejected by Member States.

37. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/1 (see annex).

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. UNICEF programme cooperation

(a) Country programme documents

38. The President introduced the panellists who would discuss the CPDs for Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Paraguay ([E/ICEF/2020/P/L.1–E/ICEF/2020/P/L.4](#)). Following an introduction by the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, the Chief and Senior Adviser, ECD, provided an overview.

39. The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Cuba spoke of the Educate Your Child programme, a long-standing social and community-based model providing children with access to integrated ECD services. Through the new country programme, UNICEF would lead the collaboration of the funds and programmes on supporting social services in Cuba.

40. Joining the discussion by video, Mr. Hugo Cáceres, Minister of the Delivery Unit of the Presidency of Paraguay, General Coordinator and Chief of the Social Cabinet and Spokesperson for the Presidency, underlined the Government's commitment to children, multilateralism and international cooperation and the prioritization of ECD. Paraguay was drafting an ECD public policy and in 2020, in

cooperation with UNICEF, would assess the existing National Action Plan for the Holistic Development of Early Childhood.

41. In a pre-recorded video message, Ms. Bibiche Mwika, Coordinator of the Network of Journalists Friends of Children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, reported on efforts by UNICEF, the Government and partners to prioritize health care and nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life. Through the country programme, the country office would support the Government to implement ECD interventions related to health, nutrition, education and child protection.

42. The UNICEF Representative in Mali said that the Government's commitment to ECD was exemplified by increased spending for pre-primary education. The CPD would adopt a life-cycle approach focused on the integrated delivery of services and the provision of a protective, nurturing and supportive environment for children, particularly girls, in humanitarian and development settings.

43. Following the presentation, the representative of Paraguay acknowledged the key role of UNICEF in helping his Government to promote ECD services as an essential national priority for the development of human capital and potential. The representative of Mali commended the ECD work of the UNICEF regional and country offices. The country programme would support the Government's efforts, particularly the Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development. The representative of Cuba reported on the country's recent progress in providing access to preschool and kindergarten to almost all children, and on its favourable rates of infant and maternal mortality and vaccination coverage. The representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo said that the Government was committed to mobilizing domestic resources for the country programme and called on development partners and donors to fund the programme as well as to increase their regular resources contributions to UNICEF.

44. Regarding the CPDs for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali, a delegation said it expected concrete and sustainable results, community resilience-building and improved cooperation among United Nations agencies. Another delegation invited UNICEF and the other funds and programmes to strengthen the CPD process through timely consultations with stakeholders.

45. The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, called a lack of financial support a constraint for joint programming. The Regional Director, West and Central Africa, acknowledging the need for more systematic efforts, reported that resident coordinators were encouraged to initiate consultations during the development of cooperation frameworks, as were UNICEF country offices during various milestones of the country programming process.

46. The representative of the United States of America shared her Government's view of the CPD process as a critical opportunity to review and comment on the technical merits of the programme documents and expressed concerns about the politicization of the CPD for Cuba. The representative of Cuba said that advocating for the rights of children around the world should remain at the core of the debates and discussions during the Executive Board sessions. Several delegations welcomed the adoption of CPDs by consensus and cautioned against politicizing the work of the Executive Board.

47. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/2 (see annex).

(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes

48. The President stated that, in accordance with its decision 2009/11, the Executive Board had been informed of the first two-month extensions of the country

programmes for Argentina and Uruguay, and of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Colombia, Lebanon, Tajikistan and Zimbabwe.

49. The Executive Board was requested to approve a three-month extension of the country programme for South Africa, following a previous 15-month extension and a previous one-year extension.

50. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/3 (see annex).

B. Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to the recommendations and decisions of the forty-third, forty-fourth and special Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinating Board meetings

51. The Associate Director, HIV/AIDS, Programme Division, presented the oral report and its background note (UNICEF/2020/EB/2).

52. Several delegations commended UNICEF for its work on HIV/AIDS. A group of delegations applauded the increase in HIV treatment coverage over the past decade, noting that behaviour change, communication and other prevention efforts had reduced new infections, including in high-prevalence African countries. The group expressed concern that young people, especially given the youth bulge, were not consistently being reached by HIV-prevention efforts. To accelerate progress in reducing new infections in children in Africa, the group urged UNICEF, with UNAIDS and the World Health Organization (WHO), to strengthen efforts towards the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and to share best practices.

53. A delegation appreciated the mention in the oral report of the integration of nutrition into HIV programming for children and adolescents. It expressed concern about the low rate of HIV treatment access in children aged 0 to 14 years and the high rate of antiretroviral drug resistance in children and infants, emphasizing the need to start children on treatment early and to keep them in care. The delegation urged training for adolescents, parents and caregivers on viral loads, and recommended the testing of all biological children, including adolescents, of adults receiving treatment. The delegation also expressed concern about the disproportionate impact of HIV on adolescents and young women and urged the inclusion of positive behaviour change efforts, including around delaying sexual debut, in prevention messaging.

54. Recognizing the slight reduction in HIV infection among adolescents, another group of delegations expressed concern about the slow development and scale-up of global guidelines and tools to prevent new infections among adolescents and young people and urged UNICEF, UNFPA and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to intensify efforts.

55. The group of delegations cited the platforms recommended by the Global HIV Prevention Coalition for scalable models and resource-constrained settings with high HIV prevalence: community outreach, comprehensive sexuality education and HIV prevention as part of integrated health services. It urged the integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV services and expected more enhanced programming in those areas.

56. A delegation asked how human rights were integrated into HIV-prevention work. Another delegation enquired about the reasons for the reduced progress in combatting HIV/AIDS and the type of support the Member States could provide. A group of delegations asked for examples of UNICEF political advocacy and programme reviews to catalyse action on HIV prevention and the challenges

encountered. It called for UNICEF to actively contribute to the implementation phase of the global action plan for healthy lives and well-being for all.

57. The Associate Director reported that, even with the youth bulge (in young people aged 15 to 24 years) and an expected doubling of that population by 2050, continued reductions in the number of new infections were expected if the current course were followed. Of concern were regions with a low prevalence and incidence of HIV, where efforts were required to engage Governments and mobilize political will. Recognizing that children might have been missed by prevention and early infant diagnosis programmes, UNICEF had adopted the testing of all children of parents accessing HIV treatment, especially in West and Central Africa. A life-cycle approach was required for work with adolescents, and UNICEF, together with partners, was engaging health services and schools to prevent children from acquiring HIV. UNICEF continued to engage with Governments to help them transition to the adoption of new guidelines and tools by sharing evidence of their success. To combat stigma and discrimination, UNICEF was working with peer-support and civil society groups and communities.

C. Update on UNICEF humanitarian action

58. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, presented the update, which focused on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in emergencies. The Director, Programme Division, was present to provide additional support. A background paper (UNICEF/2020/EB/3) was available.

59. Several delegations welcomed efforts by UNICEF to bridge humanitarian action and development programming. A group of delegations welcomed the report, encouraging consistent efforts to improve data and analysis, for example through the WASH severity index and the incorporation of updated conflict and risk analyses in UNICEF reporting. It also encouraged further efforts to minimize the UNICEF climate impact. The group emphasized the need for effective communication between global clusters across sectors and further exploration of the role of cash and markets in addressing WASH needs. It encouraged UNICEF to report on the persistent challenges within the humanitarian WASH sector and the related results achieved. The delegation would welcome information on capacity-building to strengthen the focus on such issues as climate change and to support sustainable financing models for local water-service delivery systems.

60. A delegation expressed its commitment to leveraging its resources to respond to humanitarian crises. It encouraged all Member States to increase their support commensurate with the vast global humanitarian needs.

61. A delegation called on UNICEF to strengthen its focus on diarrhoea among children, especially in high-burden and high-risk contexts. Another delegation said it would welcome comments from UNICEF on how gender, including risk mitigation, was being addressed in WASH programmes. A delegation requested information and disaggregated data on efforts with regard to menstrual hygiene among children and adolescents, including in schools.

62. Two delegations commented on humanitarian staffing, with one urging UNICEF to enhance staff capacity for the WASH cluster and to deploy the most technically qualified staff at the onset of an emergency. Another delegation emphasized the importance of addressing weaknesses and challenges related to workforce planning and retention.

63. A delegation enquired whether UNICEF was considering changes to its grant management approaches to address the administrative divide between humanitarian

and development funding. Another delegation asked how UNICEF envisioned its coordination role and cooperation with other WASH actors as well as the involvement and participation in decision-making by affected people.

64. Noting the high percentage of people in humanitarian situations reached through water trucking and other temporary measures, a delegation requested elaboration on integrated approaches for achieving durable solutions.

65. A representative of the Child Fund Alliance emphasized the importance of collaborative partnerships in fulfilling and protecting children's rights.

66. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, reported that capacity was being examined collectively, including to address the challenges identified and determine concrete steps. Work on accountability to affected populations was under way with partners. UNICEF was focusing on strengthening humanitarian and development linkages with investment by the development sector in resilience and the humanitarian response moving from temporary solutions to longer-term, more durable interventions.

67. The Director, Programme Division, said that UNICEF was working towards making its WASH interventions climate-resilient by 2021. UNICEF was focused on the sustainability of development and humanitarian systems, notably financial sustainability. Menstrual health and hygiene was a targeted priority in the Gender Action Plan; good-practice examples included separate toilets for girls in schools and a checklist for gender-responsive WASH interventions. He emphasized that flexible funding was required for cluster strengthening and improving response capacity.

68. The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, clarified that the management of funds was often the result of donor earmarking for humanitarian versus development funding and that UNICEF continued to advocate for flexible funding.

D. Extension of the Vaccine Independence Initiative and its revolving fund

69. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Field Results and Innovation, the Director, Supply Division, presented the report ([E/ICEF/2020/P/L.6](#)).

70. A delegation requested information on the cooperation and complementarity between the Vaccine Independence Initiative and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, stressing the importance of ensuring an optimal division of labour and securing close cooperation between the Initiative and the planned new finance facility. Another delegation enquired about avoiding overlaps in countries eligible for support from or mobilizing resources through both mechanisms. A delegation asked about the long-term vision for the Initiative.

71. A delegation said that the Initiative should continue to serve as a safety net and asked how UNICEF was balancing its outbreak response efforts with the investments needed to support the development of routine immunization delivery services, and whether staffing plans reflected this need.

72. The delegation also asked how UNICEF planned to raise awareness of the Initiative; whether it would consider changing the name to reflect the financing of non-vaccine commodities; and to what extent Governments had used the Initiative to procure essential supplies, and what those supplies entailed.

73. The Director, Supply Division, highlighted the Initiative's value in facilitating the leverage and growth of domestic resources in country programmes. The Initiative primarily supported bridge financing and prevented stockouts of domestically

financed supplies, including new and traditional vaccines. The Initiative worked closely with partners, including having recently complemented Gavi-funded support for a measles campaign by facilitating a domestically funded expansion of the age cohort of children to be vaccinated. Technical assistance was also provided to Initiative countries, in coordination with Gavi partners, to identify and address barriers and help Governments to better leverage and increase their domestic resource mobilization. Five years prior, the Executive Board had approved Initiative support for other commodities, including nutrition products, cold chain, medicines and other supplies, details of which had been shared in the informal briefing.

74. The Deputy Executive Director, Field Results and Innovation, stated that since 1991 there had been no defaults on the Initiative. The revolving fund had a maximum capitalization ceiling of \$100 million, but UNICEF hoped it could be increased to \$1 billion and include participation by additional countries.

75. The Comptroller clarified that the International Finance Facility for Immunization leveraged long-term commitments by donors and was used by Gavi to respond to countries' immediate vaccine needs, while the Initiative served as bridge financing for countries that were transitioning or had transitioned from donor support, ahead of the availability of their own domestic resources.

76. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/4 (see annex).

E. Update on the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

77. The Director, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, and the Director, Programme Division, presented the update. A group of delegations called for the midterm review to address both progress and challenges, looking towards the new QCPR and the start of the Decade of Action. Addressing the Sustainable Development Goals individually would not fully achieve the 2030 Agenda and new strategies for development were essential. The group called for the funds and programmes to: (a) use integrated evidence and common country analysis in alignment with United Nations reform commitments; (b) develop a UNSDCF with a whole-of-system approach highlighting synergies; (c) align CPDs with the UNSDCF; (d) dedicate resources to collectively defined outcomes and efforts, including the funding compact; (e) overcome silos through joint programming; and (f) consider General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) in strategic plan adjustments.

78. The group of delegations called for the incorporation of lessons from the previous two years, including regarding Sustainable Development Goal targets, while a delegation requested an assessment of the need for related adjustments. The group suggested analysis of the effects of the United Nations reform process on ways of working and programmatic priorities and encouraged the development of conclusions across the funds and programmes. The formats of the strategic plans and results frameworks should be refined and harmonized to facilitate joint efforts and more effective, holistic and coherent engagement at the country level. The group welcomed the proposal for a joint workshop on the midterm reviews in advance of the annual session.

79. A delegation urged the Strategic Plan's continued focus on the UNICEF mission to provide a healthy, secure environment for children, enabling them to thrive and lead productive lives in adulthood. In this connection, it supported the organization's work with other agencies and the private sector around the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus. The delegation emphasized the results focus of the reform process and looked forward to the organization's data analysis against the

results framework. It called for a balanced relationship between the resident coordinators, who needed the appropriate skills and responsibilities to effectively lead the country team, and the agencies, which needed the flexibility to do their work well. Those separate identities had long contributed to the agencies' success.

80. Two delegations requested information on adjustments relative to gender. The Director, Programme Division, responded that the midterm review was being informed by the evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, which would be presented at the annual session along with a management response outlining an increased focus on targeted priorities, such as child marriage and organizational gender mainstreaming and capacity-building.

81. A delegation appreciated the outreach regarding the midterm review process and looked forward to further information on the methodology, preliminary results and implications. It encouraged UNICEF to detail the ways in which the humanitarian-development-peace nexus had facilitated its work on the ground and requested more information on the effort to collect and track data in conflict-affected countries. The Director, Programme Division, highlighted the new guidance on shock-resistant social protection systems, which was focused on capacitating systems to provide a safety net for children in humanitarian or fragile contexts. An example was the planning of water services in Lebanon to cover both host and displaced communities, bringing people together and ensuring sustainable services at the same time.

82. A delegation welcomed the tracking in parallel of the Sustainable Development Goal and Strategic Plan targets but questioned why, in some areas, Plan targets were on track while Goal targets were not. The Director, Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, responded that this asymmetry revealed the need to revisit the assumptions made in 2016, for example around fragile contexts, climate change and the persistence of protracted humanitarian crises, and reinforced the need for systems-building. Relevant changes would be incorporated into programmes and approaches, while taking into account the organization's capacity to raise resources and leverage partnerships and global programmes. The delegation asked whether only UNICEF thematic initiatives were assessed or if the midterm review included partnership initiatives. The Director responded that UNICEF prepared a thematic annual results report covering results achieved not only through a particular thematic pooled fund, but all types of funding.

F. Evaluation of innovation in UNICEF work, and management response

83. The Deputy Executive Director, Field Results and Innovation, introduced the item. The Director of Evaluation presented the evaluation report, which was accompanied by a summary (E/ICEF/2020/3), followed by the Chief Information Officer and Officer-in-Charge, Innovation Division, who presented the management response (E/ICEF/2020/4).

84. A delegation welcomed the UNICEF Innovation Strategy and requested an informal dialogue in the coming months, joining a group of delegations in calling for clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the organization's innovation structures. The Chief Information Officer and Officer-in-Charge, Innovation Division, noted that UNICEF would welcome engaging with the Board on the new strategy and added that engagement and communication were planned as part of the launch.

85. A group of delegations noted that climate change, digitalization, population growth and migration were rapidly changing the world. Addressing the development

challenges of the era required innovation and partnerships. The group commended UNICEF for its commitment to innovation to enhance the rights of children and for taking the lead in developing rights-based principles for that work. It urged the organization to consider the impact of digital and technological innovations on human rights, good governance, democracy and the rule of law, especially regarding the most vulnerable, and to mainstream responsible business practices into innovation. The group also called for solutions beyond technology to address multifaceted, complex and systemic problems. The Chief Information Officer and Officer-in-Charge, Innovation Division, clarified that the new strategy prioritized not only digital innovation, but also product/physical innovation, innovative finance, frugal innovation and new working methods. He emphasized that a rights-based focus was key to the organization's innovation work and noted the work of the Office of Global Insight and Policy on the impact of artificial intelligence on child rights.

86. A delegation emphasized the importance of evaluating innovations in the service of sustainable results, especially considering the increasingly complex humanitarian challenges, while the group of delegations called upon UNICEF to put more effort into developing tools and indicators to measure development progress. The Chief Information Officer noted that the humanitarian context was one of the four key focus areas of the Innovation Strategy, along with WASH, maternal and newborn health, and learning, and that relevant indicators would be integrated into the results framework of the Strategic Plan.

87. The group of delegations connected innovation culture and workplace culture and urged the involvement of the Principal Adviser, Organizational Culture, in the initiatives to improve the organization's innovation strength. UNICEF should also address the risk of failure – an integral aspect of innovation – and the nature of innovation work to enable the international community and donors to adjust their expectations.

88. The group of delegations noted the challenge of balancing strategic innovation priorities with the autonomy of country offices deeply embedded in the local context and asked how the capacity of country offices to run pilots and scale up innovations could be strengthened. It urged UNICEF to emphasize institutional knowledge management and share best practices. A delegation proposed the WFP Innovation Accelerator in Berlin as an example for how to support innovation in a United Nations agency. Another delegation commended UNICEF for its leadership in advocating for open licensing and standards for digital innovations, as the digital public goods approach could help UNICEF to address the challenges of context, relevance and scale.

89. The Chief Information Officer and Officer-in-Charge, Innovation Division, noted that UNICEF played a lead role in the United Nations Innovation Network and had been engaging with WFP to connect with the Innovation Accelerator. He noted that the new innovation portfolio management and inventory tools would be publicly available for sharing experiences, results and learning opportunities.

90. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/5 (see annex).

G. Update on the implementation of the recommendations made in the independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse; the Morgan Lewis report on sexual harassment investigations conducted by the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations; and the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority

91. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, a.i., the item was presented by the Principal Adviser, Organizational Culture, and the Senior Coordinator, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Workplace Abuse.

92. During the general statements, delegations commended the Executive Director's leadership on the issue. During the discussion of the item, delegations praised UNICEF for its focus on communication and engagement with staff to increase awareness and clarify processes related to the new policies and structures. A delegation requested more information on the involvement of country and regional offices and actions taken by UNICEF to avoid the perception of initiatives as headquarters-driven. Several delegations noted that the exchange of good practices with other United Nations agencies would promote stronger sexual exploitation and abuse prevention and response system-wide.

93. A delegation noted that the inclusion of the item on the agenda reflected the openness and transparency of the Executive Board and UNICEF. It stressed the importance of obligatory training and education and acknowledged the UNICEF goal of reaching more than half of its staff with compulsory prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse training by the end of 2020. Another delegation enquired about the status, content and impact of the roll-out of the related toolkit planned for the second half of 2019, and how the increased uptake of flexible work arrangements had affected sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and workplace abuse outcomes.

94. A group of delegations commended UNICEF on its follow-up to the recommendations of the three reports and for strengthening on-the-ground capacity for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, developing a management action plan and integrating the issue into systems and tools. While the implementation of the United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse was a positive development, the group requested information on concrete plans for 2020 to enhance mechanisms for victim/survivor support and ensuring a survivor-centred approach and on how UNICEF was ensuring that arrangements and screening tools for implementing partners were aligned with the Protocol. The group also requested, ahead of the 2020 annual session, information on the status of implementation of accepted recommendations, including the allocation of financial and human resources. It recommended that UNICEF address the issue in the midterm review of its Strategic Plan and carry out an evaluation in three years' time.

95. The Senior Coordinator reported that the toolkit had been finalized at the end of 2019 and would be rolled out in 2020 along with a new procedure on managing sexual exploitation and abuse risks in the context of implementing partnerships. UNICEF would work with counterparts to develop practical guidance to support the operationalization of the Protocol and had begun engaging in inter-agency training initiatives to that purpose. Survivors had access to services through the existing

UNICEF child protection and gender-based violence programmes in humanitarian contexts. Investment in those services remained critical.

96. The Principal Adviser cited the internal agreement to include organizational culture as one of the enablers in the Strategic Plan. Diversified communication channels and platforms were being used to engage with staff in country and regional offices. UNICEF had initiated dialogues between senior management at headquarters and colleagues in the country and regional offices.

97. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, a.i., emphasized that changes at the country level, including communication, were imperative for improving organizational culture. She highlighted the importance of transparency, both internal and external, and investment in prevention. Ninety-four per cent of staff had completed the mandatory course on the prevention of sexual harassment. The increased use of flexible working arrangements, particularly among female staff, had signalled the need to implement additional family-friendly policies and mechanisms, to strengthen the use of technology and to continue to improve the mobility exercise to foster closer links to talent management.

H. UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2018 and report of the Board of Auditors, and management response

98. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, a.i., introduced the item. The Director of External Audit (India) and Member, Audit Operations Committee of the United Nations Board of Auditors, presented the report and the Comptroller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management presented the audited financial statements and the management response.

99. A group of delegations commended UNICEF for its unqualified audit opinion and its comprehensive management response and noted the progress made in implementing the current and previous audit recommendations. The group of delegations also urged UNICEF to strengthen efforts to tackle areas of recurring recommendations and to address root causes, as requested by the Board in 2019, prioritizing those posing the greatest risk to results achievement, especially the follow-up of implementing partners and National Committees.

100. A delegation asked whether UNICEF had discussed the identified alternatives for travel management with the Board of Auditors. The Comptroller responded that UNICEF had been in discussions with the Board of Auditors and was setting up a simplified process for managing travel that leveraged technology with a view to enhancing efficiency and reducing the burden on staff. The Director of External Audit added that, if the new process met with the Board's satisfaction, the next report would detail that finding.

101. The group of delegations welcomed the steps taken to strengthen staff training on the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT), but sustained efforts were needed for full compliance. Future management responses should provide evidence of improvement over time. A delegation noted that the risks identified in the assessment of implementing partners were not always considered and quality assurance was not implemented systematically or in a timely manner. The delegation called for ensuring that the HACT principles and procedures were respected through trust, mutual responsibility and capacity-building for implementing partners and relevant country-office staff.

102. The Comptroller said that UNICEF had been flexible with government partners regarding capacity for HACT implementation, and in some cases, had worked on

capacity-building. However, if weaknesses were not addressed before resource transfer, the Board of Auditors reported non-compliance. The Director of External Audit said that any gap found in a specific instance of HACT implementation needed to be flagged so a more robust system could be put in place.

103. The group of delegations also expressed concern that the low number of reported cases of fraud reflected a weakness in detection. The group welcomed the recent fraud prevention and detection measures and encouraged UNICEF to explore using proactive investigations by specialists. The Comptroller recalled that, in response to concern raised three years earlier that fraud was likely under-reported, UNICEF had implemented a new anti-fraud strategy, resulting in a dramatic increase in reports over the following two years. The organization was now concentrating on its anti-fraud strategy for implementing partners, which is where big fraud cases occurred, developed in partnership with other agencies. UNICEF did not have the jurisdiction to address fraud issues arising with government counterparts. In addition, only substantiated cases of fraud could be reported, not allegations.

104. The group of delegations highlighted the significant shortfalls in private sector fundraising, requested more analysis of why National Committees and country offices had not met their targets and called for UNICEF, through its Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, to ensure effective follow-up, taking into account the different country contexts and fundraising markets. It recommended more realistic targets for offices with persistent underperformance and even a cessation of fundraising activities.

105. A delegation asked why UNICEF published yearly cost estimations only for country-level results, not aggregate estimations by Goal Area. The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, noted that UNICEF did aggregate, but that the numbers were projections only. He explained that at the time a country programme was approved, only the allotted regular resources and possibly one or two multi-year grants were available. Since most grants were neither multi-year nor flexible, the country office projected how much funding it expected to secure in a given Goal Area. Since those projections might be overly optimistic, they were compared with the amounts the country office had received over the previous five years, to determine an estimate. The report on the midterm review of the Strategic Plan would include the expenditures against each Goal Area and show that the estimates had not been far off.

106. The group of delegations suggested that UNICEF disclose information on target and actual revenues in the financial statements in the interest of transparency, as suggested by the Board of Auditors, even though this was not required by the International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

107. A delegation encouraged UNICEF to heed the Board of Auditors' recommendation to review the availability of baseline data sets in country offices and take any necessary measures to fill gaps, as planning and accountability for results required adequate data.

108. The group of delegations acknowledged the ongoing efforts by UNICEF to reduce its negative impact on the climate and the environment and encouraged the organization to report to the Board on the main measures it was implementing in that regard.

109. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/6 (see annex).

I. Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2020 workplan and proposed budget

110. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, introduced the item, followed by the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, who presented the workplan and proposed budget ([E/ICEF/2020/AB/L.1](#)). A group of delegations said that engagement with the private sector, both financial and non-financial, was key for UNICEF in its work to influence the global agenda for children and noted that regular resources contributions from the private sector now regularly surpassed those of Governments. Those resources were crucial for the flexibility and long-term planning necessary for achieving sustainable results for children. The group commended the staff of the National Committees and the country offices for their efforts to raise those resources. The group urged UNICEF to share its expertise in private sector fundraising with other United Nations agencies and looked forward to hearing about such collaboration at the second regular session.

111. The Director noted that UNICEF provided regular briefings to its sister agencies, UNAIDS and others and participated in the International Fundraising Leadership Forum and a new informal group, together with WFP and UNHCR, to discuss capacity-building, network management, alternative investment sources and the National Committees. UNICEF also coordinated an annual peer-reviewed benchmarking analysis on behalf of the United Nations agencies and the big international non-governmental organizations.

112. The group of delegations expressed concern that the overall contribution from the private sector had fallen short of targets in 2019 and acknowledged the contraction in the global fundraising market. The group of delegations noted that country offices were expected to increase their mobilization of regular resources by 42 per cent in 2020. However, in 2019, country offices had raised only 65 per cent of the approved regular resources budget. The group of delegations asked for more analysis to explain the shortfalls in 2019 and the measures envisioned to ensure the planned growth rates over the next two years. A delegation asked for an explanation of the 14 per cent increase in the country offices' private sector fundraising contribution proposed for 2020 over the 2019 latest estimates. Another delegation asked how UNICEF planned to strengthen country offices that were missing their fundraising targets to mobilize resources, and if the organization would consider reviewing targets.

113. The Director said that UNICEF had found workable alternatives for investments in the country offices for 2020 to ensure the achievement of the expected increases and was working on more innovative ways to invest in fundraising. UNICEF considered the 14 per cent increase to be reasonable as the country offices had shown a compound annual growth rate of 15 per cent on average over the previous five years. He also noted that country office results were vulnerable to fluctuating exchange rates, as resources were measured in United States dollars.

114. The group of delegations expressed concern that the significant reduction in the investment fund budget would hamper fundraising efforts, a concern shared by the Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF, who noted that, despite fierce competition for donor funds, the National Committees had contributed almost \$1.2 billion in voluntary donations to UNICEF in 2019. The group highlighted the important role of the National Committees in keeping the welfare of children at the centre of the 2030 Agenda, and it trusted that the new operational model would be developed in consultation with the Committees to take into account their diverse operating contexts.

115. The group of delegations welcomed the emphasis on engagement with business and the efforts of UNICEF towards shared-value partnerships but urged the

organization to enhance its dialogue with the Executive Board on results and challenges, including with regard to building staff capacity, integrating child rights into value chains and coordinating with other United Nations agencies. It looked forward to the report on the implementation of the UNICEF Private Sector Plan 2018–2021: IMPACT for Every Child.

116. A delegation commended UNICEF for having met new challenges in mobilizing resources through innovation and for serving as a model for other agencies. Continuing to attract private investment, particularly predictable and flexible funding, would depend on its ability to continually evolve, improve service delivery and achieve greater and more measurable results.

117. A delegation asked for more information on the impact of the less-than-expected revenues and the anticipated countermeasures and how the recommendations of the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority would be integrated into the Division's work.

118. The Director responded that the countermeasures included two regional support centres, in Panama and Thailand, staffed with specialists in such areas as face-to-face marketing and telemarketing. The Geneva office and the regional offices also provided support. In response to the Independent Task Force report, the Division had chosen to regularize 15 temporary posts from the existing budget and would also survey general service staff to potentially review their levels.

119. The Executive Board adopted decision 2020/7 (see annex).

J. Joint preliminary comprehensive proposal on the cost-recovery policy

120. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, a.i., introduced the preliminary proposal (DP/FPA-ICEF-UNW/2020/CRP.1). The final joint comprehensive proposal would be presented to the Executive Board for decision at its second regular session of 2020.

121. A group of delegations welcomed the continuation of a harmonized approach across UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women on rates, cost classifications and methodology, based largely on the existing 2013 policy. The group appreciated the improved alignment of cost classification categories, as recommended in the 2016 independent assessment, and welcomed the detailed information on the financial impact of the differentiated rates and the disaggregated information by agency and category.

122. The group requested agencies to provide further disaggregated data to better analyse the implementation of the 2013 policy with respect to the differentiated rates and include those standard figures in future annual financial reports. It encouraged the agencies to further discuss and illustrate options to close the remaining loopholes on waivers, differentiated rates and compliance.

123. The group requested more detailed information on each contribution for which the recovery rate was less than the established rate. They requested the inclusion in the next draft of a proposed waiver policy that would uphold the principles of transparency and harmonization. The agencies should present evidence-based options for further aligning and adjusting differentiated rates to bring them in line with developments since 2013, remove any potential distorting effects and create more effective incentives for favourable funding, as called for in the funding compact.

124. The group urged increased compliance by United Nations entities, Member States and other contributors to the existing cost-recovery policy and the revised policy, once adopted. They would welcome suggestions from the agencies on how to prevent individual donors from undermining full cost recovery.

125. The group requested that the policy document comprehensively and transparently present all information related to cost-recovery classification, methodology and rates, including clear, mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive definitions of all cost categories. A joint informal consultation prior to the 2020 annual session would provide the opportunity for further discussion informed by the draft policy.

126. A delegation said that the percentages used for government cost-sharing over the previous few years should be seen as a ceiling, rather than a floor, for future reforms. On cost classifications, it would be beneficial for the agencies to amend the cost categories to increase transparency and to clarify financing related to auditing.

127. The Comptroller took note of the delegations' feedback, which would be taken into consideration in developing the final proposals and organizing joint informal briefings with the other United Nations funds and programmes.

K. Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#) on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

128. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, made introductory remarks, followed by the Director, Public Partnerships Division, and the Regional Director for West and Central Africa.

129. The Regional Director shared the regional- and country-level experience of reform implementation. Regional directors and the Economic Commission for Africa had recently discussed proposals to create a regional collaborative platform and issue-based coalitions. She cited examples of collaboration with United Nations agencies. With WFP, UNICEF was engaging on resilience-building, focusing on education, nutrition and food security in three countries. With the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNDP, UNICEF was collaborating on the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda 2020–2030. Headquarters updates on the reform process were regularly shared with country offices and dedicated sessions were held during regional meetings. In a 2019 survey, over 60 per cent of West and Central Africa Regional Office staff reported that they were aware of reform developments.

130. A strengthened United Nations common country analysis had led to more strategic cooperation frameworks. Because most resident coordinator offices in the region were not yet fully operational, it was premature to analyse the reform benefits. However, several country offices had reported that the resident coordinators were raising the United Nations profile through advocacy and resource mobilization.

131. A group of delegations welcomed efforts by UNICEF to strengthen the pool of resident coordinators, including through contributions to their performance appraisals. Systemic changes had been made and the focus should now turn to behavioural change. Citing reports of inconsistent messaging on reform, the group sought assurances that the reforms were being pursued by all levels of management, and that staff at all levels felt mandated and empowered to make implementation a critical part of their work.

132. The group encouraged UNICEF to track and harmonize reporting on the funding compact commitments and redouble efforts to reach targets. It encouraged an incisive midterm review process, informed by reflections on how the reforms had changed ways of working and programmatic priorities. The group remained committed to supporting UNICEF in driving forward the behavioural changes needed for sustainable results.

133. A delegation asked how the reported levy of \$3.39 million compared with the organization's expectations and about plans to review the composition of country-office employees. Another delegation emphasized that a focus on country-level implementation was key and that it would welcome reporting that reflected the views of country-level staff.

134. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, said that UNICEF would continue to report on progress in implementation and that leadership within the organization on reform would be reflected in the midterm review as well as in behavioural change. UNICEF would review the impact of the implementation of the levy and related costs and present information at the 2020 annual session. The Director, Public Partnerships Division, said that while the levy was still being operationalized, in 2019, UNICEF had collected the highest levy of any United Nations Sustainable Development Group member. She urged the Member States to consider absorbing the administrative costs UNICEF incurred when administering the levy on behalf of a partner, rather than deducting them from their contributions.

135. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, a.i., reported that staff profiles were being reviewed in the context of the midterm review to determine gap areas in terms of skills that might need strengthening. UNICEF was also working with the Development Coordination Office on a plan to encourage more UNICEF staff to seek to move into the resident coordinator role and other positions within that office.

L. Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2020

136. The provisional list was presented by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

M. Adoption of draft decisions

137. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2020/1 through 2020/7 (see annex).

N. Closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board

138. The Executive Director said that the Board's guidance and oversight of the work of UNICEF were invaluable and the decisions reached at the session reflected the commitment of the Board members to children and young people.

139. The Executive Director appreciated the support for the midterm review of the Strategic Plan and noted that the organization was applying lessons learned as it planned for the next two years, for the next Strategic Plan and for the Decade of Action. She also appreciated the support for the organization's 2020 priorities. Accelerated action was necessary. One of those accelerators was supporting the rights of women and girls, including through SRHR. She emphasized the importance of coupling the launch of the Generation Equality initiative with a renewed commitment to adolescent girls across all UNICEF programming and all six catalytic action

coalitions, from maternal health and nutrition to learning and skills, HIV, girls' health and well-being, menstrual health and hygiene and gender-based violence. It would not be possible to reach the Sustainable Development Goals if half of the world's population was left behind.

140. Another accelerator was finding innovative ways to serve and support children and young people, including through technology. The Executive Director appreciated the support of the Board for the UNICEF innovation programme and took note of the request for an informal briefing on the Innovation Strategy. She agreed that UNICEF must continue linking its innovation work to that of its sister agencies and reforming the ways in which it worked with them towards strengthening the United Nations system as a whole, including forming strategic partnerships with key agencies. The CPDs presented at the session were the result of such close collaboration, and the presentation's focus on ECD demonstrated the utility of examining key programming through a thematic lens.

141. The Executive Director appreciated the discussion on working methods of the Board, and on the ways that the Executive Boards were working together while remaining unique. UNICEF was committed to providing quality, timely and accurate information to the Board. Trust and transparency were paramount, and UNICEF would continue to strive for that high standard.

142. The Executive Director hoped that this trust would be reflected in increased regular resources, noting that the 4 per cent decline in 2019 undermined the organization's ability to deploy funds quickly where they were needed as well as to attract and leverage new funds. She urged Member States to strive for the funding-compact target of 30 per cent of overall donations in the form of regular resources. UNICEF staff members around the world were counting on that support to deliver and accelerate results for children.

143. The Executive Director appreciated the support for the organization's efforts to improve its organizational culture. UNICEF would continue to rely on the Board's advice as it implemented the changes necessary to make UNICEF the best place to work.

144. As the Decade of Action began, the UNICEF commitment to the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child remained strong. The world was not standing still for children, and issues such as climate change, highlighted by some Board members, challenged their future. But UNICEF was not standing still either. UNICEF and the Board must work together to bring results to life for children and young people around the world. Progress for them equalled progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. She thanked the Board members for their shared commitment to achieve progress and brighten the lives of the youngest generation.

145. The President highlighted the excellent spirit of accommodation, dialogue and partnership that had guided the discussions during the session.

146. She shared some highlights, including the update on the progress of UNICEF in implementing the recommendations of the independent reviews on sexual exploitation and abuse, harassment, gender discrimination and abuse of power. She commended UNICEF on the progress made and the Executive Director for her commitment to bring about culture change. This was important to fully restore the organization's excellent reputation in the development community. In addition, staff members at every level should be supported. The Board wished to remain updated on progress and would continue to support the organization's efforts.

147. The update on the midterm review of the Strategic Plan had facilitated a preliminary understanding of the need for UNICEF to accelerate its programme implementation and advance on its priorities, while managing the availability of

resources and responding to the implications of the United Nations reform. The Board anticipated the more detailed presentation of the midterm review scheduled for the annual session in June.

148. The Board had taken note of the unqualified audit opinion received by UNICEF on its financial reports for 2018, as well as the acknowledgement of UNICEF as one of the few United Nations system entities whose rate of implementation of Board of Auditors' recommendations had significantly increased in 2018. The Board had highlighted, however, that some areas required improvement.

149. The President noted the fluctuations in the level of regular resources received by UNICEF and emphasized their importance. She called upon the delegates to encourage their Governments to increase their contributions to such funds.

150. The Board had been pleased to hear from a diverse range of stakeholders during the interactive session on the CPDs. The President emphasized the importance of having more inclusive participation of all, including of the programme countries. With regard to the topic of the presentations, ECD, the President said that the importance of the first 1,000 days and early years of life could not be overstated. It had been useful to hear about UNICEF programme cooperation in the respective countries, with a view to improving the quality of services, increasing access and providing comprehensive care. The President stressed the need to ensure increased funding for ECD.

151. On working methods, she affirmed that the Member State-mandated and driven process should be aimed at increasing efficiency and effectiveness and promoting harmonization and alignment with the work of the Executive Boards of the other funds and programmes on joint issues. The Board anticipated considering a concrete proposal on the issue no later than the second regular session of 2020.

152. The President concluded by thanking all who had contributed to making the session engaging and productive. She looked forward to their continued support at the annual session.

Annex

Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2020

2020/1

Working methods

The Executive Board

1. *Recalls* decision 2019/20 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the working methods of the Executive Board and reiterates its requests therein;
2. *Takes note* of the joint response of the Executive Board secretariats on the working methods of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UNICEF, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme (WFP);
3. *Takes note with appreciation* of the revised guidelines for the field visits of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women, and for the joint field visits of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP;
4. *Requests* the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNICEF, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS and UN-Women, to submit to Member States, ahead of the annual session of 2020, with a view to conclude discussions on the working methods no later than the second regular session, a concrete proposal for a rearranged annual workplan of the Executive Board for 2021, which includes daily schedules of the three sessions and informal consultations, supported by a detailed comparative analysis of potential implications on items for decisions, overall costs, efficiency and oversight, with a view to reducing the workload of the second regular session by shifting agenda items among formal sessions, as appropriate;
5. *Recalls* decision 2018/14 and stresses the need to continue to harmonize the consideration of common agenda items across the respective Executive Board agendas and requests the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNICEF, in collaboration with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS and UN-Women, to reflect it in the proposal of a rearranged workplan for 2021;
6. *Also recalls* decision 2018/14 and requests UNICEF management to circulate timely written responses to those questions raised at formal sessions of the Executive Board that could not be answered;
7. *Takes note with appreciation* of the current tracking system of the decisions of the Executive Board and requests the secretariat to put the full text of decisions into the system so that Member States have full oversight on follow-up and fulfilment of decisions, starting in 2019.

*First regular session
13 February 2020*

2020/2 Country programme documents

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* that the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Paraguay ([E/ICEF/2020/P/L.1–E/ICEF/2020/P/L.4](#)) were made available to Member States for their comments and input from 19 November to 9 December 2019, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Paraguay ([E/ICEF/2020/P/L.1–E/ICEF/2020/P/L.4](#)).

*First regular session
12 February 2020*

2020/3 Extensions of ongoing country programmes

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the first two-month extensions of the country programmes for Argentina and Uruguay; and the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Colombia, Lebanon, Tajikistan and Zimbabwe, all of which were approved by the Executive Director and are presented in table 1 of document [E/ICEF/2020/P/L.5](#);

2. *Approves* the three-month extension of the country programme for South Africa, following a previous 15-month extension and a previous one-year extension, as presented in table 2 of document [E/ICEF/2020/P/L.5](#).

*First regular session
13 February 2020*

2020/4 Extension of the Vaccine Independence Initiative and its revolving fund

The Executive Board

Approves a five-year extension of the Vaccine Independence Initiative for the period 2021 to 2025, in accordance with the terms of the original document approved by the Executive Board in 1991 ([E/ICEF/1991/P/L.41](#)) and as amended by the Board in its decision 2015/5.

*First regular session
13 February 2020*

2020/5 Evaluation of innovation in UNICEF work, and management response

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the evaluation of innovation in UNICEF work and its summary (E/ICEF/2020/3) and takes note of the recommendations and the UNICEF management response (E/ICEF/2020/4);
2. *Emphasizes* the continued importance of cooperation by UNICEF with other United Nations agencies with regard to the development and implementation of innovations, and encourages UNICEF to include information on such cooperation in future reporting;
3. *Encourages* UNICEF to work in close cooperation with the Principal Adviser, Organizational Culture, to succeed in achieving an open and innovative work culture within UNICEF.

*First regular session
13 February 2020*

2020/6 UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2018 and report of the Board of Auditors, and management response

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Board of Auditors for the financial period that ended on 31 December 2018 (A/74/5/Add.3) as well as the management response (E/ICEF/2020/AB/L.2);
2. *Notes* the unqualified audit opinion for 2018 issued by the Board of Auditors for UNICEF;
3. *Calls* for UNICEF management to systematically continue to improve the maturity of risk management at all levels, particularly strengthening accountability and implementation of the internal control frameworks;
4. *Requests* UNICEF to prioritize the follow-up of those identified organizational weaknesses that pose the greatest risks to results achievement;
5. *Also requests* UNICEF to take all necessary measures, including the capacity-building of implementing partners, to ensure the full implementation of the principles and processes stipulated in the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) in all its country offices and regional offices.

*First regular session
13 February 2020*

2020/7 Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2020 workplan and proposed budget

The Executive Board

1. *Notes* the high, medium and low revenue scenarios for 2020, as shown in table 3 of document E/ICEF/2020/AB/L.1;

2. *Approves* a budget for special purpose activities of \$151.4 million from regular resources, comprising \$85 million for investment funds and \$66.4 million for other private sector fundraising costs, and the establishment of an other resources ceiling of \$59.9 million based on the medium scenario in table 3;

3. *Authorizes* UNICEF

(a) To redeploy resources between the various regular resources budget lines (as detailed in paragraph 1, above), up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the amounts approved;

(b) To increase or decrease expenditures up to the levels indicated in columns I and III of table 3 of document [E/ICEF/2020/AB/L.1](#) should the apparent revenue from fundraising increase or decrease to the levels indicated in columns I and III;

(c) To spend an additional amount between Executive Board sessions, when necessary, up to the amount caused by currency fluctuations, to implement the 2020 approved workplan;

4. *Encourages* the Executive Director to identify and respond to new market opportunities, should they arise, between Executive Board sessions and to notify the Board accordingly;

5. *Approves* an interim one-month allocation for January 2021 of \$15.1 million (or 10 per cent of the special purpose regular resources allocation of \$151.4 million), to be absorbed in the annual Private Fundraising and Partnerships budget for 2021;

6. *Notes with appreciation* that UNICEF will present a full report on the implementation of the Private Sector Plan 2018–2021: IMPACT for Every Child at the second regular session of 2020.

*First regular session
13 February 2020*