

Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board

UNICEF Executive Board

An Informal Guide

2020

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UNICEF

1. On 11 December 1946, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the General Assembly of the United Nations established the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund¹ to benefit the children and adolescents of countries devastated by the war. Aid was to be distributed on the basis of need, without discrimination because of race, creed, nationality status or political belief, and only in consultation with the Government concerned. More than 70 years on, those principles of equity and collaboration continue to guide the work of UNICEF to protect the rights of children around the world, especially those furthest behind, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.
2. On 1 December 1950, the General Assembly, recognizing the need for continued action, extended the UNICEF mandate for an additional three years, while expanding it to encompass the long-range needs of children, with a view to strengthening national child health and welfare systems.²
3. On 6 October 1953, the General Assembly, considering the role that UNICEF played “in the whole international programme for the protection of the child” and in creating “favourable conditions for the development of the long-range economic and social programmes of the United Nations and the specialized agencies”, decided to make the organization permanent. It was renamed the United Nations Children’s Fund, while retaining its already familiar acronym of UNICEF.³
4. Since its inception in 1946, UNICEF has been administered by the Executive Director in accordance with the policies determined by the Executive Board. Board members are chosen by the United Nations Economic and Social Council from Member States of the United Nations. Officers of the Executive Board initially included the Chair and four Vice-Chairs and the terms of office were based on the calendar year. In 1961, the Programme Committee and the Committee on Administration and Finance were established, each with a Chair and Vice-Chair. In 1963 the terms of office shifted from 1 February through 31 January, and in 1967 from 1 August through 31 July.
5. In 1992, the Executive Board decided that there would be due regard for equitable geographic rotation in the election of the Chair among the five regions (African States, Asia-Pacific States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States and Western European and other States). Until then, the chairmanship had alternated each year between industrialized and developing countries. In 1994, the two committees were

¹ UNICEF was established by General Assembly resolution [57 \(I\)](#) of 11 December 1946, continuing the work of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, then being phased out.

² The initial mandate of UNICEF was extended for three years in General Assembly resolution [417 \(V\)](#) of 1 December 1950.

³ The General Assembly established UNICEF as the United Nations Children’s Fund in resolution [802 \(VIII\)](#) of 6 October 1953, along the lines of its previous resolutions, “with the exception of any reference to time limits”.

abolished, and the Executive Board agreed that the Chair would be known as President, whose one-year term of office would henceforth be based on the calendar year. Membership was set at 36, including 8 African States, 7 Asian States, 4 Eastern European States, 5 Latin American and Caribbean States and 12 Western European and other States (including Japan). The role of coordinating the work of the UNICEF Executive Board was assigned to a Bureau comprising the President and four Vice-Presidents, who represent the five regional groups.

6. In 1996, the Executive Board adopted the UNICEF [mission statement](#).⁴ On 20 November 1989, the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) was adopted by the General Assembly. The Convention provides the legal framework for the work of UNICEF.

7. In the seven decades since its founding, UNICEF has progressively expanded its work around the world, and is currently present in more than 190 countries and territories, with a staff of more than 13,000 worldwide, the majority of whom are based in field offices.

8. UNICEF secures its funding through voluntary contributions from Governments and donations from the private sector, including the 33 National Committees for UNICEF, and from other private sector fundraising activities.

9. The current work of UNICEF is guided by the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, which was adopted by the Executive Board at its second regular session in September 2017.⁵ In 2020, the midterm review of the Strategic Plan will be presented to the Board at its annual session, as part of the annual report for 2019 of the Executive Director. The work of the organization is also guided by the Sustainable Development Goals; UNICEF is committed to supporting their implementation and to putting children at the centre of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Executive Board

10. The General Assembly established the Executive Board as the governing body of UNICEF when it created the Fund in 1946. UNICEF reports annually through the Executive Board to the Economic and Social Council, which in turn reports to the General Assembly.⁶

⁴ See Executive Board decision [1996/1 \(E/ICEF/1996/12/Rev.1\)](#).

⁵ On the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, see decision [2017/13](#). At the 2017 second regular session, the Executive Board also adopted the UNICEF integrated budget (see decision [2017/14](#)), which is an integral part of the Strategic Plan and should be considered in conjunction with the Plan and its annexes.

⁶ See General Assembly resolutions [48/162](#) of 20 December 1993 and [50/227](#) of 24 May 1996 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. See also General Assembly resolutions [62/207](#) of 19 December 2007 and [63/232](#) of 19 December 2008, as well as Economic and Social Council resolutions 2009/214 and 2009/215 of 22 July 2009 ([E/2009/INF/2/ADD.1](#)); and General Assembly resolutions [67/226](#) of 21 December 2012 and [71/243](#) of 21 December 2016 on the

11. UNICEF financial reports and accounts and the report of the Board of Auditors are submitted annually to the General Assembly and reviewed by its Fifth Committee and by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The Advisory Committee also reviews the UNICEF biennial support budget and other related reports, as appropriate.

12. Since 1994, the Executive Board has been operating in its current structure (see above).⁷ The annual term of the Executive Board runs from 1 January to 31 December. Each year, the Economic and Social Council elects members to the Board from among the United Nations Member States or Member States of the specialized agencies.⁸ To ensure continuity of experience, only a certain number of new members are elected in any given year. Usually, each member serves a three-year term.⁹ However, the group of Western European and other States has established a rotation schedule for its members under which some States do not serve a full three-year term.¹⁰

Functions of the Executive Board

13. The Executive Board provides intergovernmental support to the programmes of UNICEF and supervises its activities, in accordance with the overall policy guidance of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Board also makes sure that UNICEF is responsive to the needs and priorities of programme countries.

14. The UNICEF Executive Board is subject to the authority of the Economic and Social Council and has the following functions:

- (a) Implement the policies formulated by the General Assembly and the coordination and guidance received from the Economic and Social Council;
- (b) Receive information from the Executive Director and provide guidance on the work of UNICEF;
- (c) Ensure that the activities and operational strategies of UNICEF are consistent with the overall policy guidance set forth by the Assembly and the Council, in accordance with their respective responsibility as set out in the [United Nations Charter](#);

quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

⁷ On the governing bodies of the development funds and programmes, see in particular paragraphs 21 to 29 of General Assembly resolution [48/162](#) of 20 December 1993.

⁸ These elections are held during a resumed organizational session of the Economic and Social Council, held usually in the second quarter of each year.

⁹ See the [composition](#) of the Executive Board since 1946.

¹⁰ The curator of the rotation scheme is currently Switzerland. The United States of America does not participate in the rotation scheme.

- (d) Monitor the performance of UNICEF;
- (e) Approve programmes, including country programmes, as appropriate;
- (f) Decide on administrative and financial plans and budgets;
- (g) Recommend new initiatives to the Council and, through the Council, to the Assembly, as necessary;
- (h) Encourage and examine new programme initiatives;
- (i) Submit annual reports to the Council at its substantive session; these could include recommendations, where appropriate, for the improvement of field-level coordination.

Bureau

15. Five officers of the Executive Board constitute the Bureau. They are elected by the Executive Board at its first regular session of each year from among the members for that year.¹¹ The officers — the President and four Vice-Presidents — represent each of the five regional groups, with the Presidency rotating among groups every year. As a matter of custom, permanent members of the Security Council do not serve as officers of the Board.¹²

16. The Bureau serves as a bridge between the UNICEF secretariat and the regional groups, dealing primarily with liaison and administrative and functional matters to enhance the effectiveness of the Executive Board. Members of the Bureau normally coordinate informal consultations within their respective regional groups. The Bureau normally meets monthly; during the three yearly sessions of the Executive Board, the Bureau meets daily.

17. In accordance with decision [2019/9](#), the minutes of the monthly Bureau meetings are shared with the members and observers of the Board, once they have been approved by the Bureau.

18. The members of the Bureau play a vital role in facilitating the work of the Executive Board by coordinating consultations within and between their respective regional groups, and by working with the secretariat in-between sessions on ongoing issues. The President also maintains contact with the Presidents of the Executive Boards of the other funds and programmes with regard to joint meetings and related issues.

¹¹ Prior to 1994, the officers of the Executive Board formed a Governing Council headed by a Chairman and four Vice-Chairmen. See the [officers](#) of the Executive Board since 1946. The election of the Bureau is a formal agenda item for the first regular session, but is held separately, typically a few weeks earlier than the session.

¹² See also the rules of procedure ([E/ICEF/177/Rev.6](#)), in particular rules 11, 12 and 13 for details concerning their election and term of office.

19. In the election of the President, regard is held for the equitable geographic rotation of this office among the five regions. Since 2002, the Presidency has been held by each of the five regions: African States; Asia-Pacific States; Eastern European States; Latin American and Caribbean States; and Western European and other States.

Presidents of the UNICEF Executive Board, 2010–2019

2010	Bangladesh
2011	Slovenia
2012	Antigua and Barbuda
2013	Finland
2014	Kenya
2015	Pakistan
2016	Estonia
2017	Antigua and Barbuda
2018	Norway
2019	Sudan (January to April) Morocco (April to December)*

*The Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations was endorsed by the African States on 9 April 2019 to replace the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations who was recalled to his capital.

Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board

20. The Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board (OSEB) is responsible for maintaining effective relationships between the UNICEF secretariat and the Executive Board. OSEB upholds the principles of independence, impartiality, transparency and inclusiveness in its work, and services all aspects of the work of the Executive Board under the guidance of the President and the Bureau. In consultation with the President and other members of the Bureau, it organizes the business of the Executive Board and services all its sessions. OSEB also provides editorial and technical services for all documentation submitted to the Executive Board or resulting from its formal meetings. It has similar responsibilities in relation to informal consultations and briefings and Bureau meetings. OSEB coordinates the yearly field visit of the Executive Board. In addition, on a rotational basis with the other funds and programmes, it coordinates the annual joint field visit and the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/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). OSEB maintains the [Executive Board](#) website, which, among other items, houses documentation, decisions, country programme documents (CPDs) and the Executive Board calendar, and the [PaperSmart](#) portal, which houses in-session documents, presentations, statements and other procedural information.

Executive Board sessions

21. The Executive Board holds an annual session, usually in June of each year, as well as two regular sessions, the first generally in February and the second in September of each year. The sessions are held at United Nations Headquarters, although the Executive Board may accept invitations to meet elsewhere.¹³

22. The Executive Board maintains a general outline of the division of labour between the annual and regular sessions, although it retains the flexibility to discuss topics as required at any given session. The number of regular sessions is dictated by the workload of the Executive Board each year.¹⁴

Annual organization of work

23. The Executive Board approves its annual programme of work at the second regular session of each year, on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat, which is based on previous Board decisions, requests from delegations and consultation with other members of the secretariat and the Bureau. The draft programme of work indicates whether a report will be written or oral, and whether documents are being presented to the Board for information or for decision. The programme of work is a flexible framework that is subject to change. In accordance with established practice, it is made available on the Executive Board website six weeks in advance of the second regular session, along with the other session documents. Once it is formally adopted, the decision on the programme of work is included in the compendium of decisions adopted during the year. An online version of the programme of work, available on the Executive Board website, provides the most up-to-date version as approved by the Bureau. At all sessions, the Executive Director, as required, reports to the Executive Board on the relevant issues on the agenda.¹⁵

24. The documents presented at Board sessions are organized under the following categories:

- Organizational and procedural matters
- Programme and policy matters
- Evaluation, audit and oversight matters
- Resource, financial and budgetary matters
- Other matters

¹³ Under the terms set by General Assembly resolution [31/140](#) of 17 December 1976, the host Government will defray the additional cost to UNICEF of holding the session away from United Nations Headquarters.

¹⁴ See the addendum to Executive Board decision [1994/R.1/2 \(E/ICEF/1994/13/Rev.1\)](#).

¹⁵ See rule 17.3 of the rules of procedure ([E/ICEF/177/Rev.6](#)).

25. A selection of documents typically considered under each of the three yearly sessions is listed below. The list does not include joint agenda items, such as cost recovery, which are prepared jointly by the Executive Boards of the funds and programmes and present a shared approach. The list also does not include topical items that may be requested by the Board for presentation during a specific session.

First regular session

26. The first regular session usually focuses on the following agenda items:
- (a) Private Fundraising and Partnerships: annual workplan and proposed budget;
 - (b) UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements and report of the Board of Auditors, and management response to the report of the Board of Auditors;¹⁶
 - (c) Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to the recommendations and decisions of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board meetings;
 - (d) Update on UNICEF humanitarian action;
 - (e) Evaluation report(s) and management response(s);
 - (f) Country programme documents and extensions of ongoing country programmes.¹⁷

Annual session

27. The annual session usually focuses on major policy and programme issues, progress reports and other issues of broad interest to Member States:
- (a) Annual report of the Executive Director;¹⁸
 - (b) UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit;¹⁹

¹⁶ In decision [2018/3](#), the Executive Board requested UNICEF to provide a separate management response to the key findings and recommendations of the annual report of the Board of Auditors.

¹⁷ See Executive Board decision [2014/1](#). Country programme documents (CPDs) are considered and approved by the Executive Board, on a no-objection basis, in one session. CPDs are presented at the Executive Board session that is most appropriate in terms of Government and country-level planning and priorities although offices are encouraged to submit CPDs at the annual session or the second regular session. Extensions of ongoing country programmes are considered at the first regular, annual, or second regular session, as appropriate.

¹⁸ See Executive Board decision [2013/15](#).

¹⁹ This report is considered under the agenda item “Annual Report of the Executive Director.”

- (c) Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action;²⁰
- (d) Reports of field visits undertaken by Executive Board members;²¹
- (e) Office of Internal Audit and Investigations annual report to the Executive Board, and management response;²²
- (f) Annual report on the evaluation function in UNICEF and management response;
- (g) Evaluation report(s) and management response(s);
- (h) Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF [annual], and management response;²³
- (i) Annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan;
- (j) Country programme documents and extensions of ongoing country programmes.

Second regular session

28. The second regular session usually focuses on the following agenda items:
- (a) UNICEF Strategic Plan updated financial estimates;²⁴
 - (b) Structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan;
 - (c) Integrated budget (quadrennial budget);²⁵
 - (d) Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the previous year;
 - (e) Evaluation report(s) and management response(s);
 - (f) Country programme documents and extensions of ongoing country programmes;

²⁰ This report originated from a request made by the Board in the 2018 programme of work (decision [2017/15](#)).

²¹ If a field visit takes place later in the year, or if the report of the field visit is not available for presentation at the Executive Board session, it is discussed at the following session.

²² See Executive Board decision [2015/11](#).

²³ In decision 2018/11, the Executive Board requested UNICEF to provide a separate management response to the findings and recommendations of the annual report of the Ethics Office.

²⁴ The exception is when the full Strategic Plan is being considered, usually every fourth year.

²⁵ The UNICEF integrated budget, 2018–2021 was approved at the 2017 second regular session. The integrated budget contains the resources that will contribute to the achievement of the UNICEF integrated results and resources framework; it is an integral part of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and should be considered in conjunction with the Plan and its annexes. See decision [2017/14](#).

- (g) Programme of work for the following year.

Joint meetings with the Executive Boards of other United Nations funds and programmes

29. Joint meetings with the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA have been held annually since 1998, to facilitate greater integration of governance oversight and to review issues and matters of common concern.²⁶ Since 2000, the Executive Board of WFP has participated in these joint meetings, and since 2011, the Executive Board of UN-Women has also participated.

30. The agenda for the joint meeting is agreed by the secretariats of the funds and programmes, in consultation with the members of the Executive Boards through their respective Bureaux.

31. The meetings focus on overarching themes of relevance to all agencies. Recent topics have included overcoming inequalities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; joint efforts to strengthen coherence, collaboration and efficiency in the field; working methods of the Executive Boards; and harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Informal meetings

32. Intersessional meetings — usually informal briefings or consultations — are held periodically during the year to discuss issues of particular interest to Executive Board members or to provide additional information about subjects to be discussed at upcoming sessions. These meetings are typically held at United Nations Headquarters and are announced in the [*Journal of the United Nations*](#).

33. As a rule, a pre-session informational meeting is organized before each session of the Executive Board. At these procedural meetings, delegations may comment on the provisional agenda for the session or raise questions about any of the agenda items.

34. Prior to each session, the secretariat may organize regional briefings on specific agenda items for a given regional group, if requested. Delegations are advised individually by the secretariat of the date and time of these meetings, which are held either in one of the smaller conference rooms at United Nations Headquarters or, if these are unavailable, at UNICEF House, a Permanent Mission to the United Nations or any other preferred location.

²⁶ These joint meetings follow a recommendation of the Secretary-General. See paragraph 162 in the 1997 report of the Secretary-General on renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform ([A/51/950](#)).

Orientation session

35. At the beginning of each year, OSEB organizes a half-day orientation session for the incoming Executive Board members to provide them with a window into the programme, policy, humanitarian and financial/budgetary aspects of the organization's work, as well as a snapshot of the Board's year ahead. The session is open to both new and existing Executive Board members, and the relevant documentation is made available on the Executive Board [website](#).

Conduct of sessions

36. The Executive Board President presides over each session. Usually, the session begins with opening statements by the President and the Executive Director, followed by the adoption of the agenda for the session.²⁷

37. All session meetings are supported by simultaneous interpretation in the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).²⁸

38. A document containing a provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work for each session is prepared by OSEB, in consultation with the Bureau. Delegations have an opportunity to comment on the document at the pre-session informational meeting held before each session and at the opening of the session itself. The timetable may not reflect the actual order of agenda items, since it often changes in the lead-up to and during the session.

39. Agenda items may be considered separately or in clusters. Each item on the agenda is presented by the appropriate member of the secretariat for consideration by the Board. The Executive Director and other members of the secretariat respond to the statements made and issues raised by delegations at intervals during the debate on each agenda item. At present, documentation considered by the Board is classified as "for decision", where a proposed draft decision is included in the document for discussion and adoption by the Board, or "for information", where a document does not include a proposed draft decision. However, the Board may opt to take a decision on any agenda item.²⁹

²⁷ In the absence of the President, he or she delegates one or several of the Vice-Presidents to preside over the proceedings.

²⁸ Interpretation is not guaranteed for informal consultations or meetings as these services depend upon the workload of the United Nations Secretariat.

²⁹ The two types of agenda items were formalized in decision [2014/16](#) (proposed programme of work for Executive Board sessions in 2015). In prior years, four types of agenda items were considered by the Board: for action; for discussion; for information; and oral reports.

40. The effective use of time in deliberations is important. Debate is confined to the topic or topics before the Executive Board; the President may call a speaker to order if his or her remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion. The Board may limit the number of times the representative of each member may speak on any issue. In accordance with a 2016 Bureau recommendation, statements should be limited to three minutes for individual delegations speaking in their national capacity and five minutes for a delegation speaking on behalf of a group.

41. As part of the continuing efforts to seek further efficiency and effectiveness of Board sessions, starting with the 2019 annual session a new methodology was introduced to encourage speakers not to exceed the allotted time. On-screen timers allow speakers to self-monitor the timing of their remarks and microphones start blinking 20 seconds before the end of the allotted time and are shut off when the time limit has been reached.

42. To make the best use of the time available, if the Board concludes its consideration of an agenda item ahead of schedule, it immediately moves on to the next agenda item. Given that their statements may be posted on the [PaperSmart](#) portal, delegates are encouraged to limit their remarks to only the most important points, so as to adhere to the time limits for interventions.

43. Although there is no formal list of speakers, OSEB has taken steps to more effectively manage the flow of speakers during Executive Board sessions, including by providing the indicative order of speakers under each agenda item. An announcement in the *Journal of the United Nations* is published four weeks in advance of the session and daily during the session, advising delegations on the process to request the floor and encouraging them to submit electronic versions of their statements in advance. Delegations are requested to indicate the intended agenda item in the subject line of the email. The statements remain embargoed until delivery and are then posted to the [PaperSmart](#) portal. Delegations are also informed that the floor will be given by the President, in the following order of priority:

- (a) Members of the Bureau of the UNICEF Executive Board who may wish to take the floor (organized by rank);
- (b) Representatives of United Nations regional groups speaking on behalf of their groups (organized by rank);
- (c) Permanent Missions of the United Nations that had sent in advance written requests to the UNICEF secretariat to take the floor at a specific time (with priority given to members of the Executive Board, followed by observers).
- (d) Requests received from the floor through the electronic system, on a first-come, first-served basis.

44. During the formal sessions, a printout of the indicative order of speakers under each agenda item is posted near the entry doors of the conference room prior to each morning and afternoon meeting, and is also made available on the [PaperSmart](#) portal.

Decision-making

45. The Executive Board has maintained a tradition of taking all its decisions by consensus. The decisions are to be short, in principle without a preamble, and should address the specific issue/s under consideration. To facilitate the decision-making process, the secretariat, in preparing documentation for consideration by the Executive Board, is mandated to include the text of a draft decision if a decision is required by the Board in that area.³⁰

46. A compilation of draft decisions is circulated by the secretariat to all Executive Board members one month ahead of each session. The compilation lists the names of the coordinator, facilitator and the UNICEF focal point for each draft decision. Starting in 2019, the facilitators of the draft decisions are identified by the Bureau focal points and the names are communicated to OSEB. The role of the facilitator is to preside over the informal consultations on draft decisions, share all language proposals from the Board members with the assigned OSEB staff and secure agreement on the text of the decision. Overall coordination of the draft decisions is handled by the Office of the President.

47. The compilation may include draft decisions that are (a) already included in pre-session documentation; (b) prepared by the UNICEF secretariat at the request of the Bureau of the Executive Board; or (c) proposed by members of the Board or a regional group. Before and during the session, delegations may submit proposals for additional decisions that are not reflected in the compilation of draft decisions. These proposals should be submitted to the overall coordinator of draft decisions.

48. Executive Board members are encouraged to start the negotiations, provide feedback and share language proposals for the draft decisions with the coordinator, the facilitators and OSEB as early as possible. Beginning with the 2019 annual session, OSEB has scheduled an informal consultation on the draft decisions the day before the start of the formal plenary.

49. Once agreed upon, final draft decisions are presented to the Board for adoption at the end of the session.

³⁰ On the working methods of the Executive Board, see decision 1994/R.1/1 ([E/ICEF/1994/13/Rev.1](#)). An exception to that requirement would be decisions related to the adoption of new country programme documents (CPDs). The text of the draft decision is not included in the CPDs being presented to the Executive Board for approval.

50. Since 2017, OSEB maintains a decision monitoring table on the [Decisions](#) page of the Executive Board website. The table, which is regularly updated, keeps track of the implementation of the requests contained in Executive Board decisions and allows the members to take note of the progress made on the decisions adopted by the Board in previous years.

Participation of observers

51. The right of participation as an observer in the deliberations of the Executive Board meetings is reserved to a Member State when its country programme is under consideration. The Board may also invite Member States and participants who manifest a special interest in the item or items under consideration to participate in the deliberations.³¹

Informal discussions

52. Prior to each session, the secretariat normally organizes pre-session briefings to discuss the issues on the agenda. In addition, the Executive Board sometimes opts to hold informal discussions during its formal sessions. These discussions allow delegations and the secretariat to address issues without requiring that a formal document be prepared or to have a dialogue without the limits of an official debate. In the past, such discussions have focused on programmatic issues (e.g., UNICEF HIV prevention activities) and procedural questions (e.g., the working methods of the Executive Board and terms of reference for its field visits).

Field visits

53. Executive Board members have been taking part in organized field visits to UNICEF programme countries since 1993. Under the proposed guidelines for field visits, adopted by the Executive Board in 2004 (decision [2004/13](#)), there were three visits per year, one each: (a) by the Bureau; and (b) by members of the Executive Board; and (c) a joint visit by members of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP. In its decision [2018/14](#), the Executive Board decided to “eliminate the yearly field visit of the Bureau of the Executive Board of UNICEF, to harmonize with the practice of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP.” The decision further encouraged Bureau members “to seek to participate in one of the two other field visits that are available for their participation: the Executive Board field visit and the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP”.

54. The purpose of the field visits is to: (a) allow Board members to observe UNICEF field operations and the work of the United Nations country team; (b) help Board

³¹ See rules 50 and 51 and annex to the rules of procedure ([E/ICEF/177/Rev.6](#)), published on 20 May 1994.

members to understand the relationship of the UNICEF country programme to national development priorities, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)/United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), bilateral development assistance and other relevant frameworks; (c) provide insight into the implementation of UNICEF policies and strategies at the field level; and (d) discuss the impact and results of UNICEF programmes with government and non-government counterparts at the national, local and community levels, if possible.

55. The countries to be visited each year are selected by the Bureau of the UNICEF Executive Board, in consultation with the secretariat and the regional groups, and with the concurrence of the countries concerned. The destination for the joint field visit is agreed by the four Bureaux, in consultation with the respective secretariats. The President may also make field visits or undertake other official travel as necessary. The reports of the field visits are presented during Board sessions and are often accompanied by a video and/or photographs. The reports and videos of the most recent field visits can be accessed from the [Field visits](#) section of the UNICEF Executive Board website.³²

56. Other aspects of the field visits, such as participation, logistics, including timing, length of the visits, preparations and communications, as well as travel arrangements, are regulated by the proposed guidelines for field visits by members of the Executive Board, document [E/ICEF/2004/19](#), which was adopted by the Executive Board in its decision [2004/13](#).³³

Documentation

57. The UNICEF secretariat submits all documentation to the Executive Board through OSEB, which provides editorial and technical services for documents for presentation during Executive Board sessions, but also for those resulting from formal Board meetings. OSEB works closely with the United Nations Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM), which processes and translates many of the official Board documents. OSEB has successfully piloted initiatives to outsource translations of several Board documents to accredited translation vendors with experience working with the United Nations and its funds and programmes.

58. **Document overview:** An analysis of feedback from members of the Board in 2019 showed their clear preference for an overview to be provided at the beginning of Executive Board documents. Beginning with the 2020 first regular session, all formal Board documents (except CPDs and evaluation report summaries) will include an overview, in addition to the summary text box that appears on the cover page of the document. The

³² See the list of countries that have hosted [field visits](#) by UNICEF Executive Board members since 1993.

³³ Also see Executive Board decision [2018/14](#).

overview will capture the main messages; results/key findings; and challenges; and include a look ahead and/or recommendations.

59. **Document processing and translation:** All formal Board documents are translated into the six official languages of the United Nations, except for CPDs, which are available only in the three working languages of the Board, English, French and Spanish, with the possibility of an additional official United Nations language (Arabic, Chinese or Russian) being made available if requested by a country whose programme is under discussion. Informal Board documents (formerly referred to as conference room papers) are made available in English and may also be translated into French and Spanish.

60. Documents are submitted to DGACM for processing/translation around eight weeks prior to each session, to be published four weeks before the session in all United Nations official languages. In keeping with United Nations guidelines, formal Board documents must not exceed 8,500 words, while CPDs must not exceed 6,000 words.

61. The final official versions of these documents are published exclusively online through the United Nations [Official Document System](#) (ODS).³⁴ They are also available on the Executive Board website.

62. **Country programme documents:** In accordance with Executive Board decision [2014/1](#), which endorsed the proposed modifications to the procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation ([E/ICEF/2014/P/L.1](#)), CPDs are considered and approved in one session, on a no-objection basis. Draft CPDs, along with the costed evaluation plans (CEPs) for each country, are posted on the Executive Board website 12 weeks before each session for a three (3) week period. In line with the decision, all comments received from delegations are posted on the commenting page of the Executive Board website, to ensure transparency and provide delegations the opportunity to react to any comments if they so desire. Comments received by the deadline will be considered by the respective regional office, which may make revisions to the respective CPD, as appropriate, in close consultation with the country office and the concerned Government. After the end of the commenting period, the commenting page will include the following: (a) the draft CPDs that were posted for comments 12 weeks before the session and associated CEPs; (b) all comments received within the commenting period; (c) the UNICEF responses to each delegation received from the respective regional office within the commenting period; and (d) the final CPDs.

³⁴ Questions regarding access to ODS should be addressed directly to DGACM. Starting with the second regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board in 2014, the final versions of CPDs in the designated languages, in accordance with established practice, can be accessed via ODS. Prior to the second regular session of 2014, final CPDs were available only via the UNICEF Executive Board website.

63. **Document posting:** Six weeks in advance of each session, advance copies of the session documents are made available in English on the [Documents](#) section of the Executive Board website. They are available in other languages four weeks in advance of each session. These are replaced with the official versions published on the ODS [website](#) once they are available.

64. In addition to the documents prepared ahead of each Executive Board session (and published on ODS), in-session documents are posted on the [PaperSmart](#) portal. In-session documents include presentations, the opening statements of the President and Executive Director, and, as available, delegate statements and the list of participants.

65. **Statements:** Delegations are encouraged to submit electronic versions of their statements to OSEB during the session so that they can be made available on the [PaperSmart](#) portal. The statements are published only after delivery and remain accessible on the portal after a session has ended. Delegations are also encouraged to bring 10 hard copies of their statements to the United Nations Conference Officers, to facilitate the work of the interpreters.

66. **Decisions:** Following the end of each session, the final texts of all adopted Executive Board decisions are made available (in English, French and Spanish) on the [Decisions](#) section of the UNICEF Executive Board website.

67. **Reports of sessions:** The official reports of Executive Board sessions are prepared by OSEB. The reports detail the organization of the session and provide a summary of the deliberations and the decisions adopted at that session. Each report is drafted shortly after the session and circulated to Executive Board members for comment, correction or clarification. The final report of the session is posted six weeks after the session on the [Reports](#) section of the UNICEF Executive Board website.

68. At the end of each year, the reports for all Executive Board sessions of that year are combined into one comprehensive report, which is issued as part of the official records of the Economic and Social Council.

69. **Oral reports:** In line with efforts to reduce the amount of documentation produced by the United Nations, the Executive Board has increasingly used oral reports by the secretariat in place of formal, written reports.³⁵

70. When an oral report is on the agenda for a session, the secretariat prepares a short background note and posts it on the [Documents](#) section of the Executive Board website four weeks ahead of the session, so that delegations are able to prepare for the discussion. In some instances, oral reports are supported by visual presentations rather

³⁵ See Executive Board decision [1996/35](#).

than background notes. Such presentations are also posted on the Executive Board website in advance of a session, in accordance with established practice.

Logistics of the sessions

Credentials

71. Prior to each session, delegations send formal credentials to the Executive Director or the Secretary of the Executive Board conveying the names and titles of their delegation members. The announcement of each session and request for credentials appear daily in the [Journal of the United Nations](#) beginning four to six weeks prior to each session. A provisional list of participants based on the credentials received is distributed by the secretariat as soon as possible during the session and the final list is posted on the [PaperSmart](#) portal soon after the close of the session.

Documentation

72. During each session, United Nations Conference Officers and staff from the UNICEF secretariat are available in the meeting room to help delegates with any requests for assistance with documentation for the session. In-session documents and any statements submitted by delegates are available on the [PaperSmart](#) portal.

United Nations grounds passes

73. Delegations of Member States normally obtain United Nations grounds passes from the United Nations Protocol and Liaison Service through their Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Passes for representatives of National Committees for UNICEF who are not members of any State delegation are coordinated through OSEB. Representatives of non-governmental organizations that hold consultative status with the Economic and Social Council may observe and make interventions during meetings of the Executive Board.

General information and schedules

74. All Executive Board session plenary meetings are interpreted in the six official languages of the United Nations. However, interpretation of informal consultations, briefings or meetings is not guaranteed, but may be provided upon request, depending upon the workload of the United Nations Secretariat.

75. During Executive Board sessions, OSEB maintains a support office near the conference room. OSEB staff as well as the conference servicing staff are available to assist delegates in the conference room. Meeting times and the order of debate are updated daily in the [Journal of the United Nations](#), which is also linked to the [PaperSmart](#) portal. An information note for each session is also made available on the PaperSmart portal.

Accessibility

76. UNICEF is fully committed to diversity and inclusion. To ensure that the Executive Board sessions are fully accessible, OSEB encourages those making presentations to introduce themselves and to read out and/or verbally describe visual materials in slides, charts and graphs. OSEB can also provide referrals to the United Nations Accessibility Centre, which provides tools and services in support of persons with disabilities.

Survey

77. Feedback from the Executive Board members helps UNICEF to be more responsive to their needs and is important to the success of Board sessions. In 2018, OSEB began sharing with the members of the Executive Board a voluntary, confidential survey following each of the three regular sessions. To promote multilingualism, the survey is made available in English, French and Spanish.
