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Update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system)

1. This information note builds on the update presented to the Executive Board at its 2019 first regular session¹ by providing additional information on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279² on repositioning the United Nations development system.

Introduction

2. Since the last update in February 2019 several milestones have been reached: the launch of a provisional management and accountability framework for the country level; the roll-out of the 1 percent coordination levy; the first call for concept notes for funding from the Joint Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Fund; and finalization of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (known as the "Cooperation Framework" – the former United Nations Development Assistance Framework) – and the Funding Compact. A document that redefines the United Nations system-wide strategy is expected to be finalized in June. Work continues on reviews of the United Nations' regional architecture and multi-country offices and system-wide governance.
3. WFP remains strongly committed to the objectives of the reform as a means of delivering stronger results on the ground and supporting Member States in the attainment of the SDGs. For example, WFP has been a member of the UNDAF redesign team and helped to draft guidance on the new Cooperation Framework. WFP senior leadership and all WFP regional bureaux have been involved in the regional review. WFP co-chairs the

¹ WFP/EB.1/2019/5-B.

² General Assembly resolution 72/279 of 31 May 2018, Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/RES/72/279).

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Business Innovation Group with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and continues to work with sister agencies and the Rome-based agencies on the various reform components.

Reinvigorating the resident coordinator system

4. Enhanced coordination is a major part of reform efforts. Following the launch of a strengthened United Nations resident coordinator system on 1 January 2019, the provisional management and accountability framework for the United Nations development system at the country level was issued in April 2019. The framework is a significant internal document for the United Nations that operationalizes the new relationship between the resident coordinator and the United Nations country team. WFP is committed to operating within the management and accountability framework and is engaging country offices in a two-way process through which headquarters provides country offices with information and guidance on the framework while simultaneously soliciting country offices' feedback and early insights on lessons learned, which will inform a review of initial implementation of the framework scheduled for the third quarter of 2019. Regional and global dimensions of the management and accountability framework are expected to be developed by the United Nations development system Transition Team later in 2019.
5. Within this enhanced structure for United Nations coordination, WFP is examining opportunities for its staff members to serve as resident coordinators as a valuable step in their career paths and is encouraging high-performing senior staff to apply for resident coordinator positions. As a result, larger numbers of WFP senior leaders attended the Resident Coordinator Assessment Centre in 2018 and 2019 than in previous years. As of April 2019, four resident coordinators globally were on secondment from WFP. In addition, WFP has decided to invest in preparing internal candidates for assessment at the centre, taking advantage of an invitation to join the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' training initiative for resident coordinator candidates, which provides several months of preparation prior to attendance at the assessment centre. WFP is also assessing which of its high-performing staff members could be seconded to resident coordinator offices to create a critical link between WFP and the resident coordinator system for the exchange of knowledge and technical expertise, and is identifying the skills that would make these staff members particularly valuable in expanded resident coordinator offices.³
6. For several years, resident coordinators have had the option of contributing to the performance appraisal system (PACE) assessments of WFP country directors. In 2017, the assessments of approximately 50 percent of WFP country directors included inputs from resident coordinators. WFP's PACE and job description for country representatives is also being updated and will integrate collective outcome indicators that reflect the new mutual accountabilities and link to objectives laid out in their country's Cooperation Frameworks.
7. All aspects of the new hybrid funding model for the resident coordinator system have been launched. Regarding the doubled contributions that United Nations agencies are making to cover the costs of the new coordination system, WFP has doubled its share for 2019, which currently amounts to USD 2.9 million per year. WFP has also issued internal guidance on the 1 percent coordination levy. As the levy is charged on "tightly earmarked third-party non-core contributions to United Nations development-related activities to be paid at source", WFP will apply it only to contributions that donors have earmarked for the root causes focus area. Only contributions from "third-party" donors are eligible, so those

³ Under the new system, resident coordinator offices are being strengthened through the appointment of additional experts in planning and economics, policy support, monitoring and evaluation and support of strategic partnerships.

from host governments, South–South cooperation and United Nations donors are excluded, while contributions from the private sector, including foundations and non-governmental organizations, are eligible. WFP is monitoring the implications of the levy on programming resources and any associated transactional and administrative costs.

A new generation of United Nations country teams

8. The new United Nations Cooperation Framework⁴ has a primary role in the United Nations reform. United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 elevates the framework to “the most important instrument for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities in each country, in support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” This represents a shift in the nature of the United Nations Cooperation Framework, from being a planning document (the UNDAF) to providing a framework for the entire programme cycle. The Cooperation Framework will drive the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of, and reporting on, the collective outcomes of United Nations country teams as they implement the 2030 Agenda. The new framework will also be key in determining the United Nations country team configuration.
9. In close coordination with the other Rome-based agencies, WFP helped to shape guidelines for the new Cooperation Framework through its participation in a consultative process led by the United Nations Development Coordination Office and involving the participation of 17 United Nations agencies and feedback from resident coordinators, regional bodies and other United Nations entities. As a core member of the drafting team, WFP provided considerable strategic and technical inputs to the various drafts of the guidance, including for the design of innovative templates for the Cooperation Framework and the United Nations Common Country Analysis, and led the common country analysis workstream.
10. The new Cooperation Framework will be rolled out globally in the second half of 2019. The United Nations Development Coordination Office is expected to share the final guidance for implementation of the Cooperation Framework with United Nations country teams in June, focusing on countries that are due to develop a new Cooperation Framework in 2019. Lessons learned from these “pilot countries” will inform refinements of the guidance in 2020. WFP and other agencies will have the opportunity to appraise, discuss and agree on any issues that arise with adoption of the new framework. In accordance with further developments in the reform process and recent evaluation findings,⁵ WFP will continue its efforts to align all of its country strategic plans (CSPs) with the Cooperation Framework, in terms of both content and time cycle.
11. Roll-out of the Cooperation Framework comes at an opportune time as WFP starts to implement the last of its first-generation CSPs. By the end of 2019, all country offices will have a CSP or interim country strategic plan (ICSP) approved by the Board. Analysis of the implications for WFP of the new Cooperation Framework is currently under way and will provide critical inputs for the development of second-generation CSPs. WFP will organize an informal consultation with the Board to discuss these implications in detail.
12. In adopting the new Cooperation Framework, the United Nations aims to ensure that its development outcomes are coherent and, ideally, that they reinforce and are reinforced by the outcomes incorporated in other United Nations planning frameworks, such as the

⁴ The United Nations Sustainable Development and Cooperation Framework replaces the UNDAF.

⁵ In particular, see page 11 of the management response to the recommendations deriving from the summary evaluation report of the strategic evaluation of the pilot country strategic plans (2017–mid-2018) (WFP/EB.2/2018/7-A/Add.1).

Humanitarian Response Plan and the Integrated Strategic Framework. WFP's CSPs already encompass both humanitarian and development activities and incorporate related planning into one framework. WFP will continue to share its experiences in bridging the humanitarian–development divide with other United Nations entities.

13. As a dual-mandated agency with strong capacities in humanitarian and development analysis and programming, WFP is developing an evidence base related to its capacity to contribute to peace dividends. Through partnership with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute the organization has been looking more closely at WFP's contribution to the "improved prospects of peace" with a view to informing adjustments and improvements to WFP's operational response. Preliminary findings will be shared on the margins of the 2019 annual session of the Board with the official report of the first phase of partnership available towards the latter part of 2019. More broadly, WFP continues to participate in the Joint Steering Committee co-chaired by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to look at enablers to the humanitarian–development collaboration. To date the reviews focused on seven pilot countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, the Niger, Nigeria and Somalia) and their individual experiences in nexus efforts, in an attempt to support enhanced programming.

Common business operations and common premises

14. The Business Innovations Group of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group is co-led by WFP and UNHCR and has established a full-time project team that is working towards ambitious targets. WFP and its partners in the group are providing the project team with staff and resources to advance this work. Considerable progress has been made on both the necessary enablers⁶ and the Business Innovations Group substantive workstreams. On the specific enablers, the high-level mutual recognition statement has advanced with 14 United Nations entities having now signed it, representing more than 90 percent of the total United Nations agency spend, and is starting to be operationalized through agencies. The statement will clear important obstacles to common back offices and global service centres.
15. In the next few months, the Business Innovations Group project team will be piloting the revised business operations strategy and rolling it out worldwide in time to achieve the Secretary-General's goal of having a business operations strategy in every United Nations country team by 2021. WFP will support its field staff in the pilot countries where it has a presence⁷ with a view to ensuring that WFP can provide feedback on the new tool and that field staff promote WFP services for the implementation of business operations strategies.
16. The workstream on global shared service centres involves identifying services that can be provided to United Nations organizations anywhere in the world, while location-specific services will be provided by a common back office in the country concerned. In June, WFP will visit the shared service centre of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to discuss the services that UNICEF offers to its country offices and explore the UNICEF services that could be provided to WFP.
17. While cost saving and efficiency gains are a substantive feature of the reform, these outcomes will be truly feasible only with upfront investments of donors' financial

⁶ Two key enabling factors for the Business Innovations Group are the mutual recognition and client satisfaction principles. The mutual recognition principles allow a United Nations entity to use or rely on another entity's policies, procedures, system contracts and related operational mechanisms for the implementation of activities. The client satisfaction principles are a set of policy guidelines governing the provision of shared services to ensure that they are managed with transparency and accountability.

⁷ WFP has a presence in 34 of the 45 countries with business operations strategies.

contributions that facilitate achievement of the Secretary-General's targets within anticipated timelines.

Revamping the regional approach

18. The Secretary-General outlined his recommendations for a revision of the regional architecture for the United Nations development system and a review of multi-country offices in his report to the operational activities for development segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in May 2019. These recommendations are based on the conclusions of a review by the Internal Review Team (of which WFP is a member) and proposals from an external consulting firm. Implementation plans for the regional level are expected to be developed by the transition team of the United Nations development system, and WFP intends to play an active role in the reconfiguration of the United Nations regional level architecture and the strengthening of multi-country offices.

Funding the United Nations development system and partnerships

19. The Secretary-General presented the final version of the funding compact during the ECOSOC operational activities for development segment in May 2019. The compact reflects Member States' commitments to increasing core, pooled and thematic funds and supporting the funding of the resident coordinator system, while emphasizing the need for the United Nations development system to improve accountability and transparency of spending, comply with visibility requirements, plan and implement joint activities, system-wide evaluations and reporting, and demonstrate efficiency gains and a more harmonized approach to cost recovery.
20. The Joint SDG Fund, for which the funding compact includes substantially increased funding, is now functioning and has the aim of facilitating integrated and transformative policy shifts and supporting the United Nations in creating strategies for financing work towards the SDGs and making strategic investments that help countries to accelerate their progress towards the SDGs. The initial round of investments is focused on "leaving no one behind", and particularly on social protection, and has an overall funding envelope of USD 60 million. In March, interested United Nations country teams were invited to submit, via their respective resident coordinators, one concept note per team for a joint United Nations programme in line with this focus and with a maximum budget of USD 2 million. WFP took part in the preparation of concept notes in 32 countries and allocated a staff member to support the United Nations Development Coordination Office in a technical review of all the concept notes submitted. In the coming months, a shortlist of country offices submitting concept notes will be invited to draft full joint programmes for eventual implementation starting in October 2019.

Strategic direction, oversight and accountability for system-wide results

21. Based on inclusive consultations and consideration of detailed feedback from stakeholders, an annotated outline of a system-wide strategic document was shared with Member States during the ECOSOC operational activities for development segment in May. The draft document outlines the collective identity and comparative advantages of the United Nations development system and concrete actions for addressing gaps and overlaps in the existing United Nations architecture. It has the aim of providing an overarching vision for advancing a system-wide response to the 2030 Agenda, as mandated by resolution 71/243 of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and General Assembly resolution 72/279. The system-wide strategic document also outlines the changes required within the United Nations development system so that it can deliver on its collective plans, while emphasizing the commitment to increasing innovation and collaboration in order to

accelerate delivery and make the United Nations development system more effective, efficient and accountable to Member States. WFP contributed to the document's development through active engagement in the United Nations SDG strategic results group on SDG implementation.

22. The draft system-wide strategic document is closely linked to the new Cooperation Framework which will be a central tool for ensuring delivery of the strategic vision outlined in the document and applying the underlying principles of the document to the work of the United Nations development system at the country level in support of the 2030 Agenda. Implementation of the strategy outlined in the document will also provide more clarity on the interlinkages between the Cooperation Framework and the corresponding frameworks for the United Nations' humanitarian and peace work. The transition team responsible for repositioning the United Nations development system intends to finalize the system-wide strategic document in June, incorporating Member States' comments and perspectives shared during the ECOSOC operational activities for development segment in May.
23. The WFP Executive Board Secretariat has taken an active role in supporting the work of Member States on assessing the working methods of the Executive Boards and how these can be improved to further enhance efficiency, transparency, quality and effectiveness. Actions have included providing inputs and support to the Core Group of Member States on Working Methods, whose main deliverable of a written account on findings and suggestions for improving the working methods of the respective Boards would be presented at the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/United Nations Population Fund/United Nations Office for Project Services, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP on 31 May 2019.⁸

Conclusions and next steps

24. As the reform continues to advance, WFP will continue to closely follow the various adjustments and actively engage in the process. In September, world leaders will gather in New York to comprehensively review progress in implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and work towards the 17 SDGs. The event is the first United Nations summit on the SDGs since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015 and will provide an opportunity to appraise progress on the United Nations' shared efforts to advance towards the SDGs. Emerging evidence shows that United Nations agencies must urgently step up their response and embrace the paradigm shift that lies at the core of the 2030 Agenda. Reforms should be more about people and better results on the ground in order to achieve zero hunger over the next 11 years.

⁸ [Written Account of the Core Group on Working Methods of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women, WFP](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000105281/download/), <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000105281/download/>; and [Annex](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000105282/download/), <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000105282/download/>.

Acronyms used in the document

CSP	country strategic plan
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
PACE	performance and competency enhancement
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund