

Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board

UNICEF Executive Board

An Informal Guide

2021

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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 due to 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. 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 abolished, and the Executive Board agreed that the Chair would be known as the President, whose one-year term of office would henceforth be based on the calendar year. Membership of the Board was set at 36, including 8 African States, 7 Asia-Pacific 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

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”.

Executive Board was assigned to a Bureau comprising the President and four Vice-Presidents, who represent the five regional groups.

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

6. In the seven decades since its founding, UNICEF has progressively expanded its work around the world and currently works in more than 190 countries and territories. UNICEF has a staff of more than 15,000 worldwide, the majority of whom are based in field offices.

7. 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.

8. UNICEF submits its financial reports and accounts and the report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly annually for review 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.

9. The current work of UNICEF is guided by the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, which the Executive Board adopted at its second regular session in September 2017.⁵ The Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 will be presented to the Executive Board in 2021. The work of UNICEF is also guided by the Sustainable Development Goals; the organization 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

11. Since its inception, the Executive Director has administered UNICEF in accordance with the policies determined by the Executive Board. Board members are elected 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 the calendar year to 1 February through 31 January, and in 1967 to 1 August through 31 July.

12. Since 1994, the Executive Board has operated 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 of the Board from among the United Nations Member States or members 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;

General Assembly resolutions [67/226](#) of 21 December 2012 and [71/243](#) of 21 December 2016 on the 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.

- (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 [Charter of the United Nations](#);
- (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. The Executive Board elects these officers 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 the groups every year. As a matter of custom, permanent members of the Security Council do not serve as officers of the Board.¹² Another customary practice is that the delegates serving on the Bureau are Permanent Representatives or Deputy Permanent Representatives.

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.

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 usually meets monthly; during the three yearly sessions of the Executive Board, the Bureau meets daily.

17. In accordance with Executive Board decision [2019/9](#), the Bureau shares the minutes of its monthly meetings with the members and observers of the Board, once the minutes 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 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.

19. In the election of the President, there is consideration for the equitable geographic rotation of the 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, 2010–2020

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)*
2020	Bangladesh

*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 an effective relationship between the UNICEF secretariat and the

Executive Board. OSEB upholds the principles of independence, impartiality, transparency and inclusiveness in its work; the Office services all aspects of the work of the Executive Board under the guidance of the President and the other members of 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), the Executive Board calendar and in-session items, including documents, presentations and the text of oral statements.

Executive Board sessions

21. The Executive Board holds an annual session, usually in June, 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 Because of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the annual and second regular sessions of 2020 were conducted online via a videoconferencing platform (Zoom), with efforts made to ensure full interactivity and dialogue in the virtual space.

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 considers its annual programme of work at the second regular session each year, on the basis of a draft prepared by the Office of the

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 \(E/ICEF/1994/13/Rev.1\)](#).

Secretary. The proposed programme of work is based on previous Board decisions, requests from delegations and consultations with various UNICEF offices and with the Bureau. The proposed programme of work indicates whether a report will be written or oral and whether documents will be 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, the document is posted to the Executive Board website six weeks before the second regular session. After it has been considered at the session, an online version reflecting the most recent changes, if any, is prepared and posted to the Executive Board website. 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

25. A selection of documents typically considered at each of the three yearly sessions is listed below. The list does not include joint agenda items, such as the joint report on cost recovery, which are prepared jointly by the Executive Boards of the funds and programmes and reflect a shared approach. Additionally, the list 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

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

¹⁶ In its 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.

- (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 matters, 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
- (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);

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. 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”.

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](#).

- (h) Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF 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);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;
 - (g) Programme of work for the following year.

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

29. Since 1998, UNICEF has held annual joint meetings with the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA to facilitate greater integration of governance oversight and review issues and matters of common concern.²⁶ The Executive Board of WFP has participated in these joint meetings since 2000, and the Executive Board of UN-Women has also participated since 2011, as has UNOPS, as part of the joint UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board.

²³ In its 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 key part of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. See decision [2017/14](#).

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](#)).

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 that are relevant 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; the working methods of the Executive Boards; harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination and sexual exploitation and abuse; and, most recently, United Nations development system reform in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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. Informal briefings on the agenda items for the upcoming session are normally held in the weeks leading up to the session. These meetings are typically held at United Nations Headquarters and are announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*.

33. A pre-session informational meeting is organized before each session of the Executive Board. At this meeting, 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. The secretariat advises delegations 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.

Orientation session

35. At the beginning of each year, OSEB organizes a half-day orientation session for the incoming Executive Board members to provide 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 continuing Executive Board members. The relevant documentation is available on the Executive Board [website](#).

Conduct of sessions

36. The Executive Board President presides over each session. The session usually begins with the adoption of the agenda for the session, followed by opening statements by the President and the Executive Director.²⁷
37. All meetings during the formal sessions have simultaneous interpretation in the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).²⁸
38. For each session, in consultation with the Bureau, OSEB prepares a provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work. Delegations have an opportunity to comment on this document at the pre-session and at the session under the relevant agenda item. The timetable may not reflect the actual presentation order of the agenda items, since this often changes in the lead-up to the session as well as during the proceedings.
39. The Board may consider agenda items 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. Documentation considered by the Board is classified as either “for decision” (with a proposed draft decision included in the document for discussion and adoption by the Board), or “for information” (when a document does not include a proposed draft decision). However, the Board may opt to take a decision on any agenda item.²⁹
40. During the deliberations, effective time management 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 a delegation may speak on any issue. 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 regional group or for joint statements of more than two Member States.

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 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).

41. As part of the continuing efforts to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Board sessions, on-screen timers³⁰ are used to enable speakers to self-monitor the timing of their remarks. In addition, the speaker's microphone starts blinking 20 seconds before the end of the allotted time; the microphone is shut off when the time limit has been reached.

42. In the interest of efficiency, the Board moves immediately on to the next agenda item if it concludes its consideration of an item ahead of schedule. Delegations with long statements are encouraged to deliver abridged remarks that adhere to the time limits. They are encouraged to submit longer versions of their statements in advance, which are posted to the Executive Board website.

43. Although there is no formal list of speakers for Executive Board sessions, OSEB has taken steps to effectively manage the flow of speakers, including by providing the indicative order of speakers for each agenda item. A printout of the indicative order of speakers for each agenda item is posted near the entry doors of the conference room prior to each morning and afternoon meeting. The indicative order is also posted to the Executive Board website.

44. Four weeks before the session, an announcement is published in the *Journal of the United Nations* advising delegations of the process for requesting the floor and encouraging them to submit electronic versions of their statements in advance to OSEB. Delegations are requested to indicate the relevant agenda item in the subject line of the email. The statements remain embargoed until delivery and are then posted on the Executive Board website. The announcement is also published daily in the *Journal*.

45. The floor is given to delegations by the President in the following order of priority:

- (a) Members of the Bureau of the UNICEF Executive Board (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 have sent 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);

Requests received from the floor through the electronic system are granted on a first-come, first-served basis.

³⁰ During in-person sessions, the on-screen timers are shown on the large screens facing the meeting participants.

Decision-making

46. The Executive Board has maintained a tradition of adopting 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 a document to be presented for decision by the Executive Board, is mandated to include the text of a draft decision within the document.³¹

47. The secretariat circulates a compilation of draft decisions to the Executive Board members one month before each session. The compilation includes contact information for the overall coordinator of the draft decisions (a representative of the Office of the President of the Executive Board) and the facilitators of draft decisions (delegates nominated by the five regional groups of the United Nations through a process organized by the Bureau focal points). The facilitators preside over the negotiations on the draft decisions and secure agreement on them. The compilation also lists information for the UNICEF focal points for each draft decision as well for relevant OSEB staff. Both before and during the session, Board members and observers submit language proposals for the draft decisions to the relevant facilitators, who share them with OSEB.

48. 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. Executive Board members are encouraged to share language proposals with the facilitators and start negotiations as early as possible. Before and during the session, delegations may submit proposals for additional decisions that are not reflected in the compilation of draft decisions. Such proposals should be submitted to the overall coordinator of draft decisions.

49. Informal consultations on draft decisions are held in between or following (each day of) the plenary meetings of the session. When possible, informal consultation(s) are also held in the days leading up to the session.

50. Once agreed, the draft decisions are presented to the Board for adoption, normally on the last day of the session. The only exception is the adoption of the draft decision on the CPDs, which are considered and adopted on a no-objection basis in before the session. The draft decision on CPDs is gavelled at the conclusion of the discussion on the CPD agenda item.

³¹ 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 is 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.

51. OSEB maintains a decision monitoring table on the [Decisions](#) page of the Executive Board website. The tables provide a history of the implementation of the requests made by the Board in its decisions.

Participation of observers

52. 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.³²

Informal discussions

53. 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 the preparation of a formal document or to hold a dialogue without the limitations 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

54. Executive Board members have taken part in organized field visits to UNICEF programme countries since 1993. Under the 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 2018, 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 Bureau members are encouraged to participate in one of the two field visits.

55. 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 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

³² See rules 50 and 51 and annex to the rules of procedure ([E/ICEF/177/Rev.6](#)), published on 20 May 1994.

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.

56. The Bureau of the UNICEF Executive Board selects the countries to be visited each year 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 their 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 are accessible on the [Field visits](#) section of the UNICEF Executive Board website.³³

57. 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 guidelines for field visits by members of the Executive Board, document [E/ICEF/2004/19](#); the document was adopted by the Executive Board in its decision [2004/13](#).³⁴

58. Field visits may be postponed or cancelled due to prevailing conditions (e.g., in 2020, no Executive Board field visits were undertaken due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

Documentation

59. The UNICEF secretariat submits all documentation to the Executive Board through OSEB, which provides editorial and technical services for documents prepared for presentation during Executive Board sessions and for the formal reports of each Executive Board session. 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 also outsources the translations of some Board documents to accredited translation vendors with experience working with the United Nations and its funds and programmes.

60. **Document overview:** Since the 2020 first regular session, all formal Board documents (except CPDs and evaluation report summaries) have included a brief overview at the beginning of document.

³³ See the list of countries that have hosted [field visits](#) by UNICEF Executive Board members since 1993.

³⁴ Also see Executive Board decision [2018/14](#).

61. **Document processing and translation:** Formal Board documents are made available in the six official languages of the United Nations, except for CPDs, which are made 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 are made available in English and may sometimes be translated into French and Spanish.

62. Executive Board documents are submitted to DGACM or an external accredited translation vendor for translation around eight weeks before each session. They are published four weeks before the session in the United Nations official languages.

63. The final official versions of Executive Board documents, in all the available languages, are published exclusively online through the United Nations [Official Document System](#) (ODS). They are also available on the Executive Board website.

64. In keeping with United Nations guidelines, formal Executive Board documents are limited to 8,500 words and CPDs to 6,000 words.

65. **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-week comment period. All comments received from delegations are posted on the comment page of the Executive Board website to ensure transparency. Comments received by the deadline are considered by the requesting country. After the end of the comment period, the comment page will include the following: (a) the draft CPDs that were posted for comment 12 weeks before the session and their associated CEPs; (b) all comments received within the comment period; (c) the country responses to each delegation comment received within the comment period; and (d) a link to the session page on the Executive Board website where the final CPDs will be posted six weeks before the session. Starting with the CPDs for the first regular session of 2021, the comment page includes a link to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group website, where the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (in final or draft form) are posted.

66. **Document posting:** Six weeks before each session, session documents are posted in English on the [Documents](#) section of the Executive Board website and posted in other languages four weeks before each session.

67. In addition to the documents prepared ahead of each Executive Board session and published on ODS, additional in-session documentation is posted on

the Executive Board website. These include presentations, the opening statements of the President and the Executive Director, statements by delegations and the list of participants.³⁵

68. **Statements:** Delegations are encouraged to submit electronic versions of their statements to OSEB prior to or during the session so that they can be posted on the Executive Board website. The statements are published only after delivery and remain accessible on the website after the session ends. Delegations are also encouraged to provide 10 hard copies of their statements to the United Nations Conference Officers to facilitate the work of the interpreters.

69. **Decisions:** Following the end of each session, the adopted Executive Board decisions are posted in English, French and Spanish to the [Decisions](#) section of the Executive Board website.

70. **Reports of sessions:** OSEB prepares the official report of each Executive Board session. The report details the organization of the session and provides a summary of the deliberations. An annex contains the decisions adopted at the session. Each report is drafted shortly after the session and circulated to Executive Board members for comment, correction or clarification. The final report is posted six weeks after the session to the [Reports](#) section of the UNICEF Executive Board website.

71. At the end of each year, the reports for all the 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.

72. **Oral reports:** In line with efforts to reduce the amount of documentation produced by the United Nations, the Executive Board has increasingly relied on oral reports by the secretariat in place of formal, written reports.³⁶

73. When an oral report is on the agenda for a session, the secretariat may prepare a short background note and post it to the Documents section of the Executive Board website four weeks ahead of the session, to facilitate delegations' preparations for the discussion. In some instances, oral reports are supported by visual presentations rather than background notes. Such presentations are also posted on the Executive Board website in advance of each session.

³⁵ The United Nations PaperSmart portal ceased its operations in September 2020. Documents previously housed on the portal, such as the list of participants and delegation statements, will now be made available on the UNICEF Executive Board website.

³⁶ See Executive Board decision [1996/35](#).

Logistics of the sessions

Organization of Executive Board meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual and second regular sessions of 2020 were conducted online using a videoconferencing platform, with efforts made to ensure full interactivity and dialogue in the virtual space.

An information note and a participant's guide, both shared in advance of the meetings, provided delegates with detailed information on the procedures related to the sessions, including changes related to the submission of credentials and meeting registration, requests to take the floor and posting of the list of speakers.

Relevant delegations also received advance information on the schedule and registration for the virtual informal consultations on the draft decisions.

The meetings were live streamed, which facilitated viewing by interested delegations, who were able to follow the meetings without having to submit their credentials or register.

For the 2021 Executive Board sessions and other meetings, information received from DGACM will help to guide the decisions made by the Bureau with regard to the format of the sessions (virtual, hybrid or in-person).

Credentials

74. Before each session, delegations send formal credentials to the Executive Director of UNICEF 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 to the Executive Board website soon after the close of the session.

Documentation support during sessions

75. 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 Executive Board website.

United Nations grounds passes

76. 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

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

78. 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*. An information note for each session is also available on the Executive Board website.

Accessibility

79. 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

80. Feedback from Executive Board members helps UNICEF to better respond to their needs and is important to the success of Board sessions. Following each of the sessions, OSEB shares a voluntary, confidential survey with the members and observers of the Executive Board. To promote multilingualism, the survey is available in English, French and Spanish.
