

United Nations World Food Programme

Governance Review

Independent Consultant Report

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United Nations World Food Programme Governance Review

I. Executive Summary

“Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.”

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General

The genesis of this targeted review was an agreement among the Executive Board Bureau members during 2022 on the value of undertaking an assessment of WFP’s governance frameworks and processes to identify opportunities for practical ways to improve governance efficiency. The Executive Board Bureau established a Steering Committee made up of members nominated from each electoral list for the management of the governance review. The Committee appointed the independent consultant Ms Özge İskit for 4 months to conduct the governance review between February and May 2023. Regular meetings between the consultant and the Steering Committee were held to discuss progress and the key findings. The chair of the Steering Committee provided monthly updates to the Executive Board Bureau following each Steering Committee meeting.

The aim of the governance review is to undertake a targeted review of current WFP governance frameworks and processes with a view to making recommendations on pragmatic adjustments to enable the Executive Board to provide the best possible strategic advice and support to WFP as it responds to significant and increasing global challenges. The review focuses on the following key areas as defined in the Terms of Reference of the assignment:

- ❖ Current governance frameworks: Strategy, policy, oversight, accountability
- ❖ Functions of the Executive Board
- ❖ Processes of the Executive Board
- ❖ Roles and responsibilities
- ❖ Relationships of the Board with its advisory bodies (the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee) as well as the Joint Inspection Unit
- ❖ Best practices from other governance models in UN agencies

Good governance has eight major characteristics. It is participatory; consensus oriented; accountable; transparent; responsive; effective and efficient; equitable and inclusive; and follows the rule of law. This governance review used these eight characteristics as a basis for analysing WFP’s current governance frameworks and the roles and responsibilities, functions, and processes of the Executive Board.

Based on the data collected via desk research and interviews, as well as the observed Executive Board, Bureau and electoral list meetings, issues were identified, and recommendations were developed as set out in the table below.

Analysis based on the 8 characteristics of Good Governance: Participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law ¹				
	Roles & responsibilities	Processes	Impact on Board functions	Recommendations
	<i>Identified issues</i>			
World Food Programme Governance Frameworks: Strategy	<p>Need for better definition and understanding of the governance role of the Executive Board in providing strategic direction to WFP</p> <p>Need for clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Board and the WFP Secretariat (management) to ensure efficient and effective ways of working</p> <p>Need to move the focus of Executive Board discussions from technical to strategic matters</p>	<p>Need for time and platform for the Executive Board Members to have strategic discussions</p> <p>Need to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complexity and length of Board documents - Board documents focusing more on technical details rather than strategic considerations. - Compliance with word limits and submission deadlines for Board documents (e.g. only 20 percent complied with word limits in 2022.) - Late publication of Board documents and their translations, which complicates Board member preparation for meetings 	<p>Focus on technical details rather than strategic decisions at formal and informal Executive Board meetings</p> <p>Key strategic questions coming up repeatedly at informal and formal Executive Board meetings with no opportunity for detailed discussion</p> <p>Limited engagement at formal and informal Board meetings due to limited/no time for some Board Members to prepare when documents are published late and/or not translated into all working languages.</p>	<p>1. Revisit the format and agenda of the formal Board sessions in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Align the sessions with the governance frameworks (strategy, policy, oversight and accountability) - Introduce an annual strategy retreat for the Board members and WFP leadership team - Start every formal Executive Board session with a strategic discussion with the Executive Director on a selected topic agreed by the Executive Board Bureau members - Include on meeting agendas only mandatory items and reports that require strategic discussion or a decision - Discontinue side events as they don't add any value to the governance role of the Executive Board. <p>2. Rationalize and simplify Board documents to facilitate strategic discussions and decisions including formats, word limits and information provided to achieve smart reporting: "strategic input for strategic output".</p>
World Food Programme Governance Frameworks: Policy	<p>Need for better definition of the governance role of the Executive Board concerning:</p>	<p>Need for a clear policy formulation cycle including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of the necessary steps and required timeframe for developing a new policy or updating an existing one 	<p>High number of informal meetings with no clear definition of purpose, format, documentation and follow-up mechanisms</p>	<p>3. Update the policy formulation framework, define roles and responsibilities, as well as clear processes and criteria for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Required steps and timeframe to formulate or update a policy and follow up the implementation

¹ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "What is Good governance?"

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy-related decisions and the requirements for making them - Follow-up of the implementation of new and updated policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definition of the links between existing strategies, policies, plans, programmes and reports - Development of the necessary processes and criteria for organizing informal consultations - Identification of the required forms of engagement with the Board by WFP management (e.g. online consultations, informal meetings, workshops, roundtables, etc.) <p>Need for better definition of the format, purpose, modality and documentation requirements of informal Executive Board meetings as a part of the policy formulation/update/follow-up cycle. (e.g. consultations, brown bag discussions, roundtables, updates, etc.)</p>	<p>Limited overview on the interlinked strategies, plans, programmes, policies and follow-up mechanisms required for the Executive Board to make decisions and provide strategic direction</p> <p>Need for better visibility on potential policy gaps or overlaps, as well as the implementation of existing policies and their follow-up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maximum number, format and frequency of informal consultations and other informal meetings for the formulation or update of each policy - Use of new technologies and existing digital tools to increase efficiency and engagement with the Board members when collecting input and feedback (e.g. online consultation), as well as follow-up of the implementation - Stakeholder engagement - Planning of implementation and budgeting processes when adopting or updating new policies - Board reporting and engagement to enable the necessary strategic discussions at the required stages of policy formulation. <p>4. Conduct the planned policy framework review as a part of the current governance initiative rather than a stand-alone exercise to identify the potential gaps and the steps necessary to address identified issues.</p>
<p>World Food Programme Governance Frameworks:</p> <p><u>Oversight</u></p>	<p>Need for better clarification of roles and coordination across the oversight bodies to eliminate potential overlaps or gaps</p> <p>Need for assessment of the workload of oversight bodies and their allocation of budgets and resources to ensure</p>	<p>Follow-up mechanisms available for some oversight and advisory reports and recommendations but not for all</p> <p>Need for timely submission of all oversight reports to give enough time for the Executive Board members to prepare for the relevant Executive Board sessions</p> <p>Capacity issues for country offices during simultaneous oversight</p>	<p>More than one oversight body independently examine the same resource, financial and budgetary matters, posing a risk of the Executive Board receiving repetitive or contradictory recommendations or advice on the same issues.</p> <p>Risk of repetitive or over-reporting to the Board</p>	<p>5. Revisit and update the oversight framework to address the identified issues concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential overlaps and risk of contradicting or disconnected recommendations from the oversight bodies reporting on the same or related risks and issues - Data collection, assessment and reporting cycles of the different oversight bodies and their impact on the capacity and resources of the WFP teams - Complexity, length and late submission of the Board documents and the impact of the strategic governance role of the Executive Board - Rationalization and simplification of the Board documents reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the

	<p>that they can continue to perform their function also with the recent growth of WFP</p>	<p>activities being conducted by more than one oversight body</p>	<p>Board members not having the time and opportunity to discuss and provide direction on the reported recommendations due to late submission of the Board reports or their translations</p>	<p>Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) - Existing follow-up mechanisms and the potential gaps concerning the recommendations of the oversight bodies (e.g. Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC), the Office of the Inspector General, evaluations, the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services, etc.). - Frequency and content of the informal Board meetings and assessment of their relevance (e.g. to eliminate the risk of repetition or lack of efficiency)</p>
<p>World Food Programme Governance Frameworks: <u>Accountability</u></p>		<p>The complex nature and length of the management plan and annual performance report make it very difficult for Board members to discern key messages and hold strategic discussions</p>	<p>Limited understanding of the Board documents leading to limited engagement at the Board level Need for better overview of the reported issues and their follow-up</p>	<p>6. Rationalize and simplify reporting to make it suitable for strategic discussions and decisions related to accountability. 7. Define the links between key concepts like “strategy”, “policy” and “enablers” to ensure a good understanding by Board members when executing their governance role.</p>
<p>World Food Programme Executive Board</p>	<p>Need for better understanding and ownership of governance role of the Executive Board Risk of confusion of the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Board and WFP Secretariat (management)</p>	<p>Need for clear definition of the format, purpose, modality and processes of the informal meetings and consensus building to ensure good communication and constructive engagement between the Board and the WFP management, as well as among the Board members</p>	<p>Lack of understanding of the governance role of the Executive Board leads to limited engagement in the sessions, inefficiencies and delays in consensus building and decision-making processes Member state representations with limited resources having challenges to engage more</p>	<p>8. Redesign the induction session for new Board Members and introduce: - training on good governance - refresher sessions during the year (online or in-person); - delegates’ handbook - automated monitoring of the outgoing and incoming member state representatives 9. Digital transformation: - Digitalization of the relevant Board processes (e.g. online consultation), meetings, meeting registration and access and comment on Board documents would help representations with limited resources keep up with the</p>

		<p>Need for further digital transformation: Digitalization of some Board processes (e.g. online consultation), meetings, meeting registration and access to Board documents</p> <p>The online consultation platform is only used for country strategic plans (CSP) and not for any other consultations. A lot of questions and comments raised at meetings could be addressed on the online platform as a part of a written procedure.</p> <p>Potential risk of conflict of interest due to the lack of code of conduct</p>	<p>actively in Board discussions</p> <p>Limited use of digital tools lead to high number of meetings and manual written processes such as follow-up questions and answers via e-mails. These increase inefficiencies and costs in terms of time and resources of the Board members and WFP management. Cumbersome and lengthy processes limit the engagement of the member states with small representations</p>	<p>busy Board calendar and engage more actively in Board discussions.</p> <p>10. Introduce global ethics and integrity benchmarks, including a code of conduct for Executive Board members including a cooling off period for Board member representatives when joining WFP as staff members</p> <p>11. Revisit and improve the consensus building processes and platforms including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Format, content, purpose, frequency, and reporting of the informal meetings to ensure for the Board to have the required discussions and provide strategic direction for WFP. All written documentation and statements should be submitted electronically in advance, and meetings should focus on discussion. The various types of meetings should be assessed to see if some could be replaced by written processes using the existing online platform. - CSPs: Written online consultations should take place before the informal consultation meetings to ensure that all technical questions have been raised and addressed. The meetings should focus on discussion, with very short presentations at the beginning. Consideration of CSPs at formal Board sessions should be limited to the reading of the relevant draft decisions and ceremonial gaveling to mark their adoption.
<p>World Food Programme Executive Board Bureau</p>	<p>Need for better understanding and ownership of governance role of the Executive Board Bureau</p> <p>Resource limitations of Member State representations, with</p>	<p>Procedures for information sharing and consensus building that vary across the electoral lists</p> <p>A “tenure gap” arises because the terms of Board members follow the calendar year and Bureau membership continues until February. This limits the opportunity for some Member</p>	<p>Different interpretation of the role of the convenor leads to inconsistent ways of information dissemination and input collection from the electoral lists and therefore imbalanced engagement of the member states in Board processes</p>	<p>12. Revisit the roles and responsibilities, tenure, and the ways of working of the Executive Board Bureau to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear understanding of the role and the responsibilities of the Bureau - Alignment of the term of the Executive Board and Bureau membership by holding the elections in January. The new Bureau Members elected in January would also have enough time to prepare for the Board’s annual session.

	<p>some Member States lacking the capacity to join the Bureau given that convenors have tasks and responsibilities in addition to those they have as Board member representatives. This creates inequality among Board members as small missions don't have the chance to become list convenors.</p>	<p>States to be nominated to the Bureau. It can also be used as a pretext to challenge the nomination of a country for political reasons.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bureau membership term is long enough for the new Bureau members to understand the role and execute optimally. The Board can agree on ways of working for the Bureau, including the appointment of convenors for two years instead of one. - All lists employ a harmonized approach to information dissemination and input collection by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drafting the Terms of Reference of the list convenors and their ways of working ▪ Allocating an administrative support officer from the Executive Board Secretariat to each electoral list. This additional administrative support would encourage more Member States to become list convenors. <p>13. Design an induction session and a handbook for Executive Board Bureau members focusing on their roles, responsibilities, and ways of working.</p> <p>14. For the implementation of the governance review recommendations a workplan should be developed for the following next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of the report and the key findings at the Executive Board Bureau meeting in June 2023; - Informal briefing for the Board Members before the June 2023 Board session; - Presenting the report and getting feedback from the Executive Board and WFP Leadership; - Prioritization of recommended actions and development of a timeline for their implementation; - Informal consultation with the Executive Board to get feedback on the draft implementation plan before the November 2023 Board session - Board approval of the report and implementation plan - Planning for change management and transition to the new ways of working in 2024–2026
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II. Introduction

Background and Purpose

1. The genesis of this targeted review was an agreement among the Executive Board Bureau members during 2022 on the value of undertaking an assessment of WFP's governance frameworks and processes to identify opportunities for practical ways to improve governance efficiency. The Executive Board Bureau established a Steering Committee made up of members nominated from each electoral list for the management of the governance review. The Committee appointed the independent consultant Ms Özge İskit for 4 months to conduct the governance review between February and May 2023. Regular meetings between the consultant and the Steering Committee were held to discuss progress and the key findings. The chair of the Steering Committee provided monthly updates to the Executive Board Bureau following each Steering Committee meeting. The members of the Steering Committee were:

List A: H.E. Mme Espérance Ndayizeye, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Burundi

List B: Mr. Khalil Mehboob, Alternate Permanent Representative of Pakistan

List C: H.E. Miguel García Winder, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Mexico

List D: H.E. Elissa Golberg, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada (Chair)
H.E. Thomas John Kelly, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

List E: Mr Jiří Jílek, Counsellor and Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic

2. The aim of the governance review is to undertake a targeted review of the current WFP governance frameworks and processes with a view to making recommendations on pragmatic adjustments to enable the Executive Board to provide the best possible strategic advice and support to WFP as it responds to significant and increasing global challenges.
3. The organization's governance frameworks were established between 1999 and 2005. This review assesses whether they continue to function optimally, taking into consideration WFP's current internal and external operating environment and recent growth. This report provides recommendations for practical ways to improve governance by optimizing and updating Executive Board processes to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

Scope

4. The governance review is based on data collected between February and April 2023 and assesses if the existing governance structures and mechanisms meet the current needs of WFP and its Executive Board. It also investigates potential gaps, overlaps and inefficiencies as well as opportunities for possible adjustments and improvements to facilitate effective and good governance.
5. The review focuses on the following key areas as defined in its terms of reference:
- ❖ **Current governance frameworks of the Board** as established between 1999 and 2005 in the following four areas: i) strategy, ii) policy, iii) oversight, iv) accountability
 - ❖ **Functions of the Board:** The information-sharing, consultation, consensus-building and decision-making functions of the Board and how they are working at present.
 - ❖ **Processes of the Board:** The current working methods, consultation and decision-making processes of the Executive Board and its Bureau and the schedule and volume of formal and informal Board meetings, briefings, updates and consultations, including the process for the Board's review and approval of country strategic plans.
 - ❖ **Roles and responsibilities** of those concerned with governance (i.e. the Executive Board, its Bureau, permanent representatives and the WFP Secretariat), as well as the relationships of the Board with its advisory bodies (the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the

United Nations (FAO) and the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC) and the Joint Inspection Unit.

- ❖ **Best practices from other governance models of United Nations agencies** and international organizations to inform opportunities to improve governance efficiency at WFP.

6. While looking into these key areas, the review does not seek structural or statutory changes. It aspires to identify opportunities for practical solutions within the framework of the existing rules and regulations.

Approach and methodology

7. The work consists of three major components and three phases, as outlined in table 1.

Table 1. Project phases and components

Phase I: Project Initiation Phase II: Fact finding & Data collection (desk research, interviews, observation of formal & informal meetings of the Executive Board, Bureau and electoral lists) Phase III: Analysis & Recommendations		
Component I: Understanding the needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the expectations from the assignment Conceptualise the roles & responsibilities of the key stakeholders Analyse the current governance frameworks & processes Identify the needs, gaps, areas of improvement 	Component II: Assessment & Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the roles & responsibilities Review the current governance frameworks & processes Identify good practices from other UN agencies and international organizations to inform opportunities to improve governance efficiency in WFP Convert the analytical assessments into practical options & applicable recommendations 	Component III: Stakeholder management & Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings with the Steering Committee to understand the expectations, to report the progress & collect feedback Interviews with the representatives of the Executive Board Members, Executive Board Bureau, WFP Leadership and management including regional directors, independent offices & the Executive Board Secretariat to identify potential opportunities to further strengthen governance frameworks & improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes Continuous communication with the key stakeholders on the assessments and key findings

Data collection

8. The data collection was based on desk research, interviews with key stakeholders and observation of formal and informal sessions of the Executive Board and meetings of the Executive Board Bureau and electoral list meetings with the Executive Director.

9. The key stakeholders identified for the interviews are:

- ❖ Board members from all electoral lists
- ❖ Executive Board Bureau members
- ❖ Executive Board Secretariat
- ❖ WFP leadership (Executive Director and deputy executive directors)
- ❖ WFP management (Directors including regional directors)
- ❖ Independent offices (Inspector General and Oversight Office, Office of Evaluation, Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services, Ethics Office)
- ❖ Advisory bodies: ACABQ, FAO Finance Committee, IOAC, Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)

10. In addition to the key stakeholders, interviews were also held with the selected United Nations agencies to understand their governance structures and processes, as well as potential best practices that could be adopted by WFP.

11. Interviews of Executive Board members were conducted with the Steering Committee members and Executive Board Bureau members for 2022 and 2023 and their alternates to ensure well-balanced input from all electoral lists. In addition, individual interviews were conducted with Executive Board Members and observers at their request. All interviews were conducted under the Chatham House rules to ensure open discussion and information sharing. The group interviews were conducted in the form of electoral list meetings chaired by the list convenors to facilitate open discussion with all list members.

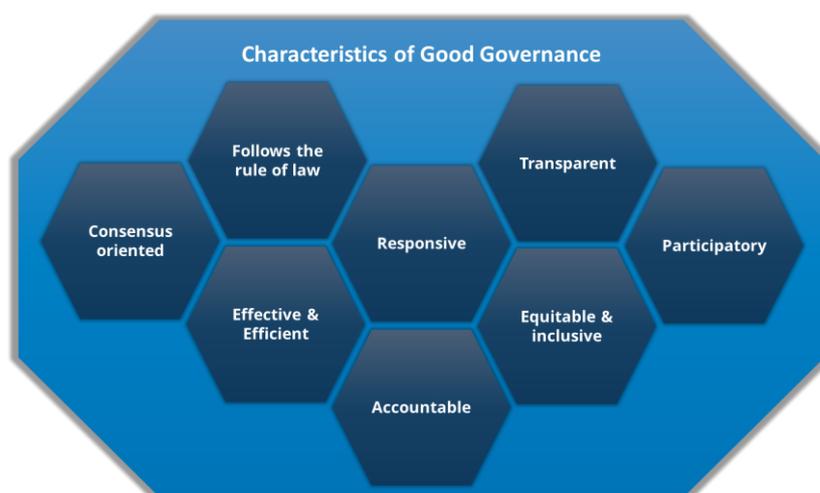
- 12. Observing formal and informal Executive Board and Bureau meetings was another fact-finding activity key to understanding how processes work in practice.
- 13. The desk research focused on Executive Board documents and reports with the aim of developing a good understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders, current frameworks, Board functions and reporting cycles and follow-up mechanisms.

III. Governance frameworks

What is good governance?

- 14. "Governance" means the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). In the words of former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan "good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development". According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific, good governance has eight major characteristics. It is participatory; consensus oriented; accountable; transparent; responsive; effective and efficient; equitable and inclusive; and follows the rule of law.²

Figure 1. Definition of "governance" by the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific



- 15. For the governance review these eight characteristics served as a basis for analysing WFP's current governance frameworks and the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Board as well as its functions and processes.

Governance at WFP

- 16. The governance group established by WFP's Executive Board in 1999 to undertake the last review of WFP governance held informal consultations with members of the Executive Board and observers, issued two formal reports with proposals and recommendations and addressed a number of ad hoc governance issues from 2000 to 2005. The governance group laid the foundation for WFP's Executive Board governance and reporting arrangements based on four interlinked frameworks, covering the areas of **strategy, policy, oversight and accountability**.

Figure 2. WFP governance frameworks



² United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "What is Good governance?"

17. In its decision 2000/EB.3/1, the Executive Board approved the frameworks alongside a number of other core components of WFP’s current governance structure.³
18. While the existing governance frameworks continue to function well, due to WFP’s current internal and external operating environment and recent growth they don’t fully meet the needs of the organization and the Executive Board. The frameworks need to be updated and adjusted to address the shortcomings identified in the review.
19. This report aims to provide an overview of frameworks, to identify and to present recommendations for consideration by the Executive Board.

Governance Frameworks: Strategy

Figure 3. Strategic Planning at the United Nations*

What is strategic planning?

20. Strategic planning is a process of looking into the future and identifying trends and issues against which to align organizational priorities.⁴ At the United Nations strategy is often about achieving a goal in the most effective and efficient manner possible. Strategic planning is about understanding the challenges, trends and issues; understanding who the key beneficiaries or clients are and what they need; and determining the most effective and efficient way possible to achieve a mandate. A good strategy drives focus, accountability and results. United Nations departments, offices, missions and programmes develop strategic plans to guide the delivery of their overall mandates and to direct multiple streams of work.



21. WFP’s direction is mapped out in its strategic plan, which is renewed every four years. The [strategic plan for 2022–2025](#) lays out WFP’s commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focusing on ending hunger, and its support for United Nations efforts to help countries respond to the urgent needs of those furthest behind and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.⁵
22. The Executive Board adopts a four-year strategic plan based on results-based management (with rollout every 2 years). Following from WFP’s mission statement, the strategic plan defines five strategic objectives for WFP. WFP has also developed a biennial management plan that sets out management priorities and the budget needed to achieve the defined strategic goals. As the organization is operating in a constantly changing environment, WFP presents the Executive Board with regular updates on the strategic plan. For accountability purposes, an annual performance report is presented to the Board, describing results achieved for each strategic objective.⁶

Observations and recommendations

23. Article VI of the General Regulations states that the Board shall be “responsible for providing intergovernmental support and specific policy direction to and supervision of the activities of WFP.” However, Executive Board sessions don’t provide the necessary time or platform for the Board members to have strategic discussions. In addition, the agenda items and related reporting are not sufficiently

³ “WFP oversight framework” (WFP/EB.A/2018/5-C)

⁴ [United Nations. Strategic Planning Guide for Managers](#)

* Ibid

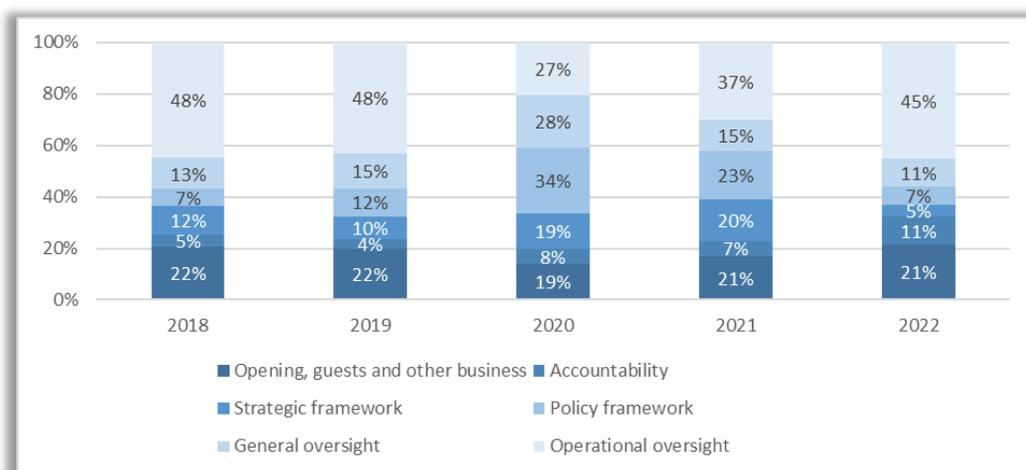
⁵ <https://www.wfp.org/governance-and-leadership>

⁶ Review of Management and Administration in the World Food Programme (WFP), Joint Inspection Unit, [JIU/REP/2009/7](#)

strategic. A new approach to agenda setting and session format is needed to give the Board the time and platform required for strategic discussions.

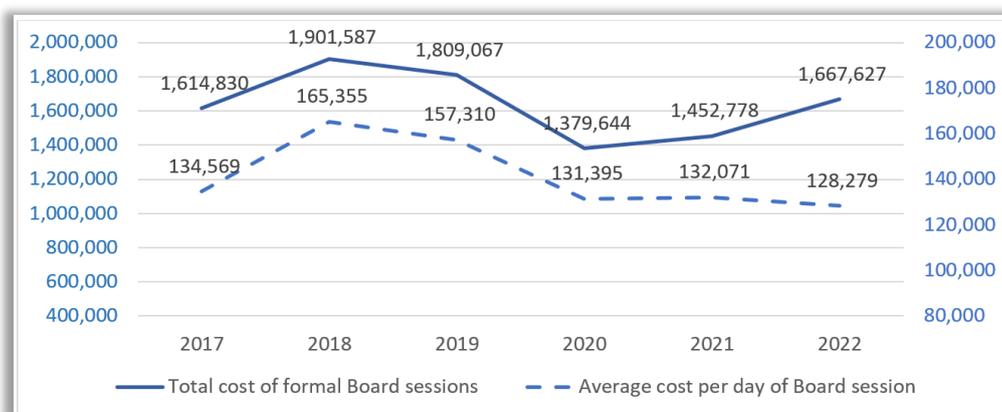
24. The diagram below shows the breakdown of the Board’s time at the formal sessions, by governance framework.⁷ In 2022 the Board spent more time on operational oversight, given the large number of second generation of country strategic plans that were presented for approval.

Figure 4. Executive Board’s sessions and time allocations, by governance framework



25. Cost of organisation of the formal Executive Board sessions is also an important factor to be considered when assessing the relevance and effectiveness of these meetings. The diagram below presents the total cost of formal Board sessions in 2017-2022, as well as the breakdown of the cost per day of Board session.⁸

Figure 5. Cost of formal Board sessions in 2017-2022



26. In 2022, the total cost⁹ of the annual and regular Board sessions was USD 1,667,627. The average cost per day of annual and regular Board sessions in 2022 amounts to USD 128,279. These calculations include neither the time and resources allocated by the WFP Secretariat (leadership and management), nor by the Member States to prepare for and attend these meetings. (e.g. reporting, reviewing, commenting, correspondence with the country offices, etc) Considering all together the time and funds

⁷ 2022 Annual Analytical Statistical Report on the Activities of the WFP Executive Board by the Executive Board Secretariat

⁸ Ibid

⁹ The total cost includes the preparation and translation of documents (excluding staff costs), interpretation of sessions into official languages, temporary conference staff, office expenditures (shuttle bus, ambulance, printing, and photography), office supplies, hospitality, overtime and information technology equipment.

allocated to the Board meetings add up to a significant amount. Therefore, the sessions’ relevance and efficacy are of great importance.

How to carve out time for strategic discussions

27. The agendas for formal Board sessions should be revisited to provide the Executive Board the time and the platform it needs to have strategic discussions. The necessary time can be carved out if the formal Board sessions focus on mandatory agenda items that require strategic discussion. All other items can be communicated to the Board through written procedures, including the Board’s existing online platform.
28. A new approach should be introduced for the formal Board sessions to enable the Board to have:
 - ❖ More strategic discussions
 - ❖ New ways of engaging with WFP management, as well as for Board members to engage with one another
 - ❖ More efficient ways of working
 - ❖ Involvement of all electoral lists and more balanced engagement in Board sessions.
29. Each Executive Board session should have a thematic focus.¹⁰ The recommended approach for the three formal Board sessions that take place each year is based on the four components of the governance framework:
 - ❖ Strategy
 - ❖ Accountability
 - ❖ Oversight
 - ❖ Policy
30. The sessions are recommended to be structured as proposed in table 2.

Table 2. Proposal for Executive Board Sessions

Executive Board first regular session in January	Executive Board annual session in June	Executive Board second regular session in November
Focus: Strategy	Focus: Oversight and accountability for the previous year	Focus: Planning for the next year (Policy)
Key content: Strategic discussions and the election of the new Bureau	Key content: Annual reports, annual accounts, reports of the independent offices, auditors and advisory bodies	Key content: Policies, biennial programme of work of the Executive Board, WFP management plan, selected CSPs
Format: Two days of strategy retreat, with workshops and break-out groups and Bureau elections	Format: Three days of formal Board session starting with a strategic discussion with the Executive Director and a guest speaker related to a selected strategic topic	Format: three days of formal Board session starting with a strategic discussion with the Executive Director and a guest speaker related to a selected strategic topic
Attendance: In person	Attendance: In-person meeting for Board members and optional virtual attendance for observers and officials from capitals	Attendance: In-person meeting for Board members and optional virtual attendance for observers and officials from capitals

31. As shown in table 2, it is suggested that the agendas and formats of the three formal Board sessions be revised as follows to provide the Executive Board with ample opportunity for strategic discussion:
 - ❖ The first session of the year should focus on strategy. Introducing a strategy retreat instead of a formal session would enable the Board Members to have informal discussions, workshops and

¹⁰ 2022 Annual Analytical Statistical Report on the Activities of the WFP Executive Board

bilateral and multilateral exchanges among themselves, as well as with the WFP leadership. A retreat outside of WFP headquarters would also help the members to get to know each other better and develop personal relationships.

- ❖ The Board's annual session should focus on oversight and accountability, with the Board examining the previous year's performance through the annual reports. Following the example of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), it could start with a strategic discussion with the Executive Director.
 - ❖ The third session should focus on planning, with the agenda covering WFP's work plans, management plans and policies so that the Board is reassured that the organization has the key elements in place for the work of the following year.
32. The proposed agendas follow the IFAD example by starting the annual and the two regular sessions with strategic discussions with the Executive Director and guest speakers on selected strategic topics. Executive Board sessions focused more on strategy would encourage members from all lists to engage more in the discussions.
 33. It is also recommended the country strategic plans to be reviewed using the online platform in advance of the Board sessions at which they will be presented for approval so that they can be adopted quickly, on a "no-objection" basis. This would free up time for strategic discussion during the Board sessions.
 34. Holding the Executive Board Bureau elections in January would eliminate the problems related to the terms of Board membership and Bureau membership. It would also give new Bureau members elected in January have more time to prepare for the annual Board session in June.
 35. *Side events*: In their interviews Board members provided mainly negative feedback concerning the "side events" held during the lunch break of Board sessions. They find it very challenging to be obliged to choose between lunch, bilateral meetings and the side events. It is therefore recommended that side events should be discontinued.

Rationalization and simplification of Board documents

36. The interviews revealed issues in relation to the complexity and length of Board documents, starting with the management plan. A 2009 JIU report pointed out the same issue and recommended that the documents presented to the Board be simplified to make them more user friendly.¹¹
37. The format and the content of the documents for formal and informal Board meetings should be revisited to provide the necessary information in a short and simple way to provide input for strategic discussion by the members of the Board.

Figure 6. Recommended Board reporting for strategic discussion and direction



¹¹ Review of Management and Administration in the World Food Programme (WFP), Joint Inspection Unit, [JIU/REP/2009/7](#)

38. Updated guidance on reporting to the Executive Board should be developed to define and clarify the key strategic questions that each document presented to the Board should address. Practical tools like using standard sections at the beginning and end of each report and presentation, identifying the key strategic questions and the strategic direction expected from the Board, could help to initiate the necessary discussions and keep the questions and comments at the required strategic level and prevent them from veering off into excessively technical detail.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Revisit the format and agenda of the formal Board sessions in order to:

- Align the sessions with the governance frameworks (strategy, policy, oversight and accountability)
- Introduce an annual strategy retreat for the Board members and WFP leadership team
- Start every formal Executive Board session with a strategic discussion with the Executive Director on a selected topic agreed by the Executive Board Bureau members
- Include on meeting agendas only mandatory items and reports that require strategic discussion or a decision
- Discontinue side events as they don't add any value to the governance role of the Executive Board.

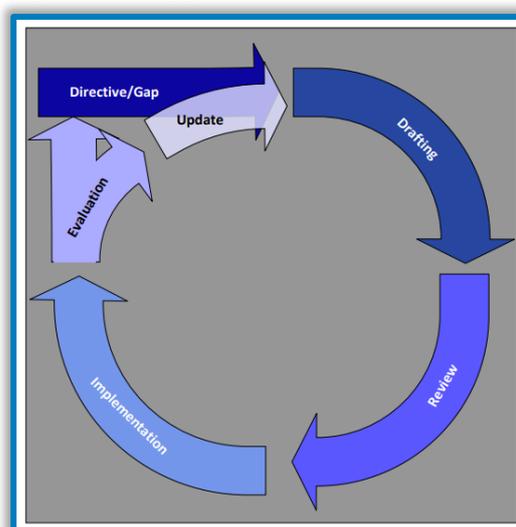
2. Rationalize and simplify Board documents to facilitate strategic discussions and decisions including formats, word limits and information provided to achieve smart reporting: "strategic input for strategic output".

Governance frameworks: Policy

Policy formulation at WFP

39. WFP's policy framework comprises a set of policies governing its operations that are summarized in a policy compendium that describes the policies and discussed possible gaps.¹² WFP policies are formulated following the cycle¹³ presented in figure 7.
40. WFP's General Regulations and Rules assign the Board the responsibility of providing intergovernmental support and specific policy direction to WFP management that is consistent with the overall policy guidance provided by the United Nations General Assembly, the FAO Conference, the Economic and Social Council and the FAO Council.
41. WFP's policy on policy formulation,¹⁴ approved by the Executive Board in 2011, provides an overview of how policies are formulated, implemented, evaluated and updated.

Figure 7. Policy formulation cycle (2011)



Observations and recommendations

42. The link between strategy, policy and programme and its significance for the Executive Board and its decision-making processes is not clear.

¹² "WFP oversight framework" (WFP/EB.A/2018/5-C).

¹³ See "[WFP Policy Formulation](#)" (WFP/EB.A/2011/5-B)

¹⁴ Ibid.

43. The decision-making process and the necessary steps for policy formulation are not well defined. Some Board members expressed their concern that necessary steps and strategic discussions are sometimes skipped in the formulation of policy.
44. Some Board members feel that they don't always have a full overview of existing policies and their links and relevance to the strategic plan, the management plan and the ongoing processes for the formulation of new policies. While the interviews revealed this gap, the questions and comments during the informal consultations observed in February and March 2023 also confirmed the lack of understanding of the role of policies as a tool for assessing and approving documents like country strategic plans and new policies.
45. WFP Secretariat (management) recognizes that the WFP policy formulation policy adopted in 2011 is outdated, and it is planning to conduct a review to address the issue. The independent consultant is of the view that the planned policy review is needed to identify the gaps and the necessary steps going forward. It should not, however, be conducted as a standalone exercise but rather as a part of the larger effort to rationalize and update the governance frameworks as recommended in this report. A holistic approach to the improvement of all four governance frameworks will be key to achieving optimal governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

3. Update the policy formulation framework, define roles and responsibilities, as well as clear processes and criteria for:

- Required steps and timeframe to formulate or update a policy and follow up the implementation
- Maximum number, format and frequency of informal consultations and other informal meetings for the formulation or update of each policy
- Use of new technologies and existing digital tools to increase efficiency and engagement with the Board members when collecting input and feedback (e.g. online consultation), as well as follow-up of the implementation
- Stakeholder engagement
- Planning of implementation and budgeting processes when adopting or updating new policies
- Board reporting and engagement to enable the necessary strategic discussions at the required stages of policy formulation.

4. Conduct the planned policy framework review as a part of the current governance initiative rather than a stand-alone exercise to identify the potential gaps and the steps necessary to address identified issues.

Governance frameworks: Oversight

Oversight reporting for the Executive Board

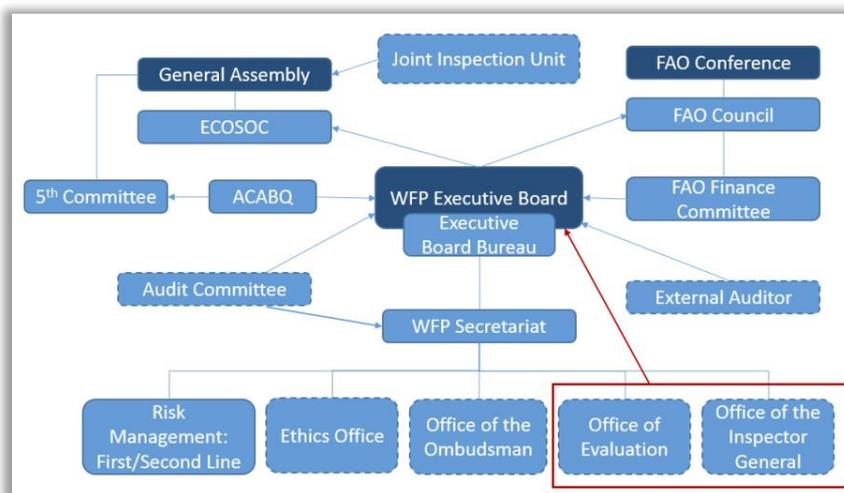
46. The oversight framework covers the Board's delegation of responsibility to the Executive Director for managing WFP within the parameters of WFP's strategic and policy frameworks. The framework rests on two pillars: the management plan and a set of programming principles for country programmes and projects, as well as operations conducted outside country programmes.¹⁵
47. The Joint Inspection Unit notes that United Nations Member States have primary responsibility for oversight of United Nations organizations and that they can delegate some oversight authority to the organizations' secretariats and external oversight bodies. Oversight activities at WFP promote accountability and transparency and reinforce the accountabilities and internal control established by its governing bodies and the Executive Director. Oversight, as an integral part of the system of governance, provides assurance that:
 - ❖ the activities of the organization are fully in accordance with its legislative mandate

¹⁵ ["WFP oversight framework" \(WFP/EB.A/2018/5-C\)](#)

- ❖ the funds provided to the organization are fully accounted for
- ❖ the activities of the organization are conducted in the most efficient and effective manner
- ❖ the staff and all other officials of the organization adhere to the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and ethics.¹⁶

48. WFP's overall governance and assurance architecture is illustrated in figure 8. Principal governing bodies appear in dark blue, and independent entities are surrounded by a dotted line. All independent entities report to the Board.¹⁷

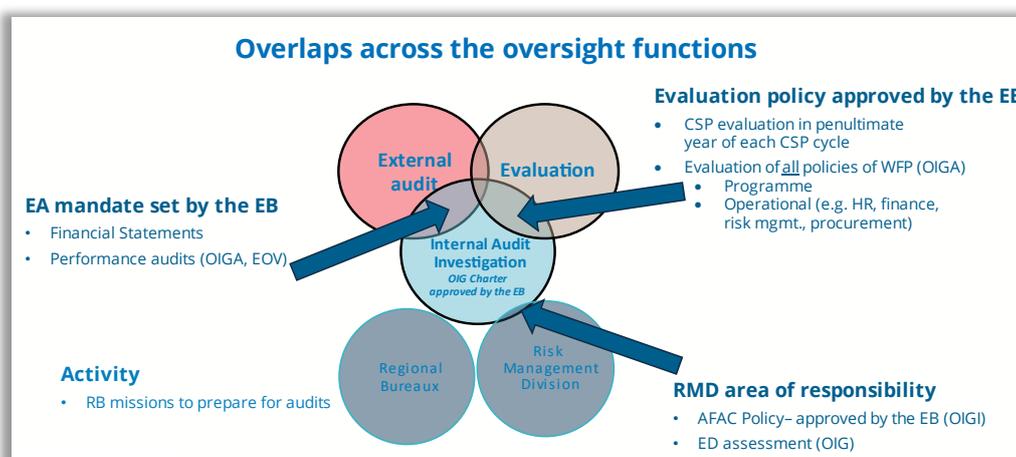
Figure 8. WFP governance and assurance architecture



Observations and recommendations

49. The oversight framework is designed based on independent bodies with direct reporting lines to the Executive Board. As various oversight bodies independently look into the same resource, financial and budgetary matters there is a risk that the Executive Board will receive repetitive or contradicting recommendations or advice on the same issues. A more coordinated approach would help to eliminate overlaps, inefficiency and repetition while facilitating the implementation and follow up of recommendations and the lessons learned.
50. While the [joint briefing on internal audit and evaluation](#) of 22 April 2022 provides a good overview of the overlaps and suggestions for improvement, figure 9 presents the overlaps across the oversight functions as identified by the Office of the Inspector General.

Figure 9. Oversight framework and overlaps identified by the Office of the Inspector General



¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid

51. In their November 2022 assessment WFP's Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC) also emphasised the importance of dynamic planning of the oversight functions, coordination and adoption of a holistic approach, with the oversight functions working collaboratively to create more impact for WFP.
52. For the Ethics Office and the Office of the Ombudsman the frequency and format of their engagement with the Executive Board should be revisited to avoid repetitive reporting on the same issues and to develop a better mechanism for following up on the advice and recommendations provided by these offices.
53. Concerning the advisory bodies - the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO FC) and the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC) there are three identified areas of risks:
 - ❖ Repetitive or over-reporting to the Board as these bodies independently examine the same resource, financial and budgetary matters,
 - ❖ Executive Board receiving repetitive or contradictory recommendations or advice on the same issues.
 - ❖ Board members not having the time and opportunity to discuss and provide direction on the reported recommendations due to late submission of the Board reports (e.g. ACABQ assessment and reporting timeline and the timing of the annual Board session)
54. The General Regulations give a broad indication of what documents should be submitted to ACABQ and the FAO Finance Committee. Currently all reports under the "RESOURCE, FINANCIAL and BUDGETARY MATTERS" agenda item for formal Board sessions are submitted to these advisory bodies. This, however is based on interpretation of the General Rules and precedent, and there is room for rationalization and simplification to improve efficiency.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

5. Revisit and update the oversight framework to address the identified issues concerning:

- Potential overlaps and risk of contradicting or disconnected recommendations from the oversight bodies reporting on the same or related risks and issues
- Data collection, assessment and reporting cycles of the different oversight bodies and their impact on the capacity and resources of the WFP teams
- Complexity, length and late submission of the Board documents and the impact of the strategic governance role of the Executive Board
- Rationalization and simplification of the Board documents reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- Existing follow-up mechanisms and the potential gaps concerning the recommendations of the oversight bodies (e.g. Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC), the Office of the Inspector General, evaluations, the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services, etc.).
- Frequency and content of the informal Board meetings and assessment of their relevance (e.g. to eliminate the risk of repetition or lack of efficiency)

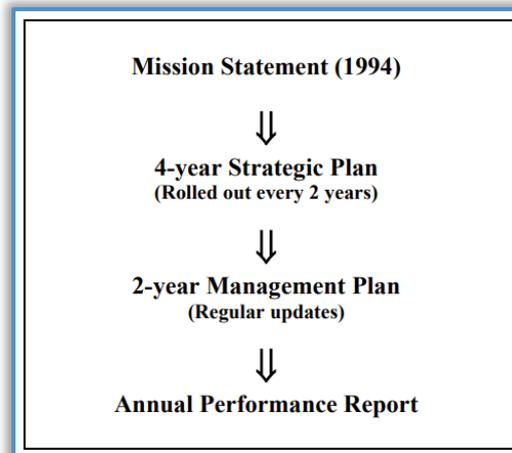
Governance frameworks: Accountability

55. The **accountability framework** enables the Board to hold the Executive Director to account for the delivery of results agreed in the management plan and to discharge its own accountability to Member States and the parent bodies of WFP (the United Nations General Assembly and the FAO Conference). The framework has three elements: an annual performance report presented alongside WFP's audited

annual accounts; lessons learned from evaluation findings; and standard project reports (replaced by the annual country reports following the adoption Integrated Road Map).¹⁸

56. The annual performance report is presented by WFP as a main accountability and learning tool at the corporate level. It also serves as the primary oversight mechanism for the Executive Board and donors. Its components such as key figures as relative to MDGs, descriptions of project and programme achievements linked with strategic objectives and factual and strategic data for projects and programmes, constitute in the Inspectors’ view a solid basis for achieving its intended functions. The Board approves the annual performance report, “noting that it provides a comprehensive record of WFP performance for the year”.¹⁹

Figure 10. Strategic planning & accountability**



57. Measuring and reporting on corporate performance enables WFP to be more accountable to the people it serves and those who provide funds. Each year, WFP plans, monitors and reports on its operations so that it can provide the best possible service to the people it assists using available resources in the most efficient and effective way possible. This means WFP not only focuses on what results it achieves but also how it achieves them.²⁰

Observations and recommendations

58. WFP’s corporate results framework, which guides this “accountability cycle”, sets out a clear structure for measuring and reporting on the organization’s achievements. This is articulated in three phases: planning, monitoring and reporting.²¹

59. The complex nature and length of the management plan and annual performance report make it very difficult for Board members to discern key messages and hold strategic discussions.

60. Additionally, the rapid and continued growth of the organization (both in monetary and staffing terms) strains its frameworks, processes and systems. As also mentioned in the Annual report of the Inspector General²², responding rapidly and effectively to growing operational demands is sometimes at odds with the need to develop, establish and enforce robust governance mechanisms and management systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

6. Rationalize and simplify reporting to make it suitable for strategic discussions and decisions related to accountability.

7. Define the links between key concepts like “strategy”, “policy” and “enablers” to ensure a good understanding by Board members when executing their governance role.

¹⁸ “WFP oversight framework”, (WFP/EB.A/2018/5-C)

¹⁹ WFP’s Annual Performance Report (APR)

** Review of Management and Administration in the World Food Programme (WFP), [JIU/REP/2009/7](#)

²⁰ WFP’s performance management and accountability

²¹ Ibid

²² WFP/EB.A/2023/6-D/1

IV. Executive Board

Role and responsibilities

61. According to Article VI of the General Regulations and Rules the Executive Board²³ is responsible for:
- ❖ Providing intergovernmental support and specific policy direction to WFP
 - ❖ Supervising the activities of WFP in accordance with the overall policy guidance of the General Assembly, the FAO Conference, the Economic and Social Council and the FAO Council,
 - ❖ Ensuring that WFP is responsive to the needs and priorities of recipient countries.

62. The Board Members have a challenging role as they are member state representatives but also act as the members of the governing body of an international humanitarian organization. It is very difficult to balance those two roles as some decisions can be difficult to engage or agree on for a Member State due to the country's position on the relevant issue.

Figure 11. Role of the Executive Board and WFP Secretariat***



Observations and recommendations

63. Induction of the new Member State representatives: The approach and format of the programme for the induction of new Board member representatives should be revisited to provide them with information and tools that will help them to understand and execute their strategic governance role throughout the year. The session should not be only about how WFP works and which departments engage with the Executive Board but also about good governance. It is recommended that the induction session include a segment – facilitated by an external expert – on good governance and the strategic role and responsibilities of the Executive Board.
64. Refresher sessions and a one-page guidance document should also be developed and made available to provide Board members with continuous support and a reminder of their role in WFP's governance and the provision of strategic guidance to the WFP Secretariat. The refresher sessions could be provided as live online sessions or developed as a recorded e-learning tool that can be accessible throughout the year.
65. The induction session should be attended at the Permanent Representative and Deputy Permanent Representative level. Other Member State representatives could also participate depending on the availability of places. This would ensure the attendance of high-level participants, giving them the opportunity to meet key members of the WFP leadership team.
66. Following the example of the United Nations General Assembly a “delegates handbook” providing all key information about the governance role of the Executive Board, functions of the Bureau, responsibilities of the WFP Secretariat (management), and the Executive Board Secretariat, together with the relevant contact information, should be developed. The handbook should be published on the Executive Board's website and updated every year.

²³ [General Regulations, General Rules, Financial Regulations and Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board](#)

*** WFP Governance – Introduction for the new Executive Board Members by the Executive Board Secretariat, February 2023

67. **Digital transformation:** Digitalization of some Board processes (e.g. online consultation), meetings, meeting registration and access to Board documents would help representations with limited resources keep up with the busy Board calendar and engage more actively in Board discussions.
68. **Introducing global ethics and integrity benchmarks:** Global ethics and integrity benchmarks are tools for helping organizations assess and measure their progress in integrating ethics and integrity throughout their workplaces.²⁴ It enables organizations, leaders and their governing bodies to identify specific actions to enhance performance. One of these benchmarks is a code of ethics to guide the behaviour of governance officials. It is recommended that the WFP Executive Board considers the adoption of a code of conduct for its members, providing for, among other things, a “cooling off period” during which former Board member representatives would be ineligible for employment with WFP as a means of avoiding conflicts of interest.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

8. Redesign the induction session for new Board Members and introduce:

- training on good governance
- refresher sessions during the year (online or in-person);
- delegates' handbook
- automated monitoring of the outgoing and incoming member state representatives

9. Digital transformation:

- Digitalization of the relevant Board processes (e.g. online consultation), meetings, meeting registration and access and comment on Board documents would help representations with limited resources keep up with the busy Board calendar and engage more actively in Board discussions.

10. Introduce global ethics and integrity benchmarks, including a code of conduct for Executive Board members including a cooling off period for Board member representatives when joining WFP as staff members

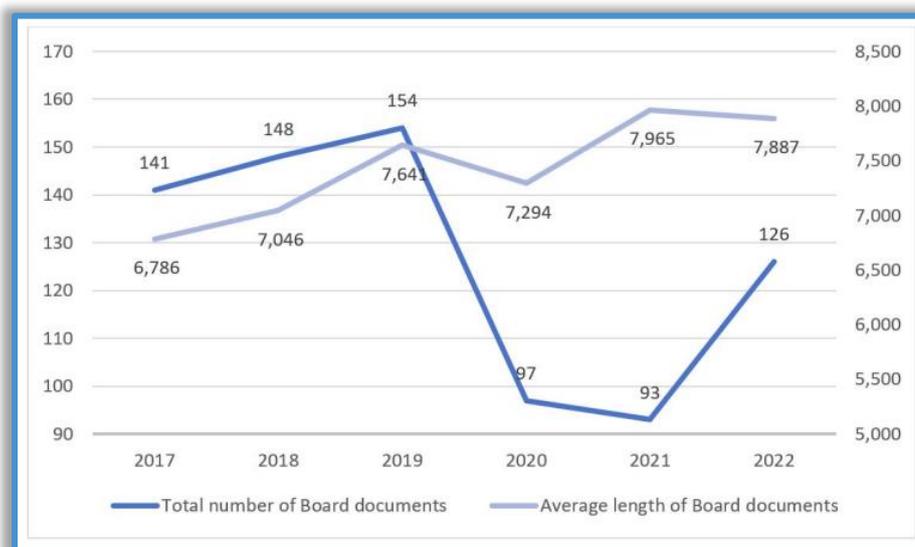
Executive Board documents

69. Interviews conducted as a part of the data collection phase of the review highlighted the following key issues concerning the Board documents:
- ❖ Length and complexity of the reports
 - ❖ Technical nature of some Board documents, which should instead provide information needed by the Board to make strategic decisions.
 - ❖ Compliance with word limits and submission deadlines for Board documents
 - ❖ Late publication of Board documents and their translations, which complicates Board member preparation for meetings
70. The annual statistical report prepared by the Executive Board Secretariat provides an overview of the number of documents Executive Board members receive for each formal Board session. As presented in figure 12, a total of 126 documents were submitted to the Board in 2022. The average word length of Board documents in 2022 was 7,887 words.²⁵ This means that each Board member had to read approximately 1 million words (in English only and probably more in other translated languages) in 2022 only for the formal Executive Board sessions. In addition to these reports, Board members also had to read and comment on the documents for the informal Board meetings.

²⁴ [Global Ethics & Integrity Benchmarks](#)

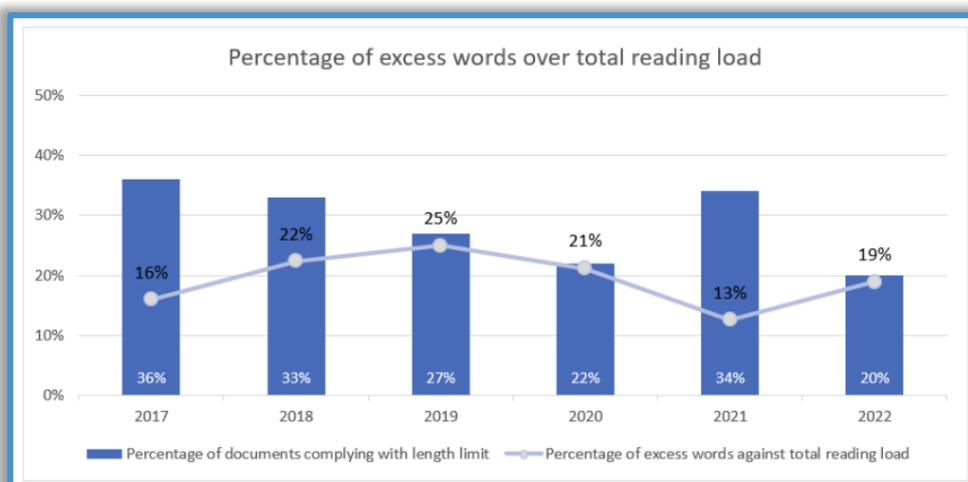
²⁵ 2022 Annual Analytical Statistical Report on the Activities of the WFP Executive Board Prepared by the WFP Executive Board Secretariat for the Executive Board Bureau, April 2023

Figure 12. Number of Board documents and their word counts 2017–2022
(units in number of documents (90-170) & number of words (5000-8500))



71. In accordance with the 2002 General Assembly resolution on the pattern of conferences (A/RES/57/283), the Board established word limits for certain types of documents²⁶ with a view to containing the cost of preparing documentation and saving Board time. Of the 126 documents submitted to the Board in 2022, 112 were subject to word limits. Of these, only 20 percent complied with their prescribed word limits as presented in figure 13.²⁷

Figure 13. Word limit compliance for the Board documents in 2017-2022



72. While the length and complex structure of Board documents is one of the issues raised in the interviews, the late posting of documents or their translations is another concern pointed out by the stakeholders.

73. While the analytical statistics provided by the Executive Board Secretariat only provide data on the compliance of documents for formal Executive Board session with word limits and submission deadlines, the interviews confirm that the situation is similar for informal meeting Board meeting documents. The late submission of meeting documents and translations make it very difficult for Board members to

²⁶ To consult the list of the document types and respective word limits, see [WFP/EB.1/2004/INF/7](#) and [WFP/EB.3/2004/15](#).

²⁷ 2022 Annual Analytical Statistical Report on the Activities of the WFP Executive Board Prepared by the WFP Executive Board Secretariat for the Executive Board Bureau, April 2023

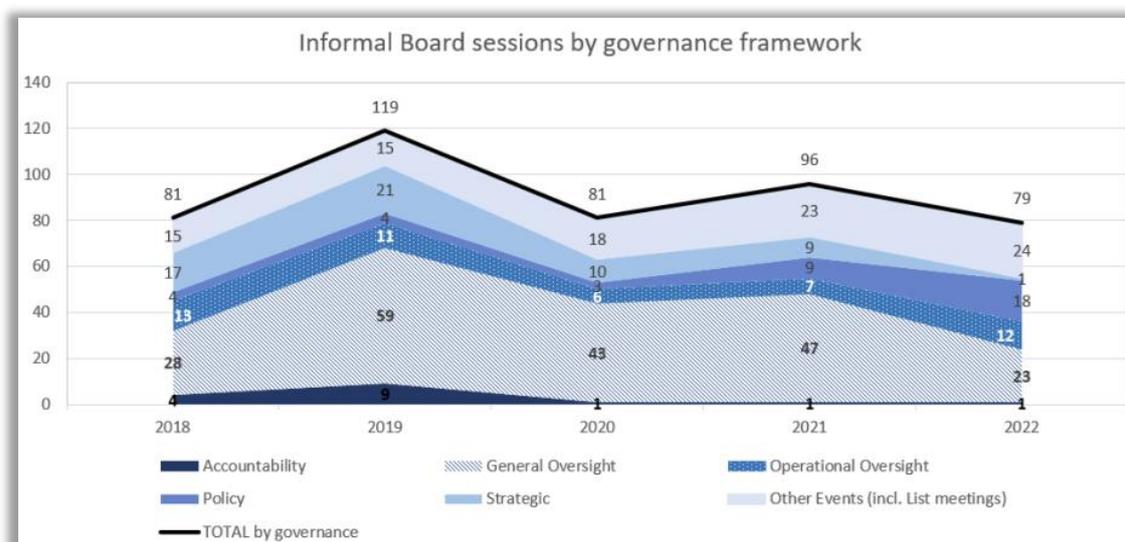
prepare for and engage at Board meetings. The length and complexity of Board documents is another obstacle preventing Board members from having strategic discussions and adopting strategic decisions.

V. Processes of the Executive Board

Consensus Building

74. According to Rule IX.2 of the rules of procedure, the Board shall make every effort to arrive at its decisions by consensus of the members.²⁸ Consensus building within each electoral list and through the Bureau prior to the sessions of the Board is an effective and efficient way of focusing the discussions during the Board sessions. This enables the Board members to reach all decisions by consensus.²⁹
75. The informal meetings were introduced as platforms for consensus building to ensure a smooth decision-making process at the formal Board sessions. However, over the years the number of the informal meetings have increased, and different types of meetings have emerged. In 2022 the WFP Executive Board had 79 informal meetings, which included consultations, roundtables, seminars, briefings, updates and brownbag events as shown on the diagram below.³⁰

Figure 14. Informal Executive Board Meetings in 2022



76. The informal meetings of the Board were introduced to enable the Board members to have discussions, exchange ideas and work together towards consensus. However, over the years the informal meetings have become very formal. Written statements are preferred to discussion. Almost all informal meetings are recorded, and transcripts are made available after the meetings. This makes it very difficult, especially for some members, to have ad hoc discussions and openly exchange ideas.
77. Cost of organisation of the informal Executive Board sessions is also an important factor to be considered when assessing the relevance and effectiveness of these meetings. The diagram below presents the total cost of informal Board sessions in 2017-2022, as well as the breakdown of the cost per session.³¹

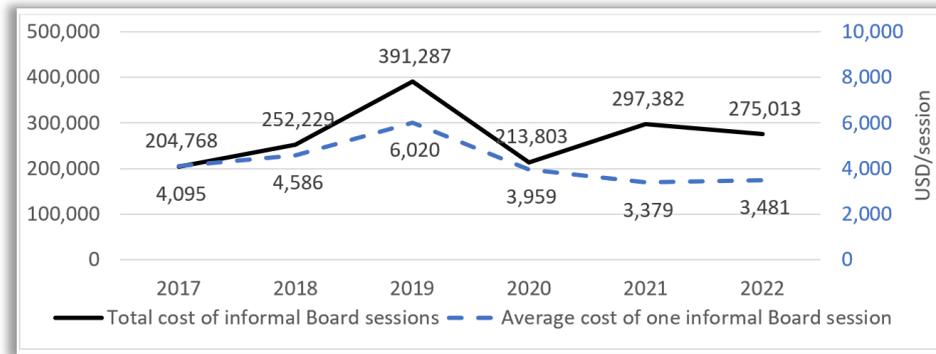
²⁸ Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, Rule IX: Decision-making

²⁹ 2022 Annual Analytical Statistical Report on the Activities of the WFP Executive Board by the Executive Board Secretariat

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

Figure 15. Cost of informal Board sessions in 2017-2022



78. The total cost³² of informal Board sessions in 2022 was USD 275,013. A total of 79 informal Board sessions and 17 Board Bureau meetings were organized in 2022, with the average cost of USD 3,481 per each meeting. These calculations include neither the time and resources allocated by the WFP Secretariat (leadership and management), nor by the Member States to prepare for and attend these meetings. (e.g. reporting, reviewing, commenting, correspondence with the country offices, etc) Considering all together the time and funds allocated to the informal Board meetings add up to a significant amount. Therefore, the sessions’ relevance and efficacy are of great importance.

79. Although the informal Executive Board meetings are organized as Board meetings they are not chaired by the Board President or Vice President. They are instead chaired by one of the members of the WFP leadership. This creates a number of issues:

- ❖ In some meetings the chair stops acting as the chair and switches roles to provide an ad hoc response to a question from a Board Member addressed to WFP management.
- ❖ Independent offices such as the Office of the Inspector General, the Office of Evaluation, the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services and the Ethics Office report directly to the Executive Board. However, the related informal sessions are chaired by members of the WFP leadership, which is a challenging situation from the governance point of view. It is also not surprising to expect in these meetings for the chair to switch roles in an ad hoc manner to respond to some of the issues addressed by these offices.
- ❖ As informal meetings are organized and chaired by WFP management there is very limited filtering and questioning to assess whether they are necessary additions to the Executive Board’s calendar. As the Executive Board Bureau and the Member States don’t play a role in the preparation and chairing of informal meetings, it is easy for the Member States to request more meetings without consulting the lists. If the Bureau were more actively engaged in the approval and chairing of informal meetings, practices such as cross-list agreement could be applied. The Board and the Bureau would be then more selective, as every meeting would require a Bureau member to be available and willing to serve as chair.
- ❖ There is no clear definition of the various types of informal meetings and their requirements in terms of format, frequency, documentation or request process. The table below provides an overview of the types, modalities, frequency, request processes, documentation requirements, and translation, interpretation and recording requirements of informal meetings.

³² The total cost includes the preparation and translation of documents (excluding staff costs), interpretation of sessions into official languages, temporary conference staff, office expenditures (shuttle bus, ambulance, printing, and photography), office supplies, hospitality, overtime and information technology equipment.

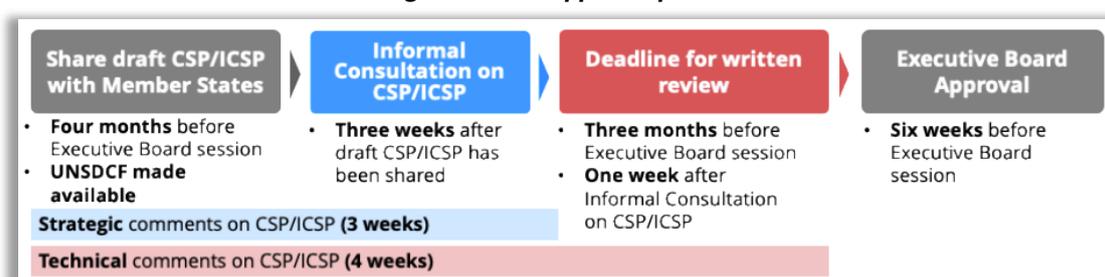
Table 3. Overview of the current types of informal Executive Board meetings

Type of meeting	Rule on frequency	Hybrid	Recorded	Transcripts	NfR/ Minutes	Documents	Translation	Supplementary documentation (i.e. PPTs)	Interpretation	Process to request the meeting
Informal consultation	No rule, determined based on the scheduling of policy/CSP matters at Board sessions	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Board and/or management through Bureau
Update	None (mainly to inform the Board about the implementation of policies)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, but not systematic	Yes, but not systematic	Yes	Yes	Board and/or management through Bureau
Roundtable	Evaluations: One prior to each formal session Other roundtables: Ad-hoc	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, for evaluations No for other roundtables	Yes, for evaluations No for other roundtables	Yes	Yes	Board and/or management through Bureau
Briefing	Oversight matters: Once every quarter (linked to the quarterly report of the Inspector General) Emergency briefings: three per year Other matters: No rule	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Board and/or management through Bureau
Seminar	Only one per year, prior to the annual session, on financial matters	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes, where possible	Yes	Yes	Board and/or management through Bureau
Brown bag event	None	Yes, but in person is preferred	No	No	No	No	No	Ad-hoc	No	Ad-hoc
Group of friends event	None	Yes, but in person is preferred	No	No	No	No	No	Ad-hoc	Ad-hoc	Ad-hoc

Country strategic plan approval process

80. Responding to feedback received from the Board and based on experience gained in 2017 and early 2018, WFP management initiated a two-step consultation process for drafting CSPs and interim CSPs in an effort to obtain Member State views earlier and thus shape the underlying strategy and formulation of the plans. Management agreed to apply this two-step consultation process until the end of 2019 and then to present at the Board's 2020 first regular session a revised process taking into consideration lessons learned and feedback from Member States. The current two-step process entails³³:
- ❖ An informal consultation on the concept note for each CSP or interim CSP held approximately six months before the Board session at which the CSP or interim CSP is to be presented;
 - ❖ A written review period that allows Board members to provide detailed comments on the draft CSP or interim CSP 12 weeks before it is submitted for Board approval.

Figure 16. CSP approval process



Observations and recommendations

81. The presentation of CSPs and CSP evaluation reports take a lot of time during formal and informal Board meetings and takes the focus away from discussion. Consultations should take place online, in writing, before the informal consultation meeting to ensure that all technical questions have been raised and responded to before the consultation. The informal consultations should be focused on discussion, with very short presentations at the beginning. Consideration of CSPs at formal Board sessions should be limited to the reading of the relevant draft decisions and ceremonial gavelling to mark their adoption. However, regional and country directors should still travel to Rome for formal sessions to allow for bilateral meetings with Board members.
82. The online consultation platform is not used efficiently to reserve time during meetings for strategic discussion. The Board's online consultation platform is only used for Country Strategic Plans (CSP). The technical questions and comments raised at the informal meetings could be addressed on the online platform through a written procedure. The platform could be used for all consensus building processes and not only for CSPs.
83. The large number of reports make it very difficult for Board members to absorb the information presented and to engage during meetings. This is especially true for small missions with resource limitations. This creates an imbalance in participation in Board meetings.
84. The types, formats and chair of informal Board meetings should be clearly defined. All informal meetings should have a clear purpose and guidance on the process for requesting and holding a meeting, modality of the meeting and the documentation to be prepared.
85. All written documentation and statements should be submitted electronically, and meetings should focus on discussion. The different types of meeting should be assessed to see if some could be replaced by written processes using an online platform.

³³ Update on the Integrated Road Map, Executive Board Second regular session Rome, 18–21 November 2019, WFP/EB.2/2019/4-D/1

RECOMMENDATIONS:

11. Revisit and improve the consensus building processes and platforms including:

- Format, content, purpose, frequency, and reporting of the informal meetings to ensure for the Board to have the required discussions and provide strategic direction for WFP. All written documentation and statements should be submitted electronically in advance, and meetings should focus on discussion. The various types of meetings should be assessed to see if some could be replaced by written processes using the existing online platform.
- CSPs: Written online consultations should take place before the informal consultation meetings to ensure that all technical questions have been raised and addressed. The meetings should focus on discussion, with very short presentations at the beginning. Consideration of CSPs at formal Board sessions should be limited to the reading of the relevant draft decisions and ceremonial gaveling to mark their adoption.

VI. Executive Board Bureau

Role and responsibilities

86. According to rule V of the rules of procedure of the Executive Board the primary functions of the Bureau are to facilitate the effective and efficient functioning of the Board and, in particular:
- ❖ the strategic planning of the work of the Board;
 - ❖ the preparation and organization of Board meetings; and
 - ❖ the promotion of dialogue.
87. Members of the Bureau are responsible for facilitating effective information sharing and dialogue on key issues within their electoral lists. They play an important role in consulting delegates on Board session agendas, thereby reducing last-minute additions to the agendas and interventions that are not focused on the agreed agenda items. Effective and timely communication between the Bureau members and the members of the electoral lists enables permanent missions to communicate with their capitals on key issues prior to Board sessions.
88. Since 1996 the WFP Executive Board has followed the practice of appointing a vice-president who serves for a year and then takes over as president. There is consensus that this arrangement serves as a valuable induction into the management of board proceedings for the vice-presidents and contributes to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Board's work.³⁴

Observations and recommendations

89. The Executive Board Bureau plays an important role in setting the agendas for Board sessions and other meetings to ensure that the Board can have the discussions that the electoral lists find important and necessary. The Bureau should be more active in playing this role, seeking agreement and support across the lists.
90. Induction session for the new Bureau members: While the annual "handover" meeting provides a very useful opportunity for outgoing and incoming Bureau members to meet and exchange experiences, it does not provide the new Bureau members with enough information regarding their important role and the power of the Bureau in shaping the meeting agendas and making sure that the Board has the opportunity to discuss the issues on which it wants to give strategic direction to WFP management. It is recommended that an induction programme for Bureau members and a handbook they can refer to throughout the year be developed.

³⁴ Review of Management and Administration in the World Food Programme (WFP), Joint Inspection Unit, [JIU/REP/2009/7](#)

91. Equal opportunity to become Bureau members: Board members need a good understanding of what the Bureau does and how much additional workload convenors have. This should be communicated to the members before countries are nominated to make sure that the new list convenors have the time and resources needed for this additional role. It is recommended that each list have one dedicated administrative staff member in the Executive Board Secretariat to give Member States with resource limitations the opportunity to become list convenors. This would also ensure a more harmonized approach across the lists when it comes to information dissemination and input collection.
92. Harmonized ways of working: The lists have different communication and information sharing channels. While some have monthly meetings and debriefs, others communicate only by e-mail. A more harmonized approach (an agreement on ways of working) would help to ensure that all lists receive the information they need and can provide input where required.
93. Tenure: The Bureau has many responsibilities, and it takes time for the convenors to understand their roles. The Board should therefore consider electing Bureau members for two years instead of one. According to rule XVII of the rules of procedure of the Executive Board, the Board may, by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting at any meeting of the Board, amend the rules to provide for convenors to serve for two years.
94. Term alignment: While the term of the Board Membership follows the calendar year, the terms of Bureau members continue until February because the Bureau elections take place at the Board's first regular session, in February. The list convenors usually try to find successors from Board members whose terms have not ended in the December preceding the Bureau election. This, however, limits the options and the opportunity for some Member States to be nominated to the Bureau. This can also be used as a challenge the nomination of a country for political motives. Following the example of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), elections could be held in January to close the gap between the tenure of Bureau membership and Board membership.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

12. Revisit the roles and responsibilities, tenure, and the ways of working of the Executive Board Bureau to ensure:

- Clear understanding of the role and the responsibilities of the Bureau
- Alignment of the term of the Executive Board and Bureau membership by holding the elections in January. The new Bureau Members elected in January would also have enough time to prepare for the Board's annual session.
- Bureau membership term is long enough for the new Bureau members to understand the role and execute optimally. The Board can agree on ways of working for the Bureau, including the appointment of convenors for two years instead of one.
- All lists employ a harmonized approach to information dissemination and input collection by:
 - Drafting the Terms of Reference of the list convenors and their ways of working
 - Allocating an administrative support officer from the Executive Board Secretariat to each electoral list. This additional administrative support would encourage more Member States to become list convenors.

13. Design an induction session and a handbook for Executive Board Bureau members focusing on their roles, responsibilities, and ways of working.

VII. Good practices from other United Nations entities

95. As a part of the governance review interviews were conducted with staff of selected United Nations entities on their governance structures, ways of working and how they address governance related issues. The exercise aimed to identify relevant good practices and assess how they might be adapted to the needs of WFP to address some of the identified issues.

Table 4. Examples of good practices from the relevant UN agencies

Relevant good practices of other United Nations entities	
Decision-making: Formal sessions of the Executive Board or the equivalent governing body	
UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-WOMEN	How can WFP benefit from a similar practice?
<p>Updated working methods for executive boards³⁵ for a harmonized approach to timing of discussion of similar items for the New York based United Nations entities and consistent agendas for Board sessions</p> <p>No side events during formal Board sessions to allow members time to negotiate and discuss.</p>	<p>Updated agendas for formal Board sessions and a new approach: This would provide the Executive Board the time and the platform it needs to have strategic discussions. The necessary time can be carved out if the formal Board sessions focus on mandatory agenda items that require strategic discussion. All other items can be communicated to the Board through written procedures, including the Board's existing online platform.</p>
FAO	
<p>Efficient use of time at Council meetings: The agendas for meetings of the FAO Conference, the FAO Council and FAO regional conferences and technical committees all make use of a "written correspondence procedure" for a number of agenda items, which are considered by these governing bodies through written exchanges in advance of meetings. Only the conclusions of the Members are debated during the meetings themselves.</p> <p>All management presentations of all agenda items are circulated in advance. For meetings of the Conference members are encouraged to provide their statements in advance (either in writing or in audio-visual form); the statements are uploaded to the meeting website as an alternative to delivery during the meeting.</p>	
UNICEF	How can WFP benefit from a similar practice?
<p>Executive Board Bureau elections held in January: The Executive Board Bureau election is part 1 of UNICEF's first regular Board session and is held early in January each year. Part 2 of the session focuses on the consideration of substantive agenda items and is held in February. This is a pragmatic arrangement allowed by the rules to ensure that new Bureau members are elected after the end of the terms of the previous Bureau members and before the first regular Board session in February.</p>	<p>Aligning the tenure of WFP Executive Board Members and Bureau members: The Executive Board can introduce a similar practice under its existing rules. This would help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close the gap between the end of Board membership (December) and end of Bureau membership (February) - Provide clarity on the latest set-up of the Executive Board when nominating new list convenors - Prevent tenure related issues from being raised at a regular Board session to challenge the nomination of a member state
IFAD	How can WFP benefit from a similar practice?
<p>Strategic discussion with the President: Every formal Board session starts with two hours of strategic discussion with the President</p>	<p>More strategic discussions at the WFP Board: All interviewed Board members and WFP leadership team members agree that more strategic discussions are needed at the Board</p>

³⁵ https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/board-documents/main-document/Joint_Paper_on_Working_Methods_of_the_Executive_Boards-Final.pdf

<p>based on a short background document including questions for the Board to consider.</p>	<p>level. The similar practice is proposed in the relevant recommendations of this report.</p>
<p>Shortened formal Board sessions: 1.5 day Board sessions from 9:30 to 18:00 with a lunch break and two coffee breaks. Many approvals (e.g. for programmes and operations) are no longer dealt with during Board sessions. There are no side events as the members find the agenda to be too heavy otherwise.</p> <p>Batch approval at formal Board meetings is being proposed, following the example of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Commission (For example: Agenda item A: Housekeeping, Agenda item B: Approvals – proposing to move some items that are already reviewed and endorsed in other fora/subsidiary bodies be approved as a batch at the beginning of each Board session... e.g., financial statements already reviewed and endorsed by the Audit Committee)</p>	<p>Aligning the Formal Board Sessions with the governance frameworks: The interviewed Board Members have all pointed out the heavy Board agenda at the formal meetings, as well as the side events not adding much value to the meetings. A proposal for the rationalisation and simplification of the Board agenda is presented in the recommendations.</p> <p>Efficient use of informal sessions and written and online procedures can help to accelerate approvals at formal Board sessions and free up time for strategic discussions. The proposed approach in this report for the formal Board sessions aims to improve time management and efficiency of the Executive Board sessions.</p>
<p>Consensus building: Informal meetings of the Executive Board or the equivalent governing body</p>	
<p>UNICEF</p>	<p>How can WFP benefit from a similar practice?</p>
<p>Limited number of informal meetings: They are scheduled only for complex and sensitive issues (e.g., strategic plan of the organization or budget adoption, private sector partnerships) and held only virtually. Informal meetings are chaired by the President or in his or her absence by one of the four vice-presidents or, if none is available, by a Member State representative.</p> <p>Two-level endorsement requirement for requests to hold additional informal meetings: A request for an informal meeting from a Member State must be endorsed by the member’s own regional group. Once so endorsed it is presented to all other regional groups for review and endorsement. Only after achieving this two-level endorsement will the Executive Board Bureau approve the organization of the meeting. Two-level endorsement serves as an efficient and effective filter.</p>	<p>Introducing processes and criteria for holding informal Executive Board meetings: WFP needs a more selective approach to scheduling informal Board meetings. All types and formats of informal meeting should be defined and clarified, considering which ones are relevant for consensus-building. (e.g. informal consultations, roundtables, briefings, etc). Introducing processes and criteria for requesting informal meetings would help to improve the content and quality of the meetings.</p> <p>Informal Board meetings to be chaired by the President, Vice-President or a Bureau member: All Executive Board meetings (formal and informal) should be chaired by the Board President, Vice-President or a Bureau member to ensure that the meeting structure is in line with the governance structure of the organization. This would also give the Bureau full ownership of all Board meetings and ensure a more thorough selection process when adding new meetings to the Board’s calendar.</p>
<p>FAO</p>	
<p>Dialogue via informal meetings: Informal meetings are not scripted and are constructive, focusing on dialogue.</p>	
<p>IFAD</p>	
<p>Informal meetings with no minutes</p>	
<p>Joint board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS</p>	

<p>Informal consultations and briefings: All meetings are virtual (not hybrid). All informal consultations and briefings are chaired by Bureau members.</p>	<p>presenters address an empty room and cannot see audience reactions. There is also an additional financial cost when the auditorium is used for a very small number of people attending in person. Holding informal meetings only virtually would also provide all meeting participants equal opportunity to participate and allow all to see who is attending in the same manner. However, it is also important for Board Member representatives to use the right equipment for virtual meetings to ensure good communication and good quality interpretation.</p> <p>Saving time and money: A selective approach to organizing informal Board meetings and conducting them virtually instead of in hybrid form would help the Board Secretariat to save time and money and enable it to organize other strategic meetings and Board events (for example, a strategy retreat). Virtual meetings also offer greater flexibility in retaining interpreters, especially during busy meeting periods of the Rome based United Nations agencies.</p> <p>(Re)defining the processes for consensus building of the Executive Board: Most of the informal meetings at WFP are recorded, with transcripts available after the meetings. This spurs the presentation of written statements rather than open discussion. Potential solutions are presented in the relevant section of this report.</p>
<p>Consensus building: Consultation on the Country strategic plans / Country programme documents</p>	
<p>UNICEF</p>	<p>How can WFP benefit from a similar practice?</p>
<p>Online review and written procedure instead of informal meetings: UNICEF country programme documents (CPDs) are virtually reviewed and commented on by Member States ahead of the formal Executive Board sessions at which they are presented for approval. The CPDs are not presented during the formal sessions because they have been already reviewed, but instead are approved on a no-objection basis. There is a ceremonial gaveling at the formal Executive Board session confirming that the document has been approved. Informal in-person consultations on CPDs have been eliminated as it has been agreed that they don't add value.</p>	<p>Revisiting the policy on country strategic plans (CSP): A similar approach can be introduced for WFP's CSPs WFP could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use the online consultation process more efficiently and effectively by completing it before informal Board consultations take place - Focus discussion during informal meetings on the outcome of the online consultation (introducing strict time limits for presentations, focusing on strategic key messages for the Board) - Be more efficient at formal Executive Board session by introducing ceremonial gaveling based on consensus already achieved via online consultation and discussions at the informal consultations (eliminating presentations and discussions to reduce the time allocated to the relevant agenda items).
<p>Joint Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS</p>	
<p>Country programme documents (CPD): Draft CPDs get posted on the Executive Board website 12 weeks prior to the formal Board sessions at which they are presented, with a three-week commenting period. Board</p>	

<p>members use a a template for providing comments. The comments are posted on the Executive Board website along with the CPDs and a table with responses. (The template has two columns, one for comments and one for responses.) All changes to the versions of the draft CPD are visible to the Board members as both versions of the CPD are posted on the Board website. All is done via email (comments and responses) because there is no digital platform where members can post comments. Members can view and compare the draft and final versions of the CPD and the template for comments and responses on the Board website. After the written procedure there is an informal consultation at which the final draft is presented.</p>	
<p>Alternative ways of engagement with the Executive Board or the equivalent governing body</p>	
<p>IFAD</p>	<p>How can WFP benefit from a similar practice?</p>
<p>Executive Board retreat organized with an external facilitator for two days outside of Rome. The first day is dedicated to Board members only. The second day is for discussions with the President and management.</p>	<p>A similar initiative can be organized to allow the WFP Executive Board and WFP leadership to discuss key strategic issues and exchange ideas. The recommendations in this report propose a similar approach to improve Board engagement and provide platforms for strategic discussions.</p>
<p>Joint Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS</p>	
<p>Examples of informal engagement: The Executive Board secretariat organizes lunches for the principals and the incoming and outgoing Bureau members during the first regular board session in January. (These are organized separately for the principals of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).)</p> <p>Regular regional coffees and lunches organized by the Board secretariat (regional engagements at the ambassador level with the Administrator of UNDP. UNFPA organizes its own for its Executive Director.)</p> <p>Regional interactions are held two or three times a year in advance of the sessions of the Board to provide permanent representatives of the Board members of each regional group the opportunity to engage with the principal of the organization and discuss the issues to be addressed at Board sessions in an informal setting. The UNDP interactions are attended by the Administrator, the Associate Administrator, the relevant Bureau Director, depending on the regional group engaged, and the Secretary of the Board. The meeting is co-convened by the</p>	

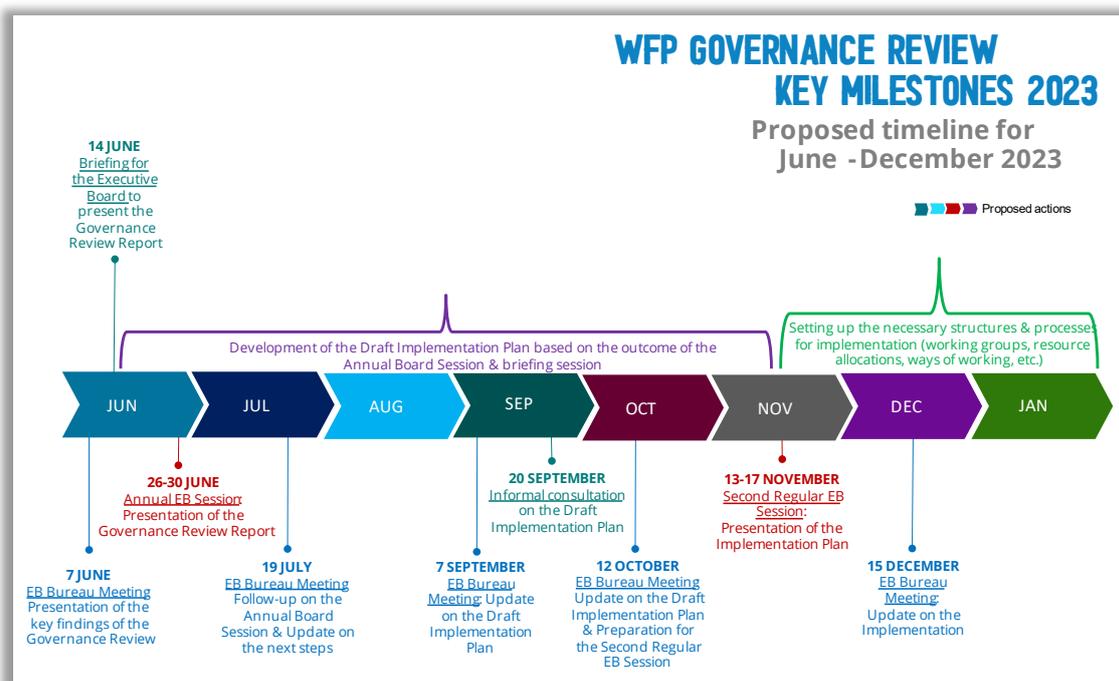
<p>Bureau member and the Administrator and co-chaired by both of them.</p> <p>There are no side events during the formal Board sessions because the members need the time to negotiate and discuss.</p>	
Digital platforms and cross-agency cooperation	
UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-WOMEN	How can WFP benefit from a similar practice?
<p>A joint calendar for the executive boards helps to avoid schedule conflicts for the meetings. UNICEF manages the calendar platform, and all the entities enter the meeting dates.</p>	<p>Rome-based agency executive board calendar: There is a joint calendar for the Rome based United Nations agencies, which is managed by FAO. Effective collaboration is needed to avoid schedule conflicts, especially in the case of informal Board meetings.</p>
FAO	How can WFP benefit from a similar practice?
<p>Members' gateway: The FAO member gateway is a comprehensive communication platform enabling information flows from FAO management and the secretariats of the various governing bodies to the members, as well as among the members themselves. This includes notifications, documents, invitations and registration for meetings. Access to the gateway is password-protected for registered representatives of members.</p> <p>In addition, each session of a governing body has its own dedicated, publicly available website containing information applicable to the session, including final reports and other documents.</p>	<p>Digital transformation: While WFP Board members already have digital tools at their disposal, there are areas in which greater digitalization is required. A portal similar to the FAO gateway would simplify and accelerate the processes of the Executive Board Secretariat and save time for Member States with small representations in Rome. Digital transformation is addressed in the relevant recommendations of this report.</p>

VIII. Follow up and implementation

Ensuring continuity

96. This governance review has been positively perceived and welcomed by all stakeholders. It has created an opportunity for open discussion and the exchange of ideas on areas for improvement as well as potential solutions. The positive engagement of stakeholders has been key to developing the new approaches and potential solutions proposed in this report. The continuity of the engagement and positive momentum will play an important role the follow-up and implementation of the recommendations. A workplan should be developed with proposed key milestones as presented below:

Figure 17. Proposal for a workplan and milestones for 2023



RECOMMENDATIONS:

14. For the implementation of the governance review recommendations a workplan should be developed for the following next steps:

- Presentation of the report and the key findings at the Executive Board Bureau meeting in June 2023
- Informal briefing for the Board Members before the June 2023 Board session
- Presenting the report and getting feedback from the Executive Board and WFP Leadership
- Prioritization of recommended actions and development of a timeline for their implementation
- Informal consultation with the Executive Board to get feedback on the draft implementation plan before the November 2023 Board session
- Board approval of the report and implementation plan
- Planning for change management and transition to the new ways of working in 2024–2026

IX. Acronyms

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
AFAC	Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption Policy
APR	Annual Performance Report
RBA	Rome based UN agencies
BMP	Biennial Management Plan
CO	Country office
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
EB	Executive Board
EBB	Executive Board Bureau
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ED	Executive Director
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HQ	Headquarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICT	Information and communication technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IOAC	Independent Oversight Advisory Committee
IRM	Integrated Road Map
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
OBD	Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services
OEV	Office of Evaluation
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
RB	Regional bureau
RBM	Results-based management
RMR	Enterprise Risk Management Division
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WFP	World Food Programme
WGG	Working Group on Governance