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Summary of the work of the 2019 first regular session of the Executive Board

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## Summary of the work of the 2019 first regular session of the Executive Board

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## Current and future strategic issues

### Opening remarks by the Executive Director (2019/EB.1/1)

1. The Executive Director spoke movingly of the growing number of people affected by hunger, food insecurity and undernutrition in situations of conflict and instability, vowing that WFP would challenge the status quo and use its experience and comparative advantages to develop new assistance modalities and partnerships in line with the reform of the United Nations development system. Combining the strengths of United Nations and private sector organizations, such modalities could be a model for future assistance approaches that leveraged expertise, funding and other resources to achieve the zero hunger targets by 2030.
2. Noting that major emergencies accounted for 80 percent of humanitarian funding, causing resource gaps in other areas, he stressed the significance of United Nations development system reform in recognizing the need to allocate resources equitably to people facing hunger and food insecurity. WFP was, for example, developing its country strategic plans (CSPs), increasing the use of cash-based transfers (CBTs), digitizing more data and implementing the institutional changes needed to maximize the efficiency of its operations. As an example of the latter WFP was extending the powers of the Inspector General to help to harmonize the work of headquarters and field offices, which would enable WFP to develop programmes addressing hunger, migration and instability in a way that built on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.
3. He urged the Board to hold the Secretariat to account to ensure that optimum solutions were identified and applied. The empowerment of women was a priority, including to support women smallholder farmers, who needed resources to engage in market systems and to work equitably with men in community improvement schemes. WFP's digitization programme was enhancing gender parity in various contexts and increasing the quantity and reliability of beneficiary data, thereby promoting the achievement of gender and other benchmarks in operations. He urged Board members to help WFP find funding for its internal changes.
4. The Executive Director reminded the Board of the centrality of teamwork between United Nations and private-sector organizations, particularly the Rome-based agencies, in addressing hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity. Suggesting that donor fatigue was inevitable in cases where WFP had been operating for decades, he called for “breaking the silos”, recruiting new talent and thinking in terms of strategic partnerships rather than the interests of particular agencies.
5. His Excellency Daniel Kablan Duncan, Vice-President of Côte d'Ivoire, acknowledged WFP's support for the Government's initiatives in reducing malnutrition but like the Executive Director said that new humanitarian and development approaches were required in the face of conflict and instability. The need in his region, where stunting affected a third of children, was to maximize people's access to support mechanisms for reducing undernutrition and improving public health. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire was supporting regional and international programmes addressing chronic undernourishment and rural food insecurity. He urged the Rome-based agencies to support national plans for improving food storage and processing in line with national and regional initiatives. The Government was adopting cross-sectoral approaches with a view to improving agriculture, access to clean water, social safety nets, school enrolment, public access to social services, roads, climate awareness and the provision of electricity in rural areas. Côte d'Ivoire was hosting WFP's new centre of excellence with a view to developing and sharing agricultural and management expertise with African countries and promoting South–South partnerships.

6. Board members asked the Executive Director for clarification as to the challenges affecting change in WFP. Others, observing that 80 percent of the populations in sub-Saharan Africa depended on family-level farming, asked what improvements were envisaged for the sector. Members commended the commitment of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to national and regional development programmes, saying that it was an example to be emulated by other beneficiary governments.
7. His Excellency replied that technical development and support options for family-level farming were being studied through the Brazil centre of excellence with a view to increasing production and establishing links between smallholder farmers and markets. The Executive Director observed that the challenges in updating WFP's systems and organization included helping governments to implement programmes that were efficient, effective and sustainable: capacity development, CBTs and local purchasing to increase access to food and improve diets were central to this. Protection of beneficiary information was increasingly important as the digitization of WFP's data progressed.
8. Board members agreed that WFP must adapt to working in the current unstable humanitarian context, which would involve accelerated development with a view to maximizing food production by smallholders, avoiding post-harvest losses and improving public health. Members said that it was vital to promote political and social stability, keep schools open and adopt holistic long-term approaches to achieve sustainable food security and nutrition in collaboration with organizations such as the African Union. Board members supported the Executive Director's determination to eliminate harassment and exploitation in the workplace and commended his strong advocacy for education for girls and the empowerment of women to enable them to realize their potential in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. Board members recommended enhanced accountability in this and other areas to ensure that proposed outcomes were achieved.
9. Board members said that United Nations development system reform, including the new roles of regional coordinators, was of great importance, observing that the scale of humanitarian needs meant that global systems had to be adopted if the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals were to be achieved. In that context Board members called once again for flexible multi-year funding so that WFP could optimize its expenditures and for clearer targeting, budgeting and assessment mechanisms supported by improved accountability systems to maximize efficiency. Board members recommended that WFP continue to support governments in prioritizing hunger in national plans and that it publicize its successes to encourage contributions from a wider range of donors, particularly in view of funding gaps in several operations. WFP should assess its humanitarian work in terms of outcomes to show how food assistance changed lives, increased resilience and promoted development. Board members recommended that WFP continue to promote South-South collaboration, capacity development and knowledge sharing through its centres of excellence and joint work by the Rome-based agencies.
10. Board members said that the Board's oversight of WFP's work could be more stringent but cautioned that its role was not to micromanage.
11. Members warmly praised WFP staff for their courage and commitment in challenging situations. The value of common services provided by WFP, including through the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service, was recognized by Board members, who also commended WFP's impartiality and adherence to humanitarian principles.
12. The Executive Director observed that scaling up operations in major emergencies called for enhanced accountability and risk management and noted that progress in improving the workplace was evident in the fact that inappropriate behaviours were being reported and that women staff members were finding it easier to speak out. He stressed the urgent need

for predictable and flexible funding to enable WFP to allocate its resources to optimum effect. Publicizing WFP's work had to be managed with discretion in view of possible distortions arising in social media and the press, and safeguards were being set up to protect beneficiary data.

13. Noting that while the Integrated Road Map aimed to increase flexible funding to 30 percent of total funding it currently accounted for only 5.5 percent, he urged donors to minimize the earmarking of contributions so that WFP could allocate funds to projects under CSPs as required.

### **West Africa portfolio**

14. The Regional Director for West Africa provided an update on the region, where WFP was active in 19 countries and was ready to intervene in another three. Eleven million people were currently food-insecure, and malnutrition and infant mortality rates were high across the region.
15. Although food security had improved in 2018, conflict and violence posed a threat in many countries. There were currently four epicentres of crisis: northeast Nigeria, the Central African Republic, northwest and southwest Cameroon and Mali.
16. In the Sahel, climate change and conflict were severely undermining livelihoods. Conflict had spread to the Niger, Burkina Faso and Mauritania and showed no signs of abating. In the Lake Chad region there was rising insecurity along the border with Nigeria, the Niger, Cameroon and Chad; WFP had launched an operation to assist 400,000 people in conflict-affected areas of Cameroon.
17. Violent clashes were also increasing in the Central African Republic despite the deployment of military forces. A recent peace agreement brokered by the African Union and the United Nations gave cause for hope. Countries in the Mano River region were still recovering from the Ebola crisis, and several, particularly Liberia, were facing significant economic difficulties.
18. In 2018 WFP had increased local and regional procurement and the use of cash-based transfers, which currently represented 28 percent of food assistance. Significant progress had also been made in establishing a centre of excellence against hunger and malnutrition for Africa, thanks to leadership and funding from the Government of Côte d'Ivoire.
19. The Sahel shock response had targeted 3.5 million people in 2018, helping nearly 3 million, and through programmes that built on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus WFP planned to assist 2 million people in five Sahel countries over the next five years, focusing on smallholder farmers and social protection.
20. Board members thanked the Regional Director for the update and his years of service to WFP. One highlighted the financial challenges facing Liberia and urged donors to support the country, underscoring the importance of food security to peace and social stability. Another member drew attention to the impact of Boko Haram in the region and called for renewed efforts to tackle the group.

### **Côte d'Ivoire country strategic plan (2019–2023) (2019/EB.1/2) (for approval)**

21. The Country Director presented the country strategic plan for Côte d'Ivoire, saying that it supported the Government's efforts to achieve zero hunger by fostering access to diverse and nutritious food for all; tackling malnutrition; building the resilience of vulnerable populations through developing sustainable food systems; and reinforcing partnerships. The plan would use participatory and inclusive methods to respond to the needs of various marginalized groups, with particular emphasis on the empowerment of women.
22. Board members praised the plan, saying that it reaffirmed the Government's commitment to promoting the food security of its citizens. One member said that government leadership

was vital to the sustainability of progress made through multilateral assistance. Another commended the linking of the school feeding programme with family farming, which would have positive repercussions on child nutrition, smallholder livelihoods and women's empowerment.

23. Board members also welcomed the planned opening of a WFP centre of excellence against hunger in Côte d'Ivoire, saying that it would accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs through knowledge exchange and partnerships in developing countries to the benefit of the whole continent.

**Nigeria country strategic plan (2019–2022) (2019/EB.1/3) (for approval)**

24. The Nigeria Country Director presented the CSP for that country, under which WFP would provide direct humanitarian response in three conflict-affected states and capacity strengthening and livelihood support for building self-reliance throughout the country.
25. Board members welcomed the CSP as an appropriate response in a country with high prevalence of food insecurity despite economic progress. They praised the multi-dimensional approach of providing life-saving assistance where needed while helping to build the capacities of government and other partners in early warning, preparedness and response management. Members saw the CSP as a good example of work at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus and a valuable contribution to Nigeria's achievement of zero hunger by 2030.
26. While emphasizing the need for WFP to continue to focus on its core mandate of saving lives, members praised the planned shift to recovery and livelihood restoration activities for crisis-affected people; the use of cash-based transfers wherever possible; and activities to address malnutrition, for which members recommended increased coverage. They welcomed the clear risk analysis provided in the CSP document, the commitment to conflict-sensitive planning and implementation and the emphasis on protection. The planned vocational training and income-generating activities for women would help address gender inequalities; one member emphasized the value of engaging young people in capacity strengthening and livelihood building activities as a way of contributing to future socio-economic development while providing alternatives to membership in armed groups.
27. Members encouraged the country office to assess the impacts of CSP activities at the regional and subregional levels; enhance cooperation with United Nations, bilateral and private sector partners in activities for food and nutrition security, early warning and resilience building; monitor conditions in conflict-affected areas before scaling down humanitarian response; and continue its work on targeting and beneficiary registration and its provision of common services to the humanitarian community.
28. In response to points raised by members, the Country Director said that WFP collaborated with FAO and IFAD on seed distribution and access to land. The country office was overcoming challenges with CBTs and had used them in the response to increased violence in January. Findings from a food security assessment in April would inform WFP's future plans.

## **Annual reports**

**Annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2017 and management note (2019/EB.1/4) (for consideration)**

29. The Ombudsman presented her office's annual report for 2017, which had seen a 70 percent increase in cases over 2016. Just over 100 people had reported harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination (HSHAPD), almost double the number in 2016.

30. Recommendations to management included improving staff leadership and conflict management skills and strengthening the culture of dignity and respect in WFP, in particular by tackling abusive behaviour quickly and effectively.
31. Responding for management, the Director of the Human Resources Division affirmed WFP's commitment to a positive working environment for all.
32. The Board welcomed the report and the management note, and requested that both be delivered more timely. Members noted that the employee issues discussed in the report were almost identical to those cited in 2016 and urged WFP to prioritize training in conflict resolution, a recurrent area of weakness. Two members asked whether the Ombudsman had sufficient resources to carry out her duties. One requested that a gender-neutral term for the role be found.
33. Some members said that the Ombudsman's annual report should feature deeper analysis, as well as a table presenting her recommendations and management's responses, with an indication for each of whether management agreed, partially agreed or disagreed with it.
34. Members asked for clarification of the drop in cases handled by the respectful workplace advisors (RWAs) at a time when the Ombudsman's workload had increased. Others expressed concern that the use of temporary staff might be excessive and that there was inadequate analysis of a number of matters, including the increase in the number of HSHAPD cases. One member called for the introduction of performance indicators for the Ombudsman's office.
35. In response to questions from the president, the Inspector General gave an overview of cases handled by her office in 2018, citing around 30 cases of sexual harassment and 100 cases of harassment or abuse of power. There was a small potential overlap between her figures and those of the Ombudsman. There had been no notable increase in reports of ethnic or racial discrimination, which were few in number. Detailed information would be provided at an update on 5 March 2019.
36. Management confirmed that the Ombudsman planned to present the 2018 report in June 2019 and noted that as the United Nations used the term "ombudsperson", WFP would explore altering the name of the office accordingly.
37. The Ombudsman added that her office had expanded from two to three full-time posts, and recruitment to fill a fourth post was imminent. She said that as the doubling of HSHAPD cases reported in 2017 was commensurate with the increase in the overall caseload it indicated increased staff confidence in and knowledge of the Ombudsman rather than a rise in the incidence of HSHAPD.
38. Similarly, the trends in RWA cases could be explained by the temporary absence of an on-site Ombudsman in 2015, when staff relied more on RWAs. The decline in RWA cases began with the appointment of the new Ombudsman. More details on this would be provided in the 2018 report.

## **Policy issues**

### **Update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system) (2019/EB.1/5) (for information)**

39. Reiterating WFP's commitment to supporting United Nations development system reform, the Deputy Executive Director summarized recent progress in and WFP's contribution to the reform process.
40. Developments included the shifting of the resident coordinator system from UNDP to the office of the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the establishment of the Development Coordination Office. Work on a new United Nations development assistance

framework (UNDAF), system-wide strategic document and funding compact and on regional and multi-country reviews continued, with the aim of completing as much as possible before the Economic and Social Council met in May. WFP was a member of the regional review team and was also reviewing its own country presence; findings would be presented to the Board later in the year.

41. Welcoming the update and noting that WFP's extensive geographic reach, innovative programming tools and expertise in ICT and logistics gave it an advantage in meeting many of the challenges posed by reform, Board members encouraged WFP to maintain its proactive engagement in the development of the new UNDAF template, cost sharing formula and other elements of the reform. Members highlighted the opportunities for dialogue on reform with the other Rome-based agencies, which they said was an opportunity to enhance collaboration among the three agencies, while also acknowledging collaboration with other agencies, funds and programmes.
42. While noting some concerns with the resident coordinator system, members praised WFP's efforts to engage constructively in the implementation of the new system, including through mutual collective performance appraisals, which would strengthen mutual accountability. Members asked how staff were being supported to enable the best and the brightest of WFP's sustainable development professionals to be well-positioned to be considered for resident coordinator positions, particularly with a view to ensuring gender parity and geographic diversity. Concerned that the new resident coordinator system could undermine the oversight role of the Executive Board, the accountability of WFP's leadership and the stability of its financial and human resources, members urged management to seek constructive ways of mitigating those risks.
43. Members asked for an indication of how WFP's internal organizational reforms and new initiatives would fit into the broader United Nations reform; information on the ways in which inter-agency cooperation would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative support services and an indication of how such efficiencies would be assessed; and a clear plan for WFP's move to common back office functions and premises, ensuring that any resulting cost savings were of benefit to food-insecure and vulnerable people.
44. Members called for regular updates on progress and consultations, particularly with regard to budgetary implications.
45. In response to the points raised, the Deputy Executive Director said that decisions regarding WFP's move to common back office facilities would depend on the situation in each country; a full merger of all WFP offices into common premises was not appropriate.
46. Management added that with much of the impact of reform likely to be felt in the field, the provision of information to field staff was an important part of WFP's work on reform. WFP chaired a United Nations project team on common back offices and premises, which had targets laid out in the Secretary-General's report; the Secretariat would clearly articulate the business case for any investments needed and the savings and other benefits that could be expected.
47. Management recalled that the cost-sharing formula used in 2019 had led to a doubling of WFP's contribution to the resident coordinator system. The formula for 2020 had yet to be decided, and the Secretariat would request members' support through advocacy by their representatives in New York should any change entail significant budgetary implications for WFP.



## Evaluation reports

### Summary report on the strategic evaluation of WFP's support for enhanced resilience and management response (2019/EB.1/6) *(for consideration)*

48. The Director of Evaluation reported on a strategic evaluation of WFP's support for enhanced resilience, saying that it focused on WFP's work in relation to the humanitarian-development nexus and was based on interviews, focus group discussions, analyses of CSPs, field missions and reviews of documentation. WFP, she said, needed to develop an agency-wide conceptualization of resilience, a strategic framework for advancing a resilience-enhancing agenda from concept to integrated programming and measurable results and explicit guidance and adopt an integrated approach to enhancing resilience in CSPs. Staff skills and partnerships should also be strengthened. The evaluation had concluded that a shared understanding of WFP's resilience work was needed, that increased convergence of activities should improve individual capacities, that funding and staff competencies needed to be oriented towards long-term programming and that WFP's monitoring and reporting on resilience should be improved. These findings and conclusions underpinned the seven recommendations set out in the evaluation report.
49. Management endorsed all the recommendations in the report, with a caveat regarding recommendation 5 in that WFP managers felt that in lieu of a parallel reporting mechanism on resilience initiatives it would be preferable to conduct a review of existing tools with the aim of adapting them to incorporate a resilience dimension into the existing reporting system. Work on recommendation 7 was already under way.
50. Board members welcomed the report, saying that it reflected the need to ensure that resilience activities remain a key element of WFP's work because it led to sustainable development and that WFP should work with governments to promote enabling environments in which such activities could succeed. Some Board members said that the recommendations should have also included a focus on the role of country offices. There was agreement that a common understanding across the organization of resilience was needed and that continued collaboration with the other Rome-based agencies and other partners to support suitable measurement and assessment mechanisms aligned with the needs of beneficiary governments was desirable. WFP was encouraged by Board members to continue to build the evidence needed to develop an effective investment case to encourage donors to provide the necessary multi-year funding. It was also important to "turn victims into actors" by involving beneficiaries, civil society and academia in resilience building initiatives; the CSPs would provide the ideal context for doing so.
51. Board members encouraged WFP to use the findings of the evaluation to avoid working in "silos" and to continue to lead and to seek out new international collaboration in supporting resilience programming and urged WFP to find ways of allocating funds that did not affect funding for emergency and humanitarian responses. Some members said that WFP should further develop staff skills related to resilience building and should seek to maximize predictable multi-year funding to enable flexible approaches; such approaches included the building of mechanisms for social protection and economic inclusion.
52. Management thanked the Board members for their supportive observations, saying that its initial work on definitions and assessment mechanisms would require an initial 10-12 months to complete. It was pointed out that the strategic nature of the evaluation had precluded observations at the country office level. Other matters would be dealt with bilaterally with concerned Board members.

## East Africa portfolio

53. The Regional Director gave an update, noting that WFP had assisted over 20 million people in the region in 2018. Around 85 percent of WFP food purchases had come from traders and smallholder farmers, and the use of cash-based transfers had increased to almost USD 232 million. Talks were under way with the Government of Eritrea about possible reengagement in the country in partnership with FAO.
54. An estimated 19.4 million people in the region had begun 2019 in acute food insecurity. That was a 17 percent drop from January 2018, but conflict, poverty and climate shocks continued to cause displacement and food insecurity. The region hosted more than 3 million refugees and asylum seekers – 81 percent of whom were women and children – and over 7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).
55. Areas of major concern for 2019 were South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and areas affected by the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
56. The L3 response in South Sudan had been extended to January 2020. Almost 7 million people were expected to face acute food insecurity from May to July and as many as 50,000 could face famine at the peak of the lean season. In Somalia, over 1.5 million would need life-saving assistance and a further 3.4 million were vulnerable to food insecurity.
57. In response to Ebola, WFP was engaged in broad screening and isolation work, the design and construction of treatment units, logistics sector coordination for partners, including transport and storage. A regional common logistics service staging area was being set up in Uganda to facilitate cost-efficient rapid response in the region.
58. Board members thanked the Regional Director for the update and commended WFP's approach to addressing food system challenges in the region. One member highlighted the value of WFP's technical support, in particular for electronic beneficiary registration.

### **Summary report on the evaluation of the Ethiopia country portfolio (2012–2017) and management response (2019/EB.1/7) (for consideration)**

59. The Director of Evaluation presented a summary report on the evaluation of the Ethiopia country portfolio for 2012–2017, which highlighted opportunities to improve monitoring, reporting and evaluation; strategic clarity; senior leadership; the use of cash-based transfers; and attention to gender, humanitarian principles, protection and accountability to affected populations.
60. Management had accepted all eight recommendations. The Country Director noted that although the evaluation had arrived too late to inform the interim country strategic plan (ICSP) it would guide the design of the full CSP.
61. Board members expressed support for all the recommendations, particularly those related to protection, accountability to affected populations and leadership continuity. They praised the report's use of resilience to link humanitarian and development objectives, saying that building resilience was essential to WFP's exit strategy.
62. Members called for increased attention to gender, greater use of cash-based transfers and stronger country office monitoring and evaluation capacity. One requested a road map showing how management would implement the recommendations. Another suggested that future evaluations assess the magnitude of local procurement and its impact on nutrition.
63. One member expressed concern over internal commodity control issues, particularly in the Somali region, saying that WFP should increase its efforts to mitigate governance and accountability risks.

64. Members requested additional information on asset creation activities and WFP's contribution to the national productive safety net programme.
65. The Director of Evaluation explained that future decentralized evaluations would address issues such as local procurement and its impact on nutrition. An impact evaluation strategy was being drawn up to guide country offices in this type of assessment.
66. She added that food for assets activities covered 17 percent of all beneficiaries in 2017 (paragraph 25 of the summary report) and that the productive safety net programme combined food and cash in asset creation (paragraph 69 of the full evaluation report). In addition the full report noted logistics problems such as congestion points (paragraph 131), as well as progress with the Global Commodity Management Facility.
67. The Country Director clarified that the ICSP did reflect some of the recommendations, such as those related to cash-based transfers, nutrition, resilience, protection and accountability to affected populations. He added that the country office was increasing its monitoring and evaluation capacity and tackling commodity management issues. WFP was working with the new authorities in the Somali region on a joint action plan, which would improve operations in the area.

**Ethiopia interim country strategic plan (2019–2020) (2019/EB.1/8) (for approval)**

68. The Ethiopia Country Director introduced the ICSP, through which WFP would assist the Government in working towards the attainment of middle-income country status by 2025. Building on the country's ongoing political and economic reforms, WFP would continue to meet the needs of vulnerable people while strengthening national institutions and systems for the achievement of national policy goals.
69. Noting that the ICSP addressed recommendations from the country portfolio evaluation, Board members welcomed it as an inclusive, pro-poor plan for enhancing the self-reliance of national institutions, communities and individuals. They praised the focus on gender-sensitive programming and the promotion of gender equality; increasing use of cash-based transfers coupled with technical assistance for local production and markets; the focus on school feeding; and ambitious work on climate-resilient livelihoods and disaster risk management in collaboration with national partners.
70. Commending the Government's hosting of refugees, members urged donors to support humanitarian and development work in the country and observed that the ICSP provided a channel for such support. They encouraged WFP to continue providing support for host communities and collaborating with United Nations partners in activities for refugees. Partnerships should be pursued with the Government and the World Bank for work on early warning; the Ministry of Health, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO) for the integration of malnutrition responses into the national health system; the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and others for CBT programmes; and FAO for boosting the production and marketing of locally produced nutritious foods.
71. Continuing violence and displacement required that WFP and the humanitarian community maintain flexibility and independence in their operations, in accordance with the humanitarian principles. It was also important that WFP be directly involved in the targeting and verification of beneficiaries and the management of distributions.
72. The Country Director confirmed that under the CSP more funding could be expected to be devoted to work on resilience and root causes. "Proof of concept" programmes involved the piloting of new approaches. WFP and other United Nations agencies were supporting the Government in the roll-out of integrated management of moderate acute malnutrition. However, a funding gap of USD 50 million put WFP's food assistance for refugees at risk.

## **Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia portfolio**

73. The Regional Director outlined WFP's work in the diverse Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, where protracted conflict was the main cause of increasing food insecurity and population displacements. Of the 33 million food-insecure people in the region WFP had reached 19 million between January and June 2018.
74. In Yemen, WFP fed 7 million people, and that figure was likely to increase by 3.2 million. WFP awaited a political solution to the crisis in the hope of shifting towards development and stability programming.
75. Twelve years of blockade in the Gaza Strip had resulted in high poverty and unemployment rates. Water sources were contaminated and electricity remained limited. With the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) facing a funding crisis, schools were unlikely to reopen in September, which would leave hundreds of children out of school and more vulnerable.
76. In Libya, WFP had returned to Tripoli after four years of remote operations. High rates of unemployment and displacement, and a lack of functioning markets remained core challenges. WFP aimed to achieve long-term impacts, including through the use of innovation and cash-based transfers, supporting the most vulnerable including migrants transiting through Libya.
77. The Regional Director thanked donors for their generous contributions, including multi-year funding, which enabled WFP to continue its assistance and build trust with host governments and affected populations. Shortfalls remained a concern, with only USD 2 billion of the USD 4.2 billion needed for 2018 received by June.
78. Due to limited funding, in the Syrian Arab Republic WFP was feeding only 3 million of the 4 million people targeted. Funding coverage in 2017 had been 76 percent, and the Regional Director hoped for at least a similar trend.
79. On a more positive note, the Regional Director outlined WFP's support for education in the region, which he saw as a potent weapon in combating terrorism. WFP's school meal programmes were supporting 4.8 million children and their families in 12 countries, employing women to prepare the meals in many schools. Despite the challenges, WFP introduced a school meals programme (SMP) in Mosul, Iraq; reached 140,000 children in Yemen, and supplied fresh school meals in Aleppo, Syrian Arab Republic. School meals were also implemented in Lebanon, Egypt, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. WFP also provided technical assistance to the governments of Morocco and Tunisia.
80. The Board requested that the Regional Director's overview be posted on the Board website.

### **Oral update on Yemen**

81. The Country Director updated the Board on WFP's work in Yemen, where four years of conflict had left 10 million people at risk of famine and 7 million – nearly a quarter of the population – malnourished. With aggravating factors including eroded livelihoods and currency fluctuations, humanitarian needs had increased by 27 percent over the previous year. WFP's focus in 2019 was on improving the food security of 12 million vulnerable people and the nutrition status of 3 million women and children. WFP's requirements in relation to the planned 2019 scale-up of assistance would entail a budget revision, which would be presented to the Board later in the year.
82. Since January, WFP had reached 9.1 million people with general food assistance, dispatching 133,000 mt of food to 21 governorates through 19 cooperating partners, introducing cash-based transfers for 124,000 people in Aden and reaching additional displaced and vulnerable people. Following the signing of the Stockholm Agreement in December 2018, WFP expected to regain access shortly to its Red Sea Mills storage facility,

which had been blockaded since September and contained 51,000 mt of WFP wheat – sufficient for 3.7 million people for one month. WFP’s planned support for the upgrading of the port in Aden was aimed at easing the entry of humanitarian commodities into Yemen.

83. As well as safety and security threats related to the conflict, major risks to WFP’s work and presence in Yemen included insufficient staff and partner capacity for the planned scale-up of activities; inadequate funding, with a current six-month budget shortfall of USD 464 million; inadequate cooperation from the authorities in Sana’a; and negative media reports regarding United Nations actions in Yemen. Incidents earlier in the year included two airstrikes hitting WFP subcontracted trucks in northern Yemen, a suspension of assistance in one district of Amran governorate and a suspected case of aid diversion, which was being investigated. WFP was working with both the Government and the de facto authorities on an action plan for mitigating the risk of diversion, including through improved beneficiary selection and targeting supported by biometrics and enhanced monitoring of implementing partners. A re-targeting exercise covering all of WFP’s activities in Yemen would be completed by early September and would be followed by biometric registration of beneficiaries.
84. Responding to Board member concerns regarding WFP’s work with non-state actors, the Country Director confirmed that WFP’s strategy in Yemen was to reach vulnerable people wherever they were. Implementation challenges resulting from a lack of cooperation from de facto authorities required flexible solutions, such as the use of third-party monitors in areas with restricted access.

**Libya interim country strategic plan (2019–2020) (2019/EB.1/9) (for approval)**

85. The Country Director presented the ICSP for Libya, saying that it was aligned with the United Nations strategic framework and the 2019 humanitarian response plan for the country. The country office would continue general food distributions while supporting livelihoods and the recovery and strengthening of national safety net systems. Thanks to better access, WFP was gathering much more data that would help it to improve the targeting and impact of its operations.
86. Board members welcomed the ICSP, praising its alignment with national plans and its support for vulnerable Libyans and migrants. They expressed appreciation for its emphasis on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, which they said would ensure that WFP contributed to long-term peace and stability.
87. Members urged WFP to work with the Libyan authorities, the World Bank and others to improve social protection mechanisms, saying that it was important to ensure that partners worked together to achieve common goals. Others called for more South–South cooperation on capacity strengthening and increased attention to gender in nutrition activities.
88. One member requested more information on resilience activities, noting that just 8 percent of the country portfolio budget was dedicated to such work. Another asked how WFP had determined food assistance needs and how it was overcoming access constraints. Other questions addressed CBT risks for women and girls, the continuity of UNHAS operations and measures to avoid the misuse of beneficiary data.
89. The Country Director confirmed that WFP was collaborating with all other United Nations agencies operating in Libya. Its collaboration with the World Bank was technical rather than financial and focused on education and social safety nets.
90. The data used for the ICSP came from a multisectoral needs assessment conducted with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It covered 22 of 24 localities, compared with the six localities covered in the 2018 humanitarian response plan.

91. WFP was a member of the cash and markets working group and had mapped all CBT-related risks. Electronic vouchers would be used instead of cash because of liquidity issues in Libya; beneficiaries would exchange the vouchers for food items at local retailers.
92. WFP was neutral in Libya, operating in the east and the west, for example by supporting port rehabilitation in Benghazi and Tripoli. UNHAS was of strategic importance in securing humanitarian access in all areas of Libya, but the service faced considerable funding challenges.

### **Southern Africa portfolio**

93. The Regional Director for the Southern Africa region reported that climate change and erratic weather continued to drive food insecurity in southern Africa. A reduced harvest was forecast for 2019 because of late and insufficient rains. Food prices were 40 to 60 percent higher than at the same time the previous year.
94. In Zimbabwe, 30 percent of the population faced food security in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification categories of "crisis" or "emergency" and required immediate assistance. WFP was stepping up its response and had reached 700,000 people with food and cash in January. Operations were also being scaled up in Madagascar, Mozambique and Lesotho in response to harsh lean seasons.
95. WFP nonetheless continued to seek opportunities to move from traditional lean season assistance to early response programming, building resilience to reduce the need for emergency operations. A communications campaign was planned for Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Madagascar to tackle high rates of stunting.
96. The number of severely hungry people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo almost doubled in 2018, reaching over 13 million. Nutritional support was critical, as 5 million children were acutely malnourished. WFP also planned to increase the use of cash-based transfers and expand resilience building in partnership with FAO.
97. In response to the Ebola epidemic, WFP had provided food assistance to over 177,000 people since August 2018, helping to limit population movements and the spread of the virus. A school feeding programme had been launched in affected areas and food-for-assets activities were planned.
98. WFP was supporting market integration efforts through the African Union Agenda and the use of technology and innovation across the region, such as the use of drones in central Mozambique to identify evacuation routes and determine where to locate emergency shelters.
99. The Regional Director paid tribute to Richard Kasimba, a colleague killed in 2018 during a road ambush while a WFP team was driving to distribute assistance in North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
100. Board members expressed condolences to the family of Mr Kasimba. They welcomed the update, noting the impact of conflict, drought, food insecurity, malnutrition and Ebola on the region and commending WFP's efforts to support national governments in confronting those challenges.

### **Congo country strategic plan (2019–2023) (2019/EB.1/10) (for approval)**

101. Presenting the CSP, the Country Director observed that the sudden arrival of 16,000 asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in December 2018 underscored the Congo's exposure to humanitarian crises. Under the CSP, WFP would deliver food and nutrition assistance to crisis-affected people while supporting resilience-building activities aimed at contributing to the consolidation of peace. Other features of the CSP included the development of programmes to address the root causes of hunger, to be adopted and scaled up by other actors; increased collaboration with FAO and

IFAD on support for smallholders; the Congo's first large-scale climate change adaptation programme; and the provision of digital tools to the Government for the management of safety nets. There were signs that the Government would be resuming its financial support for WFP operations following a recent interruption caused by a budgetary crisis.

102. Board members started their comments by expressing their condolences to the family of a WFP staff member from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who had recently been killed on duty.
103. Noting that despite its rich natural resources the Congo was a food-deficit country, Board members welcomed the CSP as having the potential to contribute to social and economic development and commended the Government for progress to date. In particular they praised the plans for addressing gender inequalities; providing assistance to refugees, displaced people and returnees; implementing measures for strengthening local markets and social safety nets, including school feeding; and applying technological innovations for mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change.
104. Given the importance of the CSP and its strategic outcomes, Board members urged donors to contribute the necessary financial resources for implementation.
105. The Country Director thanked the Board for its comments and support.

**Malawi country strategic plan (2019–2023) (2019/EB.1/11) (for approval)**

106. The Country Director for Malawi focused his remarks on the integrated resilience approach, under which WFP had shifted to conditional transfers of assistance based on food and cash for work and support for climate-smart agriculture, a small loan programme and promotion of market access; collaboration with stakeholders such as FAO, UNICEF and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ – the German Agency for International Cooperation) and with the Government to develop a shock-responsive protection system for vulnerable populations; and funding for resilience, particularly the urgent need for resources to support the integrated approach and for stable multi-year funding and investment to support long-term sustainable outcomes.
107. Board members expressed concern at recent increases in the number of food-insecure people in Malawi, including large numbers of refugees, and the likelihood of an El Niño event in 2019 that would affect agriculture. Board members commended the CSP focus on support for local authorities in addressing hunger and improving nutrition in their communities. WFP's work in partnerships with its United Nations partners and the alignment of the CSP with the nexus of humanitarian and development assistance were also commended.
108. Observing that the enhancement of resilience would take time, Board members recommended that WFP develop a practical exit strategy in the long term. In that context members fully endorsed the plans for capacity building for government and municipal officials. Some members recommended that the replacement of food distributions with CBTs be accelerated and suggested that the country portfolio budget be amended to show the comparative costs of in-kind and cash-based assistance. It was also recommended that the nutrition support element of the CSP be revised to maximize its effectiveness and ensure sustainability, with a focus on the needs of women and children.
109. The Country Director thanked the Board members for their support and comments, stressing that the CSP sought to assist communities in enhancing their resilience and taking ownership of their development. The Country Director agreed that CBTs were the most effective assistance modality – provided that good quality food was available for purchase – and would ensure that they soon replaced food distributions, with the caveat that the process largely depended on government capacities and funding decisions. The costs of in-kind and cash-based modalities would be provided as requested.

## Latin America and the Caribbean portfolio

110. The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean drew attention to challenges arising from political instability and food insecurity in the region; in Haiti, for example, 2.2 million people were affected by rising prices and consequent lack of access to food. He also noted that the humanitarian response plan faced a funding gap of USD 42 million. Food was being pre-positioned for the coming hurricane season, but the cash contingency stock was seriously underfunded. In the countries of the Central American Dry Corridor water shortages had reduced maize crops by at least 40 percent, affecting the food security of 1.4 million people. WFP, FAO, UNICEF and other partners were working on emergency response and drought-resilience programmes in support of the governments of Central America. If WFP supported 20 percent of all food-insecure and drought-affected people in Central America the funding needed would amount to USD 80 million in 2019. The school feeding and disaster prevention programmes in Nicaragua were being extended in response to the drought, but funding for emergency responses was well short of the amount needed.
111. The Regional Bureau was working with its partners to address needs arising from the large-scale migration from Venezuela into Colombia and Ecuador. The regional plan provided for USD 50 million to cover preparedness and food needs and the provision of common services for the government and humanitarian agencies if needed. Currently the Colombia country office had enough funding to cover emergency operations through March 2019.
112. In the Caribbean WFP was updating its hurricane response plan and working to ensure that its programmes contributed to sustainable development, focusing on capacity development and technical assistance programmes. Slow economic growth was limiting development, and funding was needed to develop national systems for social protection, capacity building, early warning, climate change adaptation and weather insurance.
113. Lastly, the Regional Director highlighted the commitment to working with the other Rome-based agencies, with joint objectives of achieving zero hunger, eradicating rural extreme poverty and achieving climate change adaptation and resilience, resulting in tripartite studies and publications, among other things.
114. Board members acknowledged the challenges constraining development in the region, saying that progress towards SDGs 2 and 17 was reversing as ever more people were affected by food insecurity and urging WFP to intensify its work with governments and United Nations partners to promote capacity building and resilience as a basis for further development. Board members said that significant long-term investment was required for this, even though most countries in the region had middle-income status. The fact that many migrants were young people seeking work opportunities showed the vital need for regional development, which could only be achieved if governments, United Nations agencies and other partners worked together through coordinated development programmes to achieve the SDGs.
115. The Regional Director thanked the Board members for their supportive observations, stating in response to a question that the proposed regional strategic plan for the Caribbean would include 17 countries and outlying islands under five United Nations development assistance frameworks.

### **Dominican Republic country strategic plan (2019–2023) (2019/EB.1/12) (for approval)**

116. The Country Director presented the CSP, which he said sought to foster sustainable improvements in food security through gender-transformative and whole-of-society approaches and communication, advocacy and behaviour change strategies. The plan included three strategic outcomes focused on strengthening the country's capacities for



improving food security, nutrition and disaster risk reduction among the most vulnerable groups.

117. Board members warmly supported the CSP, praising its focus on capacity strengthening for emergency response, early warning and climate change adaptation. Members called the plan ambitious in its objectives and commended its rights and life cycle approaches.
118. Some members said that it was important to work with middle-income countries to address inequalities, multi-dimensional poverty, gaps in social safety nets and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. One member asked whether WFP had gathered any lessons learned from its resilience building work in the Dominican Republic that could be useful to other countries with a similar level of vulnerability to climate change.
119. The Country Director confirmed that WFP had gained valuable experience in emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction that could be shared with other countries. He highlighted the importance of government leadership in guiding international assistance and in optimizing the use of national and international funding.
120. Management reiterated the importance of not overlooking middle-income countries, many of which faced serious threats to food security. It noted, however, that attracting the right funding streams for the development activities needed to protect and expand food security in such countries was challenging.

#### **Nicaragua country strategic plan (2019–2023) (2019/EB.1/13) (for approval)**

121. The Country Director presented the CSP, saying that it sought to respond to the immediate needs of vulnerable populations while laying the foundations for sustainable development. The plan represented a strategic shift in WFP's engagement in Nicaragua, placing gender equality at the centre of all activities. The CSP also had a strong focus on climate change adaptation, support for sustainable food systems and nutrition-sensitive social safety nets.
122. Board members praised the CSP, particularly its emphasis on resilience building, gender equality, disaster risk reduction and support for family farming. Members welcomed what they described as a consultative and transparent process used to develop the plan. They underscored the value of partnerships with other United Nations bodies, particularly for work on rural development, early warning and national capacity strengthening.
123. Some members called on WFP to expand the home-grown school meals programme, noting its potential for strengthening social protection. Others urged WFP to take a conflict-sensitive approach in implementing the plan, listening to the security concerns of communities and ensuring that participatory processes included the most vulnerable.
124. One member encouraged WFP to ensure neutrality and respect for sovereignty in all its operations. Another urged the Government of Nicaragua to facilitate WFP's access to all vulnerable populations, regardless of origin.
125. The Country Director thanked the Board members for their support. She noted that the food systems approach of the CSP was designed to foster long-term, sustainable food security, particularly as the vast bulk of staple foods was produced by smallholders vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. She confirmed that WFP would work to enhance the link between smallholder farming and school feeding in order to strengthen local markets and communities. She added that WFP was cognizant of protection issues in Nicaragua, and the country office would explore a potential standby partnership to support the design of protection measures for the implementation of the CSP.

#### **Asia and the Pacific portfolio**

126. Anticipating approval of the final tranche of CSPs at the Board's 2019 first regular session, the Asia and Pacific region had developed WFP's first complete regional CSP portfolio. The Regional Bureau would focus on intensifying the implementation of the new portfolio,

particularly in the areas of resourcing and partnership. It also continued to work on developing at the country level an enabling environment in terms of inter-ministerial food security and nutrition governance and corresponding United Nations country team coordination on SDG 2 with key agencies.

127. In Afghanistan, WFP's drought response was reaching 2.5 million people and was expected to decrease to 1.4 million by July; outstanding requirements were USD 84 million.
128. The response in Bangladesh had been downgraded to Level 2. A joint response plan for Rohingya refugees had been launched in Geneva in early February with a planning budget of USD 920 million. WFP's general food distribution reached 900,000 refugees per month, all of whom were enrolled on WFP's corporate digital beneficiary and transfer platform – SCOPE, and about a fourth of WFP's beneficiaries received e-vouchers. A site management and engineering project with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR continued to mitigate the effects of cyclones and monsoons on refugee camps. WFP supported 200,000 beneficiaries in host communities and the local private sector in Bangladesh. In response to growing food insecurity in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea resulting from poor harvests in 2017 and 2018, FAO and WFP were planning joint assessments. In the Pacific, WFP was preparing for the next storm season in the North Pacific in July. Rainfall forecasts were good in Central and South Asia and Papua New Guinea but below normal in Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Based on lessons from responses to El Niño in 2016, the Regional Bureau had intensified its analytical and contingency planning work, particularly in countries where WFP had limited presence – Mongolia, Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam.
129. Board members thanked the Regional Director for the overview.

**Bhutan country strategic plan (2019–2023) (2019/EB.1/14) (for approval)**

130. The Country Director outlined the situation in Bhutan, which was expected to become a lower-middle-income country by 2023 following years of strong economic growth. Remaining challenges included high unemployment among young people, health problems linked to poor diets and a high risk of natural disasters including earthquakes.
131. WFP's support was focused on improving nutrition for school-age children and vulnerable groups and strengthening national capacities to prepare for and respond to disasters. In particular, WFP planned to complete the hand-over of its school feeding programme and contribute to the programme's evolution into a school nutrition programme through the provision of capacity strengthening for the Government; social and behaviour change communication aimed at improving the dietary and health habits of schoolchildren and their communities; and support for the development of a legal framework and standards for the production and commercialization of locally processed fortified food.
132. Board members applauded the progress made in Bhutan and WFP's long partnership with the Government in working towards educational goals. They welcomed WFP's shift from direct implementation of programmes to the provision of enabling support and technical assistance for food security, nutrition and emergency preparedness and response, with attention to gender issues integrated into all activities. The two strategic outcomes of the CSP would provide continuity for WFP's activities in the country, facilitating increased government ownership. Members praised the planned consolidation of school feeding activities into a national school nutrition programme.
133. Given the importance of emergency preparedness in Bhutan, members were concerned about the Government's weak data and indicators for identifying hunger gaps and informing the development of policies, the implementation of programmes and the monitoring of progress towards SDG targets; they urged WFP to provide support for the strengthening of capacities in data collection and management.

134. In response to points raised, the Country Director said that since submission of the CSP WFP had increased its work on data preparedness and disaster management, including through collaboration with partners on developing a national road map for disaster risk management to be presented at a roundtable meeting with representatives of 60-80 countries in March.

**Cambodia country strategic plan (2019–2023) (2019/EB.1/15) (for approval)**

135. The Country Director presented the CSP, which had been designed using a consultative approach to identify subnational needs as well as national priorities. The CSP realigned WFP's programmes to optimize their contribution to Cambodia's development priorities.
136. The Government and WFP had made considerable progress in developing a nationally owned and locally sourced home-grown school feeding programme. The programme now covered 20 percent of WFP-assisted schools; domestic funding was being sought for the programme, and more schools were preparing to join.
137. With the CSP, WFP would work with subnational authorities to develop climate smart, environmentally responsible and gender equitable food systems that connected smallholder farmers to markets. Other priorities included strengthening national and subnational disaster risk management and supporting digitalization and improved analytical capacity for the monitoring of zero hunger investments.
138. The Board welcomed the CSP, with members saying that it was clear, pragmatic and aligned with national priorities. Members praised the effectiveness of WFP's operations in Cambodia and praised the shift from implementing activities to strengthening national capacities and building scalable programme models.
139. Members encouraged WFP to continue to work closely with the Government to mitigate crises, improve the food system, support climate change adaptation and strengthen the links between smallholder farmers and markets. One member said that it was important to support the digital transformation of the Government and to use innovative technologies to support food security in Cambodia.
140. Board members urged WFP to continue to promote gender equality and to collaborate with national and subnational authorities to achieve lasting progress towards achievement of the SDGs.

**Democratic People's Republic of Korea interim country strategic plan (2019–2021) (2019/EB.1/16) (for approval)**

141. The Country Director reported that partnerships with national institutions and other United Nations agencies positioned WFP to tackle food and nutrition insecurity in the country while improving the capacities of vulnerable communities to cope with natural disasters. A partnership with the Central Bureau of Statistics enabled WFP to carry out assessments and analyses, widen its geographic coverage and leverage national and international technical expertise. The ICSP was designed to allow rapid scale up of interventions in response to changing needs in a complex and dynamic operating environment.
142. Noting a major improvement in WFP's operating conditions over the previous decade, Board members welcomed the ICSP. In particular they praised the focus on eradicating hunger and malnutrition among children under 7, pregnant and lactating women and girls and crisis-affected people; activities for building resilience to natural disasters, including through food assistance for assets activities with FAO, UNICEF and local entities; efforts to improve the status of women, with 57 percent of beneficiaries being women and girls; provision of technical assistance to local government entities for the local production of fortified food; and plans for enhancing partnerships with other United Nations agencies.

143. Given the Government's commitment to the achievement of food security and the SDGs, its adoption of measures for increasing food production and the country's vulnerability to natural disasters, members emphasized the importance of WFP's continued engagement in the country. Although the Government and WFP had reached agreement regarding the minimum operating conditions necessary for the implementation of WFP interventions, however, risks remained, including the imposition of sanctions, the blocking of bank accounts and longer lead times in ensuring WFP's supply lines. Members called on the Government to assist WFP in its efforts to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of activities under the CSP.
144. Recalling issues raised during the Board's discussions of previous drafts of the document, one member requested information on the participation of local communities in designing and implementing WFP's interventions for disaster risk reduction and sustainable livelihoods, as well as clarification of the targeting and vulnerability criteria used in food assistance for assets interventions.
145. The Country Director said that a project management team, currently being established with representatives from government ministries, would facilitate improvements in targeting and food security assessments, including at the household level. The country office was committed to working with rural communities on the establishment of priorities.

## **Administrative and managerial matters**

### **Appointment of one member to the Audit Committee (2019/EB.1/17) (for approval)**

146. The Secretary reported that the selection panel appointed by the Board at its 2018 second regular session had considered whether to recommend the appointment to the Audit Committee of Mr Robert Samels (Canada), who had been the second highest ranked candidate examined by the 2017 selection panel that had considered candidates to fill the previous most recent vacancy on the Committee. The Board-appointed panel's current consideration of Mr Samels had included consultations, a review of the candidate's background and an interview by the Chair of the Audit Committee, following which the panel had recommended that he be appointed. She noted that Mr Samels, who had exemplary experience dealing with risk, would be the first candidate to be recommended by a selection panel consisting entirely of member state representatives.
147. The Board appointed Mr Samels to the Audit Committee for a term of three years, from 1 March 2019 to 28 February 2022.

### **Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit relevant to the work of WFP (2019/EB.1/18) (for consideration)**

148. Outlining the document on reports by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) relevant to the work of WFP, management noted that WFP had been found by an independent JIU review to be at the maximum "maturity" level in its follow-up and reporting on JIU recommendations. WFP responses to seven new JIU reports were covered in the document. Of 54 recommendations, 80 percent had been implemented and closed, as shown in the document's annexes. Open recommendations related to booking air travel, implementation of the knowledge management strategy, revision of the whistleblower protection policy and revision of the policy on conflicts of interest and financial disclosure.
149. Board members commended WFP for its high level of compliance with JIU recommendations. Some members sought clarification of the timeframe for completing the outstanding recommended actions, particularly those relating to air travel, upgrading the knowledge management system, donor reporting requirements, accountability tools and private sector partnerships.
150. Board members recommended that WFP liaise with donors with a view to increasing the proportion of unearmarked, flexible multi-year funding. Members also recommended that

the Board continue to ensure adequate budgets for the Office of the Inspector General and the Office of Evaluation. Board members encouraged WFP to continue work to mainstream results-based management, which was a continuous improvement process, and supported the recommendation that WFP focus on economy in travel booking. Members also encouraged the adoption of coordinated due diligence processes at the United Nations system level in connection with private partner engagement.

151. Management recalled that a new airline booking system was being introduced, noting that air travel accounted for a very small proportion of total official travel. Improvements in knowledge management were related to people and process aspects of knowledge management; implementation continued at the headquarters and regional levels and further global coordination was pending. Management noted that governance arrangements were in place to ensure adequate funding of the Office of the Inspector General and Office of Evaluation and agreed that strong due diligence processes should be part of a common United Nations policy on working with private sector organizations. Guidance on the updated whistleblower protection and financial disclosure policies would be issued in the near future. Compliance with mandatory training in ethics was considered in individual performance reviews, and 360 degree performance reviews were being considered as part of the enhanced performance management processes.

**Oral update on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination**  
*(for consideration)*

152. The two co-chairs of the Executive Board management working group on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination updated the Board on the group's work. The group had held three monthly meetings since the last Board session, and its two sub-working groups had met five times.
153. During its meetings, the joint working group had noted the significant increase in reported cases in 2018, which had resulted from the adoption of a more inclusive policy framework following the Executive Director's letter of 1 March 2018. Improvements in the reporting system included abolition of the six-month deadline for reporting cases and the acceptance of reports from witnesses. The group had also noted that the reporting of cases rose during the performance assessment process and that short-term consultants sometimes felt that they were the victims of harassment because of power imbalances resulting from their contract status. Following the Executive Director's letter there had been increases in the number of alleged victims seeking information on how to report incidents and managers requesting advice on how to deal with reports.
154. The sub-working group on safeguarding against sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse had examined the perceptions of what constituted sexual harassment among WFP personnel and was considering cases with a view to clarifying definitions and identifying cultural and workplace-related issues that could give rise to incidents. Preventive measures included the provision of psychosocial support and training in cultural sensitivity to staff members before and after deployment to hardship posts.
155. The sub-working group on protection from harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination was examining the causes of incidents and agreed that clearer definitions of harassment were needed, along with efforts to build trust among staff members.
156. Board members reiterated their commitment to supporting management in addressing these issues and welcomed the progress made. Commending the zero tolerance approach adopted, they urged management to take swift action whenever incidents were confirmed; to present annual action plans with clear deliverables and milestones; and to strengthen engagement and communication with partners, beneficiaries, staff and Board members on addressing these issues.

157. Members requested management to collect anonymous feedback on progress from staff members and to include in managers' performance assessments an indicator of effectiveness in preventing and addressing harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination. Members said that they looked forward to a further update from the joint working group at the next session of the Board.

## **Summary of the work of the Executive Board**

### **Summary of the work of the 2018 second regular session of the Executive Board (2019/EB.1/19) (for approval)**

158. The President reported that the rapporteur for the second regular session had prepared the summary, a draft of which had been distributed to Board members in early February 2019. Since then, a suggestion received from one member had been incorporated into the document, which the Board approved without discussion.

## **Other business**

### **Oral update on United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (for information)**

159. Management recalled that WFP had operated the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) since 2002, providing safe and reliable transport for humanitarian personnel and cargo to and from otherwise inaccessible areas, in line with SDG 17. Air movements connected with peacekeeping were beyond its mandate.
160. UNHAS was currently providing services to 700 organizations in 16 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The 380,000 passengers carried in 2018 included staff evacuees from conflicts in the Sudan, Nigeria and Ethiopia and medical personnel working to manage the recent Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The main users of UNHAS were NGOs, which accounted for 55 percent of passengers; United Nations staff accounted for 45 percent. All users appreciated the flexibility of UNHAS, which could be deployed rapidly to respond to needs as they emerged. Oversight of UNHAS by resident coordinators ensured that operations were effective and cost-efficient. UNHAS' regular fleet of 50 fixed-wing aircraft and 15 helicopters was supported by an additional 40 standby aircraft and had recently been augmented by the addition of an Airbus A320 aircraft whose large passenger and cargo capacity would help to increase efficiency and bring about cost savings. All aircraft were maintained according to international operational and safety standards, and all aspects of UNHAS operations were regularly evaluated.
161. Funding was a constant issue: there was an underlying need for predictable, flexible multi-year funding to enable UNHAS to provide flights as required and to take advantage of opportunities in the aviation market. Under the current funding model, some operations would be viable only until March 2019. Management thanked all donors but reiterated the need for predictability and flexibility. Ensuring that airfields and facilities were adequate for fixed-wing aircraft helped to offset the very high costs of helicopter operations, but new funding sources were clearly needed. Noting that some member states had called for UNHAS updates to be provided at every session of the Board, management observed that ample information about UNHAS was available on the WFP website and proposed that formal updates be provided only at every first regular session.
162. Board members recognized the significance of UNHAS in challenging humanitarian contexts and acknowledged the need for predictable funding, saying that the Secretariat should look into WFP's cost-recovery mechanisms and centralized funds such as the Central Emergency Response Fund, especially as UNHAS served organizations other than WFP. Regarding the frequency of updates, one member suggested that they be provided at the Board's first and second regular sessions each year.

**Verification of adopted decisions and recommendations**

163. The Rapporteur confirmed that the decisions and recommendations presented in the draft document corresponded to those that had been agreed during the session. The final version would be posted on the Board's website within 24 hours of the conclusion of the session.

**ANNEX I****Decisions and recommendations**

The decisions and recommendations in the current report will be implemented by the Secretariat in the light of the Board's deliberations, from which the main comments will be reflected in the summary of the work of the session.

**Adoption of the agenda**

The Board adopted the agenda.

*25 February 2019*

**Election of the Bureau and appointment of the Rapporteur**

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Board, the Board elected H.E. Hisham Mohamed Badr (Egypt, List A) as President for a one-year term. Her Excellency Lineo Irene Molise-Mabusela (Lesotho, List A) was elected as Alternate. The Board elected H.E. Dr. Ulrich Seidenberger (Germany, List D) as Vice-President. Mr Bruce Campbell (Switzerland, List D) was elected as Alternate.

The Board elected as members of the Bureau, representing the other three WFP electoral lists, for a one-year term: Mr Yousef Juhail (Kuwait, List B); Her Excellency Karla Gabriela Samayoa Recari (Guatemala, List C); and H.E. Victor Vasiliev (Russian Federation, List E). Elected as Alternates were: Ms So-Youn Hong (Republic of Korea, List B); Mr Luís Fernando de Carvalho (Brazil, List C); and H.E. Artur Andrzej Pollok (Poland, List E).

In accordance with Rule XII of its Rules of Procedure, the Board appointed Mr Salman Pervaiz (Pakistan, List B) Rapporteur of the 2019 first regular session.

*25 February 2019*

**Current and future strategic issues**

2019/EB.1/1

**Opening remarks by the Executive Director**

The Board took note of the opening remarks by the Executive Director. The main points of the Executive Director and the Board's comments would be reflected in the summary of the work of the session.

*25 February 2019*

**West Africa portfolio**

2019/EB.1/2

**Country strategic plan – Côte d'Ivoire (2019–2023)**

The Board approved the Côte d'Ivoire country strategic plan (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.1/2019/8-A/4) at a total cost to WFP of USD 82,768,485.

*25 February 2019*

2019/EB.1/3

**Country strategic plan – Nigeria (2019–2022)**

The Board approved the Nigeria country strategic plan (2019–2022) (WFP/EB.1/2019/8-A/8) at a total cost to WFP of USD 587,524,542.

*25 February 2019*



**Annual reports**

2019/EB.1/4

**Annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2017 and management note**

The Board took note of the annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2017 set out in document WFP/EB.1/2019/4-A.

*25 February 2019*

**Policy issues**

2019/EB.1/5

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

The Board,

1. Took note of the rules of procedure of the executive boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and WFP;
2. Recalled decision 2018/EB.2/29 on working methods of the Executive Boards in which the Bureau of WFP, in collaboration with the Bureaux of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women, was asked to launch a joint consultative process with the Member States starting at the 2019 first regular session;
3. Took note with appreciation of the formation of the core group of Member States to lead the joint consultative process with Member States, in an open, transparent and inclusive manner, with a view to examining the efficiency and quality of its current sessions, as well as the functions of the joint meetings of the Boards, building on the joint response prepared by the secretariats, and in close consultation with all Member States, seeking Member States' input to the written account of the core group;
4. Requested the executive board secretariats to support the core group, upon request, in analysing the effects of its findings and suggestions;
5. Looked forward to the written account of the core group, to be presented at the joint meeting of the Boards in May 2019, for subsequent consideration of its findings and recommendations by the members and observers of the respective boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP.

*26 February 2019*

**Evaluation reports****2019/EB.1/6 Summary report on the strategic evaluation of WFP's support for enhanced resilience and management response**

The Board took note of the summary report on the strategic evaluation of WFP's support for enhanced resilience set out in document WFP/EB.1/2019/7-A and the management response set out in document WFP/EB.1/2019/7-A/Add.1 and encouraged further action on the recommendations, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

*26 February 2019*

**East Africa portfolio****2019/EB.1/7 Summary evaluation report - Ethiopia country portfolio (2012-2017) and management response**

The Board took note of the summary report on the evaluation of the Ethiopia country portfolio for 2012-2017 set out in document WFP/EB.1/2019/7-B and the management response set out in document WFP/EB.1/2019/7-B/Add.1 and encouraged further action on the recommendations, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

*26 February 2019*

**2019/EB.1/8 Interim country strategic plan - Ethiopia (2019-2020)**

The Board approved the Ethiopia interim country strategic plan (2019-2020) (WFP/EB.1/2019/8-B/2) at a total cost to WFP of USD 871,337,120.

*26 February 2019*

**Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia portfolio****2019/EB.1/9 Interim country strategic plan - Libya (2019-2020)**

The Board approved the Libya interim country strategic plan (2019-2020) (WFP/EB.1/2019/8-B/3) at a total cost to WFP of USD 60,517,166.

*26 February 2019*

**Southern Africa portfolio****2019/EB.1/10 Country strategic plan - the Congo (2019-2023)**

The Board approved the Congo country strategic plan (2019-2023) (WFP/EB.1/2019/8-A/3/Rev.1) at a total cost to WFP of USD 97,921,641.

*26 February 2019*

**2019/EB.1/11 Country strategic plan - Malawi (2019-2023)**

The Board approved the Malawi country strategic plan (2019-2023) (WFP/EB.1/2019/8-A/6) at a total cost to WFP of USD 619,800,513.

*27 February 2019*

**Latin America and the Caribbean portfolio**

2019/EB.1/12      **Country strategic plan – Dominican Republic (2019–2023)**

The Board approved the Dominican Republic country strategic plan (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.1/2019/8-A/5) at a total cost to WFP of USD 10,174,911.

*164.27 February 2019*

2019/EB.1/13      **Country strategic plan – Nicaragua (2019–2023)**

The Board approved the Nicaragua country strategic plan (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.1/2019/8-A/7) at a total cost to WFP of USD 68,370,439.

*27 February 2019*

**Asia and the Pacific portfolio**

2019/EB.1/14      **Country strategic plan – Bhutan (2019–2023)**

The Board approved the Bhutan country strategic plan (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.1/2019/8-A/1) at a total cost to WFP of USD 8,942,053.

*27 February 2019*

2019/EB.1/15      **Country strategic plan – Cambodia (2019–2023)**

The Board approved the Cambodia country strategic plan (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.1/2019/8-A/2) at a total cost to WFP of USD 50,241,310.

*27 February 2019*

2019/EB.1/16      **Interim country strategic plan – Democratic People's Republic of Korea (2019–2021)**

The Board approved the Democratic People's Republic of Korea interim country strategic plan (2019–2021) (WFP/EB.1/2019/8-B/1) at a total cost to WFP of USD 161,070,534.

*27 February 2019*

**Administrative and managerial matters**

2019/EB.1/17      **Appointment of one member to the Audit Committee**

The Board approved the appointment of one Audit Committee member as follows:

- Mr Robert Samels (Canada), from 1 March 2019 to 28 February 2022.

*26 February 2019*

2019/EB.1/18      **Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit relevant to the work of WFP**

The Board took note of the information and recommendations in the document entitled "Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit relevant to the work of WFP" (WFP/EB.1/2019/10-B) and endorsed the responses to the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendations to the legislative bodies included in the annexes to the document.

*26 February 2019*

**Summary of the work of the Executive Board**

2019/EB.1/19

**Summary of the work of the 2018 second regular session of the Executive Board**

The Board approved the draft summary of the work of its 2018 second regular session, the final version of which would be embodied in document WFP/EB.2/2018/14.

*27 February 2019*

**ANNEX II****Agenda**

1. **Adoption of the agenda** (*for approval*)
2. **Election of the Bureau and appointment of the Rapporteur**
3. **Opening remarks by the Executive Director**  
*Statement by His Excellency Daniel Kablan Duncan, Vice-President of Côte d'Ivoire*
4. **Annual reports**
  - a) Annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2017 and management note (*for consideration*)
5. **Policy issues**
  - a) Revised charter of the Office of the Inspector General (*for consideration*) – POSTPONED TO THE 2019 ANNUAL SESSION
  - b) Update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system) (*for information*)
6. **Resource, budgetary and financial matters**
  - a) Update on the Management Plan (2019–2021) (*for approval*) – WITHDRAWN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DECISION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD BUREAU AT ITS MEETING OF 20 FEBRUARY 2019
7. **Evaluation reports** (*for consideration*)
  - a) Summary evaluation report of the strategic evaluation of WFP's support for enhanced resilience and management response
  - b) Summary evaluation report – Ethiopia country portfolio (2012–2017) and management response
8. **Operational matters**
  - a) Country strategic plans (*for approval*)
    - 1) Bhutan
    - 2) Cambodia
    - 3) Congo
    - 4) Côte d'Ivoire
    - 5) Dominican Republic
    - 6) Malawi
    - 7) Nicaragua
    - 8) Nigeria
  - b) Interim country strategic plans (*for approval*)
    - 1) Democratic People's Republic of Korea
    - 2) Ethiopia
    - 3) Libya

- c) Short-term interim country strategic plans approved by vote by correspondence (*for information*)
    - 1) Bhutan
    - 2) Cambodia
    - 3) Congo
    - 4) Côte d'Ivoire
    - 5) Democratic People's Republic of Korea
    - 6) Dominican Republic
    - 7) Ethiopia
    - 8) Libya
    - 9) Malawi
    - 10) Nigeria
  - d) Projects approved by correspondence (*for information*)
    - 1) Budget Revisions and extensions in time of transitional interim country strategic plans
      - 1) Liberia
      - 2) Nicaragua
    - 2) Revisions of protracted relief and recovery operations and budget increases
      - 1) Niger 200961
  - e) Reports of the Executive Director on operational matters (*for information*)
    - 1) Budget increases to country strategic plans and interim country strategic plans approved by the Executive Director or by the Executive Director and the Director-General of FAO (1 July–31 December 2018)
    - 2) Limited emergency operations and immediate response activities approved by the Executive Director or by the Executive Director and the Director-General of FAO (1 July–31 December 2018)
  - f) Crisis response revisions of country strategic plans and corresponding budget increases, submitted to the Board for comments (*for information*)
    - 1) Bangladesh
    - 2) Democratic Republic of the Congo
9. **Organizational and procedural matters**
- a) Biennial programme of work of the Executive Board (2019–2020) (*for information*)
10. **Administrative and managerial matters**
- a) Appointment of one member to the Audit Committee (*for approval*)
  - b) Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit relevant to the work of WFP (*for consideration*)
  - c) Oral update on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination (*for consideration*)
11. **Summary of the work of the 2018 second regular session of the Executive Board** (*for approval*)

12. ***Other business***

- a) Report on the field visit of the WFP Executive Board (*for information*)
- b) Oral update on United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (*for information*)

13. ***Verification of adopted decisions and recommendations***

**Acronyms used in the document**

CBT	cash-based transfer
CSP	country strategic plan
HSHAPD	harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination
ICSP	interim country strategic plan
JIU	United Nations Joint Inspection Unit
RWA	respectful workplace advisor
UNDAF	United Nations development assistance framework
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund