



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Management Segment**

**Introduction of the Annual Overview Report of the
United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) for 2021**

Simona Petrova, Secretary of CEB

Madame Vice-President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to present, on behalf of the Secretary-General, highlights from the Annual Overview Report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) for 2021 (E/2022/13) and to provide a snapshot of how the United Nations (UN) system is working together to deliver on intergovernmental mandates.

Under the Secretary-General's chairmanship, the Board is a driver of integration and coherence in support of Member States. It serves as an internal "think-tank", providing high-level forward-looking solutions in response to mandates from the legislative and governing bodies of its 31 member entities. It strives to foster systemic transformation through stronger performance and results orientation; better data, analysis and communications; innovation and digital transformation; strategic foresight; and a work culture that reduces unnecessary bureaucracy and amplifies collaboration.

As a unique high-level forum, the Board continued to serve as a strategic policy space and as a platform for the Executive Heads when considering ways to reconcile urgent short-term financial needs

resulting from the COVID-19 crisis with longer-term recovery objectives and their impact on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in this Decade of Action.

In 2021, CEB and its High-level Committees stayed the course by placing sustainable development at the core of the recovery to help make the world more resilient to future threats and steered the respective organizations' resources towards collaborative efforts.

The pandemic accelerated transformational change across the system and served to further underscore the urgency of the Secretary-General's call for principled and visionary UN leadership. The Board members strived to ensure that the UN system acted collectively and coherently to confront the challenges posed by the pandemic across mandates, pillars, functions and geography. They did so in full alignment with the Senior Leadership Commitments, developed by the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) to help UN system leaders in steering the transition of their organizations and workforces towards the future. The five Commitments – People first, Grow, Connect, Trust, and Evolve – will help reinvigorate the organizational culture by shifting away from a top-down approach towards inviting proactive and inclusive leadership.

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In 2021, as the world continued to see a surge of violent and increasingly complex and protracted conflicts threatening global peace and stability, the CEB members engaged in a focused reflection on the evolution of current and emerging root causes of conflict, and the inextricable link between conflict and the attainment of the SDGs. They underscored the importance of continued commitment to multilateralism and trust building, while identifying megatrends such as demographic transitions, digitalization and climate change as compounding existing vulnerabilities.

In recognition of the limitations of gross domestic product (GDP) as the sole indicator of societal progress and well-being, the Board also considered the potential impact that metrics beyond GDP can have in tracking and achieving an equitable, inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a result, the Board tasked the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) to develop a UN system-wide contribution on *Beyond GDP*,

including analysis and proposed recommendations on data, policy coherence and capacity development and in support of the implementation of the SDGs, particularly SDG target 17.19. This work will be submitted in August 2022 to the Chair of the Board.

As part of HLCP's efforts to promote innovation to enhance evidence-based support for sustainable development, the Committee welcomed the successful completion of a pilot cross-pillar predictive analytics project, led by UNHCR. Launched in 2020, the project uses data, algorithms, and machine learning techniques for anticipatory planning across humanitarian, development and peace pillars, and for identifying the interconnected impacts of climate change and other megatrends on the vulnerability of people in the Sahel region. The objective is to aid the achievement of the SDGs through more evidenced-based policy and operational decision-making. In leading this effort, UNHCR engaged 23 UN system entities and also formed an expert consortium of academic and research institutions – including partners from the region. This sought to unite best practices in predictive modelling and strategic foresight. The resulting models and projections enable policymakers to consider alternative futures and plan more strategically. The concept – as envisioned by HLCP and CEB – was proven, and in 2021 the project successfully transitioned to the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel.

CEB and HLCP have been following developments relating to artificial intelligence (AI) since 2017. A key product that emerged from CEB's focus on rapidly developing technologies [in support of General Assembly resolutions 73/17 (paragraph 6) and 75/316 (paragraph 19) on the impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Goals and targets] was the UN system-wide strategic approach and road map for supporting capacity development on artificial intelligence (CEB/2019/1/Add.3). HLCP was subsequently invited to channel the UN system's views into the development of the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, adopted by UNESCO's General Conference in November 2021. HLCP's inter-agency working group on AI, formed in 2020, is maintaining momentum within the UN system on both aspects under the leadership UNESCO and ITU. The working group brings together technical and ethical expertise on AI from 39 UN system entities to enhance UN system-wide policy coherence and programmatic coordination in this area. The group seeks to enhance AI's contribution to achieving the SDGs and to ensure that it is human-rights based, trustworthy, safe and sustainable. Under HLCP's oversight, working group members are also advancing

the responsible development and use of AI within the UN system. The ongoing work is being carefully managed to ensure synergies, cooperation and alignment across organizations and initiatives.

As the world at large is dependent on and vulnerable to changes in our natural environment, the Board endorsed a common approach to integrating biodiversity for sustainable development into the UN's policy and programme planning and delivery. The common approach commits the system to mainstream biodiversity and catalyse collective action to address the drivers of biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems and ultimately contribute to life in harmony with nature. This will support Member States to set in motion systemic changes towards nature-positive shifts across sectors.

The Board also endorsed Phase II of the Strategy for sustainability management in the UN system, 2020–2030, which complements and completes the first phase, endorsed in 2019. It encompasses a broader and fuller picture of environmental and social sustainability in UN system policies, programming and support functions.

Reducing inequalities, further worsened by the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, continued to be at the heart of HLCP's work. The HLCP Inequalities Task Team, an important hub for producing, sharing, and disseminating knowledge, released in December 2021, the policy brief "Tackling inequalities in public service coverage to 'build forward better' for the rural poor", focusing on rural inequalities. At HLCP's request, the Task Team is developing a reflection paper on the work of the UN system on inequalities in the current global context, with a view to further elevating the engagement and ambition on SDGs 10 and 5.

As mandated by the General Assembly (A/RES/76/216), in 2021, CEB continued to support the coordination of and follow-up to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 on a system-wide basis as well as to enhance UN system support for investment promotion regimes for LDCs.

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As part of the institutional response to the pandemic, HLCM performed a crucial role as the highest-level management coordination mechanism of the UN system. Through its functional networks

– on human resources, technology, procurement, and finance and budget – it focused on preserving the system’s ability to deliver on programmatic mandates and ensuring that staff remained safe, physically and psychologically. It also led the development of and updates to administrative guidelines for the use of the entire system on key business continuity matters.

Throughout 2021, the UN system kept accelerating the application of modern tools, techniques and skills across its operations and reinforced systems thinking and collaboration towards integrated anticipatory responses. The pandemic pushed the system to demonstrate its ability to shift gears overnight in using mostly digital tools. A notable HLCM initiative to foster the digitalization of work processes is the UN Digital ID project, currently in its design stage, with a view to be further developed in 2022 and scaled across the whole system.

Essential to accelerate progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the availability of high-quality, timely, disaggregated, and open data and statistics. CEB and its subsidiary mechanisms continued to work on ensuring the reliability and availability of UN system data throughout 2021, in support of the System-wide Road Map for Innovating United Nations Data and Statistics, developed by the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System through HLCP, and endorsed by CEB in 2020. It is featured as one of three “initial priority programmes” of the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere: With Insight, Impact and Integrity.

Enhanced data analysis and storytelling capabilities enable the UN system to strengthen evidence-based policy, transform decision-making, communicate better the impacts and results and substantiate advocacy and fundraising efforts. The UN data standards for system-wide financial reporting – also referred to as the United Nations system Data Cube – underpins the system-wide financial data of today. In 2021, the Data Cube initiative advanced the implementation of the data standards under the tagline of “maximizing transparency and minimizing efforts”. Going forward, HLCM will scale-up its ambitions for the 2022-2025 period to ensure the UN system will have a full-fledged UN system-wide Data Cube with disaggregated financial data for each SDG in each country.

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The CEB and its High-level Committees will continue to provide leadership, solutions and hope in the coming months and years to help the global community build more peaceful, inclusive, just, resilient, and sustainable societies and economies. As stated by the Secretary-General in his Oath of Office in June 2021 “...we are in this togetherwith unity in purpose and solidarity.”

I trust that the Annual Overview Report before you demonstrates how CEB, during the reporting year, served as a driver of integration and coherence in the UN system across a wide range of programmatic and management issues in support of intergovernmental mandates and priorities through timely and integrated follow-up to Member States’ directives.

I thank you for this opportunity to brief the Council.