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of the Executive Board

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Draft summary of the work of the 2024 first regular session of the Executive Board

Table of contents

Current and future strategic issues	3
2024/EB.1/1 Opening remarks by the Executive Director	3
Oral update on the organization structural review and the 2024 budget.....	6
Operational matters	8
Oral global overview on humanitarian needs and operational concerns and priorities.....	8
Regional overviews	9
Latin America and the Caribbean portfolio	9
Western Africa portfolio	10
Southern Africa portfolio.....	11
Asia and the Pacific portfolio	12
Eastern Africa portfolio.....	13
Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe portfolio.....	14
Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe portfolio	15
2024/EB.1/2 Republic of Moldova interim country strategic plan (2024–2026)	15
Latin America and the Caribbean portfolio	16
Report on the field visit of the WFP Executive Board	16
Western Africa portfolio	17
2024/EB.1/3 Chad country strategic plan (2024–2028).....	17
2024/EB.1/4 Gambia country strategic plan (2024–2028)	18
2024/EB.1/5 Mauritania country strategic plan (2024–2028).....	19

Southern Africa portfolio	20
2024/EB.1/6 Madagascar country strategic plan (2024–2028), including evaluation findings, recommendations and management response from item 5 a) 2).....	20
Eastern Africa portfolio	21
2024/EB.1/7 Burundi country strategic plan (2024–2027).....	21
Asia and the Pacific portfolio	22
2024/EB.1/8 Bhutan country strategic plan (2024–2028), including evaluation findings, recommendations and management response from item 5 a) 1).....	22
2024/EB.1/9 Philippines country strategic plan (2024–2028), including evaluation findings, recommendations and management response from item 5 a) 3).....	23
Operational matters (continued)	24
Oral update on the reassurance action plan	24
Policy issues	25
2024/EB.1/10 Implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the least developed countries	25
Update on the implementation of the Changing Lives Transformation Fund	26
Administrative and managerial matters	27
2024/EB.1/11 Establishment of a selection panel for the appointment of Independent Oversight Advisory Committee members	27
2024/EB.1/12 Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit relevant to the work of WFP.....	27
Other business	28
Oral update on the governance review.....	28
Summary of the work of the Executive Board	29
2024/EB.1/13 Summary of the work of the 2023 second regular session of the Executive Board	29
Verification of adopted decisions and recommendations.....	29
Closing remarks by the Executive Director	29
Acronyms	31

Current and future strategic issues

2024/EB.1/1 Opening remarks by the Executive Director

1. The Executive Director outlined the changes that WFP was facing, externally in an increasingly challenging humanitarian environment, and internally as it implemented an ambitious organizational restructuring exercise in response to those challenges. The new structure had come into effect, with directors for the new divisions appointed through a staff reassignment exercise. A review of regional bureaux was about to start, aimed at identifying and resolving overlaps among functions and clarifying responsibilities and accountabilities between headquarters and the regional bureaux. The new structure was expected to bolster coordination among teams, streamline administrative procedures, enhance agility and provide more strategic and focused support for field offices and staff.
2. With WFP facing a combination of increased levels of hunger and reduced funding – and latest forecasts projecting USD 8 billion in contributions for 2024 – country offices were revising their plans for 2024, and only country and oversight offices were receiving their full allocations from the programme support and administrative (PSA) budget. An ongoing re-budgeting exercise was aimed at aligning planned expenditure with anticipated levels of income, and the mid-term review of WFP's strategic plan for 2022–2025 was expected to generate evidence and lessons to inform the development of a focused approach to programming and partnership in areas such as resilience building, school feeding and adaptation to climate change.
3. Paying tribute to WFP staff in the field, the Executive Director spoke of WFP's responses to some of the world's most difficult emergencies. In Gaza the entire civilian population required food assistance and half a million people were at serious risk of famine while the lack of humanitarian access was forcing WFP to pause its operations. The Executive Director urged the international community to support WFP as it explored all options for delivering food and other essential supplies.
4. Conflict, funding shortfalls and restricted humanitarian access were affecting WFP's operations in other countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. The Executive Director said that political solutions were urgently needed for re-establishing humanitarian access and ending the violence in the Sudan, which was leading to a hunger crisis throughout the region, particularly in Chad and South Sudan. Humanitarian conditions were also deteriorating in Haiti, Myanmar and Ukraine, where WFP continued to seek innovative ways of supporting affected people and communities.
5. The Executive Director informed the Board about WFP's planned initiatives in the areas of science, technology and innovation, which included new or forthcoming strategies for modernizing information technology systems, strengthening the management and use of the extensive data held by WFP, and guiding the development and use of innovation. WFP was expanding the range and scale of its strategic partnerships, particularly with businesses – including in the Global South – with a view to obtaining access to their resources and specialist expertise.
6. The Executive Director ended her remarks by asking Board members to advocate for funding from their capitals, work together towards political solutions that would facilitate humanitarian work in complex and fragile situations, and provide their insights and collaboration as WFP navigated the new humanitarian landscape and continued to deliver for the people it served.

Board discussion

7. Members and observers of the Board applauded the Executive Director for her leadership of WFP, particularly in the organizational restructuring and the implementation of the reassurance action plan. Speakers praised the work of WFP staff in the field and expressed their condolences for those who had lost their lives.
8. Welcoming efforts to increase the cost-efficiency and effectiveness of WFP's operations, Board members encouraged management to follow a balanced approach, focusing on rapid emergency response while also investing in long-term programmes that tackled the root causes of hunger and built the resilience of vulnerable people and communities. They urged management to clarify WFP's value proposition and the scope of its involvement in resilience building and to work with partners in that area, following a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach. With that end in mind, Board members sought clarity on how humanitarian needs were determined, how WFP planned and prioritized its use of resources, the comparative advantages of WFP and other United Nations entities in humanitarian and development work, and the returns on investments in global food security and nutrition. Board members underlined the value of crisis preparedness – including through anticipatory action; the integration of cross-cutting priorities into all of WFP's work; the building of resilient food systems; and the use of school-based programming in facilitating the transition from emergency response to recovery and resilience-based interventions.
9. A number of members described the Changing Lives Transformation Fund as a tool for harnessing new sources of funding for resilience work, while others urged WFP to maintain its focus on saving lives. Board members looked forward to seeing how experience of using the Fund would inform the development of the upcoming resilience policy and an expanded toolkit for humanitarian response, in which emergency assistance was only one element.

Strengthening the humanitarian response

10. To improve efficiency and the impacts of interventions, Board members recommended the use of evidence-based targeting, efficient transfer modalities, innovation and digitalization, and joint initiatives with partners, as well as the prioritization of beneficiary groups and activities. One Board member requested a review of the implications of funding shortfalls for beneficiaries in different countries, and information on the criteria and considerations that guided the prioritization of beneficiary groups or the cutting of rations. Several speakers emphasized the importance of localization in bolstering local and national capacities and freeing up WFP resources for use in other emergencies.
11. Recognizing that the current challenges could not be addressed by WFP alone, several Board members called on the international humanitarian community to come together to build a more effective, transparent, flexible and inclusive humanitarian system adapted to the new humanitarian environment. Such a system should be based on donors' informed prioritization of activities; the use of innovative funding methods and sources, including more flexible and predictable funding from donors; greater attention and donor support for underfunded, protracted and forgotten crises; and sustained commitment from all actors in addressing the crises that weakened communities' coping capacities.
12. With that in mind, Board members undertook to strengthen their cooperation and collaboration with WFP in providing management with the strategic guidance that they needed.

The internal organizational restructuring of WFP

13. Board members welcomed the progress made in the organizational restructuring exercise, particularly the use of lessons learned from similar initiatives in WFP and other organizations; the inclusive approach to planning and implementing the changes in

consultation with Board members and WFP staff and management; and the capping of PSA expenditures; on the latter, several members warned that the cuts in office budgets must not adversely affect the functioning of WFP or the morale of its staff. Recognizing that organizational change was not easy for any organization, Board members recommended that staff be kept well informed on the change process, which should be focused on the promotion of staff safety, well-being and diversity, talent management and retention and performance management. Board members requested reports on the trade-offs involved in streamlining and reforming the organization and on how WFP was leveraging the opportunities arising from the restructuring, including those for advancing the localization agenda and increasing the resources dedicated to protection and accountability, gender equality, nutrition and sustainability as cross-cutting issues.

The reassurance action plan

14. Board members expressed their support for WFP's efforts to increase the effectiveness of its targeting, supply chain and identity management, risk monitoring and oversight procedures, along with its risk reporting and mitigation measures. Several Board members encouraged management to continue their work on aligning the practices of cooperating partners with WFP's actions, plans and strategic priorities, and developing mechanisms for more equitable risk-sharing between WFP and local partners. One Board member called on donors to support the implementation of WFP's oversight and monitoring plans.
15. Reiterating their calls for greater transparency in communications – particularly regarding cases of aid diversion, fraud or corruption – Board members looked forward to receiving regular updates on the implementation of the reassurance action plan throughout the year.

The governance review

16. A number of Board members expressed their support for the ongoing governance review, recommending that the working group on the initiative consider all the recommendations put forward by WFP's oversight bodies or included in the external consultant's report on WFP's governance system. One observer suggested that the scope of the review be expanded to include additional aspects of governance, such as the procedures used for consultations with the Board and the selection process for the Executive Director.

WFP operations

17. Much of the Board's discussion of WFP operations focused on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, with many members expressing agreement with calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to allow the delivery and distribution of food and other essential items. Welcoming WFP's plans for facilitating the emergency response in Gaza, including through the use of airdrops, members urged management to continue advocating with partners for the creation of humanitarian corridors in the region and requested regular briefings on the food security situation in the conflict zones. Board members also called on donor countries to increase their contributions to the United Nations emergency response in Gaza.
18. Regarding operations in other parts of the world, Board members recalled that the conflict in Ukraine was creating a humanitarian crisis in that country and exacerbating food insecurity around the world. They thanked WFP's leadership and staff for their efforts to remind the world about "forgotten" crises in countries and regions around the world. Board members called for greater diplomatic efforts to improve humanitarian access in conflict zones and ensure the protection and fulfilment of human rights and adherence to humanitarian law.

Innovation, technology and partnership

19. Board members expressed their approval of WFP's plans for increasing its engagement in information technology, data management and innovation. One Board member recommended that WFP use its growing body of data on flexible and multi-year funding to support its fundraising efforts. Several speakers emphasized the value of strategic partnerships with other humanitarian actors – particularly the other Rome-based agencies, governments and private sector entities – in exploring innovative, integrated and sustainable solutions for the eradication of global hunger and accelerating the deployment of new science and technology.

The prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse

20. Board members approved WFP's victim-centred approach to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and welcomed the Executive Director's role as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee champion for PSEA in 2024. That role provided an opportunity to further strengthen the mainstreaming of PSEA throughout the work of WFP, including with its local partners, and lead the development of a United Nations system-wide approach to PSEA based on enhanced coordination and the pooling of expertise and resources.

Leadership's response

21. The Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer thanked Board members for their constructive insights and ideas, and their support for WFP's organizational reform programme and other initiatives.

Oral update on the organization structural review and the 2024 budget

22. WFP management updated the Board on the organization structural review. A global survey and extensive consultation process had led to the identification of five areas for improvement, which had guided the development of a more streamlined organizational structure. With regard to the 2024 budget, forecasted global contributions had been revised down from USD 10 billion to USD 8 billion. This level of contributions would generate an indirect support cost (ISC) income of USD 456 million, which would translate into a potential deficit of USD 112 million that could be absorbed by the PSA equalization account. WFP needed to calibrate to a lower PSA level than approved in the management plan for 2024 to ensure sustainable PSA budgets in future years. A replanning exercise of the PSA budget at a reduced PSA utilization level was undertaken with the objective of re-budgeting the 2024 PSA at a level in line with expected ISC income.
23. Board members thanked management for the updates and acknowledged the difficult situation brought about by the fall in contributions at a time of increasing needs. They urged WFP to keep the Board informed as processes evolved.
24. In the face of reduced funding and the structural review, they stressed the importance of WFP maintaining its capacities, especially to provide life-saving emergency response at scale, and ensuring, including through monitoring and evaluation, and oversight, the quality of its work. Work in the fields of resilience, early and anticipatory action, climate adaptation and social safety nets should continue in collaboration with other actors across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus and where WFP had a comparative advantage. Work on cross cutting priorities, such as protection and accountability to affected populations, gender, nutrition and the environment, should also be pursued. One member said, however, that WFP might need to consider whether its global footprint was sustainable and focus on the contexts where its unique expertise added the greatest value; she was nonetheless adamant that the funding situation should not impact implementation of the reassurance action plan. Several members were of the view that revisions of the management plan should be avoided as much as possible.

25. Several members encouraged WFP to ensure that its fundraising function continued to work properly, to look for new funding partners and to enhance the use of its Innovation Accelerator programme to source, support and scale potential solutions for further savings. Members stressed the importance of being innovative, of private sector, South-South and triangular cooperation and of finding other solutions and partnerships to make up for resource scarcity.
26. Some members asked for more information about the criteria for prioritizing beneficiaries and cutting rations; contingency planning; the expected number of beneficiaries in 2024; and progress in the country office support model optimization and simplification (COSMOS) initiative.
27. In relation to the reorganization stemming from the structural review, several members were concerned about staff morale and rights, stressing the need for WFP employment contracts to be respected and for management to take pains to ensure that staff understood the situation. One member expressed concern about the impact on the junior professional officers programme and future talent retention. Another member said that it would be difficult for WFP to rebuild, in future, the human capital that it was losing at present. Several members requested further information on the hiring freeze. In addition, it was requested that the subsequent update for the Board include comprehensive information on the effect of the current exercise on the size and composition of WFP staff body; the key functionalities of the new divisions and how the new structure would facilitate improvements in agility, coordination and accountability and reduce duplication. Some members asked if a future increase in funding would have any impact on decisions taken about the new structure.
28. One member asked when the new structure would deliver results and sought more insight into how WFP would measure the success of the exercise, suggesting that indicators should be informed by lessons learned and could cover areas such as business processes, funding, PSA savings, internal and external engagement and oversight. He also proposed an independent evaluation of the restructuring.
29. In response to Board questions and comments, WFP management recalled that the organization review had been launched almost a year previously and was not being carried out in response to the current funding situation. WFP was committed to transparency and consultation and was sharply focused on emergency response activities; the reassurance action plan was a top priority that remained well-funded for the foreseeable future.
30. The hiring freeze had been introduced to take stock of the recruitment processes under way across the various contract types. Exceptions to the freeze were granted based on the critical nature of the job; whether it could be fulfilled by existing staff; the funding availability and type; the composition of the surrounding team; and opportunities for internal reassignment at a later stage. About 500 requests for exceptions had been received and 265 granted.
31. COSMOS remained an important pilot project, and WFP planned to use the lessons learned when revising the original configuration. Slight changes to the model were being tested, including greater delegation of authority to regional directors.
32. WFP would work on a baseline and key performance indicators to measure the success of the new organizational structure. Taking note of the proposal for an independent evaluation of the restructuring, management said that a couple of years would be needed for the new structure to mature. In the future, instead of a restructuring exercise every 10 years or so, it was recommended that WFP take stock every year, looking at the challenges moving ahead, updating its vision and working on the areas that need reinforcement or less investment.

Operational matters

Oral global overview on humanitarian needs and operational concerns and priorities

33. The Deputy Executive Director warned that the gap between humanitarian needs and available resources continued to grow. In response, WFP was following three approaches set out by the Executive Director: protect, grow and diversify funding and partnerships; enhance efficiency and effectiveness; and, while leading on emergencies, strengthen WFP's contribution to halting and reversing the rise in humanitarian needs.
34. WFP was operating in increasingly complex political environments, with shrinking humanitarian space. Despite the challenges, WFP aimed to stay and deliver, as it had in the most complex emergency operations. However, insecurity and operational constraints related to conflict and criminality were major concerns, impeding operations particularly in northern Gaza, Haiti, Myanmar and Sudan. The withdrawal of United Nations peacekeeping missions in several African countries was also creating new challenges in terms of insecurity. Additional complexities that posed challenges to WFP included barriers to access, administrative impediments and other operational constraints. To address these, WFP had established cross-border operations and diversified entry points for assistance, utilized community engagement for access strategies and explored all possible ways to stay and deliver.
35. WFP had been forced to introduce cuts in nearly all large operations, including in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, and had experienced major pipeline breaks in some of its largest operations, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Therefore, WFP had prioritized the greatest needs and the most vulnerable people through improved targeting while ensuring programme quality and protecting its operational integrity. Despite all these efforts, however, cuts in assistance were having real implications for people and operations and were eroding gains made in resilience, poverty reduction and school attendance by girls, as well as damaging the food and nutrition security of vulnerable adults and children.
36. The organization retained a strong focus on solutions such as resilience programming and anticipatory action, a cost-effective way of reducing the impact of shocks and accelerating response times, which had been deployed in many countries such as Bangladesh, Chad, Guatemala and the Sahel.
37. Board members thanked WFP for all its work to save lives and change lives. There was widespread concern at the increasing number of people in dire need and the funding shortfall. Several members described poverty and inequality as the largest drivers of chronic hunger and armed conflict as the biggest cause of acute hunger.
38. Commending the commitment of WFP and other humanitarian actors to delivering principled humanitarian assistance in very challenging circumstances, Board members underscored the importance of respecting international humanitarian law, including to ensure the safety of humanitarian staff. Several members expressed deep concern at the situation in Gaza, with one calling for a humanitarian ceasefire to ensure full unhindered access to people in need.
39. WFP's ongoing diplomacy to solve access challenges in many contexts was appreciated, as were its efforts to mobilize additional funding through partnership diversification; donors were called upon to increase their contributions where possible, particularly in support of anticipatory action.
40. On prioritization, one Board member asked for more details, including on how WFP would ensure that funding was used as effectively and efficiently as possible. WFP was encouraged to standardize its vulnerability criteria to ensure comparability between prioritization decisions across its operations, taking an evidence-based and principled approach. Another member – welcoming WFP's efforts to ensure safe and accessible assistance, accountability

to affected populations and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse – encouraged WFP to ensure that such efforts were sufficiently resourced and informed by technical expertise and data-driven risk assessments.

41. Reforms undertaken to mitigate aid diversion, including through the global reassurance action plan, were appreciated, as were efforts to ensure proactive transparency and accountability. One Board member asked WFP to maintain a focus on the quality of its programming, including by developing the promised global reassurance framework, with continued work on strengthening oversight, monitoring, risk management and a culture of learning and collaborative change.
42. Referring to the organization structural review, some members welcomed efforts to make WFP better able to function in the new reality. One member stressed the importance of WFP maintaining its core ability to rapidly respond to emergencies but encouraged it to hone its resilience portfolio where it added clear value.
43. On the issue of funding, the Assistant Executive Director for Partnerships and Innovation clarified that WFP's operational needs for 2024 amounted to USD 21 billion. While the organization would strive to mobilize this amount, contributions received to date were in the region of just USD 1 billion.

Regional overviews

Latin America and the Caribbean portfolio

44. The Regional Director said that throughout 2023, WFP had sought to diversify cooperation and strategic alliances with governments, regional authorities, international organizations, regional and international development banks and the private sector. Those partnerships had involved, for example, generating evidence for decision making; developing a platform to monitor food security in real time; providing employment opportunities and home-grown school feeding initiatives; and establishing and managing strategic food resources. There had also been an increase in funding from the private sector.
45. WFP was also pursuing work on supply chains, innovative finance, including climate-risk finance and anticipatory action, including in relation to the effects of El Niño, and responding to rising numbers of people on the move across countries in the region. It continued to facilitate South–South and triangular cooperation, including with the centres of excellence in Brazil and China.
46. Despite many achievements, the region had experienced slow economic growth in 2023, hampering efforts to address social issues and challenges related to climate change and irregular migration. Internally, insufficient resources had forced WFP to scale back and prioritize its operations. Ecuador and Haiti were current priorities, given the catastrophic impact of violence in those countries on food security.
47. Board members applauded the work of WFP in the region despite the challenges faced. They welcomed its focus on anticipatory action, the strengthening of livelihoods and community resilience, strategic partnerships, innovation and South–South and triangular cooperation. One member, supported by others, said that the region was an excellent laboratory for developing models that could be reproduced in other regions.
48. Members expressed dismay at rising food insecurity, driven by violence, displacement, migration, climate change and the impact of El Niño. There was a call to redouble efforts to address funding gaps, which threatened progress made in the region, with several members appealing to donor governments to increase their support. Particular concern was voiced at the deepening crisis in Haiti, including access difficulties faced by WFP staff and the impact of the prioritization of assistance due to insufficient funding.

49. Commending WFP for enhancing its internal systems, one Board member highlighted the attention given in Colombia to tracking and communicating instances of fraud, waste and abuse. She encouraged increased transparency in the reporting of suspected or actual programme irregularities. She also appreciated WFP's continued efforts to ensure that assistance reached the most vulnerable populations through the use of clear targeting criteria.
50. Focusing on the future direction of operations in the region, Board members encouraged WFP to continue to expand and build partnerships in social protection; build resilience, focusing on collaboration based on its comparative advantages; engage in national capacity-building to help countries deal with future crises; and expand South-South and triangular cooperation. They also encouraged WFP to pursue collaboration with financial institutions, foundations, the private sector and other donors.
51. Thanking Board members for their comments and support, the Regional Director emphasized the preventative aspect of WFP in striving to ensure that the region did not require more humanitarian assistance in the future, particularly its work on anticipatory action. In Haiti, WFP was firmly committed to continuing its work despite the complex operating environment. On PSEA raised by one Board member, the Regional Director said that WFP was continuing to strengthen monitoring of its activities in this area, keeping the membership fully informed through regular updates.

Western Africa portfolio

52. The Regional Director ad interim warned that food security and nutrition needs in Western Africa were continuing to escalate. The region was also experiencing one of the fastest-growing forced displacement crises in the world, caused by the combined effects of conflict, high food prices and climate change. Humanitarian access had become extremely complex in many areas, but WFP – often the only organization in hard-to-reach locations – remained present, adapting its operations to keep providing populations with a lifeline. Further advocacy and diplomacy, however, were urgently needed for certain operations to continue.
53. At the same time, WFP was striving for greater efficiency and effectiveness, rolling out reassurance plans, strengthening community feedback mechanisms, risk-based monitoring and commodity management and digitalizing in-kind distributions.
54. Owing to the funding shortfall, the largest operations – Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria – had had to revise their 2024 objectives and prioritize the people worst affected by food insecurity and malnutrition. Despite prioritization, crisis response operations were underfunded and pipeline breaks imminent, which called for partners to step up and remain engaged. WFP was pursuing efforts to diversify its funding base, including through the private sector and innovative financing.
55. While saving lives was crucial, emergency operations were not financially sustainable, nor did they reduce needs over time. It was therefore also necessary to support government systems and strengthen community resilience to shocks to reduce humanitarian needs. WFP, with a coalition of partners, was focusing on social protection systems, promoting linkages with anticipatory action, home-grown school feeding, and climate-resilient food systems with a particular focus on land restoration and water to support communities' and refugees' resilience and self-sufficiency. WFP was also leveraging local procurement, strengthening local food systems.
56. Many Board members thanked WFP for its critical life-saving work in the region in challenging conditions. They expressed concern about the high levels of food insecurity and displacement, highlighting the situations in Burkina Faso and the Sahel as well as issues such as waning funding and access challenges owing to conflict and instability. Several members

commended WFP for its operational flexibility, including its airlifting of food to blockaded areas. Members nevertheless acknowledged the need for diplomatic interventions to overcome some of the hurdles.

57. One member encouraged WFP to continue to prioritize its assistance based on vulnerability-based criteria, with food baskets tailored to specific needs in both crisis response and lean season support, including for displaced people in the Lake Chad Basin.
58. Reference was made to the need to increase people's resilience in order to reduce future humanitarian needs. One member highlighted the work of WFP's Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme and the benefits of its multi-partnership approach, which fostered enhanced coordination and synergies among partners. Several members also stressed the importance of science and innovation in optimizing sustainable agricultural practices and supporting rural economic transformation. They called for greater emphasis on cultivating crops native to the region, which were more resilient and nutritious, and described the importance of supporting smallholder farmers to build local capacity and strengthen climate resilience. One observer welcomed the progress on localization achieved in many countries. Several members commended the school feeding programmes, which had not only encouraged daily school attendance and promoted good health in children, but also improved the livelihoods of food producers.
59. The Regional Director ad interim thanked Board members for their support and guidance.

Southern Africa portfolio

60. The Regional Director said that Southern Africa faced the triple challenge of conflict, climate crises and a cholera epidemic. As a result of those challenges, and the region's deep-rooted structural problems such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, malnutrition, dependency on rainfed agriculture, and environmental degradation, 44 million people were facing food emergency.
61. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the corporate scale-up response launched in June 2023 had enabled WFP to triple the number of beneficiaries reached from 400,000 in May 2023 to 1.3 million in February 2024. The general election in December 2023 had been relatively peaceful, but the situation in eastern parts of the country continued to deteriorate, causing the internal displacement of an additional 1 million people since the start of 2024 and cutting off essential supply routes to Goma. The imminent withdrawal of the United Nations peacekeeping force from South Kivu was a cause for concern, but the international community was seeking a peaceful settlement of the conflict.
62. In Mozambique, conflict in Cabo Delgado had displaced 900,000 people and left 3.3 million unable to meet their food and nutrition needs. Following an upsurge in violence at the start of 2024, WFP had switched from status- to vulnerability-based targeting, prioritizing the areas with the highest numbers of returnees.
63. Throughout the region, the effects of climate change and extreme weather events, exacerbated by an ongoing El Niño event, were expected to have severe impacts on maize yields, hastening the start of the next lean season in many countries. WFP and its partners were planning an early lean season response.
64. In the eight Southern African countries affected by the cholera epidemic, WFP was engaged in government-led response efforts and planned to provide assistance in supply chain management and health education, using existing school-based and other programmes.
65. WFP's resilience building work in the region included the rapid rural transformation programme in southern Madagascar, which was having positive effects for food and nutrition security, small businesses and the incomes of smallholder farmers. WFP and governments were rolling out the programme to other countries.

66. Recent efforts to mobilize resources and widen the donor base included expanding WFP's partnerships with international financial institutions; funding from those institutions had doubled from USD 22.2 million in 2022 to USD 46.5 million in 2023. In 2024, the regional bureau aimed to increase that amount further and to expand its use of innovative financing mechanisms such as blended finance, climate finance and debt swap instruments.
67. Country offices in the region were making steady progress in implementing the global assurance framework, particularly in the four high-risk countries – the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe – which had costed implementation plans for strengthened targeting, identity management, supply chains, partner management, monitoring and community feedback mechanisms.
68. Board members thanked the Regional Director and his teams for their work in the region, which they said was well aligned with national and regional development plans and priorities. In particular, they welcomed WFP's work on building the resilience of smallholder farmers, including through the rapid rural transformation programme, the development of hydroponics and initiatives aimed at strengthening farmers' capacities in climate-smart agriculture, water management, animal husbandry and infrastructure development. They encouraged WFP to increase its use of anticipatory action and its efforts to mobilize innovative financing, including climate financing.
69. Expressing their governments' commitment to continuing to work with WFP and its cooperating partners, Board members urged the international community to help alleviate the challenges in the region.
70. The Regional Director thanked Board members, national governments, development partners and local communities for their support.

Asia and the Pacific portfolio

71. Following a video showing the positive effects of WFP's programmes for women in Afghanistan, the Regional Director updated the Board on WFP's work in Asia and the Pacific, where the organization had directly assisted 31 million people in 2023 despite having had to reduce or cut many of its programmes because of funding shortfalls.
72. In Myanmar, an upsurge in conflict had displaced an additional 650,000 people, halted humanitarian operations in key areas and was threatening to push more people to flee into Bangladesh. Since the military takeover of 2021, the number of people in urgent need of humanitarian support had increased from 1 million to 18.6 million – one third of the population. International action was needed to deliver a political solution and improved humanitarian access; WFP's national staff were risking their lives to deliver assistance, and some had had to flee within the country as fighting intensified.
73. In Bangladesh, increased funding from donors had enabled WFP to increase the entitlement of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazaar from USD 8 per person per month to USD 10 – an amount that remained 20 percent below the recommended minimum. WFP was preparing to provide fortified rice for the 30,000 Rohingya refugees living on Bhasan Char island, along with fresh food vouchers for selected vulnerable households.
74. In Afghanistan, WFP had reached 19 million people in 2023, 80 percent of whom were women and children; 37,000 women had benefited from economic empowerment programmes, and the school feeding programme had reached 1.5 million children and included take-home vegetable oil rations for primary school girls. Despite restrictions on the employment of women, WFP still employed 230 women and was encouraging its partners to retain their female staff and ensure that women were increasingly present at distribution sites.

75. Among WFP's work in less fragile states in the region was the country strategic plan (CSP) for Cambodia, which supported national programmes aimed at enabling Cambodia to become an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and included home-grown school feeding and the development of a national shock-responsive social protection framework.
76. Board members commended WFP's work in the region, which faced a wide diversity of challenges and social and geographical conditions. Concerned about the high levels of food insecurity, they called for enhanced cooperation among humanitarian actors, including through South-South and triangular cooperation, and more flexible, predictable and multi-year funding to address the complex and protracted challenges.
77. Acknowledging WFP's efforts to strike the right balance between saving lives and changing lives, Board members welcomed the focus on saving lives and recommended that work on changing lives be tailored to local circumstances, centred on the needs of smallholder farmers and women, and focused on the strengthening of national social protection systems, resilience building, anticipatory action, the development of climate-smart agriculture, access to financing and risk mitigation instruments, and the use of new technologies.
78. Board members urged WFP to base its prioritization of beneficiary groups and initiatives on evidence and lessons learned. In Afghanistan, overcoming the barriers to women's engagement in WFP's programmes, employment and society should be a priority and should include the direct employment of women, negotiations with local authorities, and post-distribution monitoring to verify that assistance reached women. Board members welcomed the joint response plan for Rohingya refugees, led by the Government of Bangladesh and supported by WFP, and commended WFP's creative solutions for addressing the needs of refugees with no opportunities for income generation on Bhasan Char island.
79. One Board member mentioned their country's partnership with WFP in bolstering disaster preparedness and response in the Philippines, and one observer welcomed the strong engagement of WFP in school feeding programmes in the region.
80. The Regional Director took note of the comments and suggestions put forward by Board members and thanked them for their support.

Eastern Africa portfolio

81. The number of acutely food-insecure people in Eastern Africa had declined from 82 million in 2022 to 63 million by end of 2023, reaching 58 million in the first quarter of 2024. However, the Regional Director warned that this improvement did not mean that people were safe and the number could rise again owing to conflict and natural disasters. Meanwhile, funding cuts had forced WFP to reduce its beneficiary numbers by a third and its rations by up to 70 percent.
82. The conflict in the Sudan was creating the largest catastrophe in the world, with the number of acutely food-insecure people expected to rise from the current 18 million to at least 25 million in the lean season. Almost a quarter of the population was displaced, with many refugees entering South Sudan, where 70 percent of the population was already in need of humanitarian assistance. The Regional Director called on the international community to engage in diplomatic efforts to help bring the conflict in the Sudan to an end.
83. In Ethiopia, the implementation of WFP's reassurance action plan was helping to rebuild partners' trust in WFP following the recent case of food diversion. The number of people in need of food assistance had declined from 20 million to an estimated 16 million, but drought had hit northern areas of the country, and funding gaps prevented WFP and its partners from implementing the necessary scale-up of their response.

84. WFP continued to work with partners to address concerns about aid diversion in Somalia, where overall needs had declined but persistent security challenges and vulnerability to climate change required continued investments in resilience building.
85. Crises throughout the region had led to record numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons, many of whom had been living in camps for more than 20 years. While WFP was unable to meet the food requirements of these vulnerable people, it was supporting many governments in the region as they started to integrate refugees into host communities. The Regional Director would brief the Board on those efforts at a future meeting.
86. In closing, the Regional Director appealed to the international community for greater attention and support for WFP's work in the region, particularly in the Sudan.
87. Expressing their deep concern about the humanitarian crises in the region, Board members echoed the Regional Director's appeal for increased funding from donors, commended WFP staff for their work in an increasingly complex environment and expressed their countries' willingness to engage in international efforts to solve the political crisis in the Sudan.
88. Board members welcomed WFP's attention for the crisis in South Sudan, which had the potential to spill over into other countries. They expressed appreciation for WFP's work on addressing the risk of aid diversion in Ethiopia and Somalia. One member mentioned the Houthis' attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, highlighting a need for international efforts to protect maritime security and global supply routes.
89. Many Board members emphasized the need to build resilience and food systems in the region, including through research and the promotion of resilient and high-yielding food crops, smart agricultural practices and new technologies, and school-based programmes. They welcomed the establishment of an Eastern Africa regional network for the School Meals Coalition.
90. Regarding the reassurance action plan, Board members encouraged WFP to continue enhancing prioritization and partnership, strengthening monitoring and the capacities of local partners, and providing updates on its implementation of the plan.
91. The Regional Director thanked Board members for their feedback and confirmed that WFP was exploring all possible routes for humanitarian access into the Sudan, including those from Chad and South Sudan.

Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe portfolio

92. The Regional Director said that 43 million people in the region were food insecure and that the conflict in Gaza was negatively impacting the economies of neighbouring Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon. While needs soared, WFP faced a 40 percent drop in funding compared with 2023, forcing it to reduce the level of assistance it provided, the number of people it assisted or both. Implementation of the reassurance action plan remained a priority in the region.
93. In Gaza, 500,000 people faced catastrophic food insecurity, with a risk of famine in the coming months. Due to security issues, WFP had had to temporarily pause deliveries of assistance in northern Gaza, where needs were greatest. By end of January WFP had reached 1.4 million people in Gaza; however, a step change was needed to bring food in at the scale needed.
94. In the Syrian Arab Republic, due to funding shortfalls, WFP had only been able to reach 1 million of the 3 million severely food-insecure people.
95. In November, WFP had paused its food distributions for 9.5 million people in Yemen due to a lack of resources, lack of agreement with the authorities on reducing the programme and a pending retargeting exercise. A technical agreement had since been reached on reducing

- beneficiary numbers and improving targeting, but WFP urgently required USD 355 million to resume operations.
96. In Ukraine, WFP focused on complementing government programmes and supporting the local private sector. Progress was being made in a joint demining initiative with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Government of Switzerland, which sought to enable households to resume agricultural production and thereby improve food security.
 97. In closing, the Regional Director appealed for the Board's help in raising funds, securing access and engaging in advocacy at the political level.
 98. Board members commended WFP staff for their work in the region and paid tribute to humanitarian workers who had lost their lives. They welcomed WFP's implementation of the reassurance action plan, saying that the challenging security and operational environment made assurance measures more important than ever.
 99. Board members said that the priority in Gaza was to increase the flow of humanitarian aid and goods by overcoming bureaucratic barriers, improving logistics and ensuring the safety of civilian populations and humanitarian workers. Several members expressed their countries' willingness to contribute to such efforts.
 100. A number of Board members mentioned the impact that the conflict in Ukraine was having on global food supplies, and several urged the international community to support the efforts of WFP and its partners in the country.
 101. Welcoming WFP's efforts to adjust the numbers of beneficiaries it planned to reach in Yemen in line with the available resources, Board members encouraged WFP to continue strengthening the evidence base on needs and advocating additional resources, including by reporting on the impact of funding gaps and pipeline breaks. Calling for international action to address the challenges in Yemen, one Board member said that independent targeting, unimpeded access and the safety of staff were essential.
 102. While countries facing conflict and major humanitarian crisis attracted international attention, one Board member said that it was important not to forget other parts of the region. A number of members emphasized the value of resilience-building activities such as the provision of support for smallholder farmers, the use of local procurement for WFP operations and the implementation of preventive measures and anticipatory action, including in collaboration with partners.
 103. The Regional Director thanked Board members for their messages of support, which she would pass on to the teams on the ground.

Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe portfolio

2024/EB.1/2 Republic of Moldova interim country strategic plan (2024–2026)

104. The Country Director presented the interim CSP (ICSP) for 2024–2026, which followed two years of WFP's engagement in the Republic of Moldova assisting Ukrainian refugees and vulnerable Moldovan households. The aims of the ICSP included supporting vulnerable people through the national social protection system; providing the Government and partners with technical assistance on beneficiary management, digitalization and cash-based transfers; accelerating the integration of refugees into Moldovan society and systems and promoting social cohesion; maintaining the capacity to respond rapidly to any increase in humanitarian needs; and contributing to the Republic of Moldova's trajectory towards membership of the European Union.
105. Commending WFP for its achievements in the Republic of Moldova, Board members welcomed the ICSP and its focus on meeting the needs of both Ukrainian refugees and

- vulnerable Moldovan households; strengthening national capacities and systems through the provision of technical assistance to the Government; and ensuring the inclusion and protection of, and accountability to, vulnerable population groups such as women, older people, persons with disabilities, young people and the members of minority groups – one member expressed their country's appreciation of WFP's leadership in that area.
106. Given the challenging funding environment, Board members also expressed their support for WFP's efforts to prioritize its portfolio; enhance its systems for the vulnerability-based targeting of beneficiaries and the collection and analysis of data disaggregated by sex, age and disability; build strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, including through its engagement in the regional refugee response plan; ensure adequate oversight of its partners and interventions; and plan the shift from the delivery of emergency response to the strengthening of national social protection systems.
 107. Applauding WFP's ability to engage effectively in a shifting political landscape and its use of contingency planning to facilitate a rapid response should large numbers of additional refugees arrive in the Republic of Moldova, Board members encouraged WFP to collaborate with the Government, the United Nations system and civil society organizations on supporting the ongoing reforms of the Republic of Moldova's social protection, food security and crisis management frameworks.
 108. Board members commended the Government and people of the Republic of Moldova for their solidarity with the 1 million Ukrainian refugees in the country – the highest number per capita of any country – and expressed their countries' commitment to supporting the Republic of Moldova and WFP's work in that country.
 109. The Country Director thanked Board members for their words of support and looked forward to continued collaboration with them.
 110. Following the Board's approval of the ICSP, H.E. Alexei Buzu, the Republic of Moldova's Minister of Labour and Social Protection, took the floor to express his Government's pride in its work with WFP and its commitment to maintaining that collaboration, including in implementing the ongoing reforms.

Latin America and the Caribbean portfolio

Report on the field visit of the WFP Executive Board

111. The Ambassador of Poland gave a presentation on the field visit undertaken by a delegation of five Executive Board members to Guatemala and Honduras from 26 November to 2 December 2023. In each country, the members had been given the opportunity to see first-hand WFP's support for national social protection programming; all aspects of WFP programming and programme delivery; the steps taken in anticipation of crises, particularly those related to the climate; and the challenges faced by beneficiaries and those engaged in the delivery of services. The Board members had also observed innovative activities involving cash-based transfers, livelihood projects and school meals programmes. They had met with representatives of government ministries in both countries and, in Guatemala, with Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Resident Coordinator.
112. Several Board members underlined the excellent work being done by WFP in both countries, with some applauding in particular the activities carried out with other United Nations organizations in the Dry Corridor. One Board member said that the visit had allowed him to witness the deep commitment of WFP in both countries. An observer underscored the importance of such field visits, as they gave Board members the opportunity to appreciate what was happening on the ground. Another member, thanking WFP, those who had organized the visit and the populations who had welcomed the visitors, said that the visit

had made it clearer than ever that the Board needed to fight to ensure that more resources were available to WFP.

113. Describing WFP as a strategic partner in Guatemala, the representative of that country said that the visit had also revealed scope for strengthening WFP's cooperation and coordination with other actors in support of a comprehensive approach to creating more resilient food systems and building capacity for adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

Western Africa portfolio

2024/EB.1/3 Chad country strategic plan (2024–2028)

114. Introducing the CSP, the Country Director noted that it incorporated key recommendations from the evaluation of the previous plan and was based on broad consultations with the Government, donors, civil society and affected communities. The plan comprised four key elements: an effective humanitarian response; the building of community resilience; the expansion of the school feeding programme and the strengthening of food systems; and evidence generation and the promotion of inclusion, protection, transformative approaches and women's empowerment. WFP would also continue to provide humanitarian logistics support, such as air services.
115. Board members voiced concern at the food security and humanitarian situation in Chad and called for collective efforts and resources to address the complex challenges facing the country. One Board member applauded efforts to transition from emergency response to longer-term resilience building, while others recommended that WFP focus on emergency response and strive to prevent reductions in rations or beneficiary numbers. One Board member sought additional information on WFP's prioritization strategy and measures taken to prevent or mitigate reductions in operations; she also recommended the inclusion of specific information on the implementation, measures and costs of the reassurance action plan in the CSP.
116. Given the ambition to implement anticipatory action where feasible and to support resilience, an observer asked about WFP's capacity to secure the additional staff and resources required. A Board member stressed the importance of WFP commissioning independent evaluations of resilience projects in Chad to incorporate learning into the proposed ambitious scale-up. Another encouraged WFP to continue implementing the reassurance action plan in Chad to establish effective monitoring and surveillance mechanisms. Additional details were sought on risk mitigation strategies.
117. Board members welcomed the expansion of the school feeding programme and requested more information on its impact and value for money. One Board member asked how WFP would implement Chad's national adaptation policy in its programming.
118. Board members appreciated continuing efforts to integrate age, gender, disability and diversity inclusion in WFP operations. One observer encouraged WFP to include more interventions to support people with disabilities in the CSP, while a Board member sought details of how WFP planned to implement and monitor activities related to inclusion and requested regular updates on this issue.
119. Board members recommended that WFP enhance its partnerships with other United Nations agencies and stakeholders, including with the Government to boost coordination and collaboration at the national level. One Board member requested more details of WFP's partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for CSP outcome 2.
120. In response to these comments, the Country Director described WFP's urgent funding needs in Chad, which had grown in response to the multiple ongoing emergencies affecting the Chadian population and refugees from various neighbouring countries. WFP remained

engaged in resilience-building initiatives and welcomed positive developments in relation to the legal status of refugees, land access, donor support and assistance from the Changing Lives Transformation Fund. Emphasizing its commitment to prioritizing life-saving assistance, WFP expressed readiness to scale up emergency response efforts, notwithstanding challenges including a lack of financial partners for the implementation of cash transfers. Inclusion would remain a key strategic focus for WFP as would partnerships, particularly with UNICEF for nutrition initiatives.

121. In closing, the Country Director expressed grave concern at the urgent situation of vulnerable populations along Chad's borders, who had not received any assistance since April 2023. Urgent action was critical to ensuring that assistance reached them before the start of the rainy season, which was forecast to bring devastation to these areas. Timely assistance was vital not only for those in Darfur but also to prevent additional influxes of refugees into Chad.
122. Following the approval of the CSP, Her Excellency Saintha Ndem Ngoidi, Secretary of State, Ministry of Economy, Planning and International Cooperation of Chad, said that she was proud of the inclusive consultative process that had shaped the CSP. She believed that the plan would effectively address the significant humanitarian and development challenges facing her country.

2024/EB.1/4 Gambia country strategic plan (2024–2028)

123. Introducing the CSP, the Country Director explained that its design had been informed by consultations with national stakeholders, lessons learned during implementation of the previous CSP and insights from the CSP evaluation. Through the new plan, WFP planned to reinforce its approach to food systems, which was based on the home-grown school meals programme; improve programme quality and efficiency by promoting community ownership in the school meals programme; further integrate women's empowerment, nutrition-sensitive programming and climate-change adaptation into its work; and improve the planning and delivery of technical support.
124. Board members expressed their support for the CSP, in particular, the integrated approach to school feeding to address health and nutrition, improve school attendance, promote gender equality and increase resilience to socioeconomic shocks. One member welcomed the emphasis on emergency preparedness in relation to the effects of climate change and WFP's commitment to localization, such as through the promotion of national ownership of the school feeding programme.
125. Two members appreciated the attention to gender equality, disability inclusion and accountability to affected populations; one observer called for increased efforts in the areas of gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women and girls. More information was requested on how WFP intended to reduce the risk of gender based violence and raise awareness thereof among beneficiaries.
126. One member, acknowledging the funding shortfall, appreciated WFP efforts to attract funding from international financial institutions and multilateral donors.
127. Several members highlighted ways in which WFP could optimize the impact of the CSP, such as by taking a proactive approach to the risks posed by natural catastrophes and focusing more on youth development and cooperation with the local communities. One observer expressed concern at the relatively small portion of the budget allocated to food crises.
128. In response, management confirmed that WFP was working on improving its activities in relation to young people and local communities and on localization. It had increased its budget for responding to gender issues and intended to improve its community feedback mechanism and strengthen monitoring and evaluation. Working in close collaboration with

the Government at all levels, WFP would use the country's social protection systems – which had proven to be shock responsive and robust – in its crisis response operations.

129. Following approval of the CSP, Her Excellency Claudiana A. Cole, Minister of Basic and Secondary Education of the Gambia, thanked WFP for its unwavering support. The partnership between WFP and the Government was key in combatting food insecurity and a testament to the power of international cooperation.

2024/EB.1/5 Mauritania country strategic plan (2024–2028)

130. Introducing the CSP, the Country Director said that while maintaining its focus on addressing humanitarian needs, WFP would continue its transition to an enabling role in Mauritania, supporting government systems in domains such as social protection, school meals and food systems. The CSP aimed to improve resilience by addressing chronic food and nutrition insecurity and bolstering communities' ability to withstand climate-related shocks. To optimize efficiency and effectiveness, WFP would employ various financial instruments and slowly transfer the lean season response to the national social protection system. It aimed to use cash transfers where markets were functional and sought to increase financial inclusion, particularly for women. Diverse partnerships would be key to implementation success.
131. Several Board members and observers voiced concern at the levels of food insecurity in Mauritania affecting both local populations and refugees from Mali. Many members commended the CSP for its gradual transition from direct implementation to capacity strengthening. Several observers welcomed the combination of cash and in-kind assistance, with cash transfers being prioritized where markets were viable and gradually scaled up. One Board member, praising WFP's work on vulnerability-based targeting, requested more information on WFP's cooperation with the national food security commission in relation to refugees.
132. Several observers asked whether the greater budgetary focus on crisis response would enable WFP to achieve its resilience goals and sought to understand how it would ensure that the funding of emergency response did not divert resources away from resilience building.
133. A Board member and some observers welcomed investments in gender mainstreaming and encouraged WFP to incorporate feedback from and enhance partnerships with women, refugees and people with disabilities during CSP implementation. WFP was also encouraged to strengthen synergies with other organizations, including United Nations partners. One member offered to share the development experience of his Government as part of South–South and triangular cooperation.
134. Another member appreciated WFP's support to the Government on school feeding and asked for more information on the piloting of a decentralized approach to food procurement. Some observers requested additional information on planned measures to mitigate potential disruptions in food supply chains.
135. Responding to these comments, management explained that emergency assistance and resilience building were funded through different funding streams and partners, so there was little risk of development funding being used to cover emergency needs. As of 2023, 70 percent of WFP assistance was provided via cash and this prioritization would continue. WFP would continue to employ a vulnerability-based targeting process for refugees, the most vulnerable of whom had now been included in the national social registry and received government social services.
136. WFP stressed its important partnerships with the World Bank on social protection and with UNICEF on integrated resilience. It was also leading the national social protection working group.

137. Following the approval of the CSP, Ms Fatimetou Mahfoudh Ould Khattrey, Commissioner of the Food Security Commission of Mauritania, welcomed the exemplary cooperation between her Government and WFP, which was key to achieving common objectives, such as the establishment of a sustainable national social protection system.

Southern Africa portfolio

2024/EB.1/6 Madagascar country strategic plan (2024–2028), including evaluation findings, recommendations and management response from item 5 a) 2)

138. Presenting the results of the evaluation, the Director of Evaluation noted that the previous CSP for Madagascar had been well aligned with national priorities and had delivered positive results in relation to nutrition, infrastructure rehabilitation and school attendance. Expanded use of cash-based transfers and the localization of partnerships had improved operational efficiency. Scope for improvement had been identified in areas such as gender analysis, integration between CSP outcomes, investment in evidence generation including joint assessments, funding for emergency preparedness, and partnerships at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.
139. The Country Director presented the new CSP, which responded to the evaluation recommendations and reflected national priorities and the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework. Through enhanced inter-agency cooperation and a humanitarian–development nexus approach, the CSP would ensure that WFP maintained a robust emergency response capacity while increasing its resilience programming, including through a climate-sensitive approach to the food value chain and support for food systems to increase the availability, use and diversification of nutritious foods. There would be more investment and capacity strengthening in disaster preparedness, anticipatory action and social protection and greater emphasis on gender equality, environmental sustainability and efforts to broaden the donor base.
140. Board members welcomed the new CSP and the broad in-depth consultations that had informed it. Several members highlighted the increase of the budget for promoting resilience building and reinforcing the social security system. One member welcomed the better coordination of early warning and anticipatory action with national systems, noting that warnings issued by the authorities were the most effective. Several members also said that they supported the plan to prioritize life-saving assistance in the event of funding shortfalls.
141. Some Board members were concerned that agricultural expansion would place pressure on forests and stressed the importance of integrated natural resource management. One said that the Rapid Rural Transformation initiative would reduce the time women spent looking for water, which would be a huge step forward in their empowerment.
142. Several members encouraged WFP to expand the school meals programme to other vulnerable groups. One member highlighted the strong focus on nutrition, including the use of nutrient-dense foods, and requested more information on how WFP would support implementation of the new World Health Organization guidelines on the prevention and management of wasting.
143. Several members welcomed the CSP monitoring and evaluation plans. Voicing concern about the result of the country office audit, one member applauded the inclusion of Madagascar as a high-risk country in the reassurance action plan as a means of strengthening oversight.
144. Several members stressed the need to promote synergies with complementary interventions by other organizations, including other United Nations agencies. One

supported plans to increase the Government's ability to respond to climate-related disasters and improve community resilience.

145. Responding to the comments, WFP management said that a clear action plan was in place to respond to the five recommendations of the audit report. In terms of monitoring, WFP was shifting from paper to digital beneficiary lists. It also ran a call centre for beneficiary feedback. The Rapid Rural Transformation initiative was considered a very promising initiative and was eliciting interest from other WFP country offices. Madagascar had been selected as one of the first five countries to implement the new World Health Organization guidelines, and WFP would provide support. It was a clear priority for United Nations agencies to work together, especially when resources were insufficient. WFP was also pursuing cooperation with development banks as part of its fundraising efforts.
146. Following approval of the CSP, Ms Fanja Raharinomena, Secretary General, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Madagascar, said that the plan was an essential tool that could help to catalyse investment for the Government's development priorities.

Eastern Africa portfolio

2024/EB.1/7 Burundi country strategic plan (2024–2027)

147. Presenting the CSP, the Country Director explained that, in alignment with national priorities, the new plan sought to strengthen work at the nexus between humanitarian response, social protection, food systems and resilience building through a highly integrated approach. While emergency response would remain central, including through the provision of humanitarian logistics services, WFP also planned to create a coalition of stakeholders to expand the home-grown school feeding programme, continue government engagement for national capacity strengthening and work with the Government, partners and donors to identify durable solutions for refugees and returnees.
148. Board members welcomed the CSP, noting its dual focus on responding to immediate food needs and strengthening resilience in line with national objectives. Several appreciated the varied consultations that informed the development of the CSP. One member applauded the increased integration of strategic outcomes and supported the co-location of activities in the most food-insecure districts. While she welcomed plans to complement WFP activities with partners' interventions, she sought reassurance that there would be no duplication.
149. The importance of the school feeding programme was highlighted. One Board member described it as the most efficient way to scale up WFP activities in Burundi as it could be extended to all vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. The same member encouraged WFP to stimulate food production in the country and increase technical support for smallholder farmers, the agribusiness sector and markets. He also requested more detailed information, in future, on the impact of countries' landlocked status on their food security.
150. WFP's community feedback mechanisms and its efforts to mainstream disability inclusion were welcomed, and WFP was encouraged to continue working on gender equality. Noting that the CSP proposed to strengthen South-South and triangular cooperation, one Board member offered to share the experience of his government.
151. Several members and an observer were concerned by the lack of resources to implement the CSP, especially given a recent WFP decision to reduce food aid for refugees. They asked how WFP would make up the funding shortfall and how it would prioritize its activities.
152. Thanking Board members for their feedback and support, the Country Director said that financial and technical support were needed to realize the huge potential for expanding the school feeding programme in Burundi. With regard to the needs of refugees, WFP would

continue its fundraising efforts while encouraging the Government to develop more inclusive policies.

153. Following the approval of the CSP, the permanent representative of Burundi thanked WFP for working closely with his government to develop the CSP and welcomed its focus on school feeding, home-grown local production and fortified food for children.

Asia and the Pacific portfolio

2024/EB.1/8 Bhutan country strategic plan (2024–2028), including evaluation findings, recommendations and management response from item 5 a) 1)

154. The Director of Evaluation summarized the main findings from the evaluation of the Bhutan CSP for 2019–2023, noting that the plan had been well aligned with national policies and objectives. Through its implementation, WFP had contributed to strengthened systems and policies for school feeding and rice fortification; improved marketing opportunities for smallholder farmers; and helped to foster a more conducive policy environment for agricultural marketing. Recommendations for improving the design and implementation of the new CSP included formulating a theory of change; adopting a more systematic approach to disaster risk reduction and management; aligning WFP’s technical assistance more closely with local conditions; enhancing efforts to promote income-generating opportunities for women; increasing the focus on monitoring for learning and advocacy at the country level; strengthening resource mobilization strategies and emphasizing the value of unearmarked funding in facilitating medium- and long-term planning; and strengthening synergies with other United Nations entities beyond joint advocacy and programming.
155. The Country Director confirmed that the recommendations had been incorporated into the new CSP for 2024–2028 along with feedback from consultations with the Government and other stakeholders. Under the CSP, WFP aimed to help build national capacity in relation to resilient food systems, integrate nutrition considerations into national social protection programmes and strengthen national emergency preparedness and response systems. The two CSP outcomes focused on supporting smallholder farmers and promoting women’s empowerment, and strengthening country capacity.
156. Congratulating WFP and the Government of Bhutan for their achievements so far, Board members welcomed the new CSP and the encouraging findings from the evaluation of the previous plan, which had paved the way for WFP’s shift from the direct provision of assistance to the strengthening of national capacity in school feeding, disaster risk management and social protection.
157. Board members endorsed WFP’s focus on school feeding programmes, including the use of fortified rice, and they welcomed the provision of technical assistance for the Government in the areas of emergency preparedness planning, and nutrition-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection programmes, including for the national school feeding programme. They voiced appreciation for capacity strengthening initiatives for local smallholder farmers and agro-enterprises, highlighting the potential for diversifying agricultural production, increasing the production of high-value crops and expanding marketing opportunities, including through procurement agreements between smallholder farmers and WFP or the Government. One Board member said that it was important that the Government continue to provide resources for WFP’s initiatives as part of a gradual handover of activities.
158. A number of Board members put forward recommendations for WFP’s work in Bhutan, which included exploring local approaches for implementing people-centred, nutrition-sensitive disaster risk reduction programmes; increasing the share of CSP resources directed to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women

beyond 15 percent; and doing more to address market fragmentation, including by improving logistics.

159. The Country Director took note of these comments and thanked Board members for their support.
160. Following the Board's approval of the CSP, the Ambassador and permanent representative of Bhutan thanked WFP, the Board and public and private donors for the support provided to Bhutan. He said that in the 50 years since WFP's first operation in Bhutan, the country had emerged from being one of the poorest in the world to achieving middle-income status at the end of 2023. Bhutan looked forward to continuing its partnership with WFP through the CSP, which addressed some of the remaining challenges faced by the country.

2024/EB.1/9 Philippines country strategic plan (2024–2028), including evaluation findings, recommendations and management response from item 5 a) 3)

161. The Director of Evaluation presented the evaluation of the CSP for 2018–2023, which was found to be relevant to national needs and priorities and to WFP's comparative advantages in the Philippines. Under the CSP, WFP had contributed to improved food security, nutrition and social cohesion; strengthened capacities and coordination among local governments; and positioned itself at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. The evaluation identified some areas for improvement and recommended that the country office develop a country capacity strengthening strategy based on existing frameworks and tools; strengthen its capacity to respond rapidly to emergencies; develop an inter-sectoral approach to capacity strengthening at the subnational level; adapt its resources and staff profiles to the CSP objectives; and enhance its knowledge management.
162. The acting Country Director presented the CSP for 2024–2028, which was based on the recommendations from the evaluation and focused on building emergency preparedness and response capacity and improving resilience at the system, institutional, community, household and individual levels while maintaining the capacity to respond rapidly to emergencies.
163. Thanking the Director of Evaluation for the thorough evaluation, Board members welcomed the attention that WFP had paid to the evaluation's findings during the design of the new CSP, which included actions for implementing the evaluation recommendations.
164. Board members supported the CSP's balanced approach to providing technical assistance at both the national and the local levels, mentioning in particular the focus on strengthening communities' capacities in disaster preparedness, including by providing "last mile" services for logistics, climate change adaptation and improved food security in isolated communities; using anticipatory action to reduce the impact of climate emergencies; increasing the emphasis on nutrition; and strengthening the social protection system, including through the development of a legal framework – one member recommended that WFP work with the International Labour Organization on this.
165. Welcoming the attention directed to women and persons with disabilities throughout the CSP, Board members commended WFP's collection of data on gender issues, disability, conflict and cultural norms and the barriers to inclusion that they created. They also appreciated the recruitment of additional technical staff at the country office, which would help to ensure sufficient capacity for emergency response and promote staff retention; and WFP's plans for strengthening locally led emergency preparedness and response programming through partnerships with local and community-based organizations.
166. While warning WFP against making overambitious plans, given the current global funding environment, members recommended that the country office consider deepening the institutionalization of anticipatory action, based on the country's recent legislation in that area. They also called for increased efforts to address vulnerability in the agriculture sector

by promoting better access to finance, sustainable and environment-friendly farming practices, improved post-harvest management, and enhanced logistics services and infrastructure.

167. The Director of Evaluation welcomed the attention given to evaluation findings during the Board's discussion and in the formulation of the new CSP. Responding to points raised by Board members, the acting Country Director said that the country office's efforts to leave no one behind included supplementing the Government's programmes by providing additional assistance for the people in greatest need. WFP collaborated closely with FAO in the agriculture sector, and with the International Labour Organization under the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework.
168. Following the Board's approval of the CSP, H.E. Rexlon Ting Gatchalian, Secretary for Social Welfare and Development in the Department of Social Welfare and Development of the Philippines, said that the CSP reflected the joint strategic direction of the Government and WFP. On behalf of the Permanent Representative of the Philippines in Rome, Eduardo M. Punay, Undersecretary for Innovations in the Department of Social Welfare and Development, thanked the Director of Evaluation for the evaluation, and the Board, management and donors of WFP for their support for his Government, which valued WFP as a long-time partner.

Operational matters (continued)

Oral update on the reassurance action plan

169. Following an introduction by the Executive Director, management briefed the Board on the implementation of the Global Assurance Project, which had been prioritized in the 31 countries with higher risk levels.
170. Since November 2023, minimum monitoring requirements had been revised, standard operating procedures for monitoring had been updated, and a monitoring costing tool had been released to high-risk country offices. Country offices were increasing their monitoring workforces and were rolling out Partner Connect, a digitalized cooperating partner management system, as well as systems for escalating issues identified from monitoring exercises and community feedback mechanisms. The Executive Director's annual assurance exercise had been revised to incorporate global assurance standards, and data from the exercise were being analysed with a view to establishing a baseline against which to measure future improvements.
171. High-risk country offices had reviewed their risk registers and developed augmented assurance plans, which would evolve as implementation progressed. The costs of implementing the plans had been integrated into country portfolio budgets for 2024; the average recurring cost was 1.2 percent of the operational cost. Major areas of investment would include strengthening monitoring and community feedback mechanisms, modernizing identity management systems and improving commodity tracking and supply chain management.
172. During 2024, high-risk country offices would complete their fraud risk assessments and report on progress made in tracking implementation and determine where additional support was needed. Additionally, corporate normative guidance would be updated and specific assurance-related tests from the Office of Internal Audit would be included in audits of high-risk operations and shared in their annual report. All high-risk country offices would be expected to complete implementation by the end of 2024; all remaining country offices were expected to have strengthened assurance in place by the end of 2025.
173. Thanking management for the update and for their commitment to transparent reporting, Board members stressed the importance of achieving the right balance between WFP's

responsibility for providing life-saving assistance and the need for oversight, monitoring, accountability and transparent resource management. Two Board members said that WFP also needed to balance its decentralization objectives with management and governance demands; several members urged management to involve the Board in its strategic decision making related to those balances.

174. Board members urged management to ensure that corporate policy related to assurance was reflected in practice at all levels of WFP; that cooperating partners and WFP had adequate technical capacity and expertise to identify and manage risks related to the misuse of assistance; and that WFP engaged with governments and other authorities on the need to uphold humanitarian principles at all stages of the programme cycle.
175. Board members sought insight into the impact of the assurance project on CSPs and cooperating partners; the economic gains that the project was expected to bring; and how management planned to fund WFP's assurance activities beyond the period of the critical corporate initiative, prioritize assurance activities in the budgets of WFP offices and units, and protect the funds for country offices' monitoring activities. Board members also requested regular briefings on the project's implementation and the lessons learned, including against key performance indicators.
176. Management said that country offices and country directors were closely engaged in the project and would be prepared to brief partners and donors on implementation plans, emerging risks and related mitigation measures; the escalation process for monitoring and community feedback mechanisms would be strengthened with the use of the SugarCRM system; lessons learned would guide the rollout to smaller country offices; and better segregation of duties with cooperating partners would ensure layers of control and enhanced visibility.
177. Management further confirmed that the ongoing digitization of data and the recent restructuring exercise were expected to lead to cost savings and efficiencies over time.

Policy issues

2024/EB.1/10 Implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the least developed countries

178. The Director, Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, described WFP's support for the least developed countries and the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action, including through partnerships that sought to address the lingering impacts of the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and the global food crisis; WFP had a country presence in all least developed countries except one. WFP aimed to mainstream the objectives of the six focus areas of the programme in its operations as applicable; the programme would also inform the development of the next WFP strategic plan, which would be launched in 2026.
179. Board members recognized the importance of the Doha Programme of Action in addressing the challenges faced by the least developed countries and described the positive impact that it had already had. Many noted that WFP interventions on strengthening national capacities, creating livelihoods and promoting sustainable development were closely aligned with the programme's objectives; one member pointed to several very effective WFP projects in least developed countries that could be scaled up.
180. Efforts to mainstream the programme's principles into WFP activities, in particular through CSPs, were welcomed. One Board member encouraged WFP to continue to pay special attention to addressing issues faced by women, girls and other marginalized groups; another expressed the readiness of his government to provide support for South-South and triangular cooperation in relation to the programme of action.

181. Several members stressed the importance of enhanced international cooperation and innovative solutions to address complex issues. Some saw a need for concerted efforts to enhance international trade, noting that least developed countries still encountered barriers such as non-tariff measures and market access. Others urged consideration of related initiatives, such as the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty and the updating of the 2014 Samoa Pathway for Small Island Developing States.
182. One member said that, amid budgetary constraints and growing humanitarian needs, WFP should ensure that its core humanitarian mandate was not compromised by operationalization of the programme of action. In that respect, it should collaborate efficiently with other United Nations organizations and use its own logistics and technical expertise to complement their strengths. She welcomed the intention to leverage knowledge from local actors to make implementation locally led and sustainable.
183. An observer called for Member States to support the efforts of the LDC5 Monitor to establish an independent committee of representatives. He also emphasized how WFP's experience could contribute to efforts to improve data collection and the development of science-based policies.
184. Responding to these comments, management appreciated the emphasis on implementing the Doha Programme of Action through the CSPs. In terms of working in partnership, WFP cooperated with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and was part of an inter-agency consultative group. In Rome, it worked with relevant offices at FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Update on the implementation of the Changing Lives Transformation Fund

185. The Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations, recalled that through the Changing Lives Transformation Fund (CLTF), WFP was investing in transformative, catalytic and sustainable programmes. She shared how pleased she was with Board members' strong support for and endorsement of the CLTF, which she saw as a game changer for WFP. The Director of the CLTF said 10 countries had been selected through a competitive process to showcase the types of change that WFP could help governments achieve. The CLTF also sought to generate evidence through impact measurement.
186. Welcoming the update and the promising start to the CLTF, Board members appreciated the fund's catalysing effect and the focus on partnerships, learning and impact measurement. Several members called for increased contributions to the fund and an expansion of the donor base. One expressed support for the funding of higher-risk projects and, in that regard, another asked about the generation of income from carbon markets. Other members asked how WFP would ensure that prioritization of the changing lives agenda did not happen to the detriment of emergency response. More details were requested on the origin of contributions to the CLTF, their level of earmarking and efforts to attract additional funding to ensure the sustainability of CLTF activities.
187. Board members endorsed the goal of deepening current partnerships and building new ones, including to generate additional resources. One Board member welcomed coordination between international financial institutions and the broader humanitarian system and urged continued progress in that area. She also underscored the importance of maintaining a neutral needs-based approach even when funding was not specifically humanitarian in nature.
188. One Board member proposed the development of a mechanism to facilitate common evidence-based decision-making and the judicious deployment of resources and to avoid overlap or conflicting objectives among the Rome-based agencies. He also suggested that

WFP seek to work in areas where no other organization was present. Another member saw the potential for the CLTF to improve internal WFP coordination.

189. WFP was encouraged to improve its reporting on cross-cutting themes and related results. More information was also sought on how the projects selected would contribute to operationalization of the humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach; the cost-effectiveness of the programmes; and how lessons learned would be captured and used.
190. Thanking Board members for their feedback and support, management explained that while any Member State could contribute to the CLTF special account and while such contributions would be welcome, any additional contributions to the CLTF would first allow WFP to support additional catalytic opportunities in the 10 chosen countries and generate further evidence. Sustainability would be assured by working through existing systems, which was cost-efficient, and the emphasis on catalytic funding would ensure the continuation of work once CLTF support had ended.
191. With regard to policy development, as measuring impact usually took several years, the new evidence would be unlikely to feed into the design of policy updates planned in 2024, including that for resilience. However, the evaluations would inform the implementation of new policies at the country level. They would also instil a culture of impact measurement in WFP.
192. The basic premise of the initiative relating to the carbon market was the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices and tree planting. The trees sequestered carbon that, after a number of years, allowed farmers to generate income from carbon credits.
193. WFP committed to addressing cross-cutting issues in more depth and to providing annual updates on the CLTF. Management welcomed the opportunity to engage bilaterally with Board members to address further questions about the fund in detail.

Administrative and managerial matters

2024/EB.1/11 Establishment of a selection panel for the appointment of Independent Oversight Advisory Committee members

194. The Secretary to the Executive Board recalled that the terms of two members of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC) would end in 2024 and the final term of a third member would end in 2025. It was therefore necessary for the Board to consider the renewal of two members in 2024 and to fill a vacancy on the committee in 2025. For that purpose, in accordance with the terms of reference of the IOAC, the Board was invited to appoint a selection panel comprising five representatives, one from each of the electoral lists of the Executive Board.
195. The document on the subject before the Board (WFP/EB.1/2024/8-A) outlined the process for establishing a selection panel and presented the electoral list representatives proposed for appointment to the panel.
196. Speaking on behalf of his list, one Board member commended the IOAC for its contribution to the governance of WFP, particularly through its efforts to ensure that the organization's financial reporting, internal controls and risk management processes were robust and transparent. The diverse professional backgrounds and geographical origins of IOAC members were also highly appreciated.

2024/EB.1/12 Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit relevant to the work of WFP

197. Presenting the document, management informed the Board that the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) ranked WFP among the best performing of its 28 participating entities in terms of accepting and implementing JIU recommendations. In the latest reporting period, WFP had

worked on 28 recommendations and closed 19, leaving it with no long-standing recommendations to be implemented and only one carried over from 2022. Ten JIU reviews were currently ongoing.

198. Of the 26 recommendations issued by the JIU in 2023, five were directed to the Board, and management thanked the alternates working group of the Executive Board Bureau for its collaboration in addressing those five.
199. Thanking management for the update, Board members commended WFP's timely and efficient implementation of JIU recommendations and strongly suggested that management carefully discuss and incorporate such recommendations into the work of WFP to address or minimize the risks that WFP encountered in the field. WFP was also urged to prioritize staff mental health and well-being. One observer requested that management provide the Board with follow-up reports on the results of implementation over time.
200. Board members welcomed WFP's full implementation of five of the six JIU recommendations on addressing racism and racial discrimination – including by making anti-racism training mandatory for all employees – and asked about the status of the diversity and inclusion framework and anti-racism action plan that WFP was developing, and the relationship between the two.
201. Noting that management had not fully accepted the JIU recommendation regarding WFP's reporting on the costs of implementing the accountability framework, members recommended that WFP work with the JIU to develop an alternative solution and report back to the Board on the outcome of that work. They also looked forward to receiving annual reporting on the functioning of the internal appeal mechanisms available to WFP employees from 2025 onwards, and to becoming involved in the development of the accountability and oversight framework in 2025.
202. Responding to the points raised, management said that the anti-racism action plan had been finalized. WFP was reviewing all of its policies and practices from the perspective of inclusion and would update the Board on progress in that work. Regarding the recommendation on annual reporting of basic statistics related to the internal appeals process, WFP was coordinating with FAO on how best to do this and expected to issue a first report in 2025.
203. Prior to the issuance of the JIU's recommendation regarding the costing of activities in the accountability framework, WFP had already attempted to conduct such a review on the recommendation of the External Auditor but had encountered difficulties. Along with many other agencies with similar experiences, WFP had commented on those difficulties to the JIU, and its comments were due for consideration by the Fifth Committee the following week. Management would determine whether there was another way to conduct this costing and report back to the Board. The Board would be involved in the accountability framework review once its governance review had been completed.

Other business

Oral update on the governance review

204. The Chair of the Executive Board Working Group on the Governance Review reported that in its first three meetings, the group had elected a chair and two vice-chairs and was finalizing a road map for its work, concentrating first on a subset of the independent consultant's recommendations that could be implemented immediately by the Secretariat. As the group had agreed to consider insights from other governance initiatives, additional time was required to complete its work.
205. Board members emphasized the importance of the governance review. On the proposed extension to the timeframe of the review, some members supported a deadline of

November 2024 or beyond if necessary; others recommended a two-speed approach, with the group completing work on the independent consultant's recommendations as soon as possible, before examining other recommendations. One member hoped that the implementation plan for the first subset of recommendations could be submitted for Board approval in June 2024; an observer added that any delay of this work beyond the 2024 annual session should be justified and accompanied by a detailed revised timeline.

206. Various Board members and an observer welcomed the working group's plan to consider insights from other sources, such as the External Auditor, in addition to the independent consultant's report. It was noted, however, that any proposed changes to the terms of reference and scope of the working group should be approved by the Board.
207. The Chair of the Working Group thanked all those who had taken the floor and took note of their comments.

Summary of the work of the Executive Board

2024/EB.1/13 Summary of the work of the 2023 second regular session of the Executive Board

208. The President extended his sincere thanks to the Rapporteur for preparing the summary of the 2023 second regular session of the Board, noting that the draft document had been circulated for Board member comment in February 2024. The Board approved the summary.

Verification of adopted decisions and recommendations

209. The President thanked the Executive Director and her team for their presentations during the session and the transparent and constructive dialogue that had taken place. Among the highlights of the three days he noted fruitful discussion including on key operational matters, WFP's reorganization and funding prospects, and actions taken in the area of risk management. He also extended his appreciation to Board members for their engagement and constructive approach and to the Executive Board Secretariat for supporting the session.
210. Adding his appreciation for WFP staff, the Rapporteur confirmed that the decisions and recommendations presented in the draft compilation of decisions and recommendations adopted by the Board at the current session corresponded to those that had been agreed during the session. The final version of the adopted decisions and recommendations would be posted on the Board's website during the next working day, and a draft summary of the discussions that took place during the session would be circulated for comment in due course and considered by the Board for approval at its next session.

Closing remarks by the Executive Director

211. In her closing remarks, the Executive Director thanked the President for his leadership and the Board for its insights, support and encouragement during the session, which had been a valuable opportunity to agree shared priorities for the year ahead. She was particularly grateful for the strong backing that the Board had given the organizational restructuring.
212. Cognizant of the importance placed by Board members on demonstrating that WFP assistance had been correctly targeted and was reaching its intended recipients, WFP was committed to implementing the reassurance action plan to ensure that all its operations had the most stringent controls and safeguards in place.

213. The Executive Director gave her assurance that, despite the ongoing prioritization exercise to ensure that resources delivered maximum impact, management remained committed to raising the funding needed to deliver its vital operations in 2024.
214. Looking ahead, senior leadership would strive to seize new opportunities to drive progress, using innovation to create new solutions to hunger, harnessing the potential of data analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning to transform humanitarian operations, and seeking to benefit from the expertise of the private sector.
215. Describing WFP's workforce as its most precious asset, the Executive Director underlined that the strong partnership that existed between them, the Board and the other Member States, was the bedrock of WFP's ability to deliver life-saving assistance to millions of people around the world.

Acronyms

CLTF	Changing Lives Transformation Fund
COSMOS	country office support model optimization and simplification
CSP	country strategic plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICSP	interim country strategic plan
IOAC	Independent Oversight Advisory Committee
ISC	indirect support cost
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
PSA	programme support and administrative (budget)
PSEA	prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund