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**Operational activities for development: operational  
activities for development of the United Nations system**

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**Operational activities of the United  
Nations for international development  
cooperation: follow-up to policy  
recommendations of the General Assembly  
and the Council**

**Implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/233 on  
the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational  
activities for development of the United Nations system**

**Report of the Secretary-General**

*Summary*

Submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 75/233 and 72/279, the present report provides an update on the system-wide implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the reform of the United Nations development system. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/4, the report also provides an update on the progress made in the implementation of the review of the resident coordinator system and the additional mandates contained in resolution 76/4 in that regard.

In a year where developing countries were struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts - the report demonstrates that the repositioned United Nations development system is providing more integrated, efficient and better-quality support to country needs and priorities on sustainable development. Resident coordinators are empowered leaders of United Nations country teams that are providing more tailored support, drawing on our regional assets through the Regional Collaborative Platforms, and benefiting from improved Cooperation Frameworks and other planning tools. There is ongoing progress in reconfiguring United Nations country teams to ensure the necessary expertise and skillsets are in place to deliver on the priorities in the Cooperation Frameworks.

Building on the experience of the United Nations development system in supporting countries recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations development system is delivering a scaled-up, integrated response to countries' sustainable development needs and priorities, aligned with the priorities contained in the 2020 quadrennial

review. This provides a solid basis to support countries' just transitions in the areas of digital connectivity, food systems and energy, which can have multiplying effects across all the Sustainable Development Goals.

Looking ahead, the report outlines key areas to ensure that progress realized so far – in country configuration, regional support, business operations and system-wide results reporting and evaluation – translates into ambitious results at the scale needed during this Decade of Action to achieve success by 2030. Full adherence to the 2020 quadrennial review guidance and the dual reporting at the core of the United Nations development system reforms will be central to our efforts. Similarly, building on experience gained in preparing for the Summits and high-level events in 2021, we will need to take full advantage of the convening role of the resident coordinators to attract partnerships and financing at unprecedented scale to achieve the Goals. Lastly, delivering on the funding compact commitments towards more predictable and sustainable funding, including the full funding of the resident coordinator system is a necessary condition for our collective success.

The findings in this report paint an encouraging picture. It demonstrates the commitment of United Nations development system entities to put the reforms to work to support the Sustainable Development Goals. But considering the challenges ahead of us in the next year and beyond, we must not be complacent. The reform of the UN development system can only go so far. To fully deliver the 2030 Agenda, we have a collective responsibility to bring more scale, ambition and urgency to our action. This is the time to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals. The lives of billions of people across the globe depend on keeping the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals. They remain the world's best chance for a future of peace, dignity and prosperity.

The report draws on the findings of surveys administered by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs between December 2021 and January 2022, addressed to programme country Governments, headquarters of United Nations development entities, resident coordinators, and, for the first time this year, to contributing governments and United Nations country teams. Inputs were sought from across the system, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and its individual entities. Financial data was primarily sourced from the database and reporting system managed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. I thank the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for their ongoing efforts in supporting the quadrennial review and its implementation.

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
1. Introduction.....	4
2. A strengthened resident coordinator system for a step change in United Nations support to SDG implementation .....	6
<b>A. The resident coordinator, an empowered leader of the United Nations country team .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>B. United Nations country teams united for SDG results .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>C. Bringing together regional assets in support of country needs .....</b>	<b>21</b>
3. Scaled up, integrated response to countries' sustainable development needs and priorities .....	24
<b>A. Towards integrated support for global economic recovery and to rescue the SDGs .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>B. Countries in special situations.....</b>	<b>40</b>
4. The road ahead: an integrated, efficient and accountable UN development system to support just transitions to a sustainable, inclusive future .....	42
<b>A. Ensuring full adherence to the quadrennial review and the dual reporting model .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>B. Delivering efficient and effective business operations .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>C. Improved system-wide results and evaluation to drive performance.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>D. Delivering on funding compact commitments with full funding for the resident coordinator system.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>E. Implementing key strategies for United Nations development system operations .....</b>	<b>56</b>
5. Conclusion .....	57

## 1. Introduction

1. 2021 had the potential to reignite the Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through an effective and just global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Decisive and coordinated action at all levels could have brought the global pandemic to an end, surged financial support to nations, tipped the scales in favor of ambitious climate action, and generated fresh momentum around key transitions.
2. Despite commendable efforts in many areas, global ambition and action has fallen short of what was needed to end the pandemic and foster a green, sustainable and inclusive recovery. The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the inequitable global response have set back our efforts to advance the SDGs by many years. The number of people living in poverty, for example, is estimated to have increased by 131 million in 2020 alone, and progress in the advancement of women's rights may have been set back by a generation. In early 2022, the impacts of the conflict in Ukraine have amplified these challenges, with rippling effects on food security, energy and finance across the globe. With instability in international markets, disruption of supply chains, and the squeeze in countries' fiscal space, we face the risk of ever larger gaps in the investments to deliver the 2030 Agenda. The effect of these failings is an expanding gap and growing distrust between states and within, and a broader undermining of confidence in multilateralism.
3. Taken together with continued geopolitical tensions, protracted conflicts, record levels of displacement, and increasing impacts of climate change, much greater solidarity, ambition, and scale in our collaboration and actions for sustainable development will be needed. I remain confident that we still have an opportunity to make bold changes towards more inclusive equitable, gender-equal and low-carbon economies. Together, we can still rescue the SDGs, so long as the 2030 Agenda remains our North star.
4. With the reforms we have made together, the United Nations development system is now better positioned to support Member States in the most ambitious global development endeavor to date. The COVID-19 response from the United Nations development system confirmed that the United Nations was primed for this shift. The reinvigorated resident coordinator system and the new generation of UN country teams leveraged assets from across the United Nations system to provide effective and immediate support to countries across the globe and to address the widespread impacts on people's lives, especially women and young people. United Nations country teams deployed 121 Socio-Economic Response Plans in 139 countries. Our response helped ensure access to vaccination for millions of people, healthcare, including maternal health services and nutrition, and millions of children to access education; assisted countries in their response to the surge in gender-based violence and protected people's access to social protection. Socio-Economic Response plans are now folded into country Cooperation Frameworks to ensure the recovery builds on countries' emergency responses toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
5. Strengthening the United Nations development system to support countries to achieve their sustainable development objectives was at the core of the call from Member States in the 2020 Quadrennial review. Member States provided clear guidance for the United Nations development system, requesting stronger action on poverty eradication, quality education, universal health coverage, expanding social protection, as well as support for the urgent and equitable roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines, critical for global economic recovery. Member States also asked for strengthened rights-based and gender-responsive approaches in the United Nations system's work for further improvements in gender equality, disability inclusion, United Nations action with and by youth, and to increase investment in data support and capacity to target development investments to leave no one behind and better measure progress against stronger baselines and targets. They requested that entities lift support for climate action, energy transition, digital transformation and the conservation of biodiversity to the next level, in order to accelerate the shift towards inclusive, sustainable and resilient economies. And they called for more tailored support to countries in special situations and those experiencing conflict or fragility and enhanced support for countries to mobilize the means of implementation.
6. The review of the Resident Coordinator system in 2021 was unequivocal in its backing to the United Nations development system reform process. Member States made a clear call for full adherence to the dual reporting model and full implementation of the Funding Compact as essential to derive full benefit from the repositioned United Nations development system. They agreed that the resident coordinator system needs to

be fully funded and its core capacities preserved to deliver on the ambition of the reform and committed to making the current funding arrangements work to generate sufficient and predictable funding. They also set priorities for even more effective functioning of the resident coordinator system - mobility, recruitment and training of resident coordinators; efficiencies in business operations; and results-based reporting. This clear direction from Member States has given additional impetus to the reform.

7. For the first time this year, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) launched a survey for United Nations country teams, completed by 626 members across 30 United Nations development system entities; and extended the Government survey to include voluntary contributors to the United Nations development system, receiving 68 responses, including 14 of the top 20 contributors. Complementing the annual surveys of programme country Governments, completed by 72 per cent of all programme country Governments; the survey of headquarters of United Nations development entities, that together account for 92 per cent of all funding in operational activities for development and the survey of resident coordinators, completed by 92 per cent of all resident coordinators; along with external assessments, this year's feedback provides evidence of an ever-growing level of satisfaction with the United Nations development system's collective support. This is an important indication that the reform is delivering on Member States' intended objectives. But the surveys this year also reveal areas that remain work in progress. These, plus the additional mandates in the 2020 Quadrennial review and the resident coordinator system review, provide levers for action in five key areas.
8. **First**, building on the results achieved by United Nations country teams in strengthening policy coherence and delivering integrated and expert support, we must ensure the United Nations development system is fully equipped to support countries as they embark on just transitions in energy, food systems and digital connectivity. This means making more tangible progress in our joint commitment to align the Cooperation Frameworks with the Sustainable Development Goals, and reconfigure United Nations country teams to ensure the necessary expertise and skillsets are in place to provide integrated responses to country needs and priorities and ensure progress across the SDGs, leaving no one behind. It will require a step change in our efforts to bring expertise to countries at the right level.
9. **Second**, we must take full advantage of the convening role of the United Nations to help governments attract partnerships, know how, financing, development solutions at unprecedented scale. The benefits of an empowered and more impartial development coordination function are clear in this regard. Across countries, resident coordinators are convening in unprecedented ways. We must now take this to another level, with a strong sense of urgency.
10. **Third**, we must consolidate as a matter of urgency the outstanding elements of the reform. Four years in, we must ensure excellence in and effectiveness of our business operations, ensuring they enable expert, integrated support across the United Nations development system, and drive further efficiencies. Building on progress already achieved, our regional assets must deliver on the promise to provide real-time expertise and support to our resident coordinators and United Nations country teams. We must establish and make operational the new system-wide evaluation office to close the existing accountability gap on what the system does, together to help countries advance the SDGs.
11. **Fourth**, we must continue our efforts to ensure the reform of the United Nations development system brings about the changes in behaviour, culture and mindsets that can maximize the collective offer of the United Nations. The dual accountability model is an essential enabler for the United Nations development system to unite behind the SDGs. Its value and benefits are now well understood across the system. With the continued support and oversight of governing bodies, we must ensure the revised Management and Accountability Framework is fully implemented to drive whole-of-system support to countries, with each entity contributing according to its comparative advantage. The UN development system reform checklist being developed following Member States' request in the Resident Coordinator review, will be an important tool in that regard.
12. **Fifth**, we need a step change in our funding and business models. Fully delivering on commitments made in the Funding Compact to ensure quality and predictable funding is an indispensable first step to build the right incentives for the collective work and integration required to support SDG implementation at scale. This starts with the funding, in full, of the Resident Coordinator system.

13. The findings in this report paint an encouraging picture. It demonstrates the commitment of United Nations entities to put the reforms to work to support the SDGs, with the continued guidance and backing of Member States at all levels. But we must not be complacent as we consider the challenges ahead of us in the next year and beyond. This is the time to rescue the SDGs – the lives of billions of people across the globe –and the credibility of multilateralism depend on it. The SDGs remain the world’s best chance for a future of peace, dignity and prosperity.
14. My report, *Our Common Agenda*, offers a number of tools and ideas that could help turbocharge the 2030 Agenda, with support from the United Nations development system. Member States can count on my absolute determination to continue to forge ahead. And I count on Member States’ continued leadership.

## **2. A strengthened resident coordinator system for a step change in United Nations support to SDG implementation**

15. From the outset, the central goal of the repositioning of the United Nations development system was to move beyond incremental changes in the system’s tools, architecture, and skillsets to ensure far-reaching transformation in our support to countries’ SDG attainment. Our common vision foresaw a path forward for the system to work collaboratively under robust and impartial leadership, building on the strengths of each entity but moving away from the ‘lowest common denominator’ that prevailed in the previous architecture. It also aimed to accelerate alignment with the SDGs across all entities of the United Nations development system in a way that would be commensurate with the paradigm shift ushered in by the 2030 Agenda.
16. Four years into the reform, I can say with confidence that our reforms have gotten us much closer to our shared objectives. Feedback from surveys and external assessments continue to confirm that the resident coordinator system has advanced towards greater integration and collaboration. Resident coordinators are empowered to play their role as coordinators and convenors, enabled by governments and United Nations country teams that recognize and support their leadership. United Nations country teams show greater signs of integration in their action, supported by better quality Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks and improved working mechanisms to bring together skillsets and expertise from across the United Nations system - in or outside countries - to tailor the offer to countries’ unique needs and priorities. The reforms of the multi-country offices and the regional level are bringing further support to countries for SDG achievement.
17. This progress was also reinforced by initiatives set in motion following the guidance of the 2020 quadrennial review and the 2021 review of the Resident Coordinator system, to enhance investments in training and build more appealing career paths for resident coordinators and development coordination officers; improve further country configuration exercise; anchor firmly the regional reform; and strengthen the implementation in country of the Management and Accountability Framework.
18. But we are not there yet. As countries are confronted with the compounded crises of climate, assaults on our natural systems, the protracted COVID-19 pandemic and most recently the war in Ukraine, we must continue to move forward with determination and ambition to ensure that we maximize the impact of the changes made. In particular, we must continue to invest in strengthening skillsets and strategically deploying the convening power of the United Nations to help countries to leverage financing, technologies and expertise and expand partnerships for development on an unprecedented scale. We must ensure that the enhancement of capacities of resident coordinator offices, new skillsets brought to United Nations country teams, and acute understanding of national budgets and fiscal space lead to a notable shift in our ability to render support across the 17 Goals, with economic transformation and sustainability at the centre. We must move faster to bring about more specific changes to our footprint in countries, aligned with country priorities as mandated by the General Assembly and consolidate the regional reforms to bring to resident coordinators and United Nations country teams the expertise they need, when they need it, to support countries’ just transitions to more inclusive and sustainable economies.
19. Working hand in hand with Member States across all governing bodies, we must stay focused on ensuring both accountability and incentives for system-wide – rather than ‘my agency first’ culture, behaviour and

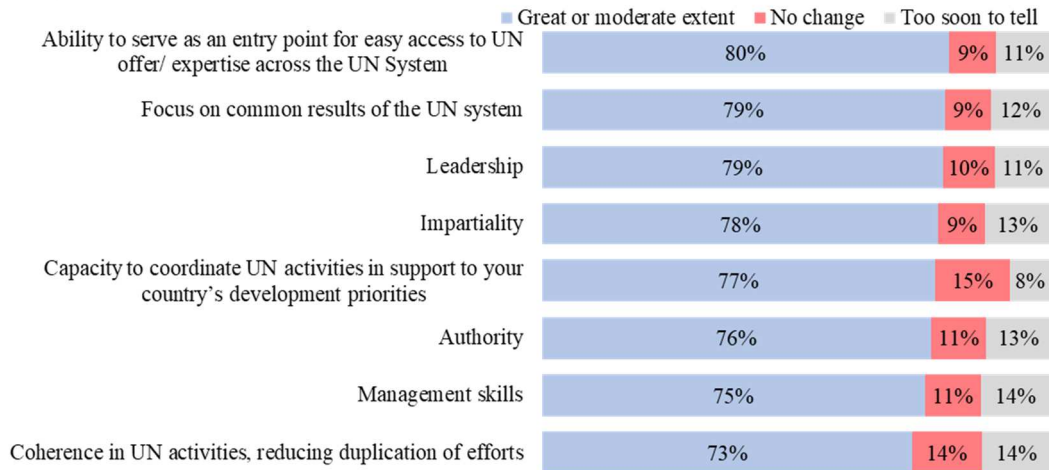
siload action. Only by working together can we provide sophisticated policy support to address the complex, multidimensional challenges countries face and convene at the scale required to rescue the SDGs.

**A. The resident coordinator, an empowered leader of the United Nations country team**

20. At the core of the repositioning of the United Nations development system was the assumption that empowered, impartial and independent resident coordinators, as direct representatives of the Secretary-General in country, could provide the leadership and impartiality required to drive greater integration within the United Nations country teams for SDG support and acceleration. Similarly, we knew that only an independent development function relieved from programmatic and fundraising responsibilities could provide the UN with the independence, ability, and legitimacy to convene all relevant stakeholders to support countries with the ambition and the scale necessary to achieve the SDGs by 2030.
21. Together, we have come a long way. In resolutions 72/279 and 75/233, the General Assembly endorsed my proposed way forward. It reiterated that empowered, strategic, effective and impartial leadership through the resident coordinator system was central to fostering more effective support from the United Nations development system. In reviewing the reinvigorated resident coordinator system in 2021, Member States gave their unequivocal support to the direction taken in their review of the resident coordinator system, based on extensive feedback collected from surveys, internal and external assessments that the resident coordinator system was strengthening the United Nations collective offer in countries.
22. The report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the Development Coordination Office provides further details on the initiatives supported by the Development Coordination Office to further strengthen leadership profiles and training of resident coordinators, aligned with Member States' request in the resolution on the review of the resident coordinator system. It also provides details on the initiatives we have taken to ensure resident coordinator offices are fully capacitated with five core professional positions – the strategic planner and head of office; economist; data management and results reporting officer; partnership officers and communications and advocacy officers.
23. The data collected this year presents convincing evidence that the resident coordinator system continued to deliver on its objectives. While there are areas where the reform remains a work in progress, there is universal consensus that the shift to a new Resident Coordinator system was both necessary and successful.
24. Government recognition of resident coordinators' leadership in delivering strategic support for national plans and priorities significantly increased from 79 per cent in 2019 to 89 per cent in 2021, and for the third consecutive year, programme country Governments' perception of resident coordinators, improved on several indicators, including in the resident coordinators' leadership, impartiality, focus on common results and their role as an entry point for the offer of the United Nations (see figure I).

Figure I

**Government responses on resident coordinator strengthening following the repositioning of the United Nations development system**

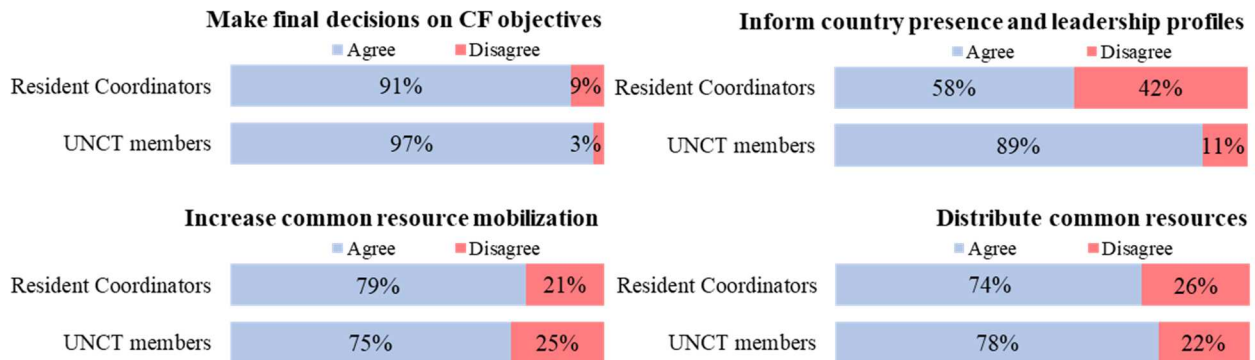


Source: 2021 DESA survey of programme country Governments.

25. Contributing countries and United Nations country teams, surveyed for the first time this year, recognized in their large majority the value of the resident coordinator system. 75 per cent of contributing countries agreed that the resident coordinators leveraged entities’ comparative advantages, although less than half of them saw reduced duplication in activities of UN agencies – a somewhat expected finding given that a transition is required before agencies can more radically revamp their ongoing portfolios. According to United Nations country team members, the Resident Coordinator is effectively empowered to make final decisions on strategic objectives of the Cooperation Framework (97 per cent); to inform country presence and leadership profiles (89 per cent), and to increase common resource mobilization (75 per cent) or distribute common resources (78 per cent) (see figure II). These numbers correspond to the assessment of the resident coordinators themselves, except for differences in perception on country presence and leadership profiles (53 per cent).

Figure II

**Resident coordinators are considered empowered within the United Nations country team, but opinions differ on their ability to inform country presence and United Nations country team leadership profiles**



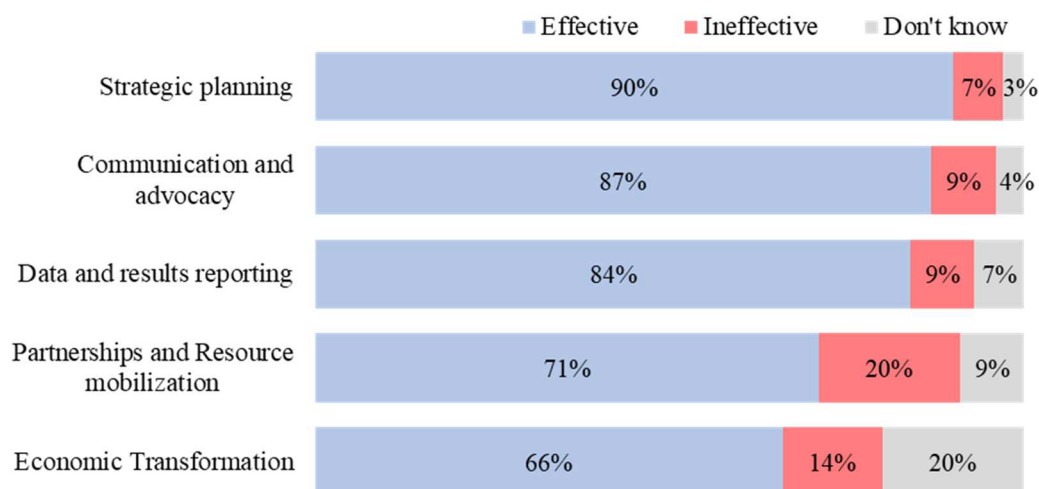
Source: 2021 DESA survey of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams.

26. Similarly, United Nations country teams gave high rating on the effectiveness of the support received from the Resident Coordinator Office (see figure III).



Figure III

**Resident coordinator office support to United Nations country teams**



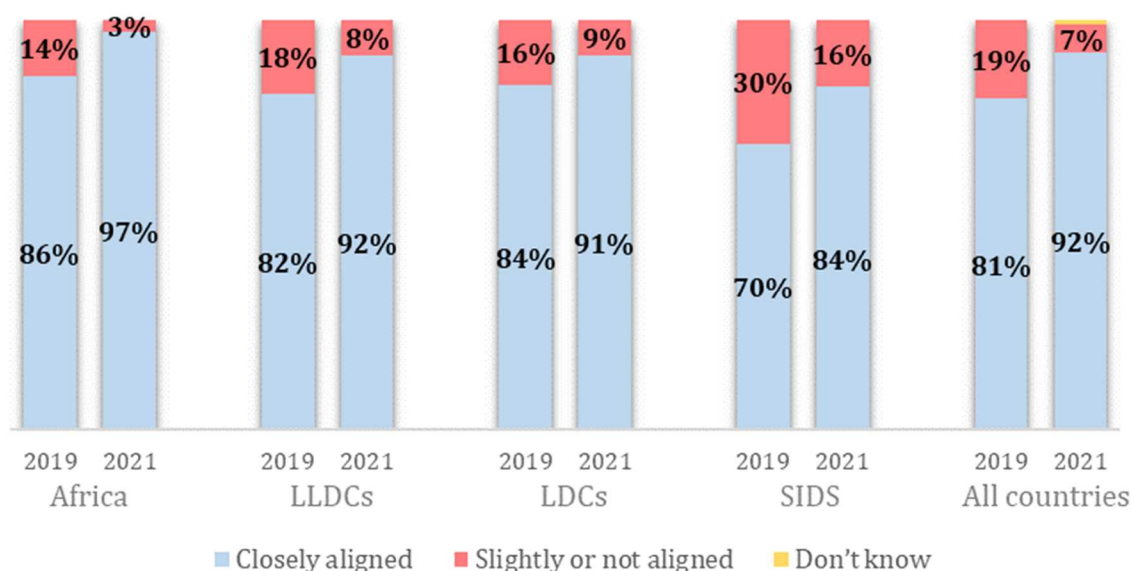
Source: 2021 DESA survey of United Nations country teams.

**B. United Nations country teams united for SDG results**

27. There is unequivocal evidence that the new generation of United Nations country teams emerging as part of our reforms are working more collaboratively and according to a clearer division of labour, driving greater alignment with country needs and priorities.
28. Over 95 per cent of governments agreed that the United Nations country team operates collaboratively, up from 93 per cent in 2020 and 80 per cent in 2019. Over two thirds of programme country Governments and 83 per cent of resident coordinators refer to a clearer division of labour within United Nations country teams.
29. Almost all programme countries state that United Nations development system’s efforts align with their national needs and priorities. In 2021, this reflected the views of 97 per cent of African countries, 91 per cent of least developed countries (LDC)s, 92 per cent of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and 84 per cent of small island developing States (SIDS), a notable increase from 70 per cent last year (see figure IV).

Figure IV

**Alignment of activities with national development needs and priorities**



Source: 2021 DESA survey of programme country Governments.

30. Efforts made in 2021 to accelerate the roll out of the Cooperation Frameworks, tailor United Nations country teams' configuration to country needs and priorities have started to bear fruit, with Cooperation Frameworks increasingly perceived as reflecting countries' priorities across all country categories.
31. The additional tools and guidance developed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, with the support of the Development Coordination Office, to improve derivation of entity-specific country programme documents from Cooperation Frameworks, and to better assess United Nations country team capacities, will help consolidate progress in these areas, with the support of governing bodies and host governments.

**UN country teams' support is more tailored to country needs and priorities**

32. The surveys provide further insights on the key measures taken in the repositioning that have contributed most to improve the United Nations country team offer, ranking the strengthened resident coordinator office, new Cooperation Frameworks and Common Country Analyses as the most helpful in improving the offer of the United Nations (see figure V). Notably, there is significant consistency in the views of Resident Coordinators and United Nations country team members.

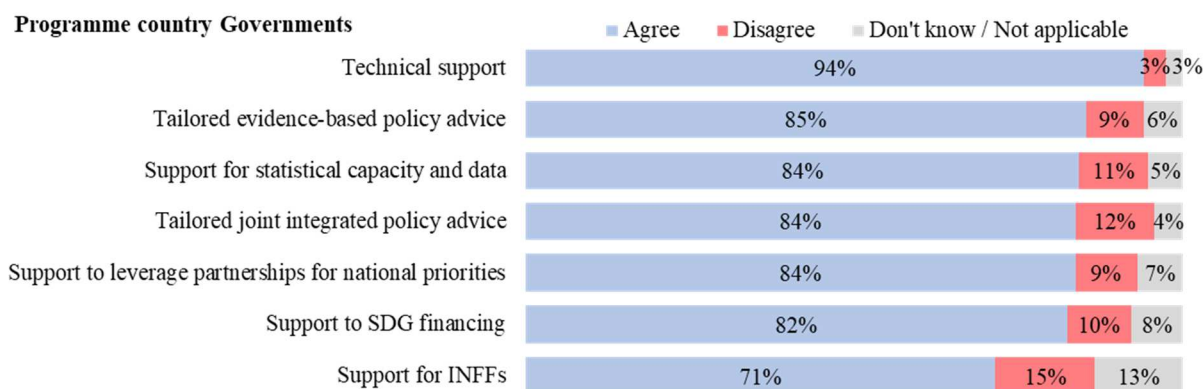
Figure V  
Measures to improve the United Nations country team offer to countries

Measure	Resident coordinator responses				UNCT member responses			
	Great or moderate extent	Small extent	No change	Don't know	Great or moderate extent	Small extent	No change	Don't know
Strengthened RC office	90%	7%	3%	1%	70%	15%	9%	5%
Cooperation Framework	87%	6%	7%	1%	77%	10%	9%	3%
Common Country Analysis	85%	7%	7%	1%	77%	11%	8%	3%
Joint Workplans	74%	12%	13%	1%	59%	21%	14%	5%
System-wide reporting	69%	23%	7%	2%	58%	22%	13%	6%
Results groups	65%	26%	9%	1%	63%	18%	14%	5%
Business Operations Strategy	61%	28%	11%	1%	55%	22%	13%	11%
More resources managed by RC/UNCTs	59%	18%	20%	3%	45%	25%	17%	14%
strengthened MAF implementation	50%	29%	19%	3%	52%	22%	15%	12%
Strengthened MAF provisions	47%	32%	16%	4%	48%	24%	14%	14%
Resource mobilization transparency	45%	22%	31%	1%	45%	20%	24%	11%
Resource mobilization collaboration	45%	28%	25%	2%	44%	27%	23%	7%
Increased common premises	34%	33%	29%	3%	39%	20%	31%	10%

Source: 2021 DESA survey of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams.

33. Feedback received also confirms that the types of support provided by United Nations country teams has continued to become more relevant to countries' needs, with 66 per cent of programme countries finding the United Nations system more relevant to their needs since the repositioning. Over 94 per cent of Governments agreed that the United Nations provides adequate technical support, aligned to national needs (see figure VI). Over 84 per cent agreed they received adequate support in tailored, joint integrated policy advice, statistical capacity and data collection and leveraging partnerships. Governments were least likely to agree that support was adequate for integrated national financing frameworks, at 71 per cent, although this was up slightly from last year's results.

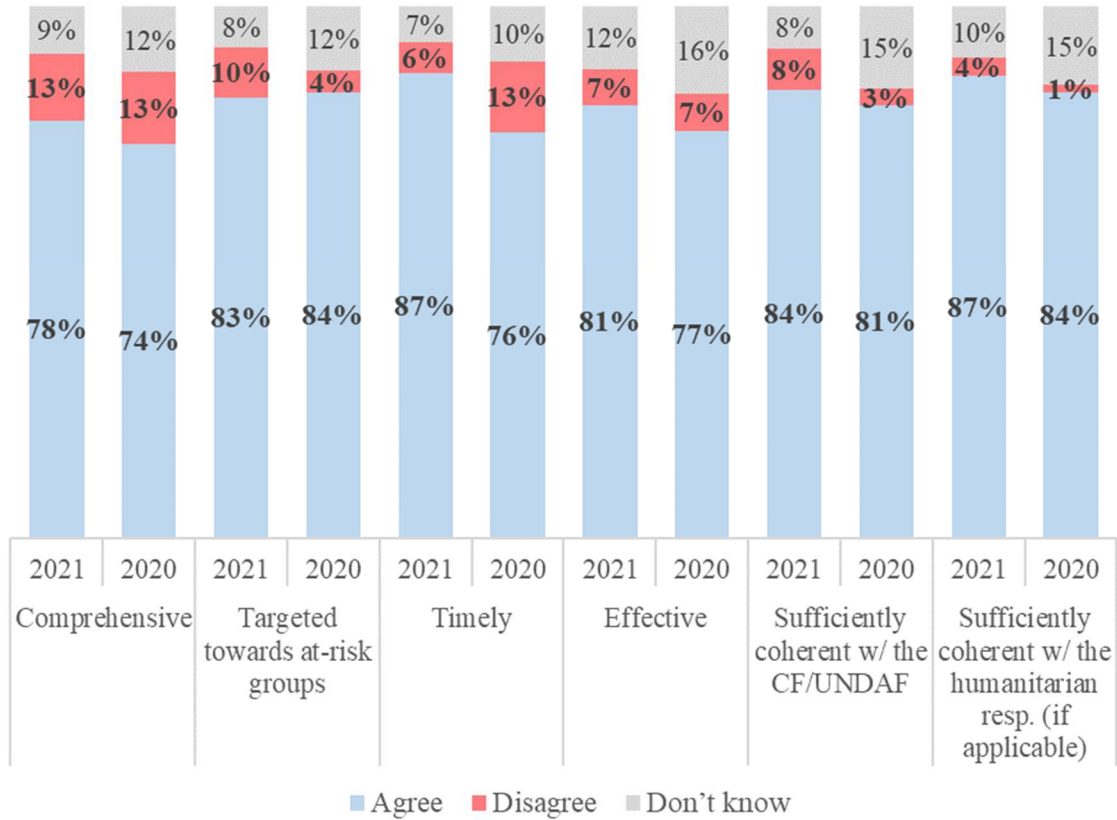
Figure VI  
Programme country Governments agree that the UN adequately provides technical support and policy advice



Source: 2021 DESA survey of programme country Governments.

34. Programme country Governments continued to rate the *quality* of the COVID-19 response highly, and overall, slightly more positive than in 2020 (see figure VII).

Figure VII  
Quality of COVID-19 response



Source: DESA, 2020 and 2021 surveys of programme country Governments.

35. Across the five pillars of the United Nations development system's response to COVID-19 – protecting health services and systems during the crisis, protecting people, protecting jobs, macroeconomic response, and social cohesion, (see figure VIII), programme country Governments considered the planning and implementation to be even more effective than in 2020. The economic response and recovery pillar saw the most noticeable improvement where 85 per cent of programme country Governments expressed satisfaction with United Nations development system support to planning their respective responses in 2021 compared to 69 per cent in 2020.

Figure VIII

**Effectiveness of UNDS support across COVID-19 socioeconomic response plan pillars**

		Response distribution, 2021 (%)			Trend in target (%)		% change 2020 --> 2021	
		Effective	Ineffective	Don't know	2020	2021		
<b>Health First: Protecting Health Services and Systems during the Crisis</b>	Planning	95	1	4	87	95	▲	8
	Implementation	93	0	7	84	93	▲	9
<b>Protecting People: Social Protection and Basic Services</b>	Planning	91	3	6	83	91	▲	8
	Implementation	86	4	10	81	86	▲	5
<b>Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting Jobs, SMEs, and Informal Sector</b>	Planning	85	6	9	69	85	▲	16
	Implementation	79	9	12	64	79	▲	15
<b>Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration</b>	Planning	78	9	12	71	78	▲	7
	Implementation	77	10	13	69	77	▲	9
<b>Social Cohesion and Community Resilience</b>	Planning	89	5	6	77	89	▲	12
	Implementation	85	5	10	74	85	▲	11

Source: DESA, 2020 and 2021 surveys of programme country Governments.

36. The Report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the Development Coordination Office captures the key results achieved on the 18 socioeconomic response indicators developed to monitor the progress and achievements of United Nations country team collective actions to respond and recover from the impacts of the pandemic. In addition, the interim report of the System-Wide Evaluation on the United Nations development system response to COVID-19, released in March 2022, highlights the positive effect of United Nations development system reforms in supporting collaborative and coherent planning by United Nations country teams in the COVID-19 context. It also shows how pooled financing mechanisms such as the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund have been effective in driving entities further together in support of an integrated response.
37. Additional data received this year, including through the new surveys of United Nations country teams and contributing governments, gives further confirmation that the resident coordinator system is adding value to the work of United Nations country team members. This is important. To be self-sustained in the future, the resident coordinator system cannot simply “coordinate”. It must add value, as it ensures that the United Nations development system becomes greater than the sum of its parts.
38. The feedback and data collected from resident coordinators and programme country Governments informs management of the resident coordinator system and actions to consolidate the United Nations development system repositioning. The data sheds light, in particular, on specific areas for further refinement, including the need to bring even greater coherence and avoid duplication within country teams, ensure the resident coordinator is empowered to inform country presence and leadership profiles, and continue to improve skillsets in resident coordinators offices, and the United Nations country team as a whole, to support countries' economic transformation, a priority for achievement of the SDGs.

**Coherent and integrated Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks**

39. The 2020 quadrennial review welcomed the revitalized Cooperation Frameworks as the most important instrument for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities in each country, in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As set out in more detail in the report of the Chair of the

United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the Development Coordination Office, we have made strides in the roll out of new Cooperation Frameworks, ensuring that inclusive consultation processes lead to better quality Cooperation Frameworks, aligned with countries priorities and needs for the 2030 Agenda.

40. Implementation of an additional 31 Cooperation Frameworks started in 2021, bringing the overall number of ongoing Cooperation Framework to 68, covering 52 per cent of United Nations country teams by the beginning of 2022. Implementation of another 26 Cooperation Frameworks will begin their process in 2022, with an additional 48 initiating the design process in 2022. In 2023, the remaining 16 countries will initiate the design process, and by the end of 2023 all countries will have a new generation of Cooperation Frameworks. All 121 Socio-Economic Response Plans, covering 139 countries, are now folded into the Cooperation Frameworks, to ensure alignment and inform a recovery that supports countries' just transitions towards more sustainable, inclusive economies. By the end of 2023, all countries will have transitioned from the former planning instrument (i.e., United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks) to the new Cooperation Frameworks. Eighty per cent of United Nations country teams have now developed or updated their Common Country Analyses to inform their Cooperation Frameworks.
41. To ensure the Cooperation Frameworks are co-led with governments, and subsequently guided by them, over 80 per cent of resident coordinators have established Joint Steering Committees with Governments that remain active throughout the Cooperation Framework's lifecycle, with 72 per cent meeting once or more annually. This is an important step forward to ensure we strengthen national leadership, alignment to national priorities and accountability in our development operations.
42. In this regard, I welcome the fact that almost all Governments (96 per cent) confirmed that United Nations activities in the Cooperation Framework are effectively responding to national priorities in the delivery of the SDGs and that 82 per cent of governments agreed that their engagement in the process is sufficient to ensure national ownership.
43. It is now time we move to the next phase in this effort and increase emphasis on ensuring that entities' programme documents truly derive from the Cooperation Framework. United Nations entities indicated in their responses this year that they have taken further action to align country programme documents (CPDs) with the Cooperation Frameworks. In addition, the Development Coordination Office has taken steps to facilitate and enhance transparency regarding alignment of CPDs with Cooperation Frameworks, including by ensuring that a Cooperation Framework status dashboard is publicly available, and provides real time updates on the status of preparations. The dashboard can be used by governing bodies to inform their consideration of their respective entities' CPDs.
44. Yet, we still have a mixed picture in this regard, and accountability for implementation is inadequate. Only 28 per cent of United Nations country team members shared their country programme documents with the resident coordinator for review and confirmation by letter of their derivation from the Cooperation Framework. This will require significant change in the coming year to confirm alignment.

### **Tailored United Nations country team configuration**

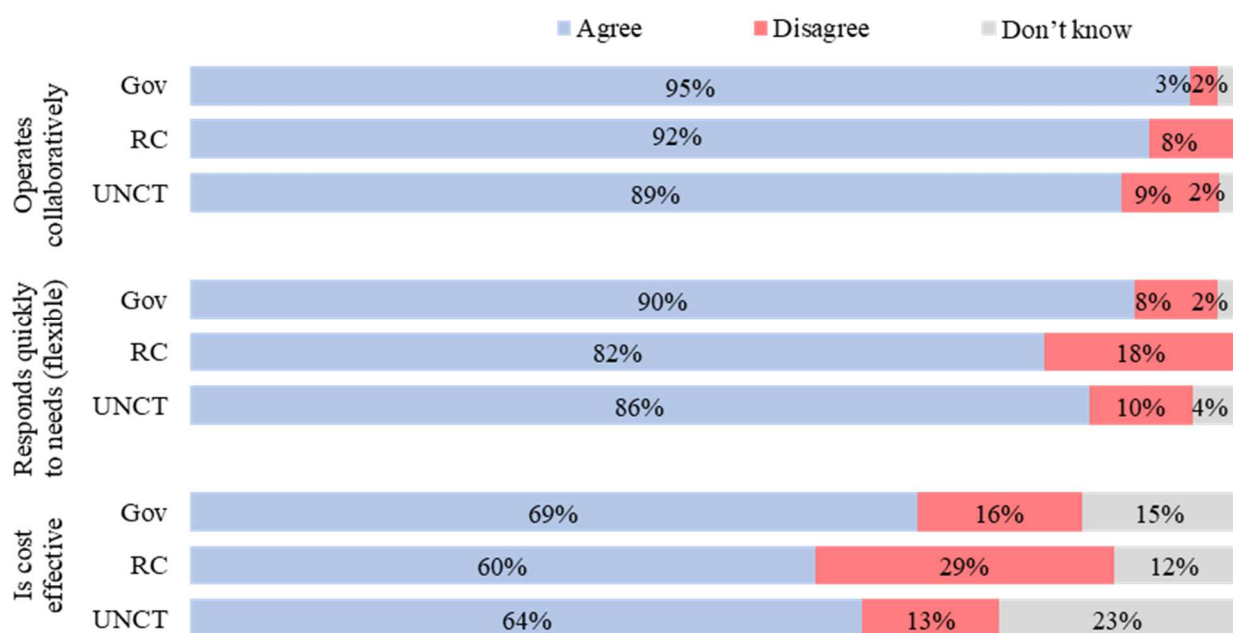
45. In my report on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in December 2017, I had proposed a demand-driven United Nations country team configuration model to optimize the mix of United Nations operational capacities and expertise from across the system, whether from resident or non-resident entities and to best respond to country priorities. In the 2020 resolution on the quadrennial review, Member States embraced this idea and emphasized the need for the presence of the entities of the UN development system to be tailored according to specific needs of programme countries, to be finalised through open and inclusive dialogues with Governments as part of the discussions on the Cooperation Framework.
46. In my report last year, I requested the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to develop a clearer and more transparent pathway to optimize country team capacities over the course of 2021 and 2022, including with host Governments.
47. By the end of 2021, 50 out of 68, or 73 per cent of United Nations country teams that have designed a Cooperation Framework since 2019 undertook a configuration exercise. An overwhelming majority of

programme country Governments (96 per cent) expressed satisfaction with the country team’s engagement on configuration and presence through the dialogues on United Nations presence.

48. Country teams saw an intrinsic value to the configuration process itself, which allowed United Nations country teams to map synergies and complementarities, reconsider business models and foster more joined-up and integrated support. Governments agreed overall (81 per cent) that the configuration exercise resulted in a United Nations country team that is adequately tailored to meet their specific needs and challenges, with variance between LLDCs (92 per cent), LDCs (89 per cent) and SIDS (61 per cent). In addition, governments, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams broadly agree that the United Nations presence in country operates collaboratively, is flexible and cost effective (see figure IX).

Figure IX

**Collaborative, flexible and cost-effective United Nations presence and configuration in country**



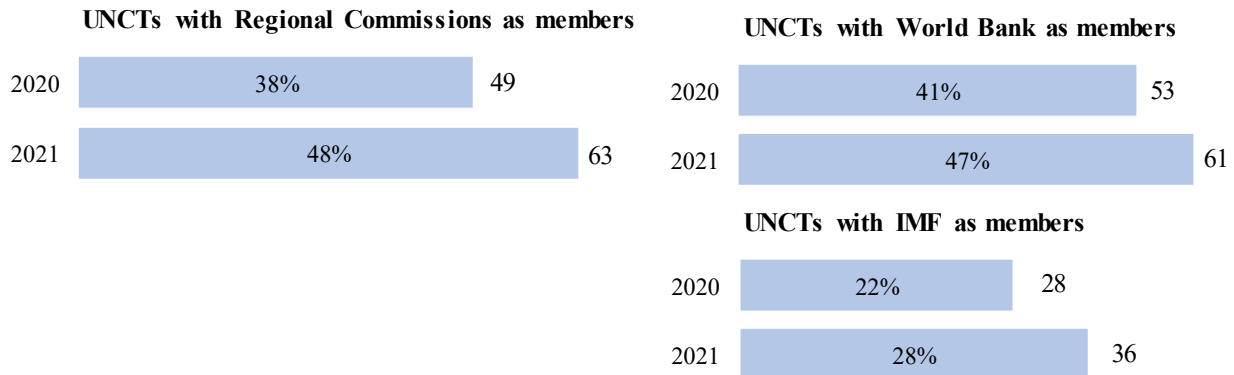
Source: DESA surveys of Governments, resident coordinators and United Nations country team members, 2021.<sup>1</sup>

49. As stated in the report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group on the Development Coordination Office, the inclusion of entities without a physical presence in United Nations country teams has created additional value for the countries. Entities such as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN Habitat, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction Office (UNDRR) – with limited or no permanent presence in countries – have made important contributions to Cooperation Frameworks. UNCTAD’s expertise on tracking illicit financial flows benefited work in Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Zambia. In Mozambique, UNIDO and UNCTAD contributed to the national development strategy to diversify the economy for sustainable livelihoods. Regional commissions, the World Bank and IMF are increasingly joining United Nations country teams (see figure X) and signing Cooperation Frameworks.

<sup>1</sup> Governments responded to the United Nations presence in the country while resident coordinators and United Nations country team members were asked about current United Nations configuration of which one component is entity presence.

Figure X

**Percentage of United Nations country teams that have IFIs and/or Regional Commissions as members**

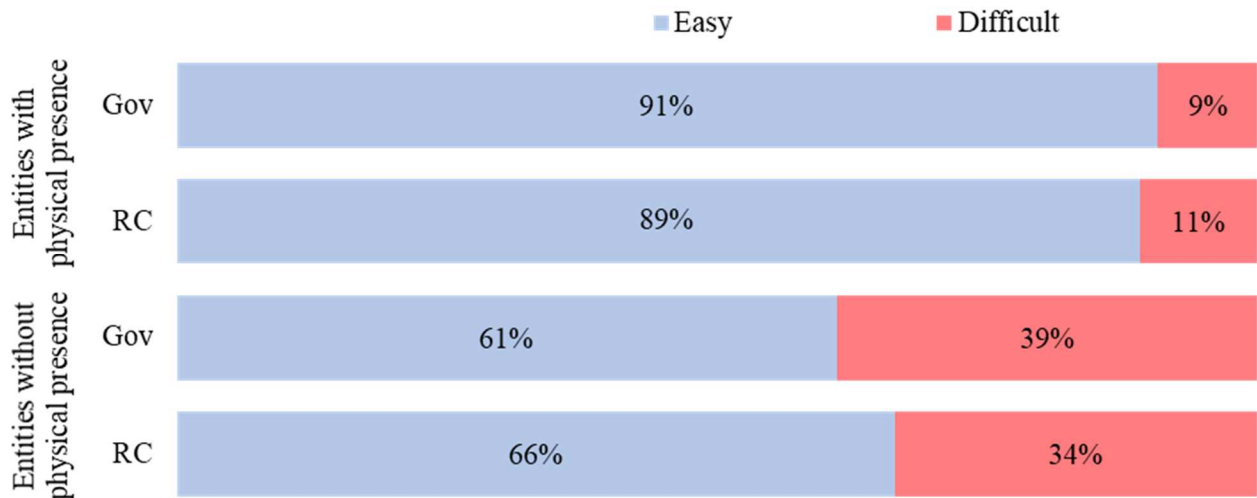


Source: UNSDG Information Management System (IMS), 2021.

50. While these are positive developments, I remain of the view that we can be more ambitious in our reconfiguration efforts and our review of United Nations country team skillsets to respond to changing demands on the ground. There are still clear missed opportunities to better deploy our assets in countries. In addition, 39 per cent of countries and 34 per cent of resident coordinators continue to report difficulties in accessing technical expertise from United Nations entities that are not physically present in the country (see figure XI). We are also seeing little progress in governments’ perception that United Nations country teams have become more cost effective as a result of country configuration.

Figure XI

**Governments and resident coordinators access to technical expertise from entities without a physical presence**



Source: 2021 DESA surveys of programme country Governments and resident coordinators.

51. Supporting countries to get back on track and achieve the SDGs requires the United Nations development system in countries to allocate its best skillsets and expertise, irrespective of physical presence. United Nations country teams also will need to adjust quickly, so they remain fit for purpose as they address new and emerging challenges and opportunities in countries. In 2022 the United Nations Sustainable Development Group will roll out a capacity assessment methodology to guide resident coordinators in adjusting the existing footprint on the basis of changing national needs and priorities. This will need to go hand in hand with stronger efforts to increase staff mobility, and engagement with Host Governments who have a key role to



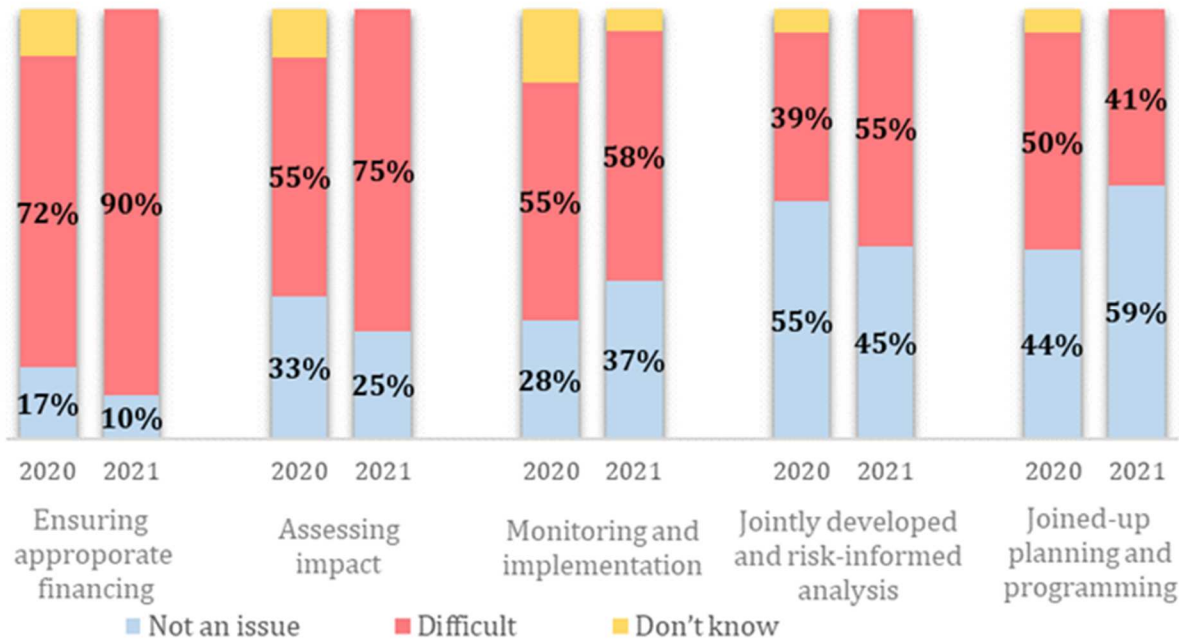
play in the full implementation of this priority in the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

### **Enhancing coordination across humanitarian, development and peace actions to advance the SDGs**

52. Violence and conflict, coupled with a climate crisis and increasing and more intense natural disasters and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, continue to wreak havoc. Even before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, some 274 million people were estimated to need humanitarian assistance and protection this year, 17 per cent more than in 2021. Due to the direct impacts of the conflict in Europe, as well as its global impacts on developing countries through instability in international financial, energy and food markets, the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance and protection has risen to 296 million. Additionally, of the 107 countries severely exposed to at least one of the three dimensions of this shock – food, energy, finance – covering 1.7 billion people, 55.3 million are already in poverty and 215 million already undernourished. In this regard, I established in March 2022 the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance to coordinate the global response to the worldwide impacts of the war in Ukraine on global food, energy and finance systems, published its first policy brief on the global effect of war in Ukraine on food, energy and finance systems, outlining a series of recommendations to mitigate effects of this crisis.
53. It is clear at this point in time that the 2030 Agenda can only be achieved universally if we significantly alter the way United Nations entities collaborate in difficult contexts where humanitarian, development and peace challenges intersect. The 2020 quadrennial review is clear in this regard. This is not about blurring mandates or resources. It is about ensuring that assets across United Nations pillars are deployed in coherent ways to help countries remain on the path – or get back on track – to advance sustainable development. In other words, more integrated action across pillars is inexorable if we are to be more effective in preventing conflict, crises and vulnerabilities before it is too late and accelerating transitions out of conflict and crises when they hit.
54. We have a good foundation on which to build, thanks to efforts already made and to the complementary reforms of the United Nations development system, peace architecture and management. Eighty-four per cent of programme country Governments now see close United Nations collaboration across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding action. Eighty-three per cent and 89 per cent of United Nations country team members and resident coordinators, respectively, described a close collaboration among entities working on development and humanitarian activities. That 75 per cent of United Nations country team members and 76 per cent of resident coordinators reported close collaboration between humanitarian and peacebuilding actors shows that room for improvement remains.
55. Yet only 77 per cent of programme country Governments agreed that resident coordinators contributed to building stronger synergies across humanitarian, development and peace interventions – a decrease from the 88 per cent reported in 2020. Dedicated expertise in, or surge capacity to support resident coordinator offices, particularly peace and development advisers, disaster risk and reduction advisers and dedicated support to strengthen the coordination across our programmes, was identified by headquarters entity respondents as instrumental in fostering joint analysis, planning and programming. Respondents from headquarters entities identified the lack of data sharing and data interoperability among United Nations entities as another significant challenge. Ultimately, there is also wide recognition that deeper culture and behaviour change across United Nations management and staff will be required for stronger collaboration and genuine recognition by all actors across all pillars of the unique value of development as both the root cause and solution to crises.
56. I have asked my Special Advisor for Programmatic Integration to work closely with entities across all pillars to identify ways to accelerate progress, drawing on the data collected, especially in areas where feedback is below expectations. We are also undertaking an internal review of the Joint Steering Committee to advance humanitarian and development collaboration to identify new opportunities to usher in a step change in collaboration between humanitarian and development activities. In the meantime, and in line with the mandate of the 2020 quadrennial review, the work of the Joint Steering Committee is being disseminated regularly to Member States, with the most recent briefing held on 30 November 2021.

57. Successfully bridging silos where the country context requires, and scaling up collaboration between pillars, call for different engagement and new incentives by Member States and funding partners. With the Funding Compact in place, it is particularly concerning that predictable, flexible and multi-year funding continues to be perceived as a significant challenge by 90 per cent of survey respondents within the United Nations system, up from 72 per cent in 2020 (see figure XII). Administrative impediments, including budgets tied to specific projects, as well as donors preventing the pooling of humanitarian and development funding, were seen as perpetuating a fragmented approach.

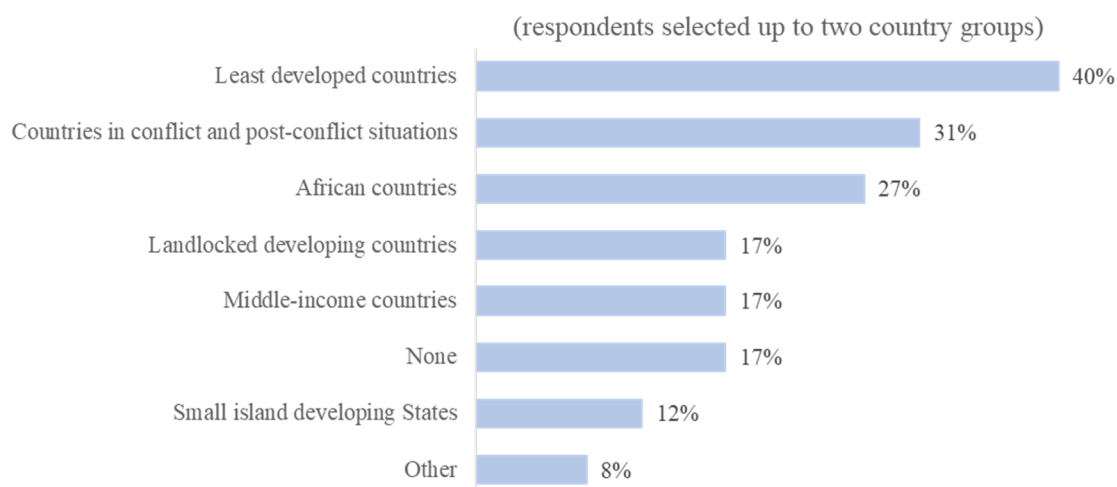
Figure XII  
**Ongoing work to bridge humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities**  
*Question: please assess the level of difficulties with each of the following aspects:*



58. A flexible funding mechanism that could target activities in areas where development, humanitarian and peace intersect could enable enormous progress. Regrettably, only 29 per cent of contributing governments reported plans to increase funding through United Nations inter-agency pooled funds by 2023, and only 29 per cent indicated more support for joint programmes, even though countries in conflict and post-conflict situations are generally well prioritized by contributing governments in deciding funding for the United Nations development system (figure XIII).

Figure XIII

**Country groups that contributing countries prioritize the most when making funding decisions**



Source: 2021 DESA survey of contributing Governments.

59. In the United Nations system, we are taking steps to maximize the coherence and therefore impact, across existing pooled funds – including the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), the Joint SDG Fund and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). While these funds will preserve their separate governance and programmatic focus, there is significant scope to improve coordination of funding allocation to improve overall effectiveness on the ground and contribute to a longer-term effort to introduce more flexible pooled funding mechanisms.
60. Ensuring that the governance arrangements across pillars are more coherent and conducive to collaboration remains critical. The reconfigured meeting of the Economic and Social Council on the transition from relief to development, further to General Assembly resolution 75/290A, offers opportunities to ensure countries affected by conflict and countries facing humanitarian emergencies are supported in an integrated manner, and with the overall objective to improve their sustainable development outcomes. I am also encouraged by the prospects of continued collaboration between the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission - including through joint meetings in support of country and thematic dialogues. This is an area of great potential, lying in the hands of Member States.

**Multi-country offices for tailored support**

61. Throughout 2021, the resident coordinator system and various United Nations development system entities have taken further steps to operationalize the recommendations to strengthen the offer of the United Nations to countries and territories served by multi-country offices. The unique challenges and vulnerabilities of these countries and territories – largely SIDS in the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean regions – have been made all too clear once again in the past year, with huge setbacks to economic growth as a result of loss of tourism and closed borders during the pandemic, the worsening impact of climate change, and now the war in Ukraine. Most SIDS are net food and fuel importers and are highly indebted, and therefore are among developing countries with the most severe exposure to the triple food, energy and finance shock from the war.

**Strengthening in-country presence**

62. It gives me great satisfaction to see that our commitment to strengthen the United Nations development system’s ability to support countries through multi-country offices is now a reality. With tenacity and working together with Member States, in particular SIDS, we have moved from resolutions to results.

63. A new Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework for the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean (2022-2026) is beginning implementation in 22 countries and territories, and a new Pacific Cooperation Framework (2023-2027) is in development. This multi-country approach has maintained national relevance to all targeted countries and territories, while drawing on commonalities among countries of focus.
64. As an outcome of the multi-country office review, the Development Coordination Office established a new resident coordinator office and United Nations country team for Micronesia, covering the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau and Marshall Islands in October 2021. Early feedback from national Governments has been very positive and expectations for the office remain high. Country coordination officers are now in place in each country covered by a multi-country office in the Pacific, Caribbean, and Indian oceans; and regional coordination specialists for the Pacific and Caribbean were also deployed to strengthen coordination with regional and sub-regional institutions.
65. Under the new Caribbean Cooperation Framework, entities such as UNDRR, UNCTAD and UN Habitat have committed larger programmatic engagements and or new physical presence in the Eastern Caribbean. Three new joint United Nations offices, shared by several entities, are to be opened in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in 2022. In the Pacific, the United Nations programmatic footprint has also increased significantly, from a total of US\$70 million and 880 staff in 2018 to a high value of US\$237 million in 2021 Country Implementation Plans, delivered by 1,106 staff.
66. The initial steps of the revamped multi-country offices give cause for optimism.
67. Over the past year, the United Nations system has leveraged the new multi-country office capacities to provide support to small island developing states in the COVID-19 response. The United Nations system in the Pacific reprogrammed around 46 per cent of planned United Nations interventions to support countries impacted by COVID-19. In the Eastern Caribbean, the United Nations multi-sectoral response plan raised over US\$45 million and, following initial success, was extended for 2021 to allow further repurposing of United Nations support and technical assistance on emerging priorities, including expanded coverage on social protection, financing and partnerships.
68. Additionally, leadership of resident coordinators and dedicated resource mobilization specialists in their offices have helped significantly increase the levels of pooled funding available to SIDS since 2019. The United Nations in the Pacific has accessed a combination of development, humanitarian and COVID-19 funding worth more than US\$55 million by the first quarter of 2022 from development partners, allowing more integrated joint programming via key agencies and the potential to leverage additional financing from public and private investment. The number of United Nations joint programmes in the Pacific has increased nine-fold since the start of the reform, from eight in 2019 to 75 in 2021.
69. The Joint SDG Fund prioritized SIDS in its initial allocations in 2020 and 2021, providing a total of US\$28.6 million to 19 countries and territories, with a specific focus on social protection and SDG financing. In addition, in June 2021 a dedicated call for proposals for SIDS led to the mobilization of an additional US\$30 million to strengthen resilience through innovative and catalytic investments. These projects will involve 23 different United Nations entities at both country and regional levels and will leverage an additional US\$17.8 million from the development system for SDG integrated policies and financing.
70. It is particularly encouraging to see efforts by various United Nations entities to step up their support to SIDS as part of the multi-country office review commitments. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiative on Rising Up for SIDS, for example, focuses on rapid, response technical and policy support in the areas of climate action, the blue economy, digital transformation and financing. The International Trade Centre (ITC) is currently consulting partners in the Caribbean and the Pacific on a SIDS strategy that will address economic diversification; strengthening capacity of micro, small and medium enterprises to overcome limitations related to remoteness, scale and vulnerability; promoting digital, e-commerce and intellectual property infrastructure; and supporting climate resilience of enterprises. The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) initiated a number of initiatives in 2021, working closely with regional intergovernmental entities like CARICOM, to combat corruption and transnational organized crime including drugs, firearms and human trafficking at ports of entry, as well as at sea. It has also worked with the Indian Ocean Commission and its Member States to develop a Regional Action Plan

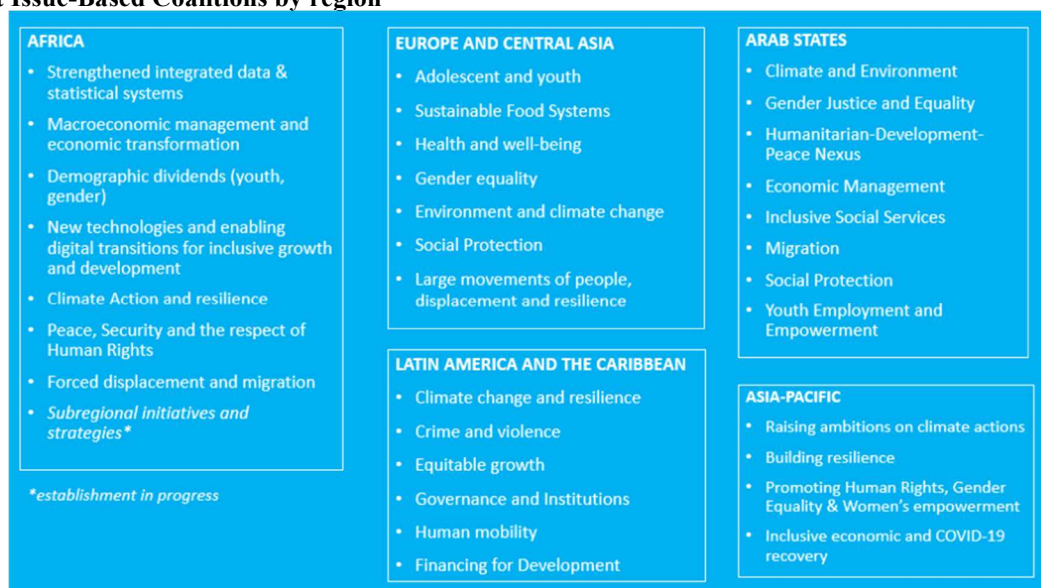
for the protection and resilience of submarine cables in Comoros, Seychelles, Madagascar and Mauritius. In Belize, the resident coordinator office and UNDP joined hands to provide the host government with an SDG Investor Map, aimed at facilitating and attracting private development financing in 16 investment opportunity areas of national priority. In the Pacific, the United Nations country team has launched a “blue financing” signature initiative as part of the Fiji Coral Reefs Joint Programme, bringing in US\$10 million from the Joint SDG Fund and the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, with the intent to raise an additional US\$50 million from private and public investment in blended finance.

71. I am encouraged by the progress in strengthening the support of the United Nations to all SIDS, irrespective of whether they have a stand-alone or multi-country resident coordinator office, as also reflected in improved perception of SIDS’s alignment of United Nations country team activities with national development needs and priorities, from 70 per cent to 84 per cent since last year.
72. This is, however, only the beginning of what we hope will mark a new era in United Nations collaboration with SIDS. Moving forward, additional attention will be paid to maximizing the impact of the United Nations support on the ground as unique financial, debt, transport and climate related challenges continue to distress small island states and to supporting recovery from the severe exposure of SIDS to the intersecting impact of climate change, COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine.

### **C. Bringing together regional assets in support of country needs**

73. Regional Collaborative Platforms are now fully established in all regions, providing a robust foundation for improved regional support to countries, based on country demand. This has been a priority focus of each of the five annual meetings of the Regional Collaborative Platforms chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General during March and April 2022.
74. Regional issue-based coalitions (IBCs) are one of the main vehicles of the substantive work Regional Collaborative Platforms can offer to country teams, rallying United Nations system-wide expertise in an agile manner in response to changing regional and country needs. The five regions undertook an assessment of the offer provided by their IBCs in 2021, leading to changes in focus and functioning (see figure XIV). For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean, an IBC on financing for development was established in 2021 in direct response to a request from resident coordinators and United Nations country teams. In Africa, a consultation of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams resulted in additional IBCs on data, climate action, macroeconomic frameworks and digital transformation as priority areas for support. Further efforts will be required in 2022 to strengthen dialogue between the regional and country level, and ensure IBCs fulfill their role in providing agile, and responsive integrated support to priorities in the region.

Figure XIV  
**Current Issue-Based Coalitions by region**



75. Another important area of priority of the regional review was to provide resident coordinators on-demand access to experts in the region for timely support of countries' needs and priorities for SDG implementation, through a roster of expertise or communities of practice. The mapping of regional assets, conducted by the think tank *Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional* (CEPEI) in 2019 to inform the regional review, gives an indication of the breadth of available expertise in the region<sup>4</sup>.
76. The establishment in each region of knowledge management hubs through which expertise and experience can be mobilized in a timely manner for identified needs are important building blocks. Steps also have been taken to bring coherence to the data architecture for evidence-based planning, programming, monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. The Africa UN Data for Development Platform was launched in 2021 as a regional repository of high-quality data on the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063 and a United Nations Africa Data and Statistics Strategy was completed. Similarly, the regional coordination group for Data and Statistics in Europe and Central Asia continued to support United Nations country teams in 2021 and has enlarged its membership to key non-United Nations entities active in data and statistics, thereby becoming more integrated into the global statistics community. In the Arab States, the MANARA platform was launched in early 2022 and includes an intelligent search engine, tools for surveys, data analysis, visualization and simulations, amongst other features.
77. In all regions, regional operations management teams have been established to develop and implement regional business operations strategies to support the implementation of efficiency initiatives in the regions. A strategy is now in place in the Arab States region, while work is ongoing in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The reports published this year by all regions on results achieved under the umbrella of Regional Collaborative Platforms in 2021 illustrate the collective achievements and joint system-wide efforts at the regional level that contributed to the advancement of the 2030 Agenda and SDG acceleration, along with specific regional development initiatives, goals and priorities. I encourage Member States to review these reports, individually, and provide guidance and feedback on the work and focus of respective Regional Collaborative Platforms.

#### **An overview of integrated support in each region**

78. In 2021, the Regional Collaborative Platform in Africa supported implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area to deepen regional integration and foster intra-African trade to accelerate SDG implementation. Technical support was further provided to Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria and Togo to develop COVID-19 response plans, mobilize human and financial resources to support implementation, as well as to monitor the progress of the response plans in the finance, tourism and transport

sectors. The opportunities and issues-based coalitions (OIBCs) on climate action and resilience, as they are known in Africa, pooled regional assets to provide joint support to the African Union Commission to establish a continental multi-hazard early warning system. Climate action will continue to be a priority for the Regional Collaborative Platform in Africa in 2022 to leverage regional assets in the preparations for COP27 in Egypt.

79. In the Arab States, the Regional Collaborative Platform provided support in the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration with key guiding principles for post-COVID-19 social protection and for the Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration with Member States. The Regional Collaborative Platform further supported nine countries in their preparations for the Food Systems Summit, including analysis of national context and progress.
80. In Asia and the Pacific, the IBC on Climate Change Mitigation supported United Nations country teams and Governments to raise the level of ambition of their Nationally Determined Contributions in the lead up to COP26 in Glasgow. Resident coordinators and United Nations country teams were supported in formulating Cooperation Frameworks that are more risk-informed, gender-responsive, and human rights-centered, including in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, and Nepal. The Regional Collaborative Platform also played a facilitation role between the global and national levels on issues such as sustainable food systems and financing for development.
81. In Europe and Central Asia, the IBC on environment and climate change equipped resident coordinators and United Nations country teams with a compendium of measures for green post-pandemic recovery to support Member States in “greening” recovery plans. The IBC on sustainable food systems provided technical support to United Nations country teams in the preparation of the Food Systems Summit and further launched a regional community of practice on the sustainability of food systems to provide key stakeholders with an inclusive and open digital space to share ideas, practices and knowledge on regional policy areas related to food systems.
82. The Regional Collaborative Platform Latin America and the Caribbean supported resident coordinators and United Nations country teams in formulating Cooperation Frameworks that are more risk-informed and transformative, including the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the Caribbean, which covers 22 countries and territories, as well as Cooperation Frameworks for El Salvador, Honduras and Peru. In response to a request for support from the resident coordinators of Central America, Colombia and Mexico on the challenges posed by increased human mobility flows and related protection challenges in their region, the IBC on human mobility deployed system-wide expertise to facilitate a coordinated response across affected countries in the region.
83. The regional review has been one of the most complex endeavors in these reforms. Working together with Member States and regional offices of the United Nations across all regions, we have made unprecedented progress. I was pleased to see in 2021 the regional assets working more collaboratively and cohesively in support of countries’ needs and priorities, using the experience, knowledge and expertise of resident coordinators and United Nations country teams to guide their support. But, while we sense genuine excitement in the regions as they enter a new era of collaboration, the litmus test for these reforms continues to be whether we are achieving transformative impact in countries.
84. At this early stage of the regional reforms, with only 54 per cent of programme country Governments indicating that expertise from the regional offices of United Nations development system entities was easy to access, it is clear that we still have a significant way to go to fully deliver on our ambition. The success of the new regional architecture depends on our ability to respond, in real time, to the demands emerging from the country level, and for our actions to demonstrate impact on the ground. This requires further efforts in all regions to ensure experts and expertise can be leveraged for timely integrated policy advice - within the region and beyond – on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. An updated mapping of expertise available at the regional level, and operationalizing systems to make the expertise easily accessible, will be a priority in 2022. In addition, and to ensure all relevant stakeholders are mobilized in support of the SDGs, the Regional Collaborative Platforms will also need to put in place more systematic outreach to external partners, including regional entities, development finance institutions, private sector, think tanks, and academia.

85. To accelerate progress against these priorities, we have asked for an independent stocktaking and recommendations from the think tank CEPEI, which has accompanied the regional review process, as we continue to roll out our ambitious objectives for the regions. For too long, regional entities of the United Nations were left outside of reforms and efforts to enhance the coherence of the United Nations development system. In many instances, the work of the regional level has also resided outside of system-wide reporting efforts, leading to an accountability gap or turning success stories largely invisible. We are in the process of changing this reality, with more impact and transparency in the way we deploy our regional assets.

### **3. Scaled up, integrated response to countries' sustainable development needs and priorities**

86. The world is moving backwards on most of the SDGs, with the ongoing conflict in Ukraine supercharging a three-dimensional crisis — food, energy and finance — that is pummeling some of the world's most vulnerable people, countries and economies. All this comes at a time when developing countries are already struggling with a slate of challenges not of their making — the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and a lack of access to adequate resources to finance the recovery in the context of persistent and growing inequalities. We are facing a perfect storm that threatens to devastate the economies of many developing countries in the absence of urgent action.

87. We need to rescue the SDGs and get back on track in our road towards 2030. The current simultaneous crises we face must be approached as an opportunity to push for the transformational change our world needs. This means embarking on the just transitions in energy, digital connectivity and food systems, which, taken together, can have multiplying effects across the 2030 Agenda. For this we need to pull developing countries back from the financial brink, opening access to the funding available in the international financial system to the economies that need them most so that governments can avoid default, provide social safety nets for the poorest and most vulnerable, and continue to make critical investments in sustainable development. And to live up to the promise to leave no one behind, we need to put people at the centre, offering the same rights and opportunities to all.

88. These imperatives are at the heart of the 2020 quadrennial review. It called, precisely, for support for recovery efforts that can supercharge implementation of the SDGs. It requested the United Nations development system to focus on crucial investments in education, health, social protection and decent work; in climate action, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the energy transition; in advancing gender equality and tackling discrimination in all its forms; and in leveraging the power of digital transformation. Member States also reinforced the need for enhanced and tailored support to countries to mobilize the means of implementation, in particular financing for development.

89. Against significant headwinds, there is no doubt that the results achieved with support from the United Nations development system last year have contributed to advances in SDG implementation. 133 million children in 95 countries were reached with cash transfer programmes. 19.9 million people gained access to basic sanitation services. 138 million workers globally were protected with reduced risk of incidence of work-related death, injuries and disease. And 48.7 million out-of-school children, 50 per cent of them girls, accessed education. These results, and many more, are elaborated on in the report of the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. They give reason to hope that there is fertile ground for progress. They demonstrate that, the foundations are now securely in place and the United Nations development system has risen to the challenge of more integrated, expert support to country needs and priorities on sustainable development.

90. Looking ahead, doubling down on advocacy and outreach aimed at mobilizing political ambition, breakthroughs and commitments from the international community to end the pandemic, reverse deteriorating SDG trends; secure decisive climate action; reform the international financial system will remain vital.

91. To help turbo-charge implementation, it is essential to address with urgency some of the shortcomings in our response that the surveys this year have helped identify. Completing the current trajectory towards more collaborative behaviour and business models across every entity of the United Nations development system;



improving planning and programming tools to support truly integrated programmes; scaling up ambition, knowledge and expertise on the priority areas identified in the 2020 quadrennial review to support countries' just transitions towards a sustainable, inclusive and equitable future. In doing so, resident coordinators must use their convenor role to bring every expert on board to deliver at scale.

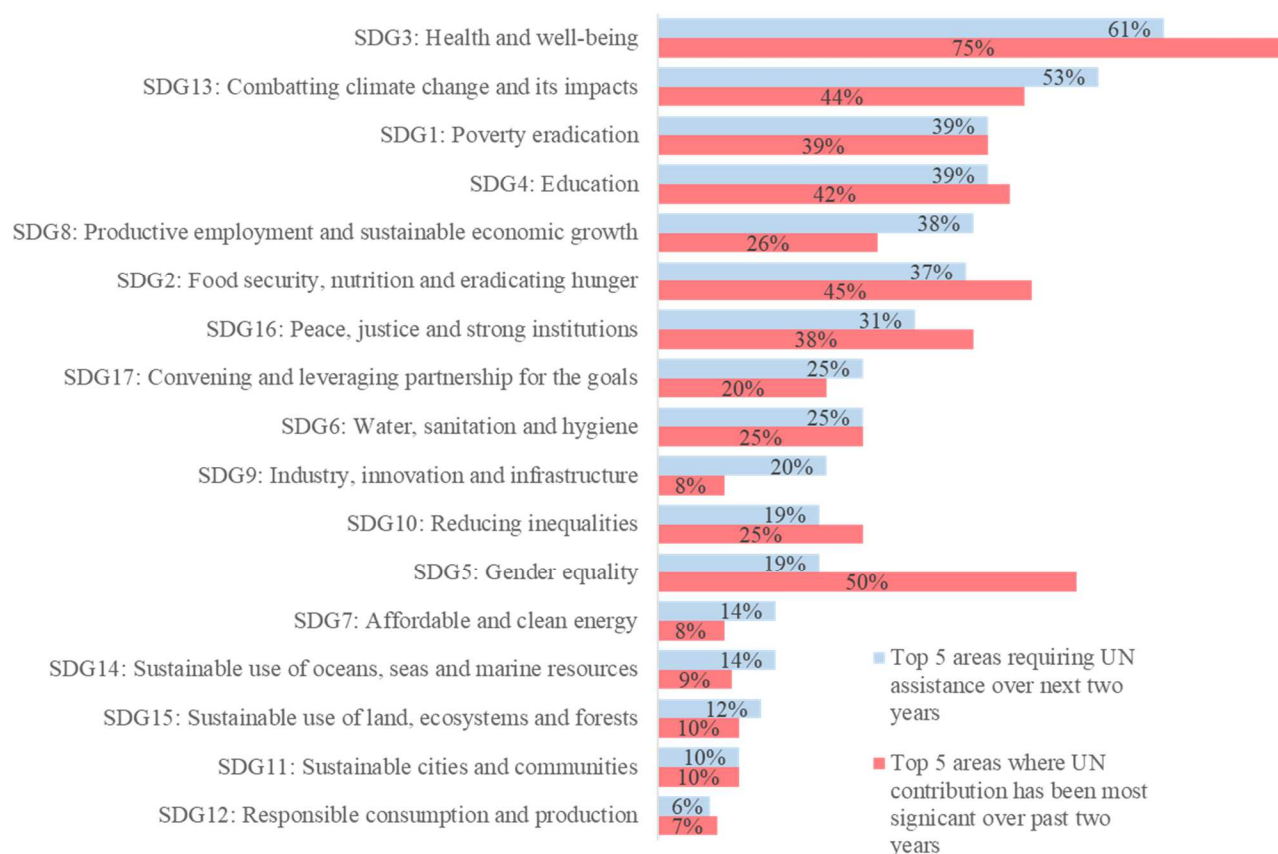
92. The proposals I made in Our Common Agenda are meant to provide additional levers to turbocharge action in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. I have requested the Deputy Secretary-General to continue to work with Principals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to strengthen our collective offer for the SDGs, leveraging Our Common Agenda to drive results at scale.

## **A. Towards integrated support for global economic recovery and to rescue the SDGs**

### **Driving further integration of United Nations support**

93. In 2021, the United Nations development system response to COVID-19 provided clear evidence of the value host governments place in the provision of evidence-based, integrated policy advice and technical support. The comprehensive health, humanitarian and socioeconomic responses to countries ensured a focus on immediate needs while striving to protect hard-won development gains. As an example, 1.4 billion vaccine doses were delivered in 144 countries, with an additional 2.8 billion doses secured or received as donations.
94. Early findings from the system-wide evaluation of the United Nations development system response to COVID-19 confirm a clear linkage between the reform and programmatic coherence, noting the effective way United Nations entities were able to quickly adapt, re-purpose, mobilize new funding and transform challenges into opportunities. As the world slowly moved beyond the immediate recovery stage, all Socio-Economic Response Plans (SERPs) were folded into the Cooperation Frameworks to ensure that future activities build on the immediate emergency response and strengthen the groundwork for countries' just transitions towards more sustainable, inclusive economies.
95. Taking stock of the United Nations development system's response, Governments reported that the UN contribution to national efforts in the past two years had been most impactful in health and well-being (SDG 3) - an evident impact of the COVID-19 response (see figure XV). This was followed by gender equality (SDG 5), food security (SDG 2), climate change (SDG 13), education (SDG 4) and poverty eradication (SDG 1). With the pandemic entering its third year, health and well-being (SDG 3) continues to be the area in which most governments (61 per cent) request UNDS support for the next two years, although significantly less so than in 2020 (75 per cent). Climate action (SDG 13) has climbed up the list of priorities.

Figure XV  
**Past and future UN assistance and contributions to the SDGs**



Source: 2021 DESA survey of programme country Governments.

96. The 2020 quadrennial review also highlighted the need for the United Nations development system to leverage the entities’ unique contributions and value add, and to provide high-quality, integrated policy advice and support with a stronger focus on actions, results, coherence, progress and impact.
97. The resulting shift in approach is recognized by programme countries. In 2021, 94 per cent of programme country Governments agreed that the Cooperation Frameworks define pathways to maximize synergies across SDGs. Eighty-six per cent of programme country Governments agreed that the UN delivers joint integrated policy advice tailored to national needs and priorities.
98. The unique value of the United Nations development system support in countries is also being recognized. A total of 70 per cent choose the United Nations as one of their preferred development partners for evidence-based policy advice and 63 per cent for integrated policy advice, far ahead of other multilateral and regional institutions and international financing institutions (see figure XVI).

Figure XVI  
**UN in comparison to other development partners**

	UNDS entities	IFIs	Other multilateral and regional institutions	OECD/ DAC partners	Southern partners	Thematic or alliance-based partners
Providing evidence-based policy advice	70%	23%	29%	17%	7%	9%
Providing integrated policy advice where appropriate	63%	23%	31%	11%	4%	8%

Source: 2021 DESA survey of programme country Governments.

99. Greater collaboration at the country level is also visible in the notable increase of joint programmes, with 571 joint programmes active across 101 United Nations country teams with a combined budget of over \$4.7 billion, up significantly from 400 active joint programmes across 84 United Nations country teams and a combined budget of over \$3.4 billion the previous year.<sup>2</sup>
100. At the global level, the adoption of strategic plans for 13 entities in 2021 was an important opportunity to drive further alignment, of entities' corporate objectives and business models with the SDGs, as Member States instructed in the 2020 quadrennial review. The interim report of the United Nations development system response to COVID-19 found some positive development in that regard, with the Strategic Plans reflecting a strong commitment to re-gaining or accelerating action toward transformative results and placing increased emphasis on joint programming. UNDP's Strategic Plan also contains clear objective to further sharpen its offer of integrated support, providing demand-driven services to the system that meet Governments' policy and programming priorities, under the overall coordination of resident coordinators. This is a positive development as part of wider efforts by UNDP to consolidate its "integrator role" in a new generation of United Nations country teams.
101. These are significant achievements. At the same time, we must intensify all efforts towards a United Nations development system that shifts away from an increasingly obsolete model of single, projectized agency support that is inadequate to respond to the demands of the SDGs. The road ahead, in this regard, will not be simple. An independent external review analysing the UN development system's reform impact at the country level,<sup>3</sup> for example, suggested that the collective offer towards a "systems approach" with a greater role for integrated policy advice remained ad hoc at this early stage of the reforms.<sup>4</sup> This is consistent with our own findings. In 2021, only 66 per cent of resident coordinators confirmed that they and the United Nations country teams were fully satisfied with the support they had received from respective headquarters to shape integrated policies to realize the SDGs. The highest level of satisfaction was in the Africa region (86 per cent) and the lowest in Asia and the Pacific and Europe and Central Asia (47 per cent each).
102. Persistent competition among United Nations entities for donor funding remains a major disincentive to greater integration. At the global level, only 7 out of 29 entities have allocated at least 15 per cent of non-core resources for development to joint activities, at odds with Member States mandate in resolution 72/279. In countries, nearly three quarters of programme country Governments report competition to a large or moderate extent, with little change since 2014 (figure XVII). Nearly half of contributing countries report no change since the reform and more than a fifth note an increase in competition.
103. It is positive to note, however, that 71 per cent of programme countries agreed that there had been an effort by United Nations entities to ensure more collaborative and coherent approaches to resource mobilization.

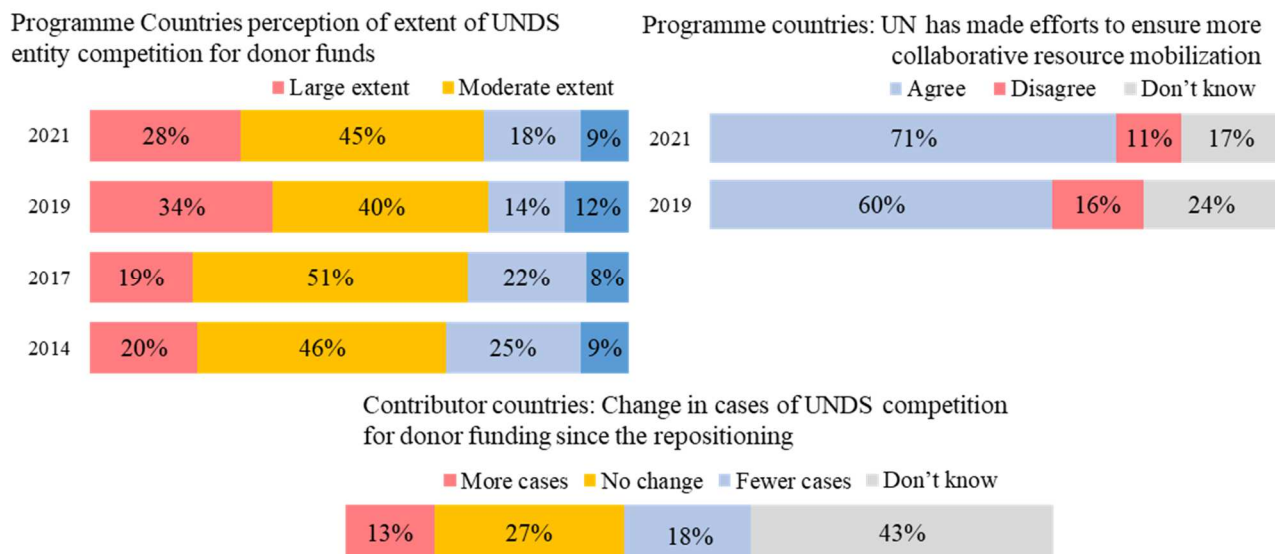
<sup>2</sup> Active joint programmes are considered those that expended funds in the past year.

<sup>3</sup> Eswatini, Georgia, Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda.

<sup>4</sup> DIE Discussion Paper: New rules, same practice? Analyzing UN Development System reform effects at the country level (Feb 2022)

Figure XVII

**United Nations development system entity competition for donor funding still prevalent but more efforts made for collaborative resource mobilization**



Source: 2021 Department of Economic and Social Affairs survey of Governments.

104. Ensuring we succeed, universally, in providing integrated responses to country needs and priorities will remain a priority for 2022 and beyond. The Cooperation Framework and the accompanying workplans and funding framework must be utilised to their fullest by country teams to ensure the spirit of collaboration in the Cooperation Framework translates into integrated programming and commensurate financing. UNDP, in its integrator function, has an important role to play.

**Poverty eradication at the centre of our action**

105. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the world further off track in its goal to end poverty in all its forms. 131 million more people have been pushed into poverty in 2020 alone. Over 276 million are estimated to be facing severe hunger due to COVID-19 according to the World Food Programme. Addressing the weaknesses in current systems of health care, education and social protection, as well as systemic discrimination and unequal power relations that were laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic, is central to eradicating poverty and ensuring no one is left behind. The 2020 quadrennial review placed renewed emphasis on action by the United Nations development system to strengthen its support to countries in these areas.

106. Accordingly, programme country Governments have emphasized SDG 1 (poverty eradication) among the top three SDGs requiring United Nations assistance in the next two years, with the goal of enabling a green, resilient and inclusive recovery.

107. Overall, the UN was considered a valued partner of governments, with 85 per cent of Governments noting that United Nations country teams have assisted their countries in assessing the situation of the poorest, and 80 per cent in addressing their needs.<sup>5</sup>

**Accelerating universal health coverage**

108. COVID-19 has uncovered long-ignored risks, including inadequate health systems, gaps in social protection and structural inequalities. It has also brought home the importance of emergency preparedness and lent greater urgency to the quest for universal health coverage. Requests for United Nations development system

<sup>5</sup> It was 91 per cent and 92 per cent respectively in 2020; however, the metric used was different and therefore is not comparable year on year.

support to health and well-being remains strong, with specific demand for United Nations country team support for universal health coverage by 2030, primarily from Governments in low-income (76 per cent) and low-middle-income countries (78 per cent).

109. In Our Common Agenda, I made specific proposals to strengthen the global health architecture. These include promoting a global vaccination plan for COVID-19, strengthening the World Health Organization, improving global health security and preparedness, and moving towards universal health coverage. I was pleased to see Member States support for these proposals in the consultations on Our Common Agenda and will appreciate continued engagement as we chart the way ahead.

### **Achieving universal social protection by 2030**

110. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted profound shortcomings in social protection and left 4 billion people, more than half the world's population, unprotected. An overwhelming majority of host governments (96 per cent) rated United Nations country team support for national social protection systems as effective. The response of United Nations country teams, in implementing special and targeted measures to expand social protection for the poor and most vulnerable, was rated as highly effective on targeted measures for children and youth (99 per cent) and refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons (90 per cent), and to a lesser extent in the case of older people (58 per cent) and indigenous peoples (52 per cent).

111. This gives a solid foundation for increased support in the years ahead. In September 2021, I proposed the creation of a Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection, which aims to expand social protection to the 4 billion people left unprotected and to create at least 400 million jobs by 2030, mainly in the green, care and digital economy. It will provide countries with support to develop inclusive and integrated national employment and social protection strategies; and to strengthen multilateral cooperation and increase access to international finance. The Accelerator will be supported by a High-Ambition Coalition of Ministers to promote job creation in emerging sectors. Building on the model followed in recent Summits such as the Food System summit, resident coordinators will mobilize United Nations country teams and other stakeholders in programme countries to ensure the Global Accelerator supports countries priorities and needs for social protection.

### **Mobilizing collective action to transform education**

112. Education systems across the world are at a crossroads. Over the last two years, pandemic-related restrictions saw countries experience on average 20 weeks of full school closures – with potentially dramatic consequences for future learning and school participation, particularly for girls and marginalized groups. This is exacerbating a pre-existing learning crisis that saw half of all children in low and middle-income countries unable to read a basic text by age 10. What's more, a seminal report from the International Commission on the Futures of Education shows that education systems all over the world are struggling to provide learners with the knowledge, skills and values needed to thrive in our rapidly changing world. A transformation of education is urgently needed to better prepare societies for uncertain futures.

113. The United Nations development system plays an important role in supporting Governments on SDG 4. In 2021, 88 per cent of Governments reported receiving support from United Nations country teams in expanding access to inclusive and equitable quality education. Almost all resident coordinators assessed United Nations country team support on different elements of education as effective, such as their assistance in improving the digital literacy of children and adolescents (99 per cent) and reducing the number of out-of-school children, especially girls (96 per cent). With the support of the United Nations, 48.7 million out-of-school children, half of them girls, accessed education, including 6.4 million children on the move and 31.7 million in humanitarian settings. At the same time, support to the education sector remains compartmentalized, and fewer than half of United Nations development system entities have a strategy in this sector, according to the Headquarters survey. At a global level, a range of important steps have been taken to strengthen cooperation across the education system, including the establishment by UNESCO of a new SDG 4 High-Level Steering Committee.

114. Boosting the offer of United Nations country teams on education is an important part of preparations for the Transforming Education Summit that I will convene in September 2022. The Summit seeks to renew political and public commitment to education as a pre-eminent public good. It aims to mobilize the action, ambition, solidarity and solutions needed to reimagine education as a means of recovering pandemic-related learning losses and accelerating implementation of SDG 4. Under the leadership of the resident coordinator, United Nations country teams will support countries as they undertake inclusive national consultations to develop a National Statement of Commitment to Transform Education by 2030.

### **Strengthening national capacities to generate and use data**

115. I remain frustrated with the lack of reliable and timely data without which the SDGs cannot be properly monitored or achieved. It also makes our pledge to leave no one behind tragically elusive. Seven years into the SDGs, this is simply not acceptable.

116. SDG target 17.18 aims to enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, and by 2030, to significantly increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts. We have not yet delivered on this commitment for most indicators.

117. This is an area where the United Nations development system, as a long-standing and valued partner of governments, has a strong comparative advantage. In 2021, 95 per cent of United Nations country teams provided support to strengthen national statistical capacities; and 53 per cent report improved joint data collection and innovation. A large majority of Governments (91 per cent) and resident coordinators (85 per cent) agreed that the United Nations contributed to strengthening national capacities in statistics and planning. Agreed workplans to coordinate and strengthen national statistical capacities now exist in 43 per cent of United Nations country teams, more than a doubling of last year's share. United Nations country teams have also supported the strengthening of national statistical capacities in disaggregating data based on sex (82 per cent), age (76 per cent) and disability (65 per cent), and to a lesser extent on ethnicity (28 per cent) and race (20 per cent).

### **Towards more tangible progress on gender equality and ending violence against women and girls**

118. The World Economic Forum's latest report found that it would take over 135 years to close the gender gap worldwide overall and 267 years to close the gender gap in terms of economic participation and opportunity. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, violence against women and girls intensified; child marriage, on the decline in recent years, increased; and women continued to suffer a disproportionate share of job losses and increased care work.

119. As the United Nations development system continued to improve its focus on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, programme country Governments ranked gender equality second in areas which received significant support over the past two years. Among United Nations country teams that developed a Cooperation Framework in 2021, 19 out of 27 incorporated a dedicated gender equality outcome. Gender equality remained a major focus of joint activities with 87 per cent of United Nations country teams, reporting one or more Joint Programmes with a focus on Goal 5.

120. 2021 saw an increase in the available capacity to address countries' gender priorities in UN country teams. In addition to UN Women's presence in 76 countries, gender advisers were deployed in 21 Resident Coordinator Offices in countries without United Nations Women's presence, through a partnership with UN Women. Eighty-six per cent of United Nations country teams have dedicated mechanisms, such as gender theme groups, to support joint work on gender equality and women's empowerment.

121. The quality of the United Nations support in terms of gender equality has been rated as overall effective by UN country teams (see figure XVIII).

Figure XVIII  
**Effectiveness of support**

	Effective	Ineffective	Don't know
Strengthening institutional mechanisms and legal frameworks to prevent and eliminate violence and discrimination against women and girls	<b>92%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>
Implementing specific measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence	<b>88%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Gender equality expertise	<b>95%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Enhancing the collection, availability and use of sex-disaggregated data	<b>78%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>8%</b>

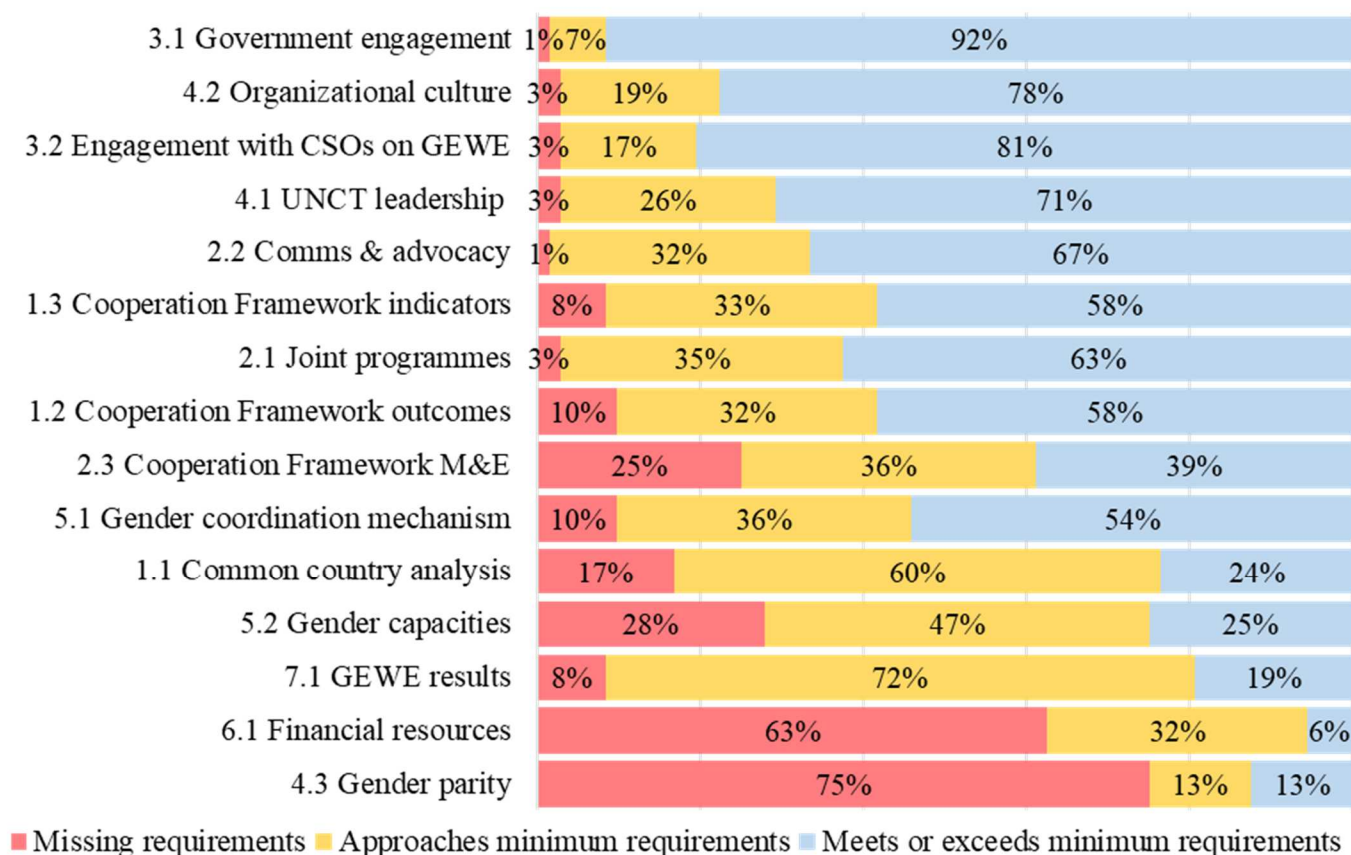
122. An important share of the work of United Nations country teams focused on addressing gender inequality in the response to COVID-19 and addressing violence against women and girls. In 2020/2021, the Spotlight Initiative, a partnership between the United Nations and the European Union to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls, contributed to a 32 per cent increase in the national budget to prevent violence against women and girls and to sign or strengthen 84 laws and policies across 17 countries. The Initiative also aided a 22 per cent increase in the number of convictions of perpetrators of violence and provided over 650,000 women and girls with gender-based violence services despite COVID-19 related constraints and lockdowns.

123. Similarly, the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund's focus on gender yielded a multi-fold increase in resources allocated to programmes with gender equality as a primary target. The allocations jumped from 5 per cent of total funding (USD 1.9 million) in the first call to 64 per cent (USD 11.9 million) in the second. The model is being replicated now by other Funds, such as the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan.

124. The establishment of a United Nations System-wide Action Plan and gender equality scorecard for United Nations country teams has helped ensure a gender-responsive implementation of the SDGs and the COVID-19 recovery. The country team Scorecard submissions demonstrate increasing uptake on gender mainstreaming as evidenced inter alia by the growing number of gender objectives in strategic plans and Cooperation Frameworks. At the global level, a total of 64 per cent of all ratings fell into the "meets" or "exceeds requirements" categories. At the country level, 61 country teams submitted a report in 2021, up from 38 in 2020.

125. Figure XIX provides a detailed breakdown of performance in the past four years.

Figure XIX  
UNCT-SWAP performance in 2018-2021



Source: UN-Women, 2021.

126. But there is much more we need to do to reverse the trend on gender equality, at a time when Goal 5 has experienced little progress across regions for most targets and indicators and a worsening outlook as a result of the pandemic. Building on the progress we have made in gender parity and gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system, it is important that country teams aim high to ensure we are able to help governments take action to scale in a way that will help truly change the dynamics on the ground. At this point in time, our efforts – too frequently – remain small-scale to address the immense existing gender equality gaps. Looking at the last four years of the 72 country teams that completed a comprehensive report against the country team score card, only 25 (34.7 per cent) met or exceeded 9 or more (60 per cent) of the 15 Scorecard performance requirements.

127. In Our Common Agenda, I urged Member States and other stakeholders to consider five related and transformative measures, in line with my call to action on human rights: (a) the full realization of equal rights, including through repeal of all gender-discriminatory laws (target 5.1 of the SDGs); (b) measures to promote gender parity in all spheres and at all levels of decision-making, including quotas and special measures (target 5.c); (c) facilitating women's economic inclusion, including through large-scale investment in the care economy and equal pay, and more support for women entrepreneurs (targets 5.4, 5.5, 5.a); (d) greater inclusion of the voices of younger women; and (e) emergency response plans to accelerate the eradication of violence against women and girls (target 5.2).

128. In addition, in order to further improve the offer of the United Nations, I have asked the Deputy Secretary-General to take the lead in reviewing the United Nations system's capacity on gender – staffing, resources,



architecture - to deliver on gender equality as a core priority across all entities, in close cooperation with UN Women and UNFPA. The review will make recommendations on how to make gender equality a shared responsibility and priority across mandates, integrated into programming and funding benchmarks, and backed by skill sets and a staffing architecture that is coherent and maximizes expertise, while minimizing duplication.

### Facilitating meaningful participation and inclusion of youth

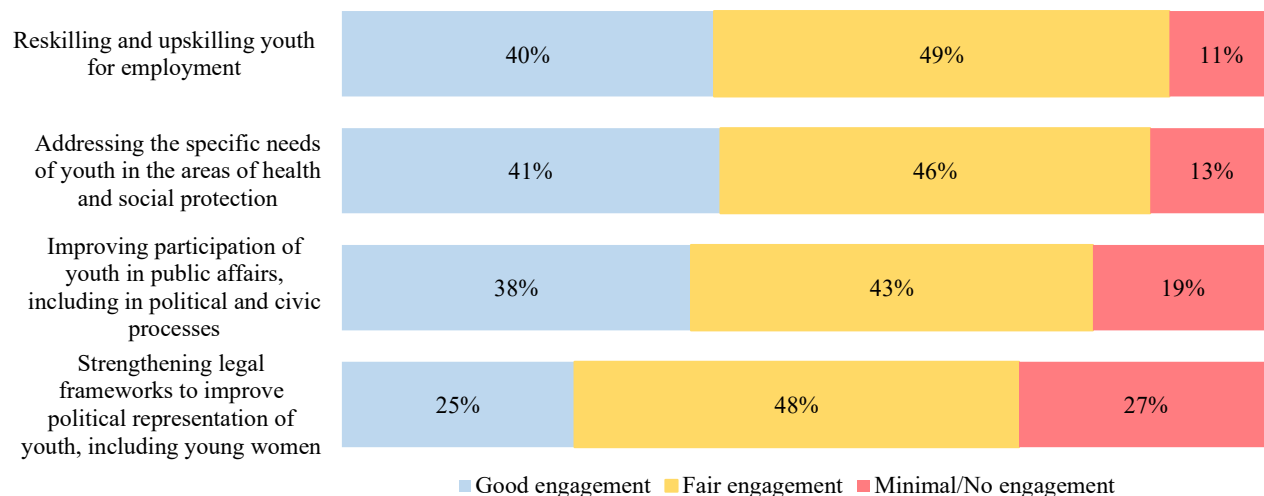
129. Young people have suffered serious setbacks to their learning, mental health and economic opportunities of young people worldwide – compounding pre-existing gaps in support for young people. At the same time, there is growing recognition of young people’s role as positive agents of change and key contributors to the advancement of the 2030 Agenda.

130. This is also reflected in the high demand for United Nations support on youth inclusion.

131. Among resident coordinators, 76 per cent indicated that their host country had requested support on youth (see figure XX). The UN Youth Strategy 2030, established in 2018, is the first system-wide framework for working for, with and alongside youth. Among United Nations country teams, guided by the UN Youth Strategy, 121 out of 130 engage youth in their actions, with good engagement at the grass roots level (80 per cent) and with girls and young women (80 per cent). Resident coordinators consider the strongest engagements of United Nations country teams in addressing the specific needs of youth are in reskilling and upskilling youth for employment (89 per cent) and health and social protection (87 per cent), and the weakest, in strengthening legal frameworks to improve the political representation of youth.

Figure XX

#### Resident coordinators’ response to United Nations country team engagement on youth



Source: 2021 DESA survey of Resident Coordinators.

132. The 2021 report on implementation of the UN Youth Strategy captures more fully the efforts of UN entities and 130 UNCTs against a set of key performance indicators and will show the breadth and depth of commitment to progressively improve United Nations system efforts for, by and with youth, while also pointing to areas in need of further attention for each entity and United Nations country team. Nonetheless, an evaluation of youth programming in the United Nations system from 2015-2020 suggests that there remains considerable scope for improving how the United Nations development system engages with youth,

moving beyond treating them as beneficiaries, and strengthening efforts to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable youth.<sup>6(OB)</sup>

133. For the United Nations to be relevant and effective into the future, it must step up its work for and with young people – particularly at the country level. My proposal to establish a United Nations Office on Youth in the Secretariat, if taken forward by Member States, would boost the ability of the entire United Nations system to meet this objective. Through a stronger and more sustainable focus on advocacy, innovation, coordination and system-wide accountability, the new Office would help ensure that young people and their interests are at the centre of the Organization and the work of the United Nations development system at all levels.

### **Mainstreaming disability inclusion**

134. Comprising more than 15 per cent of the world's population, or one billion people, persons with disabilities are the world's largest minority. Even under normal circumstances, persons with disabilities are less likely to access health care, education, employment and to participate in the community. They are more likely to live in poverty, experience higher rates of violence, neglect and abuse, and are among the most marginalized in any crisis-affected community. COVID-19 has further compounded this situation, disproportionately impacting persons with disabilities both directly and indirectly. Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the COVID-19 response and recovery, as well as in all development efforts is a vital part of achieving the pledge to leave no one behind, and a critical test of the global commitments under the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda.

135. Since its launch in 2019, the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy has provided a concrete framework to bring about transformative progress for persons with disabilities across both programmes and operations of the Organization. Progress on disability inclusion during the Strategy's first two years is clearly evident. But with only 15 per cent of United Nations development system entities and 21 per cent of United Nations country teams having met or exceeded at least 50 per cent of indicators in the Strategy's accountability framework, much remains to be achieved, and further efforts are needed to ensure full implementation of the Strategy.

136. Concerted efforts on disability inclusion from both United Nations development system entities and United Nations country teams across programmes and operations, particularly on consulting persons with disabilities and their representative organizations will be critical to achieve the goals set by the Strategy. In 2021, 44 per cent of UNDS entities met or exceeded accessibility requirements that enable persons with disabilities to participate fully in all aspects of life. Twenty-one entities are addressing disability inclusion in their strategic plans in some form, though currently only 28 per cent met or exceeded framework requirements. Forty-four per cent of UNDS entities are developing and implementing action plans to address physical and digital accessibility, while in terms of consultation, only 12 per cent of UNDS entities and 36 per cent of UNCTs report meeting or exceeding framework requirements by meaningfully engaging with persons with disabilities across all aspects of their work, including planning, programme design and implementation.

137. Disability inclusion was mainstreamed in the system's COVID-19 response through coordinated action by the Strategy's entity focal point network and a time-bound task team of United Nations country teams to support the development of response plans and dedicated measures to address the rights of persons with disabilities, including through inclusive and accessible communications and inclusion of persons with disabilities in vaccination campaigns and vaccine roll-out.<sup>7(OB)</sup>

138. The Joint SDG Fund continued funding 35 joint programmes in countries on integrated social protection of which 10 are directly targeting persons with disabilities and 12 have mainstreamed disability in integrated policies on social protection and LNOB. In addition, through the support of the United Nations Partnership

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<sup>6</sup> UNFPA Evaluation Office, et. Al, *What works to amplify the rights and voices of youth*, Dec 2021.

on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2021, 42 joint programmes on disability inclusion were carried out at country and multi-country level.

### **Advancing human rights to leave no one behind**

139. The 2020 quadrennial review requested that entities of the United Nations development system assist Governments, at their request, in their efforts to respect and fulfil their human rights obligations and commitments under international law, as a critical tool to operationalize the pledge to leave no one behind.
140. In response, most of the United Nations country teams reported that they drew on for example human rights treaty body findings (89 per cent) recommendations to inform their analysis. In addition, 48 per cent assisted governments on obligations under human rights treaties and 42 per cent on Universal Periodic Reviews reporting. In some cases, this remains below expectations from Governments, which for some noted that more financial and technical resources are needed to support compliance with human rights treaties and the preparation of human rights reports.
141. To further increase United Nations country teams' capacity and expertise on human rights, resident coordinators have - at the request of Member States and in consultation with them - continued to deploy human rights advisers in 54 countries (up from 43 in 2020), funded by the multi-partner Human Rights Mainstreaming Fund.

### **Realizing integrated and just transitions in energy, food systems and connectivity**

142. Just transitions in energy, food systems and connectivity have the potential to unlock SDG implementation with multiplier effects across the goals.
143. Just energy transitions will support countries' efforts towards the 1.5 degrees goal, integrating climate action as a base consideration across all efforts towards the development of a greener, and more sustainable economy.
144. Transformed food systems would eliminate a major cause of inequality for the three billion people who cannot access a healthy diet, substantially decrease the level of stunting and provide benefits in terms of cognitive development and educational attainment. It would decrease food system greenhouse gas emissions, boost resilience to climate shocks, help reduce biodiversity loss, and substantially reduce the economic drag presented by inadequate nutrition.
145. A just digital transition will leverage the interconnectedness of people, organizations, and technology to ensure countries have access to quality education, remote work, e-commerce, financial technologies and payments systems, and the virtual delivery of essential services – ensuring communities can reap the benefits of digitalization and adapt to the future of work; while ensuring countries have access to environmental, economic and social data and observation systems to measure SDG implementation.
146. Through the Food Systems Summit, the High-Level Dialogue on Energy and COP26 in Glasgow last year, the UN development system has supported Member States in reaching key milestones, including 110 national pathways setting countries' priorities for food systems transitions and a global roadmap towards achieving SDG 7 by 2030. These achievements are direct results of our reform efforts. At the global level, the UN development system, under the leadership of the UN Sustainable Development Group, was united in its advocacy efforts, pulling from individual agencies the expertise and reach to raise global ambition. Resident Coordinators used their convening leadership to bring relevant stakeholders in support of countries' ambitions and needs.
147. We must now take this to the next level, to ensure that our plans and ambitions deliver concrete results on the ground. The reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system has opened new entry points for the UN to convene at country level and assist Governments to maximize the opportunities and momentum generated by Global summits and other global initiatives linked to these fundamental transitions.

## **Taking climate action and making peace with nature**

148. The UN development system, with an increasingly active role by the Resident Coordinators at the country level, supported countries in ensuring intergovernmental processes in 2021 such as the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in Glasgow, the first part of the Biodiversity COP 15, the UN Food Systems Summit and the High-Level Dialogue on Energy reflected national sustainable development priorities, and in driving further ambition for climate action and environmental sustainability.
149. In preparation for COP26, through the Climate Promise initiative led by UNDP, 120 countries were supported to elaborate new Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans or revise existing ones. The UN development system supported the preparation of a global roadmap to achieve SDG 7 by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050, and helped governments, business and other stakeholders put forward voluntary Energy Compacts as part of the High-Level Dialogue on Energy, building a path for just energy transitions to support the development of a greener, and more sustainable economy.
150. We must bring the same resolve to part 2 of the Convention on Biological Diversity meeting this year to agree on a new Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. The UN Common Approach to Integrating Biodiversity and Nature-Based Solutions, adopted in May 2021, provides the normative framework to mainstream biodiversity within the UN and catalyse collective action to address drivers of biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems. So far, 14 out of 27 entities report having adjusted their strategies, policies and programmes to align to the Common Approach, and 13 out of 27 entities have considered drivers of biodiversity loss in their strategic plans. Similarly, the 2022 UN Climate Change Conference in Egypt (COP27), the upcoming Oceans Conference, as well as the new negotiations on a global plastics treaty, provide additional opportunities to work towards a greener and more sustainable future.
151. At country level, 83 per cent of host governments reported having benefitted from policy advice on climate action from the UN development system and 75 per cent of Resident Coordinators and United Nations country team members agreed that environmental considerations other than climate action had been incorporated into different areas of programming and policy over the past year. Better integration of UNDS support to countries' objectives to achieve just and green transitions is a priority area of focus for the UNSDG in 2022.

## **Enabling countries' food systems transitions**

152. Preparations for the Food Systems Summit in September 2021 deliberately adopted a systems-approach that considers the interconnections in food and agriculture across production, markets, consumption, trade, environment, climate change and health.
153. Under the Resident Coordinators' leadership, UN country teams supported national convenors in 148 countries to gather a broad range of stakeholders and articulate their priorities and potential solutions for sustainable food systems. Following 1,644 dialogues with 108,915 participants, United Nations country teams supported development of 110 national pathways towards sustainable food systems by 2030, with each geared towards advancing national progress on multiple SDGs.
154. The UN development system is supporting follow-up via a dedicated Food Systems Coordination Hub, taking over from the Food Systems Summit Secretariat, to translate the pathways into policies and programmes aligned with national priorities in 2022 and beyond.

## **Supporting just digital transitions**

155. Digital connectivity has increased since the pandemic started, but 2.9 billion people still lack access to the Internet. Ninety-six per cent of them live in developing countries, with a digital divide that is even wider for women and girls. The 2020 QCPR recognized these challenges and encouraged cooperation with programme countries to improve digital inclusion. Digital transitions enable access to quality education, virtual delivery of essential services (e.g., tele-health), remote work, e-commerce, fintech and digital payments. They are a

powerful driver of inclusion, increasing the participation of women, girls, young people, people with disabilities and indigenous people, to leave no one behind.

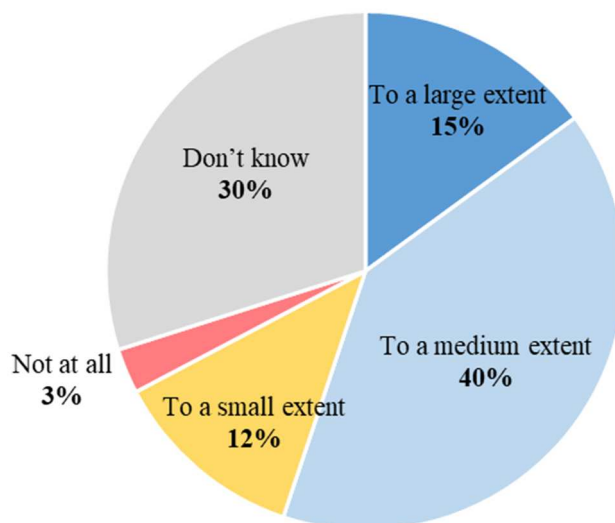
156. UN country teams are already providing support to countries to prepare for a digital future. In Benin, the UN country team helped set up an innovative digital platform with real-time data on direct foreign investments, aid and other development financing to support the government in SDG-aligned planning and budgeting. In Bangladesh, the UN is facilitating a digital trade platform for SDG investments matchmaking. While individual examples abound, with only 65 per cent of programme countries reporting that the UN country team supported them in providing digital inclusion, we anticipate a major surge in this type of activity in the coming years. Resident Coordinators also reported “relatively weak support by UN headquarters” in this area, at 41 per cent. UN entities will need to ensure ready capability to deal with the anticipated surge in demand.
157. At the multilateral level, I have pointed in my report, *Our Common Agenda*, to the need to develop shared proposals for a digital global compact to connect all people to the internet. If endorsed by Member States, this could provide a useful frame to scale up our action.

### **Support for economic transformation, increased financing for sustainable development and enhanced cooperation with IFIs**

158. Reasserting the role of the UN in the global economic debate was one of my priorities in taking office. We have come a long way in this regard. Resident Coordinators are now supported by an economist in all Resident Coordinator offices, and the establishment of a robust UN network of economists. They also benefit from much stronger links to DESA, regional economic and social commissions and other specialized entities with expertise in trade, financing for development and economic transformation.
159. It is encouraging that 86 per cent of programme country Governments agree that the UN provides adequate support to financing for the SDGs and that 78 per cent similarly agree that the Integrated National Financing Frameworks help countries strengthen their financing options for sustainable development. Enabled by the joint SDG Fund, UN country teams scaled up their support to design INFFs and reinforce the SDG financing architecture in 69 countries. I was also pleased to see 67 per cent of programme countries indicate noticeable improvement in our engagement at the country level in the past year (see figure XXI). Direct engagement of International Financial Institutions in preparing CCAs has increased from 36 to 54 per cent from 2020 to 2021. Among UN country teams, 54 per cent reported having a formal relationship with IFIs and 55 reported joint initiatives with IFIs in 2021, a major increase of 25 per cent over 2020. Initiatives were mostly with the World Bank (40), International Monetary Fund (20), African Development Bank (15) and Asian Development Bank (13). Stronger efforts will continue to be made to engage IFIs and MDBs in SDG implementation.

**Figure XXI**

Improvement in collaboration with IFIs over the past four years



Source: DESA, 2021 programme country Government survey.

160. At the global level, the Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond Initiative resulted in a single, ambitious menu of options addressing policies for the short, medium and long term that reflected the variety of needs and views of various stakeholders including Member States and helped secure critical financial relief for countries through targeted advocacy efforts, such as a High-Level Event on Debt and Liquidity in March 2021. Our advocacy efforts also helped secure the extension of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative until the end of 2021; issuance \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights in August 2021, aimed at boosting global liquidity; and deliver the establishment of the IMF Resilience and Sustainability Trust, including support for vulnerable Middle-Income Countries.

161. Despite such advances, much work is needed to fix the long-standing weaknesses in the global financial system, which continues to punish the poor through structural features on debt management, credit access, and availability of finance liquidity. At the global level, I have called for a reform of the global financial architecture, including by boosting and leveraging the resources of IFIs and MDBs, to create an enabling environment for SDG investment. In support, we must continue to improve our support at the country levels. Resident Coordinators report that it remains difficult for them to secure adequate support on economic policy advice from entities not physically present in country, and only 40 per cent of United Nations country team respondents agreed that they benefitted to a great or moderate extent from increased support of entities' headquarters to leverage financing in the past year.

### **Cooperation and partnerships to support a just transition**

162. There are high expectations regarding the UN's role in convening and facilitating partnerships to realize the 2030 Agenda. It is noteworthy that 86 per cent of host governments agreed that the Resident coordinators had contributed to leveraging partnerships in support of national efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda. Contributor countries, at 93 per cent, largely considered the UN's effectiveness in convening stakeholders, leveraging partnerships and facilitating knowledge sharing to be average or above average in comparison to other development partners (see figure XXII). When asked about preferred providers of support in leveraging partnerships, 70 per cent of governments chose the UN development system.

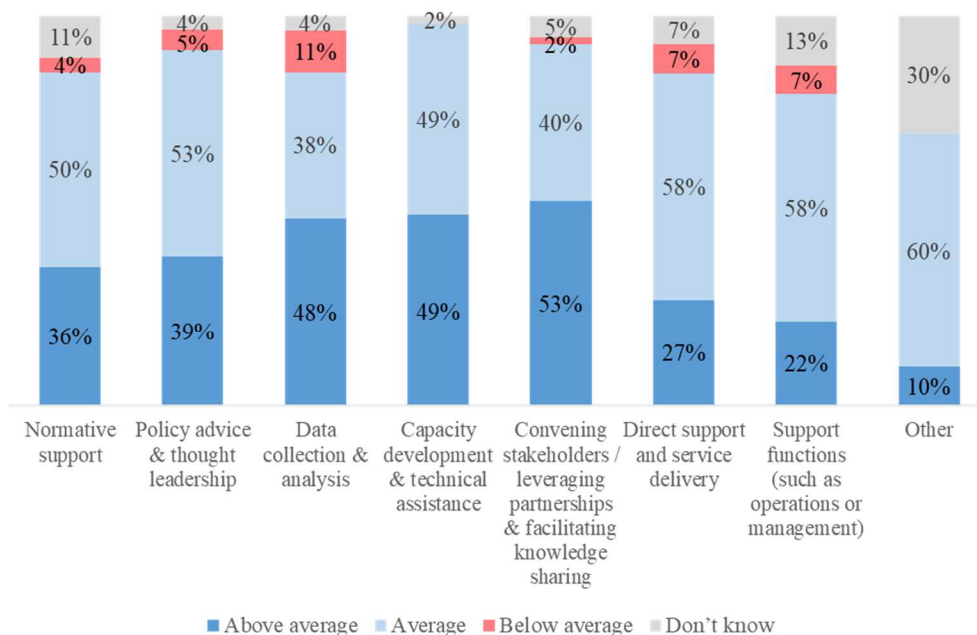
163. In considering various categories of stakeholders, developing countries gave high marks to UN engagement with civil society, including groups representing young people, women and people with disabilities, among others. We are now intensifying work with Resident Coordinators and ILO to ensure we increase United Nations country team engagement with trade unions and employers' organizations.

164. In countries, this positive trend is also visible in the increased levels of engagement in the new CCAs and Cooperation Frameworks of civil society (88 per cent in CCAs and 90 per cent in Cooperation Frameworks) and, the private sector (57 per cent and 69 per cent, respectively), among other stakeholders. As reported above, Resident Coordinators have also played an essential role in coalescing support in countries in the lead up to the Food Systems Summit, the High-Level Dialogue on Energy and COP26. In all cases, with strategic direction from the UNSDG and its Chair, they convened stakeholders to support countries achieve a high level of ambition, and support commitments towards concrete results for a more sustainable and equitable future

165. These are positive signs that the role of the Resident Coordinator as a convener of sustainable development actors in countries has taken root and can make a meaningful difference in advancing sustainable development.

166. Other types of partnerships have contributed to improving the UN offer. For example, 20 UNDS entities indicated that they had integrated South-South Cooperation results in their results reporting frameworks and 17 UNDS entities supported South-South projects financed through trust funds from the UN Office of South-South Cooperation, including deploying vital medical supplies and mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 22 countries. As reflected in the 2020 Quadrennial review, volunteerism can also be an important means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In 2021 over 10,000 UN Volunteers served across the Secretariat and UN agencies, funds and programmes, including 245 in Resident Coordinators offices. Eighty-five per cent of UN volunteers came from the Global South.

Figure XXII  
Effectiveness of the UNDS in comparison to other development partners



Source: DESA, 2021 Survey of Contributors.

167. There is room for improvement in managing and monitoring ongoing partnerships. Twenty-four per cent of Resident coordinators reported developing a United Nations country team approach to partnerships, a slight improvement from 18 per cent in 2019 and 25 of 29 UNDS entities reported having a partnership policy or guideline. Only about 67 per cent of entities reported having a global monitoring and reporting platform in

place to track partnership status and results. In addition, a UNDS assessment<sup>8</sup> suggested that too many partnerships are driven primarily by short-term UN entity fundraising objectives. The assessment underlines the need for more skills, structures and processes to position the UNDS as a credible and strategic partner with the private sector. To address this, stronger links are being built between the resident coordinator system and the Global Compact, in particular through its country-level local networks, which provide pools of private sector actors committed to advancing progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. New Global Compact regional hubs are being established to provide additional capacity to local networks and United Nations country teams, to strengthen local private sector engagement, including in countries currently without a local network. The hubs will coordinate both strategic and operational activities from program design and contextualization and delivery to policy engagement, growth, fundraising, UN, and SME engagement for the Local Networks. For instance, this includes dedicated capacity to scope out private sector partnership readiness for potential incubation of new local networks, in alignment with country priorities.

168. We also noted with concern that satisfaction with UN support to partnerships was lower in countries with small programmes, including in SIDS. This is counterintuitive, as these are countries that perhaps present the highest needs and demands for partnerships. We will take steps to course correct.

169. A successful example to follow is the collaboration enabled by the UN Office for Partnerships with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) on the UN Research Roadmap for the COVID-19 Recovery published in November 2020. This collaborative initiative demonstrates how science and global collaboration helps the world recover better from the COVID-19 pandemic while focusing on the needs of people being left behind. Development of the Roadmap was co-designed with CIHR and involved a coalition of 38 research funders from around the world. Over a 15-month period, at least US\$804 million was invested in almost 4,000 research projects relevant to the Roadmap and the Secretary-General's call to action.

170. Another important step to strengthen the UN partnership ecosystem was the launch of the UN Partnership Group, an informal UN community of practice on partnerships and to identify connection points, share information, co-create, and tackle obstacles together. The group is led by the UN Office for Partnerships, Global Compact and the UN Development Coordination Office.

## **B. Countries in special situations**

171. From the outset of the UN development system repositioning, I committed to working with the system to provide targeted, nationally owned support to all countries. There is no “cookie cutter” approach for the SDGs and each country is unique. In doing so, special attention has been given to least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), small island developing States (SIDS), African countries and middle-income countries (MICs), in line with the QCPR.

172. Expenditures on operational activities for development, including humanitarian assistance, in countries in special situations have continued to grow (see figure XXIII). Since 2015, expenditures in SIDS grew by 60 per cent, exceeding the 47 per cent growth in programme countries in general. Expenditure in LDCs also grew significantly, by 51 per cent. By the end of 2020, LDCs accounted for 50 per cent of expenditures in all programme countries.

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<sup>8</sup> 2021 MOPAN UNDS assessment.



Figure XXIII

**Expenditures on operational activities for development, including humanitarian assistance, by country group**

Country group	Number of countries	Total 2020 expenditure (USD million)	Expenditures as a share of the total	Average expenditure per country (USD million)		Five-year trend in expenditures	Expenditures per capita (USD)
				2020	2015		
LDCs	46	15,903	50%	346	224	+51%	\$15.04
SIDS	55	941	3%	17	11	+60%	\$13.23
LLDCs	32	8,057	25%	252	200	+26%	\$15.11
Africa	54	13,545	42%	251	182	+37%	\$10.11
MICs	109	16,438	52%	151	118	+24%	\$2.86
Countries in conflict and post-conflict	53	17,513	55%	310	326	+58%	\$17.08
All programme countries	163	31,810	100%	195	132	+47%	\$4.85

Source: OISC/DESA

173. The Doha Programme of Action, adopted in March 2022 as part of the Fifth UN Conference on the **Least Developed Countries**, provides critical guidance for the UN development system to further adapt its support to LDCs. It underscores the need to support sustainable and inclusive economic transformation, including through building productive capacities in health and education; investing in digital infrastructure; developing science, technology and innovation capabilities; designing and implementing green industrial policies; and diversifying economic and export structures. It calls on UN development system entities to assist Resident Coordinators in mainstreaming programme commitments into national development planning in a coordinated and cohesive manner, and requests UN entities to integrate the Programme of Action into their strategic document. Implementation of the Programme of Action can build on support provided through the Technology Bank for LDCs, which facilitates LDCs' access to the science, technology and innovation capacity that they need to promote the structural transformation of their economies, eradicate poverty and foster sustainable development.

174. The UN development system has also enhanced support for graduation to support the four countries expected to graduate out of the LDC category during the current quadrennial review cycle<sup>9</sup>, including through the Sustainable Graduation Support Facility, which brings together country-specific and integrated advisory and capacity-building services across the UN system and the inter-agency task force on LDC graduation.

175. Implementing the Vienna Programme of Action for **Landlocked Developing Countries** for the Decade 2014-2024 remains a priority. I welcome in this regard the strong partnership between OHRLLS, the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency and the UN's economic commission for Africa to provide technical support and capacity development to African LLDCs to formulate, finance and implement transport infrastructure projects. In addition, UNOSSC and IFAD are implementing a South-South and triangular cooperation project to scale up sustainable green economy approaches in Central Asian LLDCs. Crucially, annual spending on operational activities for development in the 32 LLDCs has increased by 26 per cent since 2015 to surpass \$8 billion.

176. **Africa's** growth contracted by an estimated 2.1 per cent in 2020 – the Continent's first recession in half a century – and the level of debt is surging again from 40 percent to almost 70 per cent in 2022. The aspirations captured in the AU-UN Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are at serious risk of not being met. In 2021, the 54-member Inter-Departmental Task Force on African Affairs worked to enhance UN coordination in support of African priorities, for

<sup>9</sup> Bhutan (2023), Angola (2024), Sao Tome and Principe (2024), and Solomon Islands (2024).

instance identifying energy access as key to SDG implementation and a core area where the United Nations could create added value. I have also detailed above the role played by the Regional Collaborative Platform in Africa in bringing further support to countries' priorities and needs, including the work done to help countries reap the benefits from the African Continental Free Trade Area for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

177. I have detailed in the present report the support provided to **Small Island Developing States** as part of the Multi-Country Offices review, which complements the global efforts spearheaded by OHRLLS. Encouragingly, UN spending on operational activities for development in SIDS has increased by 60 per cent since 2015 (table x). We must continue and enhance our efforts, owing to SIDS increased vulnerabilities stemming from the inability of most of them to access ODA or concessional finance due to their status as Middle-Income countries, and their high levels of vulnerability stemming from their unique geographical contexts, dependence on imports, and reliance on tourism.

178. With approximately 75 per cent of the world's population living in **Middle-Income countries** - representing about one third of global gross domestic product - we need a complete revamping in our support to these countries. As mandated in General Assembly resolution 76/215, the UN development system will carry out a mapping exercise, to be submitted at the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, to provide an overview of our support to MICs. But the most fundamental task at hand is to revisit the prevailing measurement of wellbeing altogether.

179. Accordingly, I have urged Member States in Our Common Agenda to consider measures of progress that complement GDP, in line with target 17.19 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, the General Assembly (76/203) recently welcomed my recommendation to develop a multidimensional vulnerability index, in particular for small island developing States. The President of the General Assembly appointed a High-Level Panel, co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda and the former Prime Minister of Norway, to finalize the index by December 2022. This process will also inform my Chief Executive Board's proposal on metrics to complement GDP, which I hope will be taken forward by the General Assembly and ECOSOC. It is a top priority to help advance this debate so that the world is better able to capture the vulnerability of States and help develop more effective solutions for sustainable development, including to better guide development financing.

#### **4. The road ahead: an integrated, efficient and accountable UN development system to support just transitions to a sustainable, inclusive future**

180. The support provided by the UN development system last year planted the seeds to further advance the SDGs, including: ensuring the COVID-19 response aligned with the imperative of a just, equitable and sustainable recovery; bringing the full force of Resident Coordinator's convening power to advance countries' positions and priorities ahead of, and in follow-up to, the key Summits organized last year on climate action, energy, and food systems; and supporting countries to address the impacts of COVID-19, climate change and growing financial and economic uncertainties. This has helped keep the SDGs and climate commitments alive amidst particularly turbulent times.

181. 2021 also offered critical lessons for the road ahead: there is more work to do to see the type of shift in programmatic and advisory support by United Nations country teams that can provide the scale and acceleration in SDG implementation that is needed. There is significant scope to profit even more from resident coordinators' convening role to make progress at scale, especially in follow up to global summits that have inspired more ambition and momentum. The path to providing countries with support for economic transformation and expansion of their fiscal space is becoming clearer and the demand is considerable - but we will need to work in tandem with an overhaul of the international financial architecture for longer-term solutions.

182. We are conscious that optimal support to countries in these areas is contingent on further progress in consolidating our reforms and seeing through wider behavioral changes across the system. In the present report, we have highlighted specific areas where further refinement is required to best support our UN country teams. These included full alignment of UN agencies programming documents with the Cooperation Framework; further tailoring the configuration of UN country teams to align with country needs and priorities, including in humanitarian and crisis settings; supporting a more structural realignment of incentives and business models in agencies to ensure the UN system, collectively, is able to move away from a predominant emphasis on small-scale projects to focus on high-quality and large scale support, leveraging expertise from a wide array of different UN agencies; and consolidating the support from Multi-Country offices, and ensuring our regional assets can deploy expertise to countries on demand.
183. Bringing results with the scale and ambition demanded by the 2030 Agenda – and made ever more existential by compounding crises - will also require strengthening accountability for results within the UN development system. This was a central request of Member States in the 2020 Quadrennial review and the General Assembly resolution on the Resident Coordinator system, which I welcome wholeheartedly. Member States requested the full adherence of the reporting model, at the heart of the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system. They requested further progress to ensure our operation services work most optimally and efficiently to best support our programmes; to advance results-based reporting and system-wide evaluation to provide them with relevant findings and data points to facilitate their oversight. Crucially, Member States also recommitted to advance commitments taken in the Funding Compact, to align financing and funding incentives with the Sustainable Development Goals. Member States also agreed to make full use of the current funding model for the Resident Coordinator system, to ensure it is fully funded
184. In 2021, we charted another important pathway in our journey for transformation. With the impetus of the Resident Coordinator system review, and new tools such as the revised Management and Accountability Framework and new Strategic plans for some UN agencies, there are signs that the dual reporting model is translating into shifts in culture and behaviour towards a greater focus on SDG achievement. Improved system-wide results reporting systems at the country, regional and global level have improved visibility of United Nations actions, and the creation of the System-Wide evaluation office, financed from extrabudgetary resources or staffed by secondees, is now well under way. Numerous evaluations and assessments continue to provide positive feedback on our direction of travel, while injecting new perspectives and ideas on how to accelerate progress in areas that still require special attention. But despite this important progress, the continuing shortfall in funding for the Resident Coordinator system remains a risk for our reforms and ultimate objectives to advance the 2030 agenda.
185. With 2022 proving to be an even more challenging year, it is essential that we consolidate our progress, and meet the objectives we had set for ourselves at the beginning of this transformative journey. Member States have provided us with important guidance in the resolution on the Resident Coordinator system review in that regard. In 2022, the Chair of the UNSDG will be presenting to governing bodies a UN development system reform checklist to support their oversight role and will be providing UN agencies with a self-reporting scorecard to allow them to report on progress made. The System-Wide Evaluation office, upon the imminent recruitment of its Director, will finalise the System-Wide evaluation policy to ensure we are able to learn real time from our actions. In addition, the revised QCPR framework and draft results framework on the Resident Coordinator system, when finalised, will provide important additional tools for Member States' oversight of our reform efforts in ECOSOC. As Member States have requested, I will continue to closely monitor the performance of the funding model for the Resident Coordinator system in the next year, and if necessary, I will revert on whether Member States should reconsider the proposal I conveyed in the Resident Coordinator system review, including a greater share of regular budget funding as part of a revised model.

#### **A. Ensuring full adherence to the quadrennial review and the dual reporting model**

186. The General Assembly's 2021 review of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) re-emphasized the responsibility and prerogative of ECOSOC and its operational activities segment as an accountability

platform to provide guidance to, and overall coordination of, the United Nations development system.<sup>10</sup> The segment is essential for Member States to strengthen Member States oversight of both UN system-wide performance and, specifically, of the Resident Coordinator system.

187. In a survey of UN development system entities, 26 out of 27 entities confirmed that their new strategic plans now encompass efforts to work better and in a more integrated way with other entities. All entities surveyed (representing 94 per cent of all UNDS expenditures on operational activities) reported on QCPR implementation in their governing body.<sup>11</sup> UN Secretariat entities now also provide this information through the present report and in their respective engagement with the ACABQ and the General Assembly's Fifth Committee. Following a request from their governing bodies, several UNDS entities have also improved alignment of their strategic plan indicators with those of the QCPR monitoring and reporting framework.
188. For example, UNDP's new Integrated Results and Resources Framework contains common and complementary indicators with other UN agencies, including 11 QCPR indicators. Ten UN entities coordinated efforts to develop common development output indicators to strengthen tracking of system-wide results, as well as common impact and outcome indicators.
189. In addition, the joint meeting of the executive boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP in 2021 was dedicated to examining how to leverage the QCPR and UNDS repositioning to accelerate SDG achievements in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
190. These are signs of increased alignment of the UN development system with the mandates contained in the QCPR and the reform efforts. Most importantly, these efforts demonstrate the strong leadership by Member States in transforming the UN development system. To support ECOSOC's oversight function, we have also taken important steps to enhance the transparency of activities of the entire UN development system, including by continuing to enhance data gathering in my reports to the Segment and in the report on the Development Coordination Office by the Chair of the UNSDG. For example, in the reports this year: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has aligned the QCPR monitoring framework with the additional mandates in 72/279, ensuring a comprehensive overview of our progress – or lack thereof – against QCPR requirements. And as requested in resolution 76/4, the report of the Chair of the UNSDG this year includes a draft results framework, with indicators and targets. Taken together, these reports offer unprecedented information, data and insights to facilitate oversight and decision-making by Member States. I invite Member States to continue making full use of these important accountability tools to ensure the UN development system's performance and results is on par with our shared ambitions, needs and priorities.
191. In May 2018, resolution 72/279 set out the parameters of a new set of accountabilities within United Nations country teams, with United Nations entities accountable to their governing bodies regarding their respective mandates and reporting, and periodically to resident coordinators on their contribution to collective results under the Cooperation Framework. This is a major feature of these reforms and an essential step towards greater leadership and accountability in the UN development system.
192. These new accountabilities were devised to bring the UN development system in full alignment with our common objective to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, ensuring the UN can leverage the assets and expertise across the system in its support to Governments. In my report on the review of the Resident Coordinator system, I highlighted inconsistencies in the implementation of the dual reporting model, reflecting on instances where agencies had not yet fully translated these new accountabilities into their internal processes; and cases where programme country Governments themselves, or other local development partners, did not adequately recognize the leadership role of the resident coordinator, thus contributing to a fragmented response. At the time, I highlighted the need for deeper shift in behaviour and entity business models to better reflect alignment with the dual reporting model.

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<sup>10</sup> A/RES/75/290A

193. Resolution 76/4 on the review of the Resident Coordinator system gave clear guidance in that regard, requesting the UN development system to ensure full adherence to the dual reporting model.
194. The revised Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) endorsed by the UNSDG in September 2021 is an important tool in that regard, setting working relationships and accountabilities within the UN development system between the country, regional and global levels. Most resident coordinators and United Nations country team members (84-87 per cent) reported an improvement in MAF implementation this year, with over 75 per cent of United Nations country team members reporting that their job description included provisions that recognize their reporting line to the Resident Coordinator. Progress on the mutual appraisal system set out in the MAF, however, remains uneven. While inputs from country team members are already integrated systematically in the resident coordinator performance assessment process, only 38 per cent of UNCT members included inputs from Resident Coordinators in their performance appraisals, and only 32% of Resident Coordinators reported that they provided inputs to more than a third of country team members' appraisals.
195. The adoption this year by 13 UN entities of new Strategic Plans for 2022-2025 was another opportunity to further align the entities' strategic directions with reform objectives. The preliminary results of the system-wide evaluation of the UN development system response to COVID-19<sup>12</sup> notes that the thirteen Strategic Plans assessed in their review had been well positioned within the framework of the UN development system. Most made explicit references to joint work linked to the Cooperation Framework. However, most fell short of offering concrete commitments to achieving the overall objective of a more coherent UN response to national SDG priorities and needs. Even more concerning, most Strategic Plans lacked a specific reference to their contribution to support a development coordination system and a new generation of UN country teams, or to otherwise advance UN development system reforms as guided by Member States in the General Assembly and the ECOSOC.
196. Evidence at this stage indicates that the critical changes prompted by the repositioning process to UN system coordination structures, capacities and tools are slowly leading to adjustments to corporate policies and business models remain slow. This continues to hamper collaboration at the country level, including due to differing agency programming and funding processes that make coordinated work more cumbersome<sup>13</sup>. We must accelerate this effort as a matter of priority.
197. As requested by Member States in Resolution 76/4, the Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group will be providing to the Chairs of Executive Boards across the UN development system a "United Nations development system reform checklist" and a "self-reporting scorecard" on the implementation of the dual accountability function for each of the agencies. I am certain that these two tools will be very helpful to both UN development system entities and respective governing bodies who are working to maximize the impacts of these reforms. In 2022, I also expect the UNSDG, under the Chair's leadership, to take concrete steps to address any outstanding challenges relating to MAF familiarity, implementation and compliance, including by revamping – as necessary – agency-specific incentive structures. Going forward, we must continue to develop a shared organizational culture where cooperation is the default option to deliver better results for countries.

## **B. Delivering efficient and effective business operations**

198. Advancing common business operations in UN country teams was a central element of the UN development system reforms from the outset. I remain convinced that these efforts are essential to enhance and enable joint work, while also generating efficiencies that can be redeployed by respective UN entities to development programmes on the ground. It is a simple realization: every dollar saved through more efficient operations represents an additional dollar for programmes and for people.
199. In response to my proposals in that regard, Member States endorsed in resolution 72/279 a set of system-wide improvements, targeting four primary workstreams - the business operations strategy, establishing UN

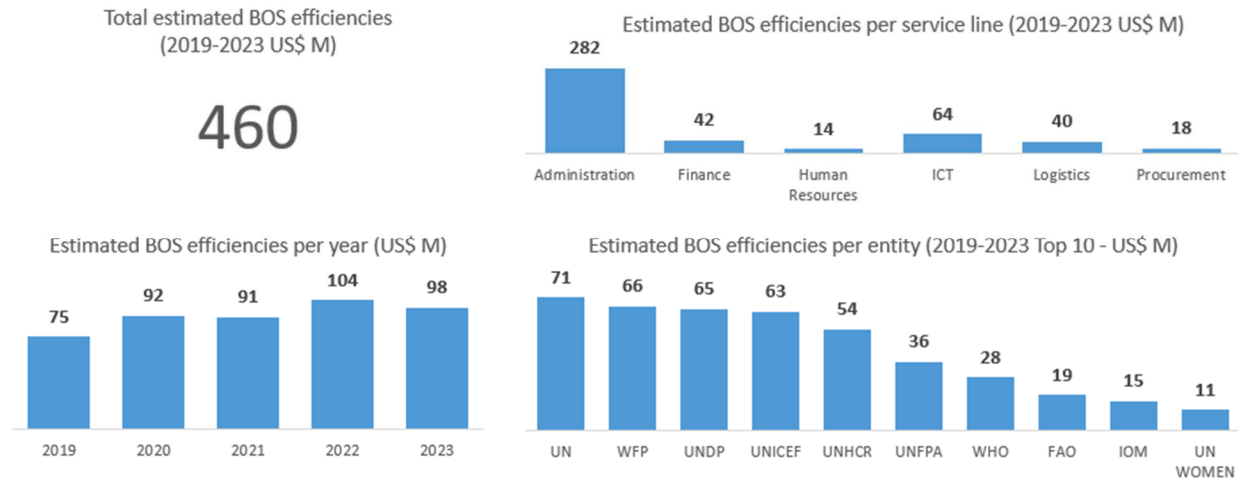
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<sup>12</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/interim-report-system-wide-evaluation-unds-response-covid-19>

common premises, global shared service centres and Common Back Offices. In previous reports, we have informed about the establishment of important ‘enablers’ for this work, including mutual recognition of business procedures across UN entities; commonly agreed costing and pricing principles, and agreement on a methodology to capture and report on efficiencies.

200. Similarly, all 131 UN country teams now have Business Operation Strategies in place - ahead of the anticipated schedule – with significant potential to unlock considerable efficiency gains, currently estimated at \$460 million over a five-year period (Figure XXIV). For example, the consolidation of security services from private sector firms for staff and premises at the country level has a potential to generate over \$21 million in savings; the sharing and consolidating of communication infrastructure and local ICT support functions can save nearly \$28 million, and a further \$16.5 million could be saved through joint procurement services.

Figure XXIV  
**Estimated Business operations strategies’ efficiency gains (\$M)**

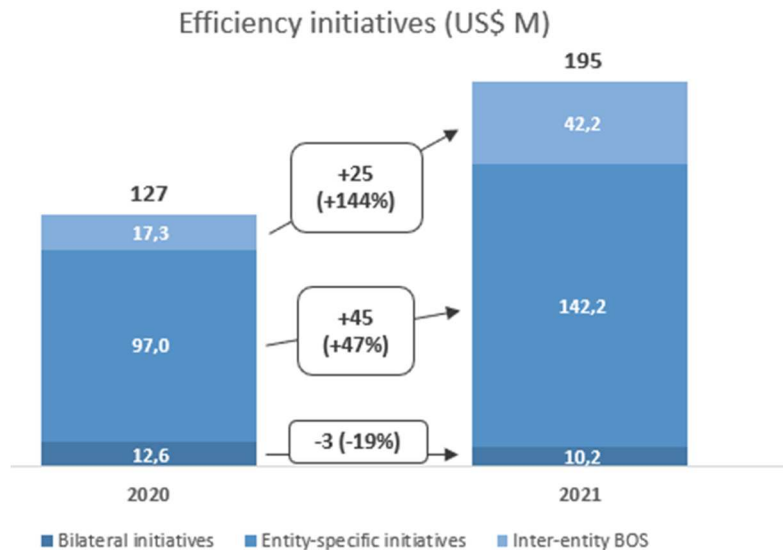


Source: Development Coordination Office, 2021.

201. Overall, efficiency initiatives in place resulted in savings of over \$ 195 million in 2021, which is a 53 per cent increase from \$ 127 million in 2020. The largest efficiency gains compared to 2021 were in the areas of the Business Operations Strategies which, with the roll-out to 131 United Nations country teams completed, increased by 144 per cent (+\$ 25M) compared to 2020, and entity-specific initiatives which increased by 47 per cent (+\$ 45M) compared to 2020, while efficiencies from bilateral initiatives were 19 per cent (-\$ 3M) lower than 2020 figures. (Figure XXV)

Figure XXV

**Savings from efficiency initiatives (US\$ M)**



Source: Development Coordination Office, 2021.

202. This corresponds to 63 per cent of the initial estimated efficiency gains of \$ 310 million yearly by 2022. While it is notable progress from last year, we must ensure progress is accelerated in the next semester if we are to reach the objective of annual savings of \$310 million set for this year.
203. While these are unprecedented and much welcomed steps, the UNSDG efficiency efforts will require continued investment of time and leadership by the UNSDG to remain on track. The establishment of Common Premises and Common Back Offices, for example, remains behind schedule. As of December 2021, Common Back Offices design was initiated in 18 countries, instead of the initial proposal to establish common back offices for all UN country teams by 2022. 26 per cent of UN system entities are currently in common premises compared to 23 per cent at the end of 2020. With the existing common premises in the larger UN countries, this amounts to 45 per cent of UN staff being co-located in common premises. In addition, Uruguay, Lebanon, Guyana and Jamaica completed their new common premises arrangement in 2021 a further 18 United Nations country teams have ongoing projects aiming to establish new common premises in their countries.
204. Increased emphasis is needed on the establishment of Global Shared and Regional Services centres to enable and complement efforts at the country level. We must also consolidate our efforts on efficiency reporting. Thirty-nine per cent of entities now have policies in place to strengthen their reporting processes on efficiency gains, an improvement from 33 per cent last year. However, as of 2021, fewer than 35 per cent of entities report to their governing bodies on efficiency gains resulting from business operations strategies, common premises or other such factors, a number that has remained unchanged since last year. To support entities' reporting, a new efficiency dashboard was introduced to the UNSDG in 2022, providing a consolidated overview of progress and impact of the different inter-agency efficiency initiatives at country, regional and global level. The dashboard will be available publicly in the course of 2022.
205. While there is unquestionably more buy in and commitment across the system to see these reforms through, I received with concern the news that some agencies were reviving the idea of “opt-outs” from important initiatives that could help yield significant savings. This would of course depart from the reform objectives set out by Member States. I thank the Principals of the UNSDG, and in particular the co-chairs of the UNSDG Business Innovations Group, for their remarkable leadership that has helped overcome centrifugal forces and bring all entities back to this joint effort with a shared sense of commitment.

206. We are acutely aware that stepping back is not an option. It is critical that we preserve the ambition and integrity of our collective commitments, while ensuring the necessary flexibility to adapt to changing operational requirements and to continue to finetune our strategy as we move ahead.

207. I have also requested the Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group to continue to directly oversee this central element of the reform, with the ultimate goal of increasing the share of funds that are allocated to programmes rather than administrative costs. In response, the UNSDG has devised a revised efficiency roadmap, with specific deliverables and quantified efficiency gains targets, to drive accelerated progress across the four workstream, with improved reporting to Member States as we move ahead.

### **C. Improved system-wide results and evaluation to drive performance**

#### **System-Wide Results**

208. Both the funding compact and the 2020 QCPR call for strengthening transparency and commitment to system-wide results. In countries, annual results reports are a key tool to ensure accountability of the work of UN country teams vis-a-vis host governments. In 2021, a record 99 per cent of annual UN country team Results Reports were produced, compared to 69 per cent in 2020 and 64 per cent in 2019. In their large majority (89 per cent) governments saw improvements in the quality of the report, 83 per cent found the reports were well linked to national development results, albeit 42 per cent stated that the reports did not include sufficient financial data.

209. As mentioned earlier, in 2021 Regional Collaborative Platforms also published, for the second consecutive year, reports on system-wide results achieved by regional offices of the United Nations development system in respective regions. These reports are an important tool for Member States to assess results achieved in regions in support of countries' priorities.

210. At the global level, efforts from the UN Sustainable Development Group supported by DCO led to further refinements of a shared methodology allowing, for the first time, system-wide reporting on the UN development system's contribution to SDG achievement as part of the report of the Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group. This is a first-of-its kind report, which bridges a historic accountability gap in the UN system. UN INFO, as the only tool for a comprehensive overview of system-wide activities and results, now draws on reporting from 109 United Nations country teams, up from the funding compact baseline of 32 in 2018. This is an important improvement.

211. I also welcome the fact that common standards for system-wide reporting of financial data have been agreed and are under implementation. The rollout of the standards for financial reporting has been a critical system-wide use case for the Secretary-General's Data Strategy. All UNSDG entities now submit financial data to the Chief Executives Board for publication on its new website,<sup>14</sup> enhancing the transparency of funding flows. Among UNSDG entities with country activities, 92 per cent are now reporting this data disaggregated by country. The proportion that submit disaggregated data by SDG has improved considerably from 29 per cent in 2021 to 83 per cent in 2022. The next step in data transparency will be ensuring that the UN Secretariat, which includes 12 UNSDG entities, can begin publishing data per the IATI data standard, following the example of the UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies. To do so and as part of phase 2.0 of the UN Data Strategy, each UN entity, department and office will need to advance its own data-driven transformation tailored to its unique purpose, challenges, or opportunities by creating data teams, investing in data programming and building internal capacity.

212. It is regrettable, however, that, as reported in the report of the Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group, two in five entities have not yet requested their country offices to report through UN-INFO. In some cases, agencies were not yet able to make their data collection systems interoperable. But time is not on our side, and this effort is critical to enhance transparency in our support to the 2030 Agenda. I am determined to continue to work with Principals across the UN development system to ensure that, in the course of 2022,

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<sup>14</sup> <https://unsceb.org/financial-statistics>



the UN development system responds fully to the request in resolutions 76/4 for UN development system entities to invest in, and fully utilize the UN-Info reporting platform.

### **System-Wide evaluation**

213. The United Nations development system has made further progress in fulfilling its funding compact commitments and responding to the 2020 quadrennial review. There was an encouraging drive to advance joint and system-wide evaluations and improving the quality of evaluations of the cooperation frameworks at the country level. Eighty-seven per cent of UNSDG entities are now making their corporate evaluations centrally available on the United Nations Evaluation Group website and 22 of 25 entities are reporting that their evaluation functions meet the UN Evaluation group standards. Engagement in joint evaluations has also improved considerably with 80 per cent of UNSDG evaluation offices engaging in joint evaluations in 2021. A major focus of 2021 was the roll out of strengthened evaluation cooperation frameworks. In 2021, 40 countries (18 in Africa, 2 in Arab States, 9 in Asia and Pacific, 5 in ECA and 6 in LAC) started their evaluations, and 30 are now considered completed. This work was further supported by, inter alia, the publication of Cooperation Framework evaluation guidelines developed jointly by UNEG and DCO, and a global training workshop targeting countries to be evaluated in 2022 and quality control consultants.
214. As we continue to build on this progress, we are now also well advanced in establishing a UNSDG system-wide evaluation office that will help strengthen transparency and accountability and enable continual enhancement of the UN's collective contribution to the SDGs. The rationale, functions and capacities of the office were laid out in my report on the repositioning of the UN development system, and further developed in my subsequent reports in follow-up to the QCPR. It is also the result of a comprehensive consultation process, involving the JIU, OIOS and the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG). Through these consultations, critical gaps were identified in the current oversight mechanisms that prevent the Secretary-General and Member States to obtain a complete picture of the overall performance of the UN development system support to SDG implementation. These included a lack of evaluation of the system's collective support to the SDGs, a lack of clear institutional function and leadership for evaluations of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks/Cooperation Frameworks, and the absence of an institutional mechanism to discuss system-wide strategic implications from evaluations. The new System-Wide Evaluation Office was designed to fill in these gaps and to be complementary to the mandates and functions of the JIU, OIOS, and the independent evaluation offices of UNDS entities. As part of these consultations, UNEG provided a draft System-Wide Evaluation Policy that formed the basis of the Secretary-General's recommendations for the System-Wide evaluation office.
215. In previous reports, I proposed a lean office, with a Director at the D-2 level, supported by a small team, reporting directly to me and with the prerogative to share reports directly with the Economic and Social Council. Member States supported my proposal in resolution 72/279 and reiterated their support in subsequent resolutions on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/217, the Secretary-General in 2021 sought the approval of the ACABQ for the creation of the position of the Director, heading the Office, for a two-year period from extrabudgetary resources. The ACABQ approved the establishment of the position of the Director for one year. The ACABQ further expressed the view that a proposal for the Office and the Director position should be included in proposed programme budget for 2023. While in earlier reports to the ECOSOC, we have informed Member States that the SWE capacity will be financed from extrabudgetary resources, the capacity could be included in the next budget proposal if Member States are agreeable.
216. During 2021, a transitional team provided evaluation capacity support to the RC system while the office is being established. The transitional team and the System-Wide Evaluation Office have already provided valuable recommendations. For example, as part of the early lessons and evaluability assessment report on the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund<sup>15</sup> published in 2021, as well as the interim report on the System-wide Evaluation of the UNDS Response to COVID-19 published in March

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<sup>15</sup> [https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/MPTF%20Lessons%20Learned%20and%20Evaluability-%20Final%20Report\\_April22.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/MPTF%20Lessons%20Learned%20and%20Evaluability-%20Final%20Report_April22.pdf)

2022<sup>16</sup>. In addition, an evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund has also been initiated and will be finalised by June 2022. One of the first tasks of the Director - upon appointment - will be to finalise a system-wide evaluation policy in consultation with members of the UN Sustainable Development Groups and evaluation offices across the system, including the UNEG. I will continue to keep Member States apprised of these developments.

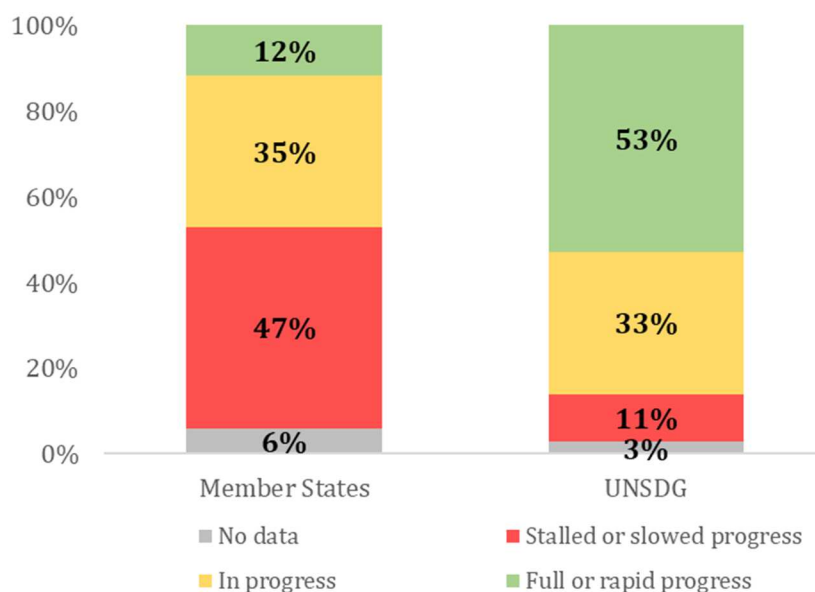
#### D. Delivering on funding compact commitments with full funding for the resident coordinator system

217. The commitments taken by Member States and the UN development system in the Funding Compact in 2019 are critical to bring about the transformative and collaborative action needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It called for a significant change in funding patterns towards more predictable, quality and sustainable funding. At the same time, it set out a series of commitments from the UN development system towards more transparency and accountability for its spending, more effective and efficient use of its limited resources. Such shifts are interdependent and mutually reinforcing - progress on each side enables progress on all.

218. Three years in, Member States and the UN development system have made significant progress on some important priorities of the Funding Compact. However, considerable work lies ahead. While there has been progress on 86 per cent of the UNSDG commitments in the last year, the comparable share for Member States was 47 per cent (figure XXVI).

Figure XXVI

#### Progress on funding compact commitments

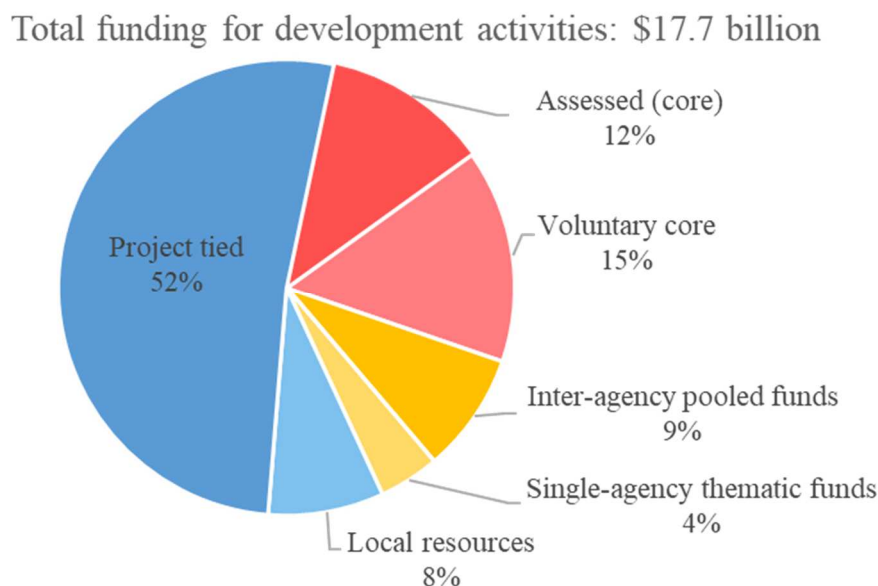


Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022

219. Total financial contributions for operational activities for development in 2020 amounted to \$42.4 billion, a significant 16 per cent increase over 2019. This included \$17.7 billion in funding for development-related activities and \$24.7 billion for humanitarian activities. The remainder of this section focuses on development activities, as the focus of the Funding Compact (see figure XXVII).

<sup>16</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/interim-report-system-wide-evaluation-unds-response-covid-19>

Figure XXVII  
Types and volumes of funding, 2020



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022

220. It is concerning that no progress has been made towards the 30 per cent target for core funding. In 2020, total core contributions accounted for just 27 per cent of funding (figure XXVIII).

Figure XXVIII  
Funding Compact: Member States commitment 1

To increase core resources for the UN development system				
Indicator	Baseline	Target	Latest value	Trend
MS. 1.1. Core share of voluntary funding for development-related activities	19.4% (2017)	30% (2023)	17.2% (2020)	
MS 1.2. Core share of funding for development-related activities (including assessed contributions)	27.0% (2017)	30% (2023)	26.9% (2020)	

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022

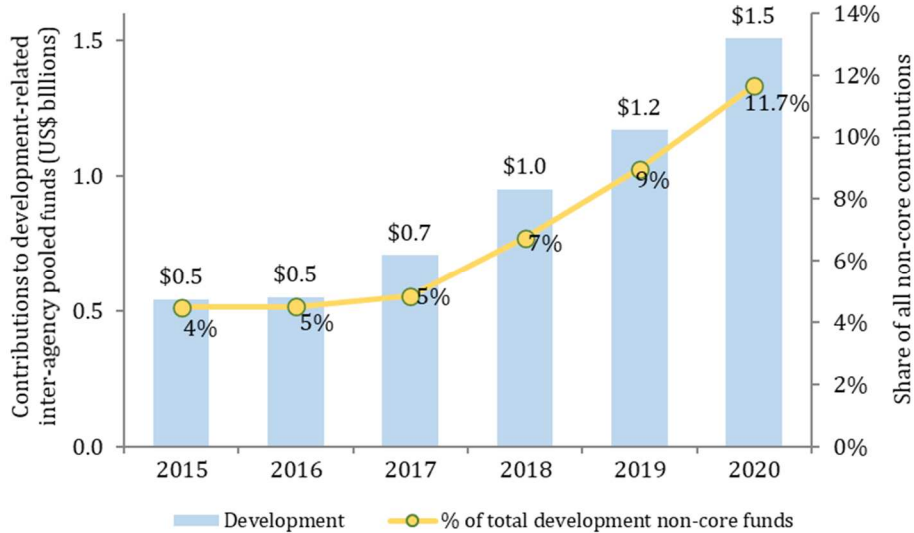
221. When considering only voluntary (non-assessed funding), the figure dropped to 17 per cent, a decrease from 2019 levels (19.6 per cent). Project-tied, non-core resources still accounted for over half of all funding.

222. Core funding is essential to ensure UN development system entities have the flexibility to adapt their programmes to evolving needs and priorities. It proved indispensable as the COVID-19 crisis unfolded, allowing the UN development system to repurpose funds rapidly to address the impact of the pandemic.

223. It is encouraging, on the other hand, that funding to inter-agency pooled funds continued to increase this year, channeling 11.7 per cent of all non-core funding for development activities, narrowly surpassing the Funding Compact target of 10 per cent, with contributions to development-related inter-agency funds totaling \$1.5 billion, an increase of 29 per cent over the previous year and 178 per cent higher than in 2015 (figure XXIX).

Figure XXIX

**Volumes and shares of development-related non-core funding channeled through inter-agency pooled funds, 2015-2020**

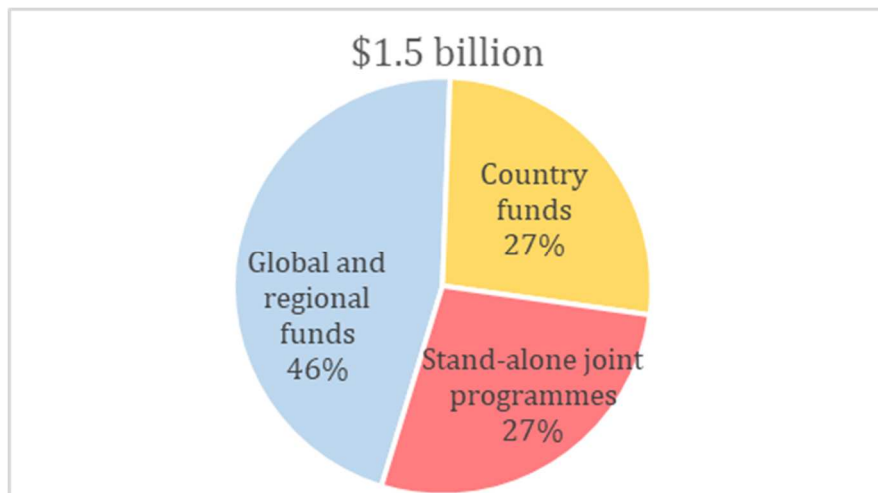


Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022 and UN Inter-agency pooled funds database, 2021

224. Contributions to global and regional funds, the most common types of inter-agency pooled funds, were 72 per cent higher in 2020 compared to 2019 (figure XXX). They accounted for 46 per cent of all resources to inter-agency pooled funds.

Figure XXX

**Funding of development-related inter-agency pooled funds, by type, 2020**



Source: UN Inter-agency pooled funds database, 2021

225. This growth was partly driven by a 44 per cent increase in commitments to the Peacebuilding Fund between 2019 and 2021, which reached \$195 million, still short, however, of the \$500 million target of the Funding Compact and vastly short of meeting growing development-related needs (see figure XXXI).

Figure XXXI

**Funding Compact – Member States’ commitment 2**

<b>To double the share of non-core contributions that are provided through development-related pooled funds and single-agency thematic funds</b>				
<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Latest value</i>	<i>Trend</i>
MS 2.1. Percentage of non-core resources for development-related activities channelled through inter-agency pooled funds	5.0% (2017)	10.0% (2023)	11.7% (2020)	
MS 2.2. Percentage of non-core resources for development-related activities channelled through single-agency thematic funds	2.6% (2017)	6.0% (2023)	5.9% (2020)	
MS 2.3. Annual capitalization of the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda	\$43 million (2018)	\$290 million (2020)	\$79 million (2021)	
MS 2.4. Annual contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund	\$129 million (2018)	\$500 million (2020)	\$195 million (2021)	

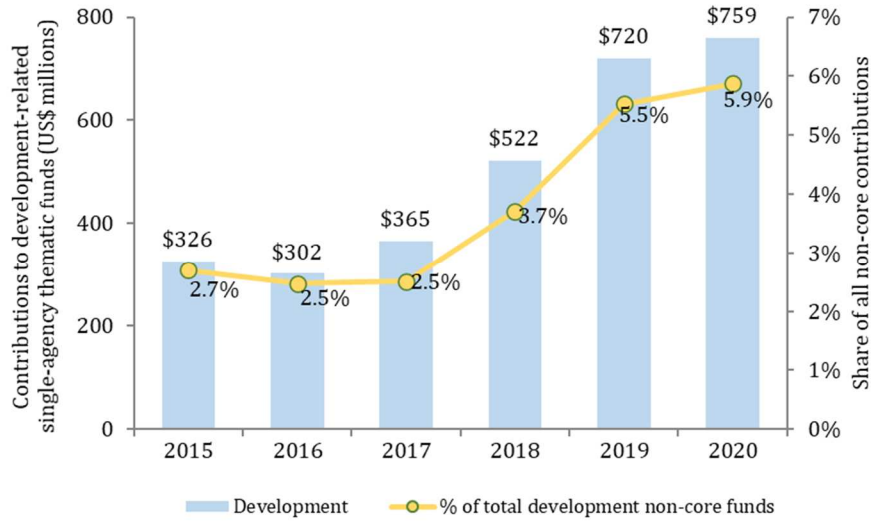
Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022

226. The flagship Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund has catalyzed an estimated \$1.7 billion in SDG financing since its inception in 2018. Contributions increased by 85 per cent between 2020 and 2021 to reach \$79 million. This is an important achievement, and a testament to Member States’ growing confidence in the results achieved by the Joint SDG Fund. But it remains well short of the annual \$290 million Funding Compact target, and I reiterate my call for Member States to prioritize funding to this critical enabler for the reforms.

227. UN country-level pooled funds, used by United Nations country teams to galvanize joint action agreed in Cooperation Frameworks, saw an 11 per cent increase from 2019.

228. I am also encouraged by continued progress on Member States’ commitment to channel more of their non-core funding to single-agency thematic funds. Such contributions doubled in the past three years to reach \$759 million, equivalent to 5.9 per cent of all non-core contributions (figure XXXII) and just shy of the 6 per cent Funding Compact target.

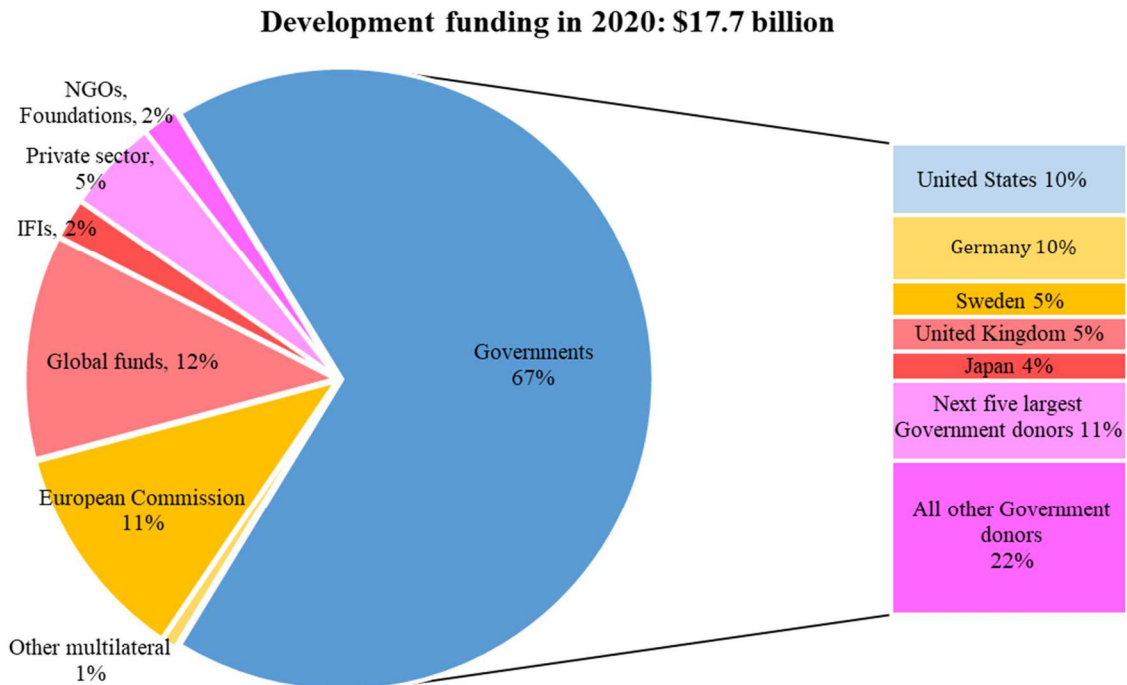
Figure XXXII  
**Volume and share of non-core funding to single-agency thematic funds**



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022

229. The UNDS continues to rely on a small number of contributors for most of its development-related funding (figure XXXIII). Two-thirds of funding comes directly from Governments, and half of this amount comes from five contributing countries (Germany, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America).

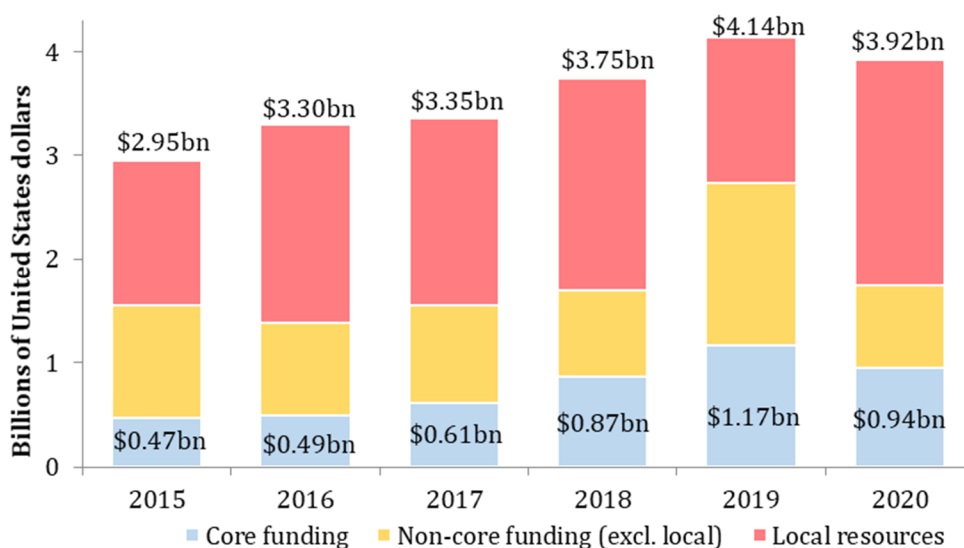
Figure XXXIII  
**Main sources of funding for development activities, 2020**



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022

230. Funding from programme countries helps to alleviate some of the high dependency that the United Nations development system has on its top donors (see figure XXXIV). Despite the severe impact of the pandemic on their economies, programme countries' contributions remain stable (\$3.9 billion in 2020, from \$4.1 billion in 2019), representing an overall increase of 33 per cent between 2015 and 2020). In addition, Contributions of local resources for programming in contributors' own countries amounted to \$2.1 billion in 2020 or 5 per cent of all contributions to the UNDS, marking a very significant increase of 55 per cent since 2015.

Figure XXXIV  
Funding from programme countries, 2015-2020



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022 <sup>17</sup>

231. Funding from sources other than governments, making up one third of the funding for development activities, also saw an important increase in 2021. The European Commission contributed \$2 billion in 2020, a 49 per cent increase over the previous year and funding from global vertical funds more than doubled, now constituting 12 per cent of all resources for development activities.

232. A less positive picture emerged from the international financial institutions. Contributions fell 44 per cent to \$372 million in 2020, despite increased engagement in a number of areas, including financing for the COVID-19 recovery.

### Funding the resident coordinator system

233. The resolution on the review of the Resident Coordinator system is clear that delivering on Member States' expectations will require the Resident Coordinator system to be fully funded, with its core capacities preserved. While I had recommended changes to the funding model in response to budget shortfalls in recent years, I was encouraged by Member States' collective determination to make the current arrangements, based on a combination of voluntary contributions, UN development system entities cost-sharing and a contribution levy, deliver the \$281 million budget required for the proper functioning of the Resident Coordinator system.

234. The Report of the Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group provides further details on funding performance in 2021. As in previous years, UN Sustainable Development Group entities continued to pay their

<sup>17</sup> Note that this data includes funding provided to United Nations humanitarian activities.

cost-sharing in full (\$77.5 million). It was also encouraging to see a slight increase in voluntary contributions, from \$86 million to \$98 million, and the levy at a similar level as last year (\$39 million). However, this year again, the funding, at \$215 million, falls short of needs, in addition to a narrowing of the donor base. This creates a significant cash flow dilemma and causes uncertainty that affects United Nations operations on the ground.

235. I will continue to do everything in my power to deliver on our collective expectations for a fully funded budget, and to engage with you to ensure the voluntary portion of the budget is fully met and strengthens predictability. As Member States have requested, I will closely monitor the performance of the funding model in the next year, and will revert if necessary to the regular budget or the previously presented hybrid 2.0 options for Member States' consideration.

## **E. Implementing key strategies for United Nations development system operations**

### **Achieving gender parity at all levels of the UNDS**

236. Gender parity within the UNDS remains one of my top priorities, guided by the system-wide strategy on gender parity. We have further consolidated our progress in 2022, with gender parity maintained among Under Secretary-Generals and in Resident Coordinator appointments, and a new record number of women comprising 58.3 per cent of heads and deputy heads of peace operations (28 out of 48 encumbered positions) in 2021. My recent report **18** on the status of gender parity at the UN details specific successes, including more enabling work environments and active support from senior leadership. It also looks at remaining challenges, such as difficulties in attracting and retaining female talent to field and hardship locations, and the limited number of posts and inadequate career development for mid-level staff. The report also includes concrete recommendations on how to advance progress, including robust accountability mechanisms, the adoption of temporary special measures, the appointment of gender focal points, and the development of internal talent pipelines and strategic succession planning.

### **Preventing sexual exploitation and abuse in the UNDS**

237. UN country teams continued to undertake important actions related to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) in 2021, ensuring compliance on mandatory training, establishing and/or strengthening risk management and mitigation strategies, and mechanisms to report allegations. The number of UN country PSEA action plans grew from 119 in 2020 to 126 in 2021. United Nations country team PSEA inter-agency task forces, coordination mechanisms and/or focal points expanded from 119 to 127, with the goal to achieve a 100 per cent rate for both measures in 2022. Under the leadership of the UN Victims' Rights Advocate, progress also continues in integrating a victims' rights approach to policies and procedures across the UN system, including through engagement with Resident Coordinators and PSEA networks in all regions. A methodology to gather feedback from victims on the quality and appropriateness of assistance received will be piloted in the coming months.

238. Nonetheless, we remain far from reaching our goal of eliminating all cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, as I elaborated in my annual report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse of this year. I call on all leaders at the entity, regional and country levels, including Resident Coordinators and my Special Representatives, to fast-track action towards reaching this common goal, in line with our strategy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel.

### **Advancing the environmental sustainability of UN operational activities for development**

239. Accurately mapping and reducing the environmental footprint of UN global operations has been a long-standing goal, supported since 2007 by the Greening the Blue initiative. In 2020, parameters on carbon emissions, waste production and water consumption saw declines compared to 2019,<sup>19</sup> mainly due to

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<sup>18</sup> A/76/115

<sup>19</sup> Greening the Blue Report, 2021.



pandemic-induced changes to operations. As the organization reimagines the “Next Normal” for its operation, there is an important opportunity to revisit activities with high environmental impacts, such as international flights and in-person meetings, and to accelerate progress in our organization in implementing the green transition we call for.

240. So far progress on reducing the system’s environmental footprint has been slow and uneven. On the positive side, 99 per cent of UN greenhouse gas emissions are already offset, but we can do more to reduce the absolute level of emissions. Similarly, it is positive that 29 UNDS entities reporting to Greening the Blue publicly disclosed their efforts to reduce their climate and environmental footprint, although only 13 of 27 entities confirmed having greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets in place in 2020.

241. Phase I of the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System 2020 – 2030, adopted in 2019, provides an overarching approach to incorporate environmental considerations across UN operations, including a key commitment to develop entity-specific environmental management systems and, importantly, a framework to drive accountability across the system. In 2020, only one UN development system entity had environmental management system that met the requirements outlined in the strategy, and 10 were approaching the requirements. Additional training and compendia of best practices are planned for 2022 and 2023 to support the implementation of the strategy. Another key commitment of the strategy relates to environmental and social safeguards, which 17 out of 27 UN development system entities integrated into policies, programmes and projects in 2020.

242. Phase II of the sustainability management strategy, adopted in 2021, sets out ambitious plans for the UN system towards full internal environmental and social sustainability across policies, programming, facilities and operations by 2030. A scorecard for entities to monitor implementation will be developed in 2022, piloted in 2023 and rolled out to all entities in 2024. I am counting on all entities to move faster on incorporating environmental considerations to operate within planetary boundaries.

## 5. Conclusion

243. The COVID-19 crisis shone a spotlight on international cooperation and exposed its grave shortcomings, from vaccine inequity to a lack of financial solidarity. Developing countries are struggling to recover – with record inflation, rising interest rates, looming debt burdens, and exponential increases in the cost of financing. And now the impact of the conflict in Ukraine is supercharging a three-dimensional crisis of food, energy and finance that devastate lives and livelihoods even more.

244. We are moving in the wrong direction. Overcoming these crises will require that we reverse the tide. We need to re-embrace global solidarity and find new ways to work together for the global good. The silver lining is that the world already has a plan that could help turn these multiple crises into an opportunity to change course. The Sustainable Development Goals remain our blueprint for action, with Our Common Agenda offering recommendations to support a much-needed acceleration of our efforts so we can rescue the SDGs by 2030. The pathway ahead is clearer than ever – only through decisive action to unblock transitions on energy, food systems and in the digital domain and finance can we accelerate progress across all SDGs in a way that puts us back on track and keeps the promise of leaving no one behind.

245. The UN development system is ready to support Member States to activate these transitions at this pivotal moment for people and planet. I am humbled to see that the appreciation of governments of the performance of the repositioned UN development system increases year on year, and that it is matched with positive feedback from contributing governments and UN country teams. This is validation that our collective efforts are bearing fruit, and that the repositioned UN development system has built a solid foundation and is now delivering concrete results on the priorities set out in the 2020 Quadrennial review.

246. This gives us solid ground to increase the ambition and scale required of us two years into the Decade of Action. Building on these achievements, learning from the challenges that the present report has highlighted, and addressing the additional mandates provided in the review of the Resident Coordinator system have opened a clear path ahead to deliver upon the expectations conveyed in the 2020 quadrennial review.

247. We need all hands on deck. I am committed to make every effort to continue to guide the UN development system support to meet the ambition of the 2030 Agenda, relying on the expert support of the entities in the UN Sustainable Development Group. In turn we need the strategic guidance and support of Member States to harness the benefits of the reform to support countries' just transitions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
248. I look forward to continuing this transformative journey, hand in hand with entities across the UN development system, and at the service of the countries and people we serve. I count on Member States to continue to provide steadfast support to our reform efforts, as set out in the General Assembly resolution on the review of the Resident Coordinator system, including on the areas where the resolution had provided further impetus to our action. This includes further improvements to the resident coordinators' career path; the full implementation of the dual reporting model and the Management and Accountability Framework; greater transparency and results reporting; and a step change in the UN development system integrated offer, catalyzing partnerships at the country level, including with international financial institutions and the private sector.
249. I am committed to providing Member States with the additional accountability tools that are needed to further enhance their oversight of the UN development system. The Economic and Social Council will be able to rely on the annual updates against results in the revised QCPR framework, and the results framework for the Resident Coordinator system when finalized. In addition, the System-Wide Evaluation Office will have the authority to bring to the Economic and Social Council recommendations and evaluative evidence on the performance of the UN development system in supporting countries in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In line with the dual reporting model, and the guidance of Member States in the General Assembly resolution on the review of the Resident Coordinator system, the Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group will make available to the governing bodies of the UN development system entities a "United Nations development system reform checklist" and a "self-reporting scorecard" on the implementation of the dual accountability function, to help reinforce governing bodies' oversight of the UN development system reform efforts. On our end, we will also continuously review the tools at the disposal of the UN development system, including the Management and Accountability Framework, to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose.
250. Our collective efforts can only materialize into results at the daunting scale that is needed with a breakthrough on the implementation of our respective commitments in the Funding Compact, to once and for all align sustainable development goals and priorities with the financing and funding allocated to them. We are committed to holding our end of the bargain, with a more efficient, transparent and results-oriented UN development system. I urge Member States to build on the solid progress made in recent years in giving greater priority to joint funding initiatives, to bring the catalytic funding we need to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals. The full funding of the Resident Coordinator system, as Member States committed to in the Resolution on the Resident Coordinator system is an imperative in that regard.
251. Most importantly, I count on Member States and stakeholders across all sectors to keep focused and stay determined, because the multiple challenges we face can only be overcome through more ambition, not less; with greater sense of urgency, not complacency; through greater transformation, not status quo. Together, we can do it.
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