



UNOPS



Report of the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-WOMEN, and WFP

“UN80: System-wide Perspectives and Strategic Considerations”

5 June 2026

I. Opening

1. The Acting President of the Executive Board of UN-Women, in his capacity as Chair of the 2026 Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards, welcomed participants and highlighted the Joint Meeting as a valuable opportunity for the Executive Boards and the principals of the United Nations funds, programmes and entities to discuss issues of common concern and exchange perspectives on system-wide challenges. Referring to the theme of the meeting, “UN80: System-wide Perspectives and Strategic Considerations,” he emphasized the importance of ensuring that the United Nations development system remains fit for purpose in an increasingly complex global environment and highlighted the need for strengthened coherence, effectiveness and strategic alignment across the system. He underscored the complementary mandates of the participating entities and the need to reduce fragmentation, leverage synergies and maximize impact at the country level. Stressing the important role of Executive Boards in providing strategic guidance and oversight, he called for constructive engagement by Member States to help shape evidence-based and credible reform proposals under the UN80 Initiative, with a view to strengthening delivery and results across the United Nations system.
2. In her opening remarks, the Deputy Secretary-General emphasized that the UN80 Initiative builds on mandates and commitments already established by Member States through United Nations development system reform, the 2030 Agenda, and the Pact for the Future. She underscored the need to strengthen efficiency, coherence, and effectiveness across the United Nations system in response to growing global challenges and resource constraints, highlighting ongoing work on shared services, country team configuration, the regional reset, expertise-on-demand mechanisms, and the humanitarian reset. She stressed the central role of Resident Coordinators and integrated country-level responses aligned with national priorities, while noting that proposals under consideration, including potential mergers, were intended to improve mandate delivery rather than alter mandates. The Deputy Secretary-General emphasized the importance of sustainable financing, including stronger partnerships with international financial institutions, regional organizations and the private sector, and continued Member State engagement and oversight throughout the reform process. While acknowledging progress achieved through United Nations

development system reform and operational efficiencies, she argued that further reforms were necessary to ensure that the United Nations remains fit for purpose and capable of delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

3. Speaking next, the Executive Director of UN-Women reaffirmed the organization's commitment to advancing gender equality and women's rights and highlighted progress achieved in supporting legislative reforms, ending violence against women and girls, advancing the women, peace and security agenda, expanding humanitarian assistance, and promoting women's economic empowerment. She emphasized that multilateralism remains essential to achieving these objectives and expressed strong support for the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative. Stressing the importance of integrating gender equality across all reform workstreams, she underscored the need to strengthen the United Nations gender equality architecture, ensure meaningful engagement of civil society and women-led organizations, and maintain dedicated gender expertise throughout the system. She further highlighted UN-Women's engagement in discussions on humanitarian reform, peace and security, country team configurations, and data initiatives to ensure that gender-responsive approaches are embedded across the reform agenda. Regarding the assessment of a potential merger between UN-Women and UNFPA, she noted that the exercise seeks to determine whether alternative institutional arrangements could enhance coherence, impact and effectiveness in advancing gender equality and women's rights while safeguarding existing mandates and normative frameworks. She emphasized that country-level results should remain the primary measure of success, acknowledged Member States' request for alternative options to a merger, and reaffirmed UN-Women's commitment to engaging openly and constructively with Member States throughout the process.
4. As the second principal to speak, the Administrator of UNDP emphasized that addressing today's interconnected development, humanitarian, climate, governance and peacebuilding challenges requires integrated responses and a more coherent United Nations system. Highlighting UNDP's role as an integrator and platform for system-wide collaboration, he pointed to examples of joint work on sustainable development financing, climate action, crisis response and recovery, including through partnerships with other United Nations entities and support to nationally-led development priorities. He underscored the importance of strengthening coherence across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, supporting transitions in crisis-affected settings, and expanding shared services and common operational arrangements to improve efficiency and effectiveness across the system. Expressing support for the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative, he stressed that reform efforts should be driven by delivery, evidence, value for money and country-level impact, while preserving national ownership, respecting mandates and maintaining strong oversight by Executive Boards. In this regard, he emphasized the continued importance of country programme documents (CPDs), derived from and aligned with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, as a key mechanism for ensuring Member State oversight and accountability, noting that 100% compliance of UNDP's

CPDs in this regard. He highlighted the importance of Expertise on Demand, as a practical mechanism that guarantees governments access to the best the UN has to offer without having to build duplicative infrastructure. He concluded that a less fragmented, more coherent and effective United Nations development system would be better positioned to deliver results in support of national priorities and sustainable development.

5. In her remarks, the Executive Director of UNFPA reaffirmed the organization's support for the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative and its commitment to contributing evidence and analysis to inform Member State deliberations on reform. She highlighted UNFPA's engagement across multiple reform workstreams, including country-level coordination, humanitarian response, regional support arrangements, expertise-on-demand initiatives, and efforts to strengthen the use of demographic data, population analysis and foresight across the United Nations system. She emphasized the importance of preserving specialized technical expertise, normative functions, human rights-based approaches and sustained country presence to ensure effective delivery of sexual and reproductive health services, gender-based violence prevention and response, and broader population and development objectives, underlying that impact is not just about money spent. Referring to discussions on a potential merger between UNFPA and UN-Women, she stressed that the assessment was intended to examine future institutional arrangements rather than address performance concerns and noted that both organizations were developing alternative options to strengthen coherence and impact within existing frameworks. She underscored the importance of safeguarding mandates, governance arrangements, operational continuity, financial sustainability and accountability to Member States, including through country programme documents, while reaffirming UNFPA's unique role in advancing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. She concluded that the success of reform should ultimately be measured by its ability to improve support to Member States and deliver results for the people the United Nations serve.
6. The Executive Director of UNOPS similarly reaffirmed the organization's commitment to the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative and emphasized the need for a more coherent, coordinated and collaborative United Nations system capable of responding effectively to complex and interconnected global challenges. He stressed that reform efforts should preserve mandates while strengthening collaboration, avoiding unnecessary duplication, excessive competition, and the creation of monopoly powers or incumbent structures, and advocated for a marketplace approach, rooted in mandates, to enhance efficiency, agility and effectiveness. Referring to discussions on United Nations country team reconfiguration, he highlighted efforts to strengthen strategic, needs-based planning and develop more adaptive, fit-for-purpose operating models. He emphasized that the Resident Coordinator should be well-positioned to strategically plan with host governments and United Nations country teams to identify and mobilize required skills and expertise through the Cooperation Framework. He further highlighted the need to shift

towards deployment of relevant expertise, on demand, where and when needed from outside the country, and that United Nations country teams shall work more as hub-like configurations. He underscored the potential of the Unified Services Roadmap and common back-office arrangements to maximize operational efficiencies and reduce duplication across the system. This requires sustained behavioral change to shift organizational dynamics toward systemic buy-in. In addition, he expressed support for greater integration of supply chains and operational services, emphasizing the importance of leveraging the comparative advantages of different entities, informed by transparent data and cost-benefit analysis. He concluded that increased agility, stronger collaboration and more horizontal ways of working would be essential to improving efficiency, effectiveness and impact, and to rebuilding trust in the United Nations system.

7. The Executive Director of UNICEF reaffirmed the organization's support for the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative and emphasized that reform efforts should be guided by their ability to improve results for children. She highlighted measures undertaken by UNICEF to increase efficiency and effectiveness, including reducing operational costs, modernizing its operating model, expanding shared services, and strengthening collaboration with other United Nations entities. Stressing the importance of accountability to Member States and national governments, she underscored the continued role of Executive Boards in overseeing country programmes, resource allocation and mandate implementation, while emphasizing the need to preserve strong alignment between country programme documents and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. She further highlighted the importance of a strong Resident Coordinator system, noting that coordination and operational delivery are complementary functions requiring both system-wide coherence and specialized agency expertise. The Executive Director pointed to practical examples of inter-agency cooperation, including common premises, common back offices, integrated humanitarian supply chains, data initiatives, and partnerships in health, nutrition, social protection and humanitarian response. She concluded that reforms should strengthen coherence, accountability and efficiency while remaining focused on delivering better outcomes for children, particularly those affected by poverty, conflict, displacement, disability and climate-related challenges.
8. The Acting Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) reaffirmed the organization's support for the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative and emphasized that reform efforts should build on the strengths and achievements of the United Nations system while addressing growing needs in an increasingly constrained resource environment. Highlighting WFP's operational experience in humanitarian emergencies, he stressed the importance of improving both efficiency and effectiveness, including through organizational streamlining, greater prioritization, and a stronger focus on helping countries build resilience and reduce long-term dependence on external assistance. He underscored the value of partnerships and system-wide collaboration, pointing to ongoing work on integrated supply chains, common services and data interoperability as practical

examples of reforms that can enhance collective impact. The Acting Executive Director also emphasized the need for a cultural shift across the United Nations system towards greater collaboration and a stronger focus on shared outcomes. He called for candid discussions with Member States on risk-sharing and the operational consequences of funding reductions, and stressed the importance of more flexible, predictable financing and stronger incentives for cooperation across entities. He concluded that a more coherent and collaborative United Nations system would be better positioned to deliver effective results in support of vulnerable populations.

II. Session 1: Governance, mandates, and system-wide coherence

9. Introducing the first session, the President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS emphasized the significant contributions of United Nations operational entities in delivering results at the country level and underscored the importance of direct engagement between Member States and the executive heads of the organizations. Drawing on observations from Executive Board field visits, he noted both the strengths of inter-agency cooperation and the continuing challenges posed by fragmentation within the United Nations system. He encouraged Member States to approach discussions on the UN80 Initiative with a focus on practical improvements to effectiveness, coherence and impact rather than institutional processes alone, stressing that current global challenges do not permit complacency or inaction. The President also highlighted the importance of broad and inclusive consultations with Member States on reform proposals, including discussions related to possible mergers, and noted ongoing cooperation among the Executive Boards in facilitating such exchanges. Referring to governance arrangements, he observed that the existence of multiple governing bodies and parallel board processes may itself merit examination as part of broader reform efforts, while reaffirming that Member States would play the central role in determining the future direction of the reform agenda.

10. After opening the floor, delegations raised the following observations:

➤ Delegations broadly welcomed the UN80 Initiative and expressed support for reforms aimed at strengthening the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and responsiveness of the United Nations system. Many emphasized that reforms should ultimately be judged by their ability to improve results and impact at the country level and ensure that the organization remains fit for purpose in an increasingly complex global environment.

➤ A strong emphasis was placed on strengthening system-wide coherence and coordination while preserving the comparative advantages, specialized expertise, mandates and governance structures of individual entities. Several delegations stressed that coherence should not be equated with uniformity and that reforms should enhance

complementarity and collaboration rather than pursue consolidation as an objective in itself.

➤ Delegations repeatedly underscored the importance of preserving mandates and ensuring that reform efforts strengthen, rather than weaken, existing programmatic capacities and normative functions. Particular attention was given to safeguarding specialized expertise and maintaining support in areas such as development, humanitarian action, gender equality, women's empowerment, human rights, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

➤ While many delegations expressed openness to considering structural reform options, they emphasized that decisions should be supported by robust evidence, comprehensive cost-benefit analyses, assessments of risks and operational implications, and careful consideration of alternative approaches. Several delegations stressed the importance of preserving country presence, programme continuity and service delivery throughout any transition process.

➤ Delegations highlighted the central role of Executive Boards and Member States in providing governance, oversight and strategic direction throughout the reform process. Many stressed that proposals affecting mandates, governance arrangements, operational models or accountability mechanisms should be subject to meaningful consultation with Executive Boards and informed decision-making by Member States.

➤ Strong calls were made for transparency, consultation and evidence-based decision-making. Delegations emphasized the need for timely information-sharing, comprehensive analysis, regular reporting and meaningful opportunities for Member State engagement as reform proposals continue to evolve.

➤ Several delegations underscored the importance of strengthening country-level coordination and leadership, including through the Resident Coordinator system. Support was expressed for ensuring that reforms reinforce country-level coherence, improve responsiveness to national priorities, and make greater use of field perspectives and country-level feedback in shaping reform decisions.

➤ Delegations emphasized that reform efforts should respect national ownership and align with the priorities of programme countries. Many stressed that reforms should support nationally-led development pathways, strengthen local institutions, and avoid disruption to cooperation frameworks, country programmes and ongoing operations.

- A number of delegations highlighted the importance of ensuring that reform efforts remain focused on supporting developing countries and countries in special situations, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Calls were made for reforms that strengthen the development pillar, reinforce humanitarian and emergency response capacities, and improve outcomes for vulnerable populations.
- Several delegations noted the importance of assessing reform proposals within the broader context of ongoing United Nations reform efforts, including the humanitarian reset, regional reset, Resident Coordinator system reforms and country team reconfiguration processes. Delegations emphasized the need to understand the cumulative operational, financial and human resource implications of these interconnected initiatives.
- Concerns were raised regarding the financial environment facing the United Nations system and the implications of resource constraints for mandate implementation and country-level delivery. Delegations stressed that efficiency gains should support stronger programmatic impact, preserve field-level capacities and avoid placing additional burdens on programme countries.
- Delegations sought further clarification on the practical implications of proposed reforms, including governance arrangements, accountability mechanisms, transition costs, operational risks, impacts on staff and country-level delivery, preservation of technical expertise, preparedness of governments for potential changes, and measures to ensure that reforms produce tangible improvements for the populations served by the United Nations.

III. Session 2: Operational efficiency, delivery models and partnerships

11. Opening the second session, the President of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme emphasized that rising global needs and declining resources require a more coherent, coordinated and efficient United Nations system. Noting the interconnected nature of challenges such as food insecurity, health, education, social protection and infrastructure, she stressed the importance of integrated approaches, stronger collaboration across entities, and greater coherence across the humanitarian-development nexus. She highlighted ongoing efforts among the Rome-based agencies to advance more coordinated and nationally-led approaches, aimed at reducing fragmentation and increasing collective impact, while emphasizing that efficiency should serve as a means to improve results rather than create additional bureaucracy. She underscored the importance of flexibility, adaptation to country contexts, particularly in fragile and crisis-affected settings, and reaffirmed the commitment of the WFP Executive Board to strengthening system-wide coherence, operational efficiency and localized delivery in order to better serve vulnerable populations.

12. Speaking next, the Vice-President of the Executive Board of UNICEF emphasized that reform efforts should ultimately be measured by their ability to improve outcomes for children, particularly those who are most vulnerable and hardest to reach. He underscored the importance of operational efficiency, including through shared services, integrated supply chains, and strengthened data systems, while stressing that reforms must be evidence-based, responsive to country contexts, and preserve mandates, accountability, and oversight. He highlighted the continued importance of country programme documents and predictable, flexible financing in supporting effective delivery and accountability for results. He also called for clear evidence of the impact of system-wide reforms and emphasized the need for transparent engagement of Member States and Executive Boards in decisions affecting governance, mandates, country presence, and financing arrangements.

13. During the interactive discussion that followed, delegations raised the following points:

➤ Delegations broadly welcomed the Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative and ongoing efforts to strengthen the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the United Nations development system. Many emphasized that reforms should enhance country-level impact, reduce duplication and administrative costs, and enable entities to deliver more effectively in a context of growing needs and constrained resources.

➤ Strong support was expressed for deeper inter-agency collaboration, including through shared services, common back-office functions, joint programming, pooled procurement, integrated logistics and supply-chain arrangements. Delegations encouraged building on existing operational efficiencies while ensuring that reforms remained practical, evidence-based and focused on improving development and humanitarian outcomes.

➤ Several delegations underscored the importance of maintaining strong country-level coordination and leadership. Support was expressed for strengthening the role of Resident Coordinators and ensuring that reforms enhanced the responsiveness of United Nations country teams while respecting national ownership and alignment with programme country priorities.

➤ Discussions on structural reform proposals, including possible mergers among United Nations entities, continued to attract significant attention. While many delegations expressed openness to exploring merger options as a means of improving coherence and efficiency, they stressed that any such arrangements should be supported by thorough analysis and preserve existing mandates, technical expertise, governance arrangements and programmatic and implementation capacities, particularly in areas related to gender equality, women's empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and humanitarian action.

➤ Delegations emphasized that reform efforts should remain people-centred and continue advancing the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Particular attention was drawn to the need to protect support for vulnerable populations, strengthen localization, promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and reinforce linkages across humanitarian, development and resilience efforts.

➤ Concerns were raised regarding the financial environment facing the United Nations system. Delegations highlighted the importance of ensuring that efficiency gains translated into greater programmatic impact and called for reforms that maximize the use of available resources while preserving field-level capacities and technical expertise.

➤ A number of delegations stressed the importance of transparency and meaningful engagement with Member States throughout ongoing reform processes. Calls were made for timely information-sharing, opportunities for consultation through governing bodies, and regular updates on proposals being considered under the UN80 Initiative, the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review and related reform processes.

➤ Delegations sought further information on the practical implications of proposed reforms, including governance arrangements, operational impacts, safeguards for specialized functions and service delivery models, the preservation of technical expertise, accountability mechanisms, and measures to ensure that reforms result in tangible improvements at the country level.

14. In response, the Executive Director of UN-Women thanked Member States for their constructive engagement and reaffirmed UN-Women's commitment to supporting the UN80 reform process. She noted delegations' calls for ambitious reforms, stronger system-wide coherence, and continued efforts to reduce fragmentation and duplication while enhancing collective impact. Emphasizing that the success of reforms should be measured by improved results for those most at risk, she highlighted the important role of Executive Boards in guiding the reform agenda, including discussions on potential mergers. She stressed that reforms should strengthen the United Nations' ability to deliver for women and girls and uphold international commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment, and reiterated UN-Women's readiness to support a stronger, more effective, and coherent United Nations system.

15. The Executive Director of UNFPA thanked Member States for their comments and emphasized the importance of collaboration across the United Nations system in advancing shared objectives. She acknowledged the contributions of partner entities and underscored that, while mandates may differ, the success of the United Nations depends on its ability to work together effectively. She concluded by recalling the commitment to leave no one

behind and highlighted the importance of ensuring inclusion and attention to the needs of persons in all their diversity.

16. The Administrator of UNDP thanked Member States for their comments and emphasized the importance of listening to Member States throughout the reform process. He acknowledged questions regarding timelines and stressed that established governance, oversight, and intergovernmental processes must be respected to ensure meaningful Member State engagement in decision-making. He also underscored the continued importance of looking at the reform through the lens of delivery, noting that the UN is at its best when it works as one.
17. The Executive Director of UNOPS thanked Member States for their guidance and emphasized the importance of ensuring that their views inform the next steps of ongoing reform efforts. He highlighted the significant progress already achieved in delivering results despite challenging circumstances, including advances in United Nations development system reform, strengthened Resident Coordinator leadership, enhanced coherence within United Nations country teams, and increased collaboration among United Nations entities. He noted that reform is an ongoing process that is already taking place across the system, including within individual organizations, and expressed confidence that any future country team reconfigurations or merger processes could be managed in a way that avoids disruption to delivery.
18. The representative of UNICEF, speaking on behalf of the Executive Director, thanked Member States for their constructive and insightful interventions and emphasized that the success of the UN80 Initiative should ultimately be measured not by the ambition of its architecture but by the United Nations system's collective ability to deliver results for vulnerable populations, particularly those furthest behind. The representative also expressed UNICEF's commitment to continuing discussions with Member States on UN80 and United Nations development system reform through the Executive Board.
19. The representative of WFP thanked Member States for their comments and emphasized the importance of both sharing progress on reforms and efficiencies and listening to Member States' perspectives. The representative highlighted the tangible reforms undertaken by WFP, including in collaboration with other United Nations entities, and reaffirmed the organization's commitment to continuing these efforts. The representative also expressed appreciation for the guidance and oversight provided by Member States and governing bodies throughout the reform process.
20. Closing the session, the Acting President of the Executive Board of UN-Women thanked participants for their active engagement in the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards and commended the spirit of collaboration and candid dialogue that had characterized the discussions. He noted that these exchanges reflected a shared commitment to a strong and effective United Nations system, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve as Chair of the 2026 Joint Meeting, and formally declared the meeting closed.