



**Executive Board of the
United Nations Development
Programme, the United Nations
Population Fund and the
United Nations Office for
Project Services**

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29 January to 2 February 2023, New York

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Organizational matters

**Report of the second regular session 2023
(28 to 31 August 2023, New York)**

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I. Organizational matters

1. The second regular session 2023 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS was held in person at United Nations Headquarters from 28 to 31 August 2023.
2. The Executive Board adopted the agenda and workplan for the session (DP/2023/L.3), as orally amended, and approved the report of the annual session 2023 (DP/2023/24). The Board took note of the draft annual workplan for 2024 (DP/2023/CRP.2) and approved the tentative workplan for the first regular session 2024.
3. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at the second regular session 2023 appeared in document DP/2023/25, available on the [Executive Board website](#).
4. The Executive Board agreed in decision 2023/25 to the following schedule for sessions of the Executive Board in 2024:

First regular session:	29 January to 2 February 2024
Annual session:	3 to 7 June 2024
Second regular session:	26 to 30 August 2024

Statement by the President of the Executive Board

5. The President expressed the deepest gratitude to the men and women who had averted a pending calamity by commencing the salvage of the FSO Safer (a deteriorating floating oil storage and offloading unit moored off the coast of Yemen). He called on delegates to imagine a Red Sea awash in oil with a 25-year recovery period costing \$20 billion for a clean-up. The United Nations, specifically UNDP, had stopped a catastrophe in its tracks. This success captured the United Nations at its best in being preventive, proactive and bold. As for UNFPA, in 2022 it had contributed to averting 13.3 million unintended pregnancies and 3.7 unsafe abortions. UNOPS for its part continued to help deliver clean energy and an equitable energy transition. Impediments, such as conflicts and economic instability, however, thwarted progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The upcoming SDG Summit was a chance for States to redouble their commitments. He called for assessing priorities and for donor and programme countries to support United Nations organizations in concrete ways.

UNDP segment

Interactive dialogue

6. The President introduced an interactive dialogue on working together to finance sustainable development, describing it as a timely conversation given the trillions of dollars required to achieve the Goals. He called for putting the United Nations at the heart of the thinking, synthesis, collaboration and accelerated action needed to achieve the global Goals. He pointed to decades of innovations in private sector finance and said that UNDP was now innovating boldly for the public sector. UNDP needed to be further equipped to bring the private sector into sustainable finance and required regular (core) resources financing to undertake continued innovation.
7. The Administrator stated that overcoming financing challenges was fundamental for the world to move forward together. This was not just a matter of equity and fairness – it went to the core of risks to global and national security. Many developing countries were now spending more money on interest payments than education or health, even as the financial system had all the finance needed for a moment of transformation. Finance was not a panacea but without it, everything else would remain theoretical.

8. The Minister of Information and Communications Technology and Innovation of the Government of Rwanda said that progress in addressing complex financing challenges in her country had built on visionary leadership, coordinated planning and execution, strong partnerships and homegrown innovations. When the Government needed to raise \$400 million for health care, information and communication technology and renewable energy, it created an award-winning bond. Careful use of the proceeds and regular reporting to investors had led to a second bond. Good preparation, planning and execution could lead to better pricing, increase capacity for investment in strategic projects and attract much-needed capital. Other successes comprised issuing East Africa's first sustainability linked bond, and blending finance from bonds and World Bank resources for affordable housing and public transport. While finance remained insufficient, such examples had galvanized commitment to new solutions. Machine learning and artificial intelligence offered new options for efficiency in allocating capital by modelling scenarios and impacts. The Government looked to UNDP as a steadfast ally in obtaining a sustainable future for all.

9. The Managing Director of the Monetary Authority of Singapore described the importance of uplifting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. They faced constraints from limited scale, connectivity and finance even as new opportunities were emerging in the green and digital economies. Public and private partners in Singapore were developing a digital infrastructure to establish new capabilities and overcome limitations due to location and size. Collaboration with UNDP was building digital trust, expanding access to financial, trade and green resources and providing training. Achievements included: developing a unique legal entity identifier to expand capacities to verify and conduct financial transactions; creating a holistic digital platform to access trade opportunities, financial services and suppliers; and launching an open learning hub drawing over 7,000 smaller businesses from 61 countries. He concluded that a promising start towards realizing global public goods would not be possible without UNDP support. It would result in unlocking business opportunities and access to finance while enriching lives.

10. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa said the resolve to help countries get back on track was never stronger, particularly amid struggles to secure adequate and affordable financing. She stressed the urgent need for "patient" capital, and called for paying more global attention to staunching illicit financial flows, using national resources to mobilize global capital, ensuring objective credit ratings and securing finance from the diaspora.

11. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific said that UNDP had supported 21 countries in the region on integrated national financing frameworks. Fiji had developed its first blue bond. Indonesia had moved into blended finance and better private capital alignment. The biggest demand was to close loopholes to retain funds for development, such as through tax audits and improved domestic market regulations.

12. In additional remarks ([available on the UNDP website](#)), the Administrator called for moving past frustration in finance discussions. The world needed to embrace financing as the key variable not only in terms of money but also its capacity as a family of nations to pivot forward and manage imperative transitions. UNDP, with its universal presence, saw finance as a serious but solvable problem. With \$463 trillion circulating in the global economy, it was inexplicable that a few trillion could not be found to invest in existential transitions. While current systemic challenges required systemic responses, the global financial system was anachronistic. National economic ecosystems, regulations, policies and investment contexts defined the pathway of each individual nation. These were not separate spheres; global and national policies incentivized and supported transitions or held back nations or sectors of society.

13. In a few years, he continued, UNDP had moved from mainly supporting countries to access finance for projects to the growing recognition of its value in having its feet on the ground and connections to expertise and institutions around the world. It had provided extensive engagement, partnership and support to the Group of 20 and its presidency, including as the secretariat of the Sustainable Finance Working Group. UNDP was one of three core United Nations entities leading

the SDG Stimulus process, which called for the United Nations and international financial institutions to work closely together on country priorities to advance the Goals, including through the integrated national financing frameworks. European investors in the Goals had made the UNDP-devised impact standards their most common reference framework for private equity investments in sustainability. UNDP had leveraged hundreds of billions of dollars through supporting countries in aligning national budgets to the Goals and developing financing frameworks.

14. The Administrator stressed that UNDP did not have all the answers to current challenges, nor would it singularly shift global development finance. It had called attention to a staggering debt burden earlier than most and to the flow of money out of the poorest developing countries, but since this was not yet threatening the global financial system, it was being overlooked. In 2024, 45 per cent of debt would mature in low-income countries; 60 countries were one step away from potentially defaulting. While richer economies had begun to see the end of current crises, a chronic structural divergence meant that poor countries could not mobilize needed finance.

15. UNDP had collaborated with international financial institutions and other partners in seeking to change how markets looked at developing countries, such as through Sustainable Development Goal bonds and new insurance products. It was partnering with governments on policies and frameworks to create markets and services to meet development objectives. In 86 countries, the integrated financing frameworks helped governments to set priorities. If finance was handled proactively, intelligently and with greater wisdom, it would bring people together. Otherwise, it could paralyse the world. For example, a green transition was not possible with \$7 trillion invested in fossil fuel subsidies each year, effectively trapping the world in the fossil fuel economy.

16. UNDP did not have a singular or unique role, he said, but was an extraordinary network to connect innovations from North to South, from small to large economies, in a partnership for development that empowers countries to take sovereign, informed decisions. UNDP built the capacities of institutions, communities and smaller businesses and enabled financial markets to serve citizens. Every day, 22,000 UNDP staff members worked with national institutions, including to address finance from the vantage point of those for whom it was an existential concern. UNDP brought collective insights based on these experiences to forums such as the Executive Board, and to dialogues with international financial institutions and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Governments should not underestimate the relevance and momentum of coming together, or the potential to generate innovations, partnerships and financing shifts at the richest moment in human history. Thousands of answers were out there but in a difficult climate, UNDP and its many partners could catalyse understanding that the financing problem was solvable.

17. Delegations commended UNDP for being at the forefront of efforts to help countries navigate financing for sustainable development. UNDP had played an impressive role in establishing priorities, pursuing policy de-risking, accessing climate and biodiversity finance and developing new and innovative financial instruments. Challenges persisted, particularly for the most vulnerable countries; adequate resources, capacity-building and policy coherence demanded collective action. While digital technology showed remarkable potential to catalyse sustainable finance, technologies should be harnessed responsibly and inclusively, and aligned with achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Member States should address the decline in regular (core) resources and recommit to supporting UNDP through additional core, flexible and multi-year funding so it could continue to provide finance solutions in line with the scale and needs in programme countries.

18. A delegation urged support for countries in debt distress as this was linked to the Sustainable Development Goal financing gap. Countries needed assistance to manage debt and improve investment scenarios, and UNDP, with its technical expertise and long-term capacity-building for developing bonds for the Goals, had the potential to increase financial flows for the Goals and climate objectives.

19. A group of delegations appreciated the emphasis on diagnosing constraints and necessary global reforms to help development advance in the global South. There were serious shortcomings in realizing commitments to official development assistance that had first been made 53 years ago, and achieving the Goals would require changes in the global financial architecture. The international community should reform the multilateral development banks to catalyse next-generation public and private investments in global public goods, and strengthen the global financial safety net to offer greater and more equitable access to international funding in crises. Major governance changes at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund should improve the representation of developing countries. The group stressed a platform for debt treatment, improved debt transparency, better safeguards on credit ratings agencies and a strengthened regulatory framework for financial flows and global tax reforms. The group encouraged UNDP through the integrated national financing frameworks to further assist governments in financing the Goals and nationally determined contributions, and to mobilize innovative finance, capitalizing on digital innovations.

20. A group of delegations said that UNDP remained a steadfast partner while expressing concern about reduced regular resources funding. For eradicating poverty, such funding was not a choice. Improving the material conditions of humanity depended on Member States leveraging the expertise of developmental organizations such as UNDP; these entities must be fit-for-purpose. The group urged Member States to realize funding compact commitments and suggested a funding compact 2.0 to take account of current realities and embody collective ambition.

21. Delegations said it would take more than official development assistance to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, pointing to increased trade, private investment and innovative finance, and intensified action on finance alignment, mobilization, blending and scaling up. Budgeting for the Goals would increase transparency and efficiency, while stepping up national efforts to facilitate financing and investment and looking at total fiscal systems would increase revenue and support better spending. UNDP played a key role in financing for the Goals while also helping to confront social inequality and strengthen institutions. Some asked about tackling corruption and encouraged UNDP to advance Goal 16 to improve conditions for investment.

22. Multiple interventions stressed the debt problem as one of the most glaring impediments to development, requiring radical, immediate reforms, without which the Goals would be an illusion. For the least developed countries, borrowing rates were high and risk premiums excessive, suggesting that the financial system prioritized risks for creditors over risks for populations. Tangible progress required debt cancellation for the most vulnerable, correcting rating systems and responding to national needs for finance. Delegations referred to a lack of sufficient solidarity, describing the international environment as too restrictive and unfriendly for developing countries. One delegation indicated a pandemic-related loss of 15 per cent of gross domestic product followed by an expected 3 per cent loss from the El Niño effect in 2023, challenges rendered more difficult by the lack of finance for adaptation in middle-income countries.

23. Delegations welcomed the portfolio approach as important for more effective development support and a chance to fit pieces together into consolidated solutions. UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) could complement the international financial institutions based on comparative advantages.

24. The Administrator expressed appreciation for the many comments on strategic, relevant and responsive partnerships with UNDP. It would present its “SDG insights” on 95 countries to better understand how the alignment of national development planning and financing was unfolding. He referred to political dilemmas and a feeling of retrogression, and agreed the financial system was not effective in responding to short-term shocks, which was why the debt issue continued to come up. The global community needed to come together to relieve pressures so financing discussions could evolve. Even with innovations, the fundamentals of economic policy remained orthodox and financial regulatory systems entrenched in paradigms favouring creditors and marginalizing the poor.

25. The repeated call for increased regular resources funding was a preoccupation. Such funding gave UNDP a multiplier function, enabling it to interact with governments and to provide analytics and a range of options for national policy choices, including those that have already aligned billions in investment in the Goals. UNDP acted on its commitment to focus on countries under the greatest stress, with the integrated national financing frameworks supporting 31 of the least developed countries. He appealed to donors to take the call for regular resources seriously. While some had maintained or expanded regular resources funding, others had cut back or stopped these contributions. This could lead to a model where UNDP simply implemented projects, but it had to be more than the sum of its parts, especially amid many exciting opportunities to learn and work with countries. He suggested reminding the public of how little taxpayer revenue was invested in international development cooperation and how much could be accomplished with sustained investment. Regular resources funding was almost the smallest issue embedded in a broader debate about climate finance and finance for the Goals.

26. He said that anti-corruption work in particular was in high demand, with UNDP working with 115 countries on related issues. Digitalization offered enormous opportunities in reaching people traditionally outside the modern financial system.

27. He concluded that in solving tough issues in financing for development, UNDP was systemically relevant, positioned to scale up successes and reach many countries otherwise not on the global radar. He stressed hope despite enormous challenges, speed in tackling them and the integral contributions that UNDP would continue to make.

II. Structured funding dialogue

28. The Director, Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, presented the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 (DP/2023/2026 and its annexes), in response to General Assembly resolution 75/233. The Officer-in-Charge, UNCDF presented the annual review of the financial situation of UNCDF (DP/2023/2027).

29. A group of delegations expressed deep concern regarding the continued decline in regular resources contributions in a time of record-breaking needs. They did not want UNDP to become a project organization and welcomed the shift to portfolios. UNDP should be able to design and implement integrated, innovative and transformative solutions, reach all who are vulnerable, uphold normative mandates and have sound fiduciary, oversight and management functions in support of Member States' development objectives. While underlining continued commitment to the funding compact and noting pressures on official development assistance, the group urged UNDP to deepen reporting on the results of unearmarked resources and to enhance the visibility of donors to regular resources at the country level. UNDP was asked for an explanation of a \$11.4 billion dollar surplus in 2022.

30. In other interventions, delegations appreciated harmonized reporting, sound financial management, increased programme delivery and efficiency gains. They said that a few countries cannot continue taking a disproportionately large responsibility for regular resources, which should reflect the multilateral character of the United Nations and economic realities. They asked how UNDP could maintain robust accountability structures in light of resource imbalances, and welcomed analysis conducted by UNDP on factors contributing to declining regular resources funding. One delegation encouraged UNDP and UNCDF to broaden the donor base through strategic approaches with the international financial institutions and private sector in addition to stronger engagement with traditional supporters. The delegation would continue to look towards UNDP to address Member State concerns about management oversight weaknesses and reaffirm its commitment to reform and organizational effectiveness.

31. In response, the Director, Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, stressed the importance of moving from projects to portfolios, which regular resources made possible. She

pointed to recent and notable improvements in attracting flexible funding. Regular resources remained key for upholding normative standards, strengthening transparency and accountability, leveraging other resources and supporting innovations, such as digital public infrastructure. UNDP sustained strong and high-quality oversight. While programme countries funded 25 per cent of the UNDP budget, there were increasing efforts to work with new strategic partners on regular and other resources as part of the diversification agenda. The UNDP #PartnersAtCore campaign was in its third round with an emphasis on partnership on the ground and a broad range of country-level partners.

32. The Chief Financial Officer reported that of the accumulated surplus of \$11.4 billion, \$329 million was regular resources. UNDP was obliged to maintain three to six months of regular resources as a reserve. Another \$5.1 billion had not yet been received and was mostly earmarked for programmes; \$5.3 billion was earmarked for programmes and included cost sharing, trust funds, reserves in line with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, reimbursable support and other activities. Another \$1 billion was ringfenced to cover after-service health insurance, end-of-service and other employee benefits liabilities.

33. The Officer-in-Charge, UNCDF, said the fund was the only United Nations organization mandated to provide loans and issue 100 per cent funded guarantees. In moving from funding to financing, it offered important models. The organization was proud of its results and hoped donors, programme countries and partners would fund and sustain them.

34. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/20 on the structured funding dialogue on financing the results of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025.

III. Country programmes and related matters

35. Following an overview by the Associate Administrator and an introduction by the regional directors for Africa and Asia and the Pacific, the Executive Board approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the country programme documents for Angola (DP/DCP/AGO/5), Benin (DP/DCP/BEN/4), Burundi (DP/DCP/BDI/5), Chad (DP/DCP/TCD/4), Equatorial Guinea (DP/DCP/GNQ/4), Lesotho (DP/DCP/LSO/4), Malawi (DP/DCP/MWI/4), Mauritania (DP/DCP/MRT/4), Papua New Guinea (DP/DCP/PNG/3), Senegal (DP/DCP/SEN/4) and Togo (DP/DCP/TGO/4).

36. The Board also approved the fifth two-year extension of the country programme for Afghanistan; the third two-year extension of the country programme for Burkina Faso; and the second one-year extension of the country programme for Myanmar (DP/2023/28).

UNFPA segment

Statement by the Executive Director

37. In her opening remarks ([on the UNFPA website](#)), the Executive Director stressed partnerships as crucial to achieving global goals for women and girls. Investments that made the greatest, most lasting contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals included the three transformative results of UNFPA: zero unmet need for family planning; zero preventable maternal deaths; and zero violence and harmful practices against women and girls. These were fundamental to sexual and reproductive health and human rights and well-being – and were at the heart of the work of UNFPA. Investment in sexual and reproductive health and rights had multiplier effects across all aspects of sustainable development. Family planning, for example, had long been considered a “best buy” for global development. UNFPA estimated that spending an additional \$79 billion on ending the unmet need for family planning and preventable maternal deaths in low- and middle-income countries between 2022 and 2030 would avert 400 million unplanned pregnancies, save the lives of 1 million women and generate \$660 billion in economic benefits.

38. Sexual and reproductive health were the foundation for gender equality, on which all Sustainable Development Goals depended, she continued. Yet powerful opposition to women's rights was well-organized and well-financed, threatening to reverse hard-won gains. It was vital to be just as bold, organized and unrelenting as those seeking to roll back the clock, discarding divisions to come together in the spirit of international cooperation and solidarity. The 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was a moment to find common ground for a common future. She described how UNFPA was bringing data and evidence to bear in pursuing equity and justice. Further, transformational national data partnerships could unlock a powerful "data dividend" conservatively estimated to bring in \$32 for every \$1 invested.

39. UNFPA was making every effort to manage risk effectively and resources wisely and draw on evaluative evidence, she said. More investments were urgently needed to reach the "three zeros." UNFPA was exploring innovative financing to scale up investments, including through impact bonds linked to adolescent sexual and reproductive health. With strong evidence of what worked, it was time to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals and the ICPD Programme of Action by standing up for the rights and freedoms of women and girls.

40. The Regional Director, Arab States, described another challenging year marked by natural disasters, conflict and protracted crises, and stressed the importance of resilience and investing in empowering women and girls. In Yemen, for example, UNFPA has supported 620,000 women and girls to access reproductive health services, 56,000 to have safe deliveries and 236,000 to gain services to mitigate and respond to gender-based violence, laying foundations for longer-term recovery. In a region with significant resources and vibrant young populations, investment in young people and women would unlock demographic assets and lead to a better future for all.

41. Delegations referred to the SDG Summit as an opportunity to accelerate momentum around the three transformative results of the UNFPA Strategic Plan. The 30th anniversary of the ICPD was a critical moment to accelerate the delivery of its promises. It was essential to adhere to funding compact principles to ensure predictable funding. Given gaps in concessional financing, partnerships with international financial institutions could generate more resources for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Mobilizing domestic resources would also contribute to achieving the three zeros. South-South and triangular cooperation could open further opportunities for innovation.

42. A group of delegations commended UNFPA for enhancing the effectiveness of resource allocations and supporting struggling communities. Transparent, effective funding frameworks should channel resources where needed most and ensure that plentiful human and natural resources become engines of a prosperous, sustainable world. They pointed to the transformative dividends of investment in sexual and reproductive health in realizing all Sustainable Development Goals. They appreciated the emphasis on data and invited other Member States to support these efforts. There was a rich tapestry of perspectives but restricting development finance based on these would widen gaps in multilateralism. The funding dialogue should be reframed to reflect an unwavering commitment to ambition, effectiveness, sustainability, equity and respect.

43. A group of delegations referred to regrettable polarization, pushback and barriers to progress, including climate change and persistent conflict. UNFPA had a vital mandate for important work that must continue. It should invest in high-impact, evidence-based solutions, such as expanding the midwifery workforce, and pursue gender-transformative approaches. The ICPD anniversary offered a significant milestone to reinvigorate work on fulfilling past commitments and creating a world where all people could exercise their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

44. Another group of delegations expressed appreciation to UNFPA for its close work with partner governments, other stakeholders and United Nations entities, which amplified its impact and demonstrated a collaborative spirit. UNFPA had noteworthy funding achievements, including high expenditure on reducing sexual and gender-based violence and other harmful practices.

However, significant investment gaps remained on the three transformative goals. More collective efforts were needed to ensure that UNFPA had sufficient, high-quality resources and it was suggested that UNFPA link resources and substantive results more clearly in reporting.

45. In individual interventions, delegations stressed the importance of regional reviews before the ICPD anniversary to assess progress, provide tailor-made solutions and further strengthen links to the 2030 Agenda. The review process could open new opportunities for building consensus and cooperation. Delegations commended UNFPA for scaling up its humanitarian response and strengthening resilient health systems and urged renewed focus on normative change and the social determinants of health. They appreciated an emphasis on tackling the root causes of gender-based violence but stressed that the phenomenon continued to grow, including through technology. They congratulated UNFPA for a healthy resource picture but noted challenges, and underlined innovative financing, domestic resource mobilization, a broader donor base and efforts to redress the imbalance in regular resources as central to fulfilling normative functions and providing fundamental services. They noted the value of prudent approaches to budget management and emphasized robust forecasting and a long-term strategic approach.

46. In response, the Executive Director pointed to the organization's move from funding to financing, and its work with partners to leverage both their resources and influence in society. UNFPA has made strides in innovation and advancing the normative agenda. Progress on domestic finance included family planning commitments with 43 governments. As part of the universal health coverage movement, UNFPA was engaging governments to dedicate greater domestic resources to health systems and sexual and reproductive health services. It continued to work with the international financial institutions. On South-South and triangular cooperation, UNFPA was collaborating with at least 130 countries on improved data, surgical skills for obstetric fistula and other issues.

47. The Executive Director called on Member States to engage in the ICPD anniversary, noting opportunities for sharing experiences at a time of demographic shifts. The anniversary was a chance to embrace people-centred development, with an emphasis on reducing polarization and helping countries adapt to changing realities such as burgeoning youth and ageing populations. Noting that population was about people, not just numbers, she said UNFPA focused on policy approaches, data and evidence, technical guidance and reaching marginalized groups. Gender-based violence required continuous and new actions, with UNFPA engaging with men and on positive masculinities, for example, and working towards zero rapes in conflict. She pointed to improved forecasting abilities, including through new artificial intelligence applications.

48. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) described the UNFPA youth and disability strategies. The Deputy Executive Director (Management) indicated a significant jump in humanitarian activities, with funding up by 150 per cent since 2018. Yet in some emergencies, appeals continued to fall short. UNFPA was improving preparedness for humanitarian crises, particularly by reorganizing its humanitarian response programme, updating standard operating procedures and prepositioning supplies.

Interactive dialogue

49. The President of the Executive Board introduced the interactive dialogue on addressing gender-based violence in a digital world, saying that while digital technology offered enormous potential, it also presented new spaces for the subjugation of women and girls. Addressing these concerns was crucial to upholding rights and choices.

50. The Executive Director recounted stories of women tracked through technologies by violent partners or chased from political leadership positions by online campaigns of abuse. With two in five women subjected to online violence, the issue demanded urgent action; UNFPA was stepping up with partners in more than 150 countries and territories. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence affected broader work on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

51. A representative of the Association for Progressive Communications stated that technology could increase participation and access to information and offered new tools for mobilization and activism. Yet technology-facilitated gender-based violence contributed to making societies less peaceful and less democratic. It was both a cause and effect of gender inequality. Some subgroups at heightened risk included young women and girls, women in public life, racial and other minorities, migrants and people with disabilities. Gender-based violence occurs across an online and offline continuum with the same root causes. Women must participate in creating technology and the laws and policies regulating it; the United Nations had a key role in discussing principles to guide the Internet and standards.

52. The representative of another non-governmental organization, Derechos Digitalis, emphasized that combating technology-facilitated gender-based violence requires multiple measures and the strengthening of institutional responses, legal and non-legal. States have obligations under human rights laws. Legislation needs to be rights-based. Some efforts have mainly focused on broad criminal statutes that were ineffective and could put victims at greater risk. Legal responses should take a human rights-based, survivor-centric, intersectional perspective; consider the range of criminalization and investigative powers; and uphold the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality.

53. The UNFPA technical adviser on gender-based violence described how technology had broken down barriers and increased access to high-quality services and information. However, misuse and poor design meant that technology had also reinforced and deepened inequalities and harmful norms. UNFPA integrated work on technology-facilitated gender-based violence across its broader programme on gender-based violence to meet the needs of survivors of violence in all spaces and contexts. It worked to increase the digital literacy of practitioners and decision-makers to better understand the effects of technology and the ways in which it could facilitate the perpetration of violence; to strengthen response mechanisms; and continue to work to transform harmful gender and social norms to prevent the perpetration of violence through technology. UNFPA supported data governance mechanisms to ensure transparency and data protection; and standard-setting in technology design, rights-based laws and policies and protection and redress for survivors. It brought together feminists, youth, digital rights advocates, academia and business and technology actors to respond to the multiple dimensions of technology-facilitated violence.

54. Delegations repeatedly thanked UNFPA for its leadership on technology-facilitated gender-based violence. They expressed support for the “bodyright” campaign and welcomed the guidance on the safe and ethical use of technology. They regretted that online gender-based violence continued to be seen as less serious than violence offline. They stressed the importance of the global digital compact, the urgent need for digital entities to commit to preventing and correcting technology-facilitated violence, and for working with industry on a safer digital ecosystem and innovative technological solutions. Gender equality and non-discrimination principles should be embedded in every aspect of the design and development of new technologies. More should be done to prevent gender-based violence and bring perpetrators to justice. They asked about synergies between UNFPA and other United Nations organizations in combating technology-facilitated gender-based violence and gathering data and statistics.

55. The panellists underscored that gender should be a key consideration in the global digital compact. They pointed to tools to combat technology-facilitated violence, noting that many such tools still do not work in languages beyond English. With young people the highest users of technology and facing increased risks, UNFPA has integrated technology into comprehensive sexuality education and worked with youth to design technologies that are user-friendly, safe and ethical.

56. In conclusion, the UNFPA Executive Director stressed the organization’s important convening role and commitment to creating inclusive and safe spaces for debate and action, bringing together diverse stakeholders.

IV. Structured funding dialogue

57. The Deputy Executive Director (Management) and the Director, Division of Communication and Strategic Partnerships, presented the report on the structured funding dialogue, 2022-2023 (DP/FPA/2023/8), in response to General Assembly resolution 75/233, to further improve the functioning and effectiveness of structured dialogues on how to fund the development results agreed in the strategic plans, including through the implementation of the United Nations funding compact commitments.

58. A group of delegations stressed that unearmarked, multi-year contributions were key; decreasing contributions to regular resources was a great concern, especially amid negative trends in the Sustainable Development Goals. UNFPA had to respond to crises, provide high-quality support and essential services, uphold its normative mandate and have sound fiduciary, oversight and management functions. It was important to implement the funding compact. The group appreciated the initial steps to better report on results achieved using regular resources as it was increasingly difficult to advocate for unearmarked resources. The group emphasized moving beyond the same discussions to find solutions to improve funding quality and predictability.

59. Delegations stressed that UNFPA had maintained a strong financial position. It was among the United Nations entities with the highest portions of other resources from pooled funds and joint activities, although there were some concerns related to decreased expenditure on joint activities. They commended a diversified resource mobilization strategy involving the international financial institutions, the private sector and domestic resources.

60. The Deputy Executive Director (Management) said there had been progress on increasing the visibility of regular resources-financed results, including through dedicated communications. UNFPA remained keenly aware that all results depended on regular resources funding for institutional robustness, knowledge and core competencies. UNFPA was actively campaigning to expand its diverse regular resources donor base from 100 to 150 members. Every dollar counted as did the political signal from broad support.

61. The Director, Division of Communication and Strategic Partnerships cited improved visibility at the country level for results from regular and other resources through work with regional directors and country offices. The UNFPA strategic investment fund provided regular resource funding to catalyse new resources and partnerships. Innovative financing such as development impact bonds depended on regular resource funding to get started.

62. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/21 on the report on the UNFPA structured funding dialogue, 2022-2023.

V. Country programmes and related matters

63. Following an overview by the Deputy Executive Director (Programme) and introductions by the regional directors for the Arab States, East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa, the Executive Board approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the UNFPA country programme documents for Angola (DP/FPA/CPD/AGO/9), Benin (DP/FPA/CPD/BEN/10), Burundi (DP/FPA/CPD/BDI/9), Chad (DP/FPA/CPD/TCD/8), Equatorial Guinea (DP/FPA/CPD/GNQ/8), Lesotho (DP/FPA/CPD/LSO/8), Libya (DP/FPA/CPD/LBY/2), Malawi (DP/FPA/CPD/MWI/9), Mauritania (DP/FPA/CPD/MTR/9), Senegal (DP/FPA/CPD/SEN/9) and Togo (DP/FPA/CPD/TGO/8).

64. The Board also took note of the first one-year extension of the country programme for Sierra Leone as approved by the Executive Director and approved the second one-year extension of the country programme for Myanmar, the third, two-year extension of the country programme for Burkina Faso, the third one-year extension of the country programme for the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea, and the fourth, two-year extension of the country programme for Afghanistan (DP/FPA/2023/9).

UNOPS segment

VI. United Nations Office for Project Services

Statement by the Executive Director

65. In his opening remarks ([available on the UNOPS website](#)), the Executive Director said that despite challenges, the reform journey was progressing well. More than half of actions in the comprehensive response plan were complete; the majority of outstanding actions should be concluded by the end of 2023. Remaining items were longer-term, including a business transformation and digitalization programme to fundamentally change how UNOPS operates. A third-party culture assessment was nearly finished as the baseline for a renewed organizational culture. He proposed mainstreaming these changes within the implementation time frame of the renewed Strategic Plan. UNOPS had clarified its demand-side role in enabling financing for development, which would involve no new activities, and the former Sustainable Investments in Infrastructure and Innovation (S3i) office in Helsinki, Finland would close by the end of 2023. He recognized the trust placed in UNOPS, vowing not to take it for granted.

66. Actions to achieve the objectives of the newly endorsed UNOPS Strategic Plan were under way. Internal coordination would be key along with measuring the impact of services under the expanded results framework. Dedicated structures at the highest levels were being established to focus expertise and drive contributions to the objectives of the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda. The process of appointing two Deputy Executive Directors was in motion. Demand for support remained strong, with recent agreements on 60 new projects and extended existing agreements on a further 90 projects in over 60 locations.

67. The Executive Director presented the UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium, 2024-2025 (DP/OPS/2023/7) and the findings of the annual statistical report on United Nations procurement (DP/OPS/2023/9).

68. Delegations said that UNOPS had gone through a year of steadying the ship and charting a path forward. The Executive Board had endorsed the revised Strategic Plan and provided guidance on the future of S3i, the comprehensive response plan and the UNOPS reserves. It had requested UNOPS to distribute all excess reserves accumulated after 31 December 2021, and to propose a methodology and time frame for distributing excess reserves accumulated during this budget period. In exercising its mandate, the Board found compromise by focusing on an institutionally and culturally reformed UNOPS, adequate redress for the S3i case, accountability for those culpable and a path forward. UNOPS cooperation, responsiveness, the speed of reforms and steady management were critical.

69. On the comprehensive response plan, delegations urged implementation of lagging areas, particularly governance and management. They recognized the inability of UNOPS to absorb an \$11.8 million tranche and its request to carry over parts to the next biennium. UNOPS had made commendable efforts to distribute excess reserves with up to 41 per cent refunded to paying entities, and urged UNOPS to continue to accelerate this process. They took note of the proposed methodology for the distribution of reserves for the 2022-2023 biennium and urged UNOPS to make data related to its progress in fee generation and refunds available on public platforms. On the budget estimates for 2022-2025, they acknowledged increased management costs and fees and emphasized the importance of net-zero revenues. They emphasized the importance of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and stated that the Board would act as deemed fit. Finally, they reiterated the need for UNOPS to report to the Board whenever possible on the ongoing process of recovering S3i funds and holding perpetrators accountable.

70. A group of delegations applauded the determination of the UNOPS workforce in the face of internal and global challenges; appreciated positive strides in reforms; and underlined the importance of a non-programmatic, demand-driven mandate anchored in United Nations values and norms. It was imperative to focus the UNOPS portfolio on mandated areas of infrastructure, procurement and project management services where it had valuable knowledge and experience, and expertise was needed. Since the S3i and management crisis had highlighted major structural deficiencies that would shape engagement priorities for some time, clarity and transparency around finances and decision-making were key to rebuilding trust, along with achieving zero net revenue. The group appreciated the focus on a safe, inclusive, responsive organizational culture, recognizing that cultural change required consistent, dedicated, long-term efforts. It welcomed progress on the comprehensive response plan but called for accelerated action to complete it.

71. A group of delegations said that UNOPS remained a critical partner in expanding implementation capacity to achieve development aspirations and commended decisions to renew this focus. These delegations emphasized the importance of updates to the comprehensive response plan, implementation of the 2021 recommendations of the Board of Auditors and the distribution of excess reserves. Appreciating the pace of change and commitment in line with agreed timelines, they took note of progress on monthly briefings and encouraged a third-party review at the end of the response plan. They welcomed the measures in the Strategic Plan to mitigate strategic risks as well as more information on strategic internal investment and digital transformation. On the annual statistical report (DP/OPS/2023/9), they welcomed a 19 per cent increase in procurement from the least developed countries and encouraged a continued expansion in procurement from developing countries.

72. Delegations endorsed a renewed focus on the core mandate of UNOPS. They appreciated efforts to show how UNOPS contributed to the 2030 Agenda through implementation for partners, and how it was realigned with United Nations norms and values. Positive steps to address major deficiencies included the independence of the ethics office and of the internal audit and investigations group. The Board needed assurances on implementation of the comprehensive response plan; and governance, risk management and internal controls must be fully satisfactory. UNOPS should not expand outside its core mandate, including in financing for development. They asked for clarity on challenges in implementing the response plan and on what UNOPS would do and not do vis-à-vis its original mandate, including in terms of the Strategic Plan requirement for a clear Executive Board mandate to guide work on financing for development.

73. The Executive Director replied that UNOPS had a deep commitment to deliver everything in the comprehensive response plan and go beyond it, with a management review of additional reforms under way. The reform agenda did not end with the response plan. UNOPS has no sense of complacency or expectation that delegations would immediately go back to normal engagement. Some members had already lifted UNOPS from the suspension list; he hoped that all would do so, recognizing that this depended on remaining accountable, transparent and committed to reforms.

74. On financing for development, UNOPS had learned from past mistakes and would not engage on impact investment, blended finance, de-risking investment or any other activity on the supply side. It had communicated its work on the demand side to be transparent and accountable because even though this was an existing area of work, it involved a reputational issue. UNOPS provided technical assistance on the demand side and had tried to outline this in practical terms; a monthly meeting could be organized to share more details. He stressed the importance of an enabling context for finance and how UNOPS often had a clear understanding of bankable projects, which helped to design projects that could be funded by others. He reiterated that UNOPS expanded partners' capacity for implementation based on their requests.

Interactive dialogue

75. The President of the Executive Board introduced an integrated dialogue on infrastructure for energy: pathways towards a just, green and resilient transition.

76. The Executive Director said that there were huge gaps in progress under Sustainable Development Goal 7, on affordable and clean energy. One in three people, mostly in the poorest regions, still lacked clean cooking facilities. In 2021, almost 700 million people had no electricity, largely in sub-Saharan Africa. This had serious consequences across the Goals. The question was not whether but how to provide access to energy for all, and to transition from fossil fuels in a just and equitable way while sustaining jobs and economic opportunities. Progress was moving faster in parts of the energy system like electricity generation; the pace was slower for transport and industry, heating and cooling. While developing countries needed \$1.7 trillion in renewable energy investment annually, they had attracted just \$500 billion in 2022. Only 3 per cent of energy investments worldwide went to Africa even though it had 60 per cent of the best solar resources. Infrastructure was key to the energy transition and at the core of the UNOPS mandate, along with technical assistance to make renewable energy projects more bankable so that demand met supply.

77. A speaker described how her country's energy transition had started in the 1970s when it invested heavily in renewable sources. Today, 99.4 per cent of the population had access to electricity, which was 100 per cent renewable for 300 days per year. This achievement was due to enlightened leadership, a national sense of ownership, strong institutions and foresight. Globally, the transition required investments, public-private partnerships and alignment with the international financial institutions; having UNOPS as a connector and enabler would help many countries make this shift. Member States had a responsibility to ensure that projects were financially viable and attractive to investors; they should closely examine what they were doing to fulfil climate and Sustainable Development Goals commitments.

78. Another delegation expressed appreciation for the dialogue's understanding of the centrality of energy to all Goals and its emphasis on Africa. Continuous movement towards cleaner energy was the only viable path. Countries should help each other to reduce harm to the environment, the sooner the better, while respecting the diverse realities in which people lived. Africa's two most important problems, poverty and climate, were both connected to energy; every effort was needed to get the mix right. Towards that end, he welcomed exchanges of knowledge and experiences with other countries. A just transition implied not relying only on market forces as otherwise major inequalities could result.

79. A speaker described how her country had proposed hydrogen and ammonia-based energy technologies for energy security, economic efficiency and lower environmental impact. The country had launched its first hydrogen strategy in 2017 and focused on accelerating supply chains. Other important initiatives were thermopower technologies, carbon capture and storage, and carbon capture utilization and storage. There must be realistic pathways to transition suitable to each country's situation, and UNOPS, in cooperation with United Nations partners, should develop studies tailored to country situations. Her country had tried to show what was possible and was investing domestically and internationally, with an emphasis on investment, not assistance, since the returns would benefit everyone.

80. Another speaker said that small island developing States were scaling up mitigation with ambitious targets, such as 100 per cent renewables by 2025 in Samoa. Technology should be accessible to all vulnerable States; consultations were crucial for national ownership. UNOPS in particular could work with national governments on operationalizing projects. Talk about a just transition should centre on what countries were transitioning, since even if all 39 members of the Alliance of Small Island States went to 100 per cent renewables by 2025, the needle would not move. The biggest economies with lower levels of renewable energy needed to be most ambitious. Small island developing States needed partners because for them, climate change was an issue of survival.

81. Delegations said that people-centred approaches and clean energy were terms backed by international consensus, but this was not the case for renewable energy. Many people did not have access to renewable energy even as they needed electricity today. Delegations asked where UNOPS saw its niche and competitive advantage in work on energy, and if it had learned from evaluating past work in the face of accelerating demand. Given significant support required for national energy ambitious, they asked about stakeholder coordination and synergy, and suggested that UNOPS promote South-South cooperation. They commended the enhanced implementation capacity of the United Nations towards transition and underscored coordination with UN-Energy. UNOPS added value through its expertise in infrastructure and project services and should continue to assess this to retain focus on its original mandate.

82. The Executive Director said that increasing demand for clean energy came from partners. UNOPS did not design national strategies or provide finance but knew how to implement projects originated by others. In some cases, it provided technical assistance in designing high-quality, bankable projects. UNOPS worked in highly fragile contexts that were not a priority for the private sector. Even if policies, national will and funding were in place, they still needed quality infrastructure and technical capacity. All countries should be able to decide their options and have implementation capacity and resources. He announced that UNOPS planned to join UN Energy and was working on clean energy procurement and a catalogue of renewable energy solutions where procurement played a fundamental role.

83. In closing, the Executive Director said that UNOPS had reviewed all projects and its new enhanced evaluation framework would go further in gauging impact. UNOPS had shown a willingness to implement projects in collaboration; other organizations had demonstrated a willingness to get the best expertise from UNOPS on clean energy.

84. The President of the Executive Board concluded the integrated dialogue by encouraging UNOPS to continue bringing forward concrete examples of its contributions.

85. The Executive Board adopted decision 2023/22 on UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium 2024-2025; decision 2023/23 on the comprehensive response plan in response to the recommendations of the two independent third-party reviews on UNOPS; and decision 2023/24 on the annual statistical report on the procurement activities of United Nations system organizations, 2022.
