

For Delivery

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Agenda Item 12: Coordination, programme and other questions: Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Statement by UN Women

Introduction of the Report of the Secretary-General on “Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system”

Madam Vice-President, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with pleasure that we present to you the “Report of the Secretary-General on Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system”.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the ECOSOC 1997 Agreed Conclusions on this very topic (“Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes”) which established principles for gender mainstreaming.

As this Council reaffirmed last year in its resolution 2021/7, gender mainstreaming remains the globally accepted strategy for achieving GEWE, and remains central to the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and, the SDGs.

The report before you focuses on efforts made in the UN system to strengthen GEWE (gender mainstreaming and gender equality) in the context of the continuing (COVID-19) pandemic, in operational activities and, through implementation of the gender mainstreaming accountability frameworks, UN-SWAP for the entity level, and its UNCT (United Nations Country Team) equivalent, the UNCT-SWAP Scorecard.

Madam Vice-President, Distinguished Delegates,

The ongoing pandemic continued to take its toll on women and girls - violence against women and child marriage increased, women's employment declined,¹ and as per the World Economic Forum it will now take more than 13 decades to close the gender gap worldwide².

Hence, the UN system continued to focus on the production of robust data to inform a gender-sensitive response to COVID-19. UN Women partnered with UN-DESA, governments and others to conduct Rapid Gender Assessment surveys in more than 70 countries. The results confirmed that while women and girls disproportionately suffered the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, they receiving far less COVID-19 relief or social protection³.

Other inter-agency initiatives in this context included: the UN-Women and UNDP COVID-19 global gender response tracker of pandemic policy measures enacted by Governments; a Technical Note on Mainstreaming Gender perspectives into the UNCT COVID-19 Response; and, in partnership with the World Tourism Organization, production of gender mainstreaming guidelines for public and private sectors as the tourism sector, the largest employer of women, focuses on recovery.

Madam Vice- President, Distinguished Delegates

With respect to mainstreaming of gender perspectives into operational activities across the UN system, some accomplishments bear mention:

- One, at the UNCT level, 70 per cent of country teams that developed a Cooperation Framework in 2021 included a dedicated gender equality outcome. In addition, 87 per cent of country teams reported at least one Joint Programme that included a focus on SDG 5.

¹ 2021 Gender Snapshot

² [WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf \(weforum.org\)](#)

³ UN-Women 2021 report, *Women and girls left behind: Glaring gaps in pandemic responses*

- Two, the UNSDG (UN Sustainable Development Group) promulgated the Gender Theme Groups (GTG) Standards and Procedures, to enhance support for mainstreaming gender perspectives across the SDGs and in Cooperation Frameworks.
- Three, attention to gender mainstreaming in peace and security, humanitarian and human rights issues continued in 2021, including an Afghan Women’s Advisory Group for the Humanitarian Country Team to amplify women’s voices.
- Four, regarding ending violence against women, stakeholders from the Spotlight Initiative overwhelmingly confirmed that the Initiative contributes to achieving the SDGs in an integrated way.
- Five, with regard to pooled funding, the mandatory inclusion of the gender equality marker in the COVID-19 Multi-Partner Trust Fund yielded a multifold increase from 5 to 64 per cent in the funding of programmes with gender equality as a primary target⁴.
- Six, UN-Women and the UN Statistical Division produced its annual Gender Snapshot report, which examines progress in all of the SDGs from a gender perspective⁵.
- Lastly, inter-agency coordination has been bolstered at both country level, with strengthened GTGs (Gender Theme Groups), and at global levels through networks such as IANWGE and the Gender Network of the UNSDG.

Madam Vice-President, Distinguished delegates,

With respect to the implementation of the UN-SWAP and the UNCT-SWAP in particular, both continued to register progress.

⁴ The allocations jumped from 5 per cent of total funding (USD 1.9 million) in the first call of proposals to 64 per cent (USD 11.9 million) in the second. This successful model is now being replicated by other pooled funding mechanisms.

⁵ The 2021 edition, for the first time, also includes an SDG 5 tracker revealing a long road ahead. Globally, only 1 of the 18 indicators for SDG 5 is assessed as being close to target (proportion of seats held by women in local government) with 9 indicators standing at a moderate distance and 2 far or very far from target.

At the entity level, 71 entities reported on their gender mainstreaming performance in the UN-SWAP 2.0, with 64 per cent meeting or exceeding ratings in 2021. They registered consistent performance in the areas of strategic planning and gender policy, two areas which then drive institution-wide progress. In contrast, the gender architecture indicator decreased slightly. Also, the strengthened implementation of the gender equality marker (GEM), while showing encouraging results, continued to lag when compared to the performance of other indicators.

At the country level, the number of UNCTs implementing the UNCT-SWAP increased to 61 in 2021, up from 38 in 2020. Three indicators registered the strongest performance: collaboration and engagement with the government, with civil society organizations dedicated to GEWE, and organizational culture supportive of it. In contrast, despite registering gains in 2021, and similar to the entity level, the financial resource tracking and allocation indicator continued as one of the weakest. To address this, nearly 45% of country teams which submitted a comprehensive UNCT SWAP report in 2021, also invested, for the first time, with UN Women's support, in capacity building on the GEM (gender equality marker).

The multi-year progress evidenced by both UN-SWAP 2.0 and UNCT-SWAP reporting, illustrates the continued impact that such standardized system-wide accountability mechanisms can have within the UN system.

Madam Vice-President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Yet, progress must be accelerated and gaps remain. The report before you contains some recommendations:

- a) Tracking and increasing gender-related allocations and expenditure remains a critical priority at all levels⁶.

⁶ For example, only 8 per cent of funding for Joint Programmes is focused on Goal 5 despite making up 38 per cent of the total number of Joint Programmes. Funding allocations to Joint Programmes with a dedicated gender equality outcome need to be commensurate with the proportion of Joint Programmes that include such a focus.

- b) Supporting universal coverage by the UNCT-SWAP Scorecard, strengthening country-level GTGs (Gender Theme Groups), enhancing capacities for gender-sensitive programming, and the application of the country team gender equality marker can ensure that gender equality outcomes are strengthened and better achieved⁷.
- c) The UN-SWAP review indicates that all standards are interlinked. Results require investments in both human and financial capacity. Capacity grows exponentially if leadership prioritizes inter-agency work kicking in efficiencies and collective experience, to be had also from harmonization and uniform application of common standards against which progress can be systematically measured and gaps addressed.
- d) Lastly, a UN system survey on the gender architecture of entities revealed that 49 per cent of responding entities noted an expansion of the remit of gender units to include broader agendas, but mostly without the allocation of proportionately more resources. In effect, this results in dilution of resources for GEWE and mainstreaming. This trend must be countered with stronger focus and sufficient resources on GEWE issues.

Madam Vice- President, Distinguished Delegates,

In conclusion, while there is no single panacea as we all know, strengthening of mainstreaming of a gender perspectives into all policies and programmes constitutes a central pillar of any work undertaken in the UN system, or anywhere for that matter, to address gender inequality and achieve the SDGs. This requires concerted system-wide support and joint action to improve performance at all levels, but also, very fundamentally and importantly, it requires strong and meaningful manifestation of support from Member States.

Thank you for your time.

⁷ Less than a fifth of CTs (country teams) that submitted a comprehensive UNCT-SWAP report in 2021 noted that they had achieved or were on track to achieve the gender equality results planned in their Cooperation Framework.