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Summary of the work of the 2021 second regular session of the Executive Board

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Draft summary of the work of the 2021 second regular session of the Executive Board

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Current and future strategic issues

2021/EB.2/1 Opening remarks by the Executive Director

1. The Executive Director welcomed participants to the first “hybrid” Board session, at which a limited number of member and observer representatives were present in the meeting room while others participated remotely via web link.
2. The world faced a challenging year in 2021, with 285 million people at risk of starvation. WFP was particularly concerned about the 45 million in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) phase 4 but the organization had already reached the advance funding ceilings of its internal project lending mechanism and Global Commodity Management Facility and was in urgent need of further resources for the following weeks and months. The Executive Director was seeking contributions from the world’s billionaires in order to fill a funding gap of USD 6.6 billion. If hungry people were not assisted in or near their home countries, the resulting migration would require far higher expenditures to support them in developed countries.
3. Outlining the situation in some of WFP’s main countries of operation, he said that in Afghanistan 22.8 million were at IPC phases 3, 4 or 5. WFP needed USD 233 million per month for its programmes in that country and had sufficient resources to last until only the end of December. The Executive Director had met with Taliban leaders in Kabul and the provinces with a view to securing operational independence for WFP and the Taliban’s commitment to directing the national assets held outside the country to international humanitarian organizations such as WFP.
4. In the Syrian Arab Republic, price rises and food distribution challenges had left 12.4 million people at IPC phase 3 or above. WFP needed USD 80 million a month for programmes that included working with local food producers on the rehabilitation of bread factories. In Lebanon, in addition to the 1.2 million refugees already reached, WFP was assisting 800,000 Lebanese people and aimed to reach 1.6 million by spring.
5. In Yemen, where 16 million people (out of a population of 30 million) were at IPC phase 3 or above, donors’ support had allowed WFP to address pipeline breaks, helping to avert famine. However, WFP had received only USD 286 million of the USD 1 billion it needed for the following six months, and 50,000 people were living in famine-like conditions. In the Sahel, destabilization and severe food insecurity had left 8.7 million people in need of assistance, while in the Democratic Republic of the Congo 27 million people were at IPC phase 3 or above as a result of economic deterioration, climate change effects, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and conflict involving rebel groups. Challenges to food security in Madagascar were related to climate change, and 1.3 million people were at IPC phase 3 or above. Mitigation plans agreed to at the recent twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26) would help to alleviate the situation in Madagascar over the long term.
6. Turning to WFP’s work to address climate change, the Executive Director said that of the 40 million people newly displaced from their homes in 2020, climate-related factors were the driving force for 30 million. WFP’s sustainability and resilience building operations aimed at addressing the effects of climate change included the use of climate-based insurance schemes and advance payments for smallholder farmers, as well as food assistance for asset programmes through which local communities had rehabilitated land and built and repaired roads, bridges, ponds and reservoirs, wells, irrigation canals and other resilience boosting infrastructure.
7. After thanking Member States for their support in establishing the school feeding coalition at the 2021 United Nations food systems summit, the Executive Director emphasized the essential role that school meals played in the nutrition status and education of children. So far more than 60 national governments and 50 organizations had joined the coalition.
8. In closing, the Executive Director said that with global wealth at USD 430 trillion there was no reason for any child in the world to go to bed hungry, let alone die of hunger.

9. Members, including one speaking on behalf of a list and another speaking for the Nordic countries, thanked the Executive Director for his presentation and his successful fund- and awareness-raising efforts worldwide. Several speakers commented on the timeliness of the Board session, which followed the recent meeting of the Group of 20, COP26 and the United Nations food systems summit.
10. Expressing concern about the continuing challenges of climate change, conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, with the resulting increase in humanitarian needs and the return of famine, members applauded the courage and commitment of WFP staff in delivering life-saving assistance and facilitating the crisis responses of other actors, singling out in particular WFP's role in advocacy for humanitarian access and a safe environment for the delivery of humanitarian and development interventions. They urged all stakeholders to contribute to ending armed conflicts and ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers and the people they served, including refugees and other migrants.
11. Many members commented on the forthcoming WFP strategic plan, saying that it reflected WFP's adaptation to a complex and changing global situation, with new approaches to programming and working that would ensure more efficient resource use and better outcomes. Members expressed appreciation for the consultative process used to develop the plan and welcomed its increased focus on climate risks, early warning, resilience and anticipatory action; the integration of conflict sensitivity into country strategic plan (CSP) activities; the inclusion of environmental sustainability and climate issues as a cross-cutting priority; and its emphasis on disability inclusion. Most speakers viewed WFP's increasing engagement in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus as a sound response to the world's growing challenges, including in humanitarian access and the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers. Some members urged WFP to remain focused on its core mandate of emergency response, and one suggested that attention to peacebuilding could result in the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance becoming conditional on the adoption of specific political processes.
12. For successful implementation of the new strategic plan, members recommended that WFP prioritize its use of resources appropriately, integrate the promotion of gender equality into all activities, continue to enhance partnerships, including with local actors, and develop a strong and diversified workforce conducive to gender equality, the protection of beneficiaries and employees, accountability to affected populations, disability inclusion and a good workplace culture. WFP should also ensure that its current policies and new corporate results framework were coherent with the new strategic plan. Members looked forward to receiving regular updates on implementation of the plan.
13. Many members commented on the recent United Nations food systems summit, saying that it had provided a lens through which to view the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) more holistically, with food and nutrition security as a connecting theme. Governments should build on the momentum created by the summit to bring about the changes required for the attainment of their national objectives, with guidance and facilitation from the United Nations system, particularly the Rome-based agencies (RBAs). Members welcomed the RBAs' identification of joint priorities related to food systems and their successful advocacy on the incorporation of those priorities into United Nations country plans and United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks (UNSDCFs). Members also praised WFP's role in the establishment of the global school feeding coalition during the summit and urged WFP and its partners and donors to make the necessary investments in implementation of the WFP school feeding strategy, including the harvesting of best practices from school feeding programmes around the world for replication in other countries.
14. The COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated the interdependence of agriculture, food security and nutrition, health, climate conditions, security and socioeconomic equality, creating an opportunity to set a new direction and strengthen global collaboration in addressing growing challenges. That would require broader and deeper partnerships, including a strong One United Nations approach with more systematic pooling of resources for innovative approaches such as

anticipatory action, sharing of best practices, joint training initiatives, shared services and an expanded donor base. In particular, members urged the RBAs to continue to optimize cooperation at the headquarters and field levels, minimizing bureaucracy and nurturing complementarities. Several members expressed concern about the inequitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines between developed and developing countries.

15. With regard to the uncertain funding outlook, many members outlined their countries' plans for supporting and collaborating with WFP over the coming years, including through multi-year and flexible funding and in-kind donations. They urged WFP to maintain its advocacy on flexible funding from donors; welcomed ongoing efforts to expand the donor base, including by seeking contributions from wealthy individuals; and supported the proposal to increase the ceilings of the internal project lending facilities and the Global Commodity Management Facility.
16. Looking ahead, members encouraged WFP to maintain its focus on building resilience and addressing the root causes of vulnerability, including through capacity building and the transfer of technical skills to young people; the strengthening of institutional capacity in social protection; the facilitation of South-South cooperation; and the fostering of local partnerships and procurement.
17. Several members mentioned forthcoming events to be held in their countries: the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit in December would provide a good opportunity for stakeholders to adopt a food systems approach to achievement of the SDGs; the first European Humanitarian Forum in January 2022 would feature high-level discussions on humanitarian policies, strategies and operations; and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit would include food system transformation as a discussion topic.
18. The Executive Director thanked Board members and observers for their comments and welcomed new Board members and representatives, saying that he looked forward to continuing to work with the Board and asking that it continue to hold all of WFP accountable for the highest standards of operation.

Policy issues

2021/EB.2/2 WFP strategic plan (2022–2025)

19. The Assistant Executive Director presented the WFP strategic plan for 2022–2025, the organization's road map for meeting the huge challenges of rising hunger. The plan had five strategic outcomes and seven guiding principles, as well as four cross-cutting priorities and six enablers that would facilitate their achievement. It was the outcome of an intensive consultation process during which three recurring themes had emerged: focus and prioritization, the understanding being that WFP should focus on emergencies as a top priority while seizing opportunities to prevent and reduce needs; partnerships and how WFP worked with others, on the understanding that WFP could not meet the challenges alone; and financing, including efforts to demonstrate the return on investment that resulted from addressing the effects of stressors and structural vulnerabilities before they led to full-blown crises. The final version of the plan incorporated clarifications aimed at addressing comments on language and terminology, and an annex on the corporate results framework that was to be presented at the Board's 2022 first regular session.
20. Members, including several speaking on behalf of lists and one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the strategic plan and commended the underlying consultative process that had led to its finalization. They also welcomed the continued focus on SDGs 2 and 17 and the plan's alignment with United Nations development system reform and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They expressed support for the cross-cutting priorities of the plan as well as its strategic outcomes, with outcome 5 and school feeding programmes under outcome 2 mentioned as particularly important, while among the plan's guiding principles they highlighted "humanitarian-principled", "people-centred", "country-owned" and "context-specific"

and among the enablers they mentioned partnerships, enhanced flexibility and predictability of funding, evidence and technology.

21. Other positive elements of the plan highlighted during the discussion included its emphasis on emergency response; provision for enhanced anticipatory action in the context of emergencies, including investment in early warning tools and platforms and greater use of cash-based transfers; its linking with the outcomes of the United Nations food systems summit, including in particular the school meals coalition; a commitment that WFP should engage only when it clearly added value; recognition of the full range of challenges facing developing countries, including the impact of trade tariffs on the flow of food; affirmation of WFP's role of strengthening rather than substituting for government capacity; a focus on workforce planning, with emphasis on transparency and cooperability; continued cooperation with middle income countries, notably on disaster risk management; support for peace outcomes; and partnership for climate risk assessment, disaster preparation and resilience.
22. Areas mentioned as being of concern or meriting additional work during implementation included prioritization, notably of the strategic outcomes; clarification of WFP's role within partnerships; strengthening of disability inclusion; consideration of indigenous peoples; development of institutional guidelines for cooperating partner selection in the field; development of an exit strategy; assessment of food security and logistical issues in small island developing States; standardization of approaches for early and anticipatory action, such as on trigger criteria; implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) resolution and use of the common indicators of the QCPR monitoring framework; work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; consideration of inequality as a root cause; enhanced coordination with the other RBAs; further tapping of the potential of South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC); and data monitoring and analysis and data system security and privacy protection, including in the context of partnership with the private sector.
23. Several members, including one speaking for a list and another on behalf of a group of countries, said that they looked forward to the plan's implementation and its incorporation into CSPs and policies and encouraged WFP to provide regular updates on implementation, including on innovative financing approaches such as debt swaps and work with international financial institutions.
24. Several members, including several speaking on behalf of lists, indicated that they would have preferred to see development and presentation of the corporate results framework at the same time as the strategic plan. One member speaking for a list encouraged close consultation with members in finalizing the framework. Another speaking on behalf of a list asked for clear indication of the methodology and rationale used for the proposed indicators.
25. One member drew attention to the recent report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations on WFP matters, including observations on cash-based transfers and food vouchers, and called on management to implement the recommendations of the report and to reflect on how such assistance could be further streamlined.
26. The Chief Financial Officer assured members of WFP's commitment to submitting a corporate results framework for approval at the Board's 2022 first regular session. High-level targets currently being developed on management results would provide an indication of WFP's ambition across the five strategic plan outcomes. Indicators were currently being finalized and validated globally and at headquarters, including to assess the impact on country offices and CSPs and links to UNSDCFs. A formal consultation with members was planned for December 2021.
27. On the QCPR monitoring framework he said that WFP had identified common and complementary indicators with other United Nations entities and was reviewing its policy commitments, particularly with regard to the measurement implications for the four cost-cutting priorities in the strategic plan.

28. Picking up on a comment regarding the importance of evidence and technology as strategic plan enablers, the Chief Financial Officer provided examples of new technology-enabled tools that would facilitate the implementation of the new strategic plan, including the MoDA (Mobile Operational Data Acquisition) application, which enabled consistency and security for assessment data management; DOTS, a data platform that supported decision making; and School Connect, a WFP-designed application introduced in Burundi that allowed school staff to track the number of boys and girls attending schools and optimize school meals programme planning. He also assured members that WFP was committed, through its global privacy office, to putting in place the governance, controls and safeguards needed to ensure that data collection and processing remained in the interest of the people it served and that private sector partners processed but did not own the data.
29. The Chief Financial Officer also indicated WFP's interest in engaging further and formally with Executive Board members on debt swaps. He added that WFP had seen a significant increase in funding from international financial institutions through partner governments over the past couple of years and expected USD 600 million of such funding in 2021.
30. The Assistant Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department, acknowledged and concurred with comments on the need to prioritize emergencies and focus on nutrition, school feeding, resilience and government systems and to uphold humanitarian principles when engaged in humanitarian work. She also acknowledged concerns regarding partnership and prioritization, which had also been recurring themes throughout the consultative process. She assured members that WFP planned to assess its policies and strategies to determine which needed to be updated or put in place to ensure that the strategic plan was fully implemented. CSPs would ensure contextualization and prioritization at the country level. She also informed members that WFP was developing, for the first time, a strategic plan implementation plan. Members would be kept informed on that process, as well as on WFP's growing engagement with international financial institutions.

Oral update on WFP's implementation of the outcomes of the 2021 United Nations food systems summit

31. The Director, Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, recalled that during the 18-month food systems summit process WFP had served as inter-agency lead for resilience action areas while engaging actively in all other action tracks and action areas. The summit process had raised awareness of the importance of food systems and how they were linked to hunger, food security, climate and resilience and had resulted in over 30 coalitions of action, with WFP acting as lead for eight. The school meals coalition was the most advanced, with Head of State and ministerial-level membership and formal commitments from over 60 countries and 50 partners. WFP was also involved in the coalitions on fighting food crises along with those on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; resilient local food supply chains; climate-resilient food systems; social protection for food system transformation; zero hunger; healthy diets from sustainable food systems; making food systems work for women and girls; indigenous peoples; and agroecology. The social protection coalition had already been mainstreamed under the Universal Social Protection 2030 apparatus, while the climate-resilient food systems coalition was instrumental in making the global climate change community more aware of the criticality of food systems in the climate debate and was paving the way for the eventual handover of the lead role to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
32. The coalitions offered opportunities for WFP's programmes and global and regional positioning. The RBAs were part of discussions on a proposed coordination hub for transforming national food systems, and WFP aimed to align its programming with government food systems commitments. Improved collaboration across the United Nations system would ensure that the coalitions remained linked to other global processes. In the area of knowledge-sharing, thought leadership and scientific research, WFP saw an opportunity to leverage partnerships such as

- those with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research to promote emerging research.
33. Beyond the national dialogues, WFP would aim to support governments in taking food systems into account in data collection and analysis and promoting inter-ministerial coordination. WFP was increasingly considering food systems in its country-level programming, reporting and other activities in the development of second-generation CSPs.
 34. Members, including three speaking on behalf of lists, thanked WFP and the other RBAs for their work on the food systems summit, applauding WFP's contribution to the coalitions and urging them to work together, within the wider United Nations system, to build on the results of the summit and spur action on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
 35. Regarding how the work of the summit could best be taken forward, two members said that Member States had to first agree on the outcomes of the summit while others, including one speaking for all the lists, said there was a need for a shared understanding of how the follow-up process would occur. There was general agreement that the RBAs should play a central role. Two members said that no new bureaucracies were needed but there was general agreement to the concept of a coordination hub led by the RBAs, although members had questions regarding its role and functioning.
 36. Two members, including one speaking for all the lists, said that a United Nations system-wide approach to follow-up was essential, as were links to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to ensure that the follow-up contributed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Two members also called for the Committee on World Food Security and the High-level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition to play a central role. Several members, including one speaking for a list, said that Member States should play a central role in the follow-up, which should be country-driven and focused.
 37. Two members, including one speaking for a list, said that summit follow-up and WFP's new strategic plan should be linked, and one encouraged WFP to lend its expertise in local and regional purchases to the sustainable growth coalition to promote a holistic approach to improving productivity in food security.
 38. Speaking for List A, one member called for implementation of the actions set out in the common African position presented during the summit.
 39. Members also asked a number of questions, which were addressed by WFP management and the Chief of Staff, food systems summit secretariat, as summarized below.
 40. The Director, Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, noted that the food systems summit had been convened by the Secretary-General and was not binding on Member States, much like the World Humanitarian Summit held five years earlier. The summit remained a work in progress, with the September event as a point of departure and progress to be achieved with the support and engagement of Member States and through dialogue within WFP and in the broader RBA environment.
 41. The multi-stakeholder national dialogues initiated in connection with the summit were still under way, just over half complete. WFP, along with the other RBAs and the United Nations country teams, was supporting the dialogues, which were raising awareness of the importance of food systems and laying a foundation for national pathways for transforming them. The coalitions would provide technical support for the pathways and should remain focused on that task.
 42. He said that WFP, the other RBAs and United Nations country teams and regional coordinators needed to promote the linking of the national pathways and national development plans and ensure that UNSDCF took food systems into account, which would make it easy for WFP to do likewise in its CSPs. That would mark a change in WFP's work, directly attributable to the food systems summit. The summit outcomes had already been reflected in the new WFP strategic plan to the extent possible given the timing, and they would be more evident in the second-generation

- CSPs. He acknowledged the common African position presented at the summit, saying that it was impressive and valuable and would be used as a reference point.
43. The Chief of Staff, food systems summit secretariat, also acknowledged the common African position, adding that he had recently received a letter from the Government of Brazil setting out common positions of the Latin American and Caribbean countries. Observing that food systems were local and national, he said that countries would play the central role in the work on food systems, including through the voluntary national dialogues and pathways and the multi-stakeholder coalitions, which were already being discussed at events such as the latest annual session of the Committee on World Food Security and the World Food Day activities at the Glasgow climate change conference to ensure that food systems were taken into account across the United Nations system and in the work on relevant SDGs.
 44. To support a system-wide approach to the summit follow-up, bearing in mind the Secretary-General's chair summary and statement of action, the food systems summit secretariat was prioritizing collaboration with the RBAs and the United Nations Environment Programme as the chair of the United Nations task force while also working with the Development Coordination Office and other United Nations entities that had played roles in the task force or summit action tracks. The goals were a food systems coordination hub that would bring a whole-system approach to the food systems aspects of the 2030 Agenda and engage non-State actors, in particular indigenous peoples, food producers, young people, women's groups and the private sector, in the work on food systems. Given Member States' desire that no new structures be created, coordination within the existing United Nations structure was being explored, including working through the RBAs directly and use of the High-level Political Forum for central reporting and follow-up. The Committee on World Food Security, also a critical stakeholder, was closely engaged in the process. Opportunities for Member State briefing and feedback sessions on the coordination hub over the coming weeks were being considered.
 45. The Assistant Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department, spoke briefly about the impact of the summit outcomes on WFP, saying that food systems had been prioritized within the new strategic plan, which was expected not only to inform WFP's work but also to drive stronger collaboration among the RBAs, as called for by members. In addition, the national pathways provided a framework for national development plans that prioritized investment in food systems, which previously had not often been a focus of national plans or UNSDCF's. That development was expected to galvanize United Nations-wide action, with WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in particular as strong leaders and supporters along with the resident coordinators at the country level. Finally, she said that the school meals coalition promised to carry forward the momentum from the summit to bring the goal of no child going to school hungry and all children benefiting from nutritious school meals within reach.
 46. The Assistant Executive Director, Partnerships and Advocacy Department, also addressed the question of the summit's impact on WFP, saying that she hoped the conversation with international financial institutions would change as a result of the summit and in turn influence the conversations with national governments, leading to changes in food systems.

Update on collaboration among the Rome-based agencies

47. The Senior Director, Strategic Partnerships Division, presented the 2021 progress report on RBA collaboration, prepared jointly by the three agencies and discussing the key areas of collaboration: strengthening collaboration within the overall repositioning of the United Nations development system; collaborating in the design, development and support of the follow-up to the United Nations food systems summit; continuing joint work in the context of COVID-19; pursuing opportunities for joint funding to drive collaboration; and leveraging knowledge and institutionalizing collaboration.
48. Several members spoke on the topic, all on behalf of lists and one presenting a cross-list statement. All agreed that collaboration among the RBAs was important, citing a range of reasons

- to continue strengthening collaboration, including improved cost efficiency, both short-term and long-term; improved effectiveness; maximization of COVID-19 response efforts; risk reduction through information sharing; more coherent operations; greater benefits for governments and beneficiaries; sharing of best practices and project experience; improved data collection; and avoidance of duplication through enhanced understanding of roles and comparative advantages.
49. Two members drew attention to the programme, “Emergency and Rural Development in the Sahel: A Joint RBA - G5 Sahel + Senegal Response to the 3C Challenges (COVID-19, Conflicts and Climate Change)” (SD3C). One expressed the hope that the programme would receive the necessary funding, noting that it involved three important areas of collaboration: nutrition, resilience to climate change and COVID-19. The other said that the SD3C programme provided other United Nations agencies with an exemplary case of collaboration and called for regular reviews of the programme during its implementation, in consultation with Member States.
 50. A third member speaking for a list asked for an update on the feasibility study on integrating the administrative functions of the RBAs requested at the Board’s 2019 second regular session. She also asked about harmonization of resource mobilization to support joint programming at the regional and country levels.
 51. The Senior Director, Strategic Partnerships Division, responded that the RBAs were doing more than was reflected in the progress report. The joint evaluation of RBA collaboration was expected to enable a more strategic approach to their collaboration. He highlighted engagement with international financial institutions as an area for reoriented collaboration with FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The three agencies wished to optimize their engagement with the institutions, including by leveraging the fact that IFAD, itself an international financial institution, provided access to dialogues in which WFP and FAO could not participate. He noted that previously, as members of the steering committee for the development of the UNSDCF, FAO and WFP had ensured that IFAD’s views were well represented. In his view, the RBAs were regarded within the United Nations system as a model of how to work together in presenting joint ideas and adopting joint approaches.

Other business

Oral global overview on humanitarian needs and operational concerns and priorities

52. The Deputy Executive Director warned that global food insecurity was at a record high, with 283 million people acutely food insecure or at high risk of food insecurity in 80 countries. Conflict, economic shocks, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, weather extremes and natural disasters were driving growing rates of hunger and malnutrition, particularly among refugees and displaced people. WFP had assisted 90 million people in the first half of 2021 and was planning to reach 140.5 million people by the end of the year. Following a “no regrets” approach to emergency response, the organization was reviewing the design and use of the Immediate Response Account; it was also streamlining processes to improve operational agility and optimizing its human resources and training.
53. Board members expressed grave concern over the sharp rise in food insecurity and supported the planned scale-up of assistance. Several members called on the international community to act to alleviate human suffering. Others paid tribute to WFP staff, who they said were working tirelessly in very challenging circumstances.
54. Several Board members urged WFP to take a consistent approach to identifying those most in need, given the funding gap; others said that it was important to maximize the impact of every dollar spent and highlighted the value of anticipatory action, safety nets and climate-related resilience building in that regard. Some members commended WFP efforts to mobilize funding, particularly flexible funding and contributions from non-traditional donors. One member asked how WFP planned to change the Immediate Response Account, remarking that flexible funding had been used to top up the account in the past.

55. Noting that 76 percent of WFP cash assistance was delivered in the context of emergency responses, one Board member sought an explanation of the prerequisites for using cash-based transfers in such settings. Another member commended WFP's work with partners to resolve cash coordination challenges. Various members called on WFP to invest in robust emergency response mechanisms and to ensure transparent communications with donors. WFP efforts to secure access, defend the humanitarian principles, support coordination in complex emergencies and expand its security analysis capacity were also welcomed.
56. The Deputy Executive Director thanked Board members for recognizing the dedication of WFP staff. Describing cash-based transfers as a flexible modality that enabled WFP to assist hard to reach populations and respond quickly, he said that the prerequisites for their use included a functioning market, the availability of financial services and low risk of negative effects such as inflation. WFP was committed to strengthening cash coordination through its participation in field-level cash working groups with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other organizations. Regarding the review of and possible changes to the Immediate Response Account, WFP was considering introducing a USD 200 million floor, which would ensure that the organization was ready to respond very quickly, as it had recently in Afghanistan. The review of the account would also cover how the account was used and how it was replenished.

Asia and the Pacific regional overview

57. The Regional Director, Asia and the Pacific region, warned of soaring hunger and malnutrition across the region, driven by economic collapse and the continuing impact of COVID-19. WFP had assisted over 20 million people in 2021 and provided common services to the humanitarian community, including through the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service.
58. In Myanmar, almost 90 percent of households were resorting to negative coping strategies in order to eat. Currency devaluation, widespread job losses and the collapse of public services were contributing to rising humanitarian needs, with 13 million people estimated to require assistance. WFP planned to expand its large-scale urban food assistance programme to 4 million beneficiaries in 2022. Access was being severely curtailed by bureaucratic and security constraints and the humanitarian community had reached fewer than half of those newly displaced. Operations also faced major funding shortfalls.
59. In Afghanistan, 23 million people were facing crisis or emergency levels of malnutrition and 1 million children were at risk of dying from acute malnutrition. Since August, WFP had assisted 12.4 million people with food, cash and specialized nutrition products, responding rapidly thanks to a loan from the Immediate Response Account and other advance financing mechanisms. WFP had successfully negotiated the return of most of its female staff to work and continued to operate independently. It was appealing for USD 2.4 billion in order to provide emergency food and cash assistance for 24 million people in 2022, along with nutrition support for 6 million vulnerable women and children.
60. Board members commended WFP for providing emergency assistance in extremely difficult circumstances and expressed grave concern over the crises in the region. Several Board members invited the Regional Director to elaborate on access challenges faced in Myanmar, Afghanistan and other countries. One member asked whether access might deteriorate in Afghanistan if the economy continued to decline. A number of Board members asked how WFP was using cash-based transfers in the absence of functioning markets and how it was overcoming the breakdown of financial services. They also asked whether WFP was providing agricultural support.
61. One member said that flexible funding was vital to supporting swift emergency response through the Immediate Response Account and other mechanisms. She urged WFP to ensure that resilience building continued in Afghanistan and asked for insight into negotiations with the World Bank in support of such activities. She sought clarification of the purpose of the basic

- humanitarian needs fund set up by the United Nations Development Programme, particularly with regard to food assistance and the 2022 humanitarian response plan for the country.
62. One Board member asked how WFP was ensuring that the Afghanistan country office was staffed by the highly experienced personnel needed to manage such complex operations. He also said that it was important to adhere strictly to the humanitarian principles. Another member asked how governments could provide support in Afghanistan without lending legitimacy to the de facto authorities.
 63. Highlighting the situation of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, one Board member encouraged WFP to keep the Board updated on developments related to Bhasan Char, including the status of planned operations, technical assessments and the 2022 joint response plan.
 64. The Regional Director reported that since the military takeover in Myanmar, WFP had struggled to secure access despite having official permission to operate; some local NGOs were managing to deliver some assistance but it was far from sufficient. Discussions regarding the possibility of using cross-border operations from Thailand in order to reach communities that were currently inaccessible were under way.
 65. In Afghanistan security constraints had eased since August, and WFP was operating in all 34 provinces; focal points in local authorities were assisting WFP with day-to-day access issues. WFP was using the *hawala* system to make payments to beneficiaries and was paying its vendors outside the country. WFP was also exploring arrangements with international financial service providers such as MoneyGram.
 66. WFP was working closely with FAO on initiatives to protect seeds for Afghan farmers, although this vital work was underfunded. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service had been operating out of Islamabad and continued to transport humanitarian workers around Afghanistan, serving around 20 locations; consideration was being given to setting up a new airbridge to Doha or Dubai. The details of the United Nations framework in Afghanistan were still being clarified, but it would probably be based on three pillars: the humanitarian response plan, emergency support for basic service provision and a framework for long-term support. The United Nations Development Programme fund would cover some of the non-humanitarian needs.
 67. The World Bank would be providing funding for basic services in Afghanistan and was in discussions with WFP about providing direct funding through the latter's country programme. The World Bank had previously been running major safety nets in Afghanistan and funding public sector salaries, particularly in the health sector. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization had begun an initiative to pay health and education workers via NGOs, which was one way of assisting the population without putting money into the public system. WFP was likely to almost double the size of its workforce in Afghanistan in 2022, mostly through the recruitment of national staff but also through internal mechanisms such as the Future International Talent Pool.
 68. In Bangladesh WFP was continuing to assist 875,000 Rohingya refugees. Around 20,000 had been moved to Bhasan Char. WFP had not yet committed to operating on the island and was currently assessing whether operations could be effectively managed there.

Eastern Africa regional overview

69. Reporting on events in Eastern Africa, the Regional Director said that conflict, climate shocks and COVID-19 were behind rising food insecurity in the region, where 78 percent of the acutely food insecure were in South Sudan, the Sudan and Ethiopia. Record contributions of at least USD 2.6 billion were expected in 2021, but the amount needed for the region for 2022 was expected to reach USD 5 billion. Funding was urgently required to ensure operational continuity, particularly for refugee programmes and other operations in Ethiopia and Somalia.
70. In Ethiopia, the impact of the conflict in Tigray had spread to Amhara and Afar. WFP was seeking to support an estimated 9.6 million vulnerable people across the north of the country. Although

food stocks were in place, WFP was unable to reach those in need; negotiations to secure humanitarian access were under way.

71. Prolonged political crisis was exacerbating high levels of food insecurity in the Sudan, where 9.8 million people were currently in IPC phase 3 or worse. Soaring food prices had left most households unable to afford nutritious meals, and many development and resilience building initiatives had been put on hold, threatening to reverse recent gains. Food insecurity was also of growing concern in Somalia and South Sudan.
72. Board members acknowledged the huge challenges facing the region and commended WFP staff for their work in difficult and dangerous circumstances. One member urged WFP to work with communities on finding long-term solutions that protected livelihoods and addressed the root causes of malnutrition; she also called for more funding for resilience building activities.
73. Social protection, support for innovation and the scale-up of anticipatory action in the face of climate shocks were cited as key areas of focus. One Board member sought more information on the impact of desert locusts; another urged WFP to work with climate and development actors in order to address the consequences of global warming. One member asked how supply chain challenges could be overcome.
74. Turning to Ethiopia, Board members called on all parties to the conflict to allow unhindered access to all vulnerable populations in the north. One member asked for an update on the security situation and its impact on WFP and its partners. Others asked how Member States could support access negotiations, what could be done to improve the protection of humanitarian workers in conflict-affected areas and how national efforts to assist refugees could be supported.
75. The Regional Director reported that prolonged drought had greatly reduced the desert locust population; however, the food security of up to 8 million people was at risk unless rains were forthcoming. WFP was working with governments, international financial institutions and other United Nations bodies on climate change adaptation and mitigation. Meanwhile, the 2021 United Nations food systems summit had afforded a valuable opportunity to revisit approaches and assess links between operations in order to maximize the impact of WFP's work; efforts to translate discussions into sustainable approaches were ongoing.
76. On supply chains, WFP had increased local and regional procurement, which was strengthening supply chains and directing investment to local and regional food systems. An ongoing study was examining how WFP could gauge the impact of these investments.
77. The situation in Ethiopia was deteriorating, and WFP was very concerned at the potential for destabilization of the country and the region. Challenges related to humanitarian access and security were unlikely to disappear. It was essential that the international community call out any contravention of humanitarian law; advocacy was also key to putting pressure on all parties to the conflict to move to a resolution as quickly as possible.

Southern Africa regional overview

78. The Regional Director, Southern Africa region, said that the underlying objective of WFP's engagement in the region was to align WFP interventions with government priorities with a view to facilitating effective responses to emergencies while helping to build sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable people. WFP aimed to achieve this through a combination of direct implementation of WFP programmes and the provision of technical assistance for national institutions and local communities. As well as engaging governments, traditional and non-traditional development partners, international financial institutions and other United Nations bodies in those efforts, WFP also sought to secure consistent financial support from host governments.
79. Throughout the region, the effects of conflict, displacement, economic instability, climate shocks, pests, diseases and the COVID-19 pandemic continued to undermine food security. Of the 50.4 million acutely food insecure people in the region, 14.4 million lived in urban areas and 78 percent in South Africa or the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Although normal to above

normal rainfall was forecast for most countries in the region, with good prospects for cereal production, Southern Angola and Madagascar were experiencing their worst droughts in 40 years.

80. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo WFP was targeting 8.7 million of the 27 million food insecure people and implementing large-scale resilience activities with FAO, UNICEF and other partners for an additional 518,000 people. In Madagascar, WFP was providing emergency assistance for 687,000 people in the Grand Sud region and planned to reach more than 1 million between December 2021 and April 2022. In Mozambique, the volatile security situation in Cabo Delgado had resulted in the internal displacement of 740,000 people by September 2021; WFP was providing life-saving assistance for 925,000 beneficiaries, and the RBAs were developing a multi-year resilience programme for internally displaced persons and vulnerable host communities in northern Mozambique. In Angola, WFP was working with the Government to find ways of responding to the severe drought that had affected 1.58 million people, 417,000 of whom were at IPC phase 4.
81. WFP had received 42 percent of the USD 827 million it needed for its work in the region over the following six months, leaving a funding gap of USD 483 million.
82. WFP's contribution to long-term nationally owned solutions to hunger in the region was based on the development of integrated community-based food systems and took into account the vital role of women, who accounted for 70 percent of the agricultural labour workforce but had limited access to land, finance and agricultural inputs. Climate change adaptation projects in many countries focused on the development of tools for vulnerability mapping, evidence generation, knowledge management, the digitalization of data management systems and market access. They built on successful experiences in upper-middle-income countries in the region, with WFP providing a platform for South-South cooperation for the exchange of knowledge, technology and skills.
83. The Regional Director thanked Board members for their support in southern Africa and echoed the Executive Director's call for contributions from the world's billionaires.
84. One Board member took the floor to thank WFP for its work in the region, including the piloting of data sharing with the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), and to encourage the regional bureau to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the assistance it provided by increasing its use of vulnerability-based targeting, needs analysis, prioritization of limited resources and coordination with partners. Expressing concern about the emerging humanitarian crisis in Angola, the member requested additional information on the situation in that country.
85. Responding to the points raised, the Regional Director confirmed the importance of FEWS NET to WFP's work but said that access issues hampered assessment and targeting work in some areas of the region; WFP was working with governments to resolve those challenges. Discussions in Angola focused on encouraging the Government to fund WFP capacity building activities aimed at developing national response capabilities.

Western Africa regional overview

86. The Regional Director, Western Africa region, reported that to date 31 million people in the region had been at crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity in 2021, the highest level since 2014. While the lean season had come to an end, most indicators, including for food and nutrition security, were worrying, and it was feared that the economic recovery remained too fragile to improve food security. Extreme poverty had increased by 3 percent in 2021, food prices remained high and most countries lacked the resources needed to support economic recovery.
87. Insecurity continued to threaten WFP operations, especially in the Central Sahel, Cameroon, Nigeria and the Central African Republic, with non-state armed groups expanding their reach. The possible spread of insecurity from the Central Sahel to coastal countries posed a serious risk, as confirmed by recent incidents in Côte d'Ivoire and Togo.

88. From 2018 to 2020, the number of WFP beneficiaries had grown from 10.4 to 18.2 million, and those displaced by conflict from 2.1 to 4.65 million. The trend was accelerating and was not expected to improve anytime soon.
89. Climate change was a major aggravating factor in the region, and strengthening resilience against shocks as well as climate adaptation had never been more urgent. In 2021 the rains had started late and ended early, particularly in the northern parts of the region, and a negative impact on food production and pasture development was expected.
90. The funding situation was critical, with 2021 contributions to date USD 100 million less than at the same time in 2020, while the need was greater.
91. WFP country offices had been forced to downsize their operations through difficult prioritization choices and significant ration cuts. In Burkina Faso, rations were set at 75 percent for the most vulnerable in hard-to-reach areas and 50 percent for other locations, and pipeline breaks would start in November for cash-based transfers and December for in-kind food. In Mali, the assisted population had received 50 percent rations throughout the lean season. In the Niger, the country office had cut targeted beneficiaries from 1.2 million to 600,000 and reduced rations. The Chad country office had been unable to assist refugees and could help only half the planned number of internally displaced people, with half rations. Such cuts could be expected to contribute to increased food and nutrition insecurity, mortality, malnutrition and severe negative coping strategies such as early child marriage, child labour, sexual exploitation, migration and enlistment with non-state armed groups.
92. The most under-funded operations were in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic and Chad. An additional USD 708 million was urgently needed for the next six months.
93. WFP continued to work to reduce emergency needs by finding ways to strengthen the resilience of households, communities and national systems. The Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme, the joint social protection programme with UNICEF in Mali, the Niger and Mauritania and the SD3C programme were all good examples of such work in the region.
94. Regarding the SD3C programme, WFP country offices in Burkina Faso, Chad, the Niger, Mali and Senegal had signed agreements with the governments of those countries and begun to implement activities on creating climate-resilient assets for communities and providing support and capacity strengthening for value chain actors, including smallholder farmers.
95. Another example of partnerships in the region was WFP's collaboration with the German Agency for International Cooperation in the Niger to strengthen social cohesion by enhancing local capacities for conflict resolution. Expansion of those activities to other countries of the region was being discussed.
96. Beyond programmatic activities, WFP was also partnering with regional institutions and other stakeholders on knowledge products such as a recent joint socioeconomic study with the Economic Community of West African States and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.
97. Board members thanked WFP for its efforts in the region, including its attention to the triple nexus. Members voiced concern about the growing insecurity, humanitarian access challenges and general socioeconomic fragility in the region and encouraged donors to continue to provide support. One member drew attention to the burning of farmers' crops by individuals and groups, a new form of crime that her country was at a loss to deal with. Another asked what WFP was doing to counter supply chain bottlenecks and rising food prices.
98. The Regional Director acknowledged the seriousness of humanitarian access and safety and security issues. Given its mandate, however, WFP was compelled to find ways to retain access, which it did through work in humanitarian negotiations, security analysis, community acceptance and civilian-military coordination with the various military forces.

99. Supply chain bottlenecks and rising food prices were being mitigated to the extent possible using the Global Commodity Management Facility, as well through advance financing, which enabled WFP to purchase food during the harvest season when prices were lower. Supplies of specialized nutritious foods had been a challenge both in West Africa and globally, but WFP had supported the establishment of a private sector agro-processor in Ghana, which had enabled WFP to start sourcing from the region for some of its specialized nutritious food needs.
100. Crop burning had indeed become an issue. All the rice fields in the central part of Mali had recently been burned by non-State armed groups. Mali, Burkina Faso, the Niger and other countries were fighting wars, the cost of which further constrained their fiscal space. In Cameroon, too, people were going hungry because of conflict. Donor support was sorely needed.
101. WFP's objective in the region was to apply the triple nexus approach, continuing to prioritize emergencies while moving to long-term programmes in partnership with several actors and governments. The frameworks were in place and opportunities had been identified in the buffer zones not yet engulfed by conflict, where WFP judged that it could have the most impact.

Middle East and Northern Africa regional overview

102. The Regional Director, Middle East and Northern Africa region, said that the region faced some of the most difficult emergencies, including those in Yemen, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and the State of Palestine, and middle income countries were being driven to the edge by the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation in Iraq, however, showed how WFP's large-scale operational expertise and systems could enable governments to meet responsibilities effectively in the face of tremendous challenges.
103. WFP was currently partnering with the Government of Iraq to bring efficiency to the public distribution system and establish livelihood programmes that the Government could expand. Digitalization in the public distribution systems was expected to result in 30 percent savings, providing additional funds that the Government could redirect to other essential services. While Iraq was still in a transition phase and urgent resources were still needed to support internally displaced people and Syrian refugees, WFP's programme in Iraq showed what could be achieved when stability was established, rebuilding could begin and WFP could help in the development of systems to be left in place once it withdrew.
104. When WFP had the resources to achieve its mandate, Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic also showed how WFP's large-scale operations could save lives and contribute to peace while its expertise and systems enabled other organizations to reach many more people in need. Sadly, WFP's work was currently dominated by saving lives, and resources even for that were insufficient. In Yemen, there was a gap of USD 800 million for the next six months, and 5 million people faced ration cuts in December and 7.5 million by January. In addition, the economic situation was worsening, especially in the south, and food prices were soaring. In Libya, food rations might soon be cut in half for WFP's beneficiaries, while food prices and unemployment were high, which could push young men to join the armed groups still prominent in the country, which was still emerging from conflict and preparing for elections. The Syrian Arab Republic, which had received considerable attention during the height of the conflict when 6.5 million people were food insecure, currently had 12.4 million food insecure people; due to a lack of funds WFP could only reach half of them, with half rations. In Jordan, large-scale ration cuts had recently been avoided thanks to last minute contributions but remained on the horizon for the following year.
105. The Regional Director acknowledged the difficulty that donors hard hit by COVID-19 faced in providing assistance but pointed out that the cost of not responding was much higher: the annual cost of assisting a Syrian in his or her country was estimated at USD 160 but was USD 450 in a Jordanian refugee camp and 12,000 euros in Europe. Concluding her presentation, she recalled that WFP ration cuts in 2015 had helped spark a massive migration to Europe. Poverty and hunger were currently much worse than at the onset of the Arab Spring in 2011, and WFP needed USD 1.7 billion to sustain its operations in the region over the next six months.

106. Members thanked the Regional Director for the overview, with one also expressing appreciation that WFP managed to avoid politicizing its actions despite the politically challenging landscape in the region.
107. One member commended WFP on the success of its crossline operation in the Syrian Arab Republic, delivering food rations from Aleppo to Idlib, as well as its work in Lebanon and Yemen, while also encouraging it to prioritize in its 2022 planning for Yemen to ensure that the most vulnerable populations received predictable assistance. Another urged WFP to ensure that effective measures were taken to protect its staff and enable them to continue saving lives, while also expressing concern about the risks of long-term dependence on humanitarian aid and calling on WFP to work to improve livelihoods and strengthen adaptation and resilience. A third member underscored the cost of not addressing root causes and called for more discussion on how to do so.
108. Responding, the Regional Director provided an update on the crossline operations in the Syrian Arab Republic, saying that the initial stocks delivered to Idlib were expected to be distributed soon following positive discussions with the local authorities and that the next convoy would include seven trucks of WFP food and seven trucks of items from other organizations. She also confirmed that prioritization of operations in Yemen was being worked on and would be addressed in a forthcoming interim CSP.

Latin America and the Caribbean regional overview

109. The Regional Director, Latin America and the Caribbean region, reported that the COVID-19 pandemic, migration and the climate crisis had dramatically increased poverty, inequality and food insecurity in the region; 93 million people were food insecure – compared to 27 million in 2019 – including 12.3 million severely food insecure people in countries where WFP had a presence. In 2020 the region had suffered its worst economic downturn of the last 120 years and the worst performance of all developing regions.
110. Migration both within the region and to North America, including even migrants from Africa and Asia, had increased alarmingly as a result of the economic crisis. Tens of thousands of migrants were using a new route, the Darién Gap, through previously impassable jungle on the border between Colombia and Panama, causing serious protection and illicit trafficking issues. In South America, the number of Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees and affected host communities would result in the largest migratory flows in the world by the end of 2021. Based on recent information, in South America there were more than 2 million food insecure migrants and WFP had assisted around 930,000 of them in Ecuador, Colombia and Peru in 2021.
111. The crisis in Haiti was the worst there since 2010 and perhaps the worst in the region, fuelled by the assassination of the President, the earthquake in August 2021 and tropical storm Grace. Some 4.4 million Haitians had been severely food insecure even before the earthquake, and WFP was targeting 1.5 million in 2021. WFP's Level 2 response to the earthquake was increasingly impeded by criminal groups, and WFP was stepping up its service provision for the international community with transport, convoys and logistics coordination. The national social protection system needed urgently to be strengthened to ensure its sustainability.
112. WFP had been operating in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for four months and in December would begin to expand its school meals programme and assist students with disabilities, with a goal of reaching 130,000 by the end of 2021. The United Nations humanitarian response depot in Panama had been critical in securing the rapid opening of the WFP office in Caracas and had also been instrumental in shipping medical and biosecurity supplies in the region.
113. Turning to WFP's resilience work, the Regional Director noted estimates that by 2030 climate change could push 3 million people a year in the region into extreme poverty and reduce bean and maize fields by 20 percent. Currently, drought and flooding were reducing harvests in

- El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. WFP hoped to tap the adaptation and conservation experience of countries like Costa Rica through South–South cooperation.
114. Climate change was also predicted to have an alarming impact in small island developing States. A multi-country strategic plan covering 22 small Caribbean islands and territories with a strong focus on social protection and climate change adaptation and mitigation would be presented to the Board at its next meeting. WFP expected to reach 1.5 million people through government activities to build resilience to climate change such as microinsurance initiatives in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. In Cuba, it had finalized the design of a preventive insurance scheme linked to disaster risk reduction that would be tested in 2022. It was also developing innovative climate information initiatives, including in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, where it was integrating traditional indigenous methods into national early warning systems.
 115. The Regional Director concluded with an update on the study on migration in Northern Central America, to be released on 23 November 2021. The study showed that while people wanted to remain in their homes 43 percent intended to migrate, primarily due to a lack of economic opportunity. Multisectoral action was needed, and WFP planned to work with the governments of the subregion to expand cash transfers, school feeding and community resilience and job creation activities, at a cost of USD 1.7 billion for five years, to address the underlying causes of food and nutrition insecurity. The governments of the 17 countries in the region affected by regular migration had met in Colombia in November and agreed that there was a need for further coordination in the migration crisis and that investment in root causes and employment opportunities in home countries was key.
 116. As at September 2021, WFP had assisted 5.2 million direct beneficiaries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean with food and cash transfers and reached millions more through technical support for governments. WFP coordinated governments and international financial institutions to find sustainable solutions. It was also working with the private sector, FAO and IFAD to follow-up on the national pathways of 14 countries of the region emerging from the food systems summit.
 117. WFP needed USD 814 million by 2022 and currently had planned contributions covering only half that. The gaps were particularly significant in resilience building and root causes programming.
 118. Welcoming the new Regional Director, Board members underscored the worsening situation of countries of the region as a result of COVID-19, which had exacerbated inequality, and climate change, which was spurring migration. Two also cited economic sanctions as an exacerbating factor.
 119. Members commended WFP for its work in Haiti, its leading role in providing food assistance and building resilience in the Northern Triangle and its work on school meals, with some stressing the importance of its dual humanitarian-development mandate. One member said that the region, as a major producer and exporter of food, produced enough to feed its population but faced food access challenges and along with another member encouraged greater SSTC to address that problem.
 120. Members called on donors to support the region in recovering from COVID-19 and adapting to the impacts of climate change to avoid irreversible damage to development, with two saying that middle income countries needed support and that per capita income should not be the sole criterion for assistance. Members requested additional information on WFP's efforts to broaden its donor base in the region, as well as on past and planned investments in the region; potential delays in food distributions and access to the most vulnerable populations in Haiti; and WFP's work in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.
 121. Responding to the comments and questions, the Regional Director said that there were few donors for the region and that WFP was working with international financial institutions and governments to address that, although some governments already provided significant bilateral

support to other countries. She asked non-donor governments to support international financial institutions to enable WFP to scale up its operations in the region.

122. She concurred that the region was an important producer of food, noting that half the food bought in the region by WFP in the past five years had been for export. She also agreed that middle income countries required attention and said that WFP used indicators such as the cost of diets and the cost of the double burden of malnutrition in addition to per capita income when assessing need. Operations in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela were progressing and would soon begin to scale up from the current 33,000 children and teachers to 800,000 by the end of 2022. However, WFP faced a funding gap for the country of USD 9 million to cover the next six months.
123. Concluding her remarks, the Regional Director pledged to increase the region's visibility in conjunction with the Executive Director. The new WFP strategic plan was also expected to provide opportunities to look at what middle income countries could do, both through WFP and bilateral and multilateral activities. With migration acute and worsening across the region, urgent action was needed to address underlying causes to stem the tide.

Resource, financial and budgetary matters

2021/EB.2/3 WFP management plan (2022–2024)

124. The Deputy Director, Corporate Planning and Performance Division, presented the management plan for 2022–2024, noting that as a result of the bottom up strategic budgeting exercise (BUSBE) the baseline budget encompassed all indirect costs of headquarters and regional bureaux and was used to identify the most appropriate funding source for the activities, an approach that improved transparency. The 2022 budget had been finalized prior to approval of the strategic plan for 2022–2025 but was not expected to require changes following approval of the plan.
125. Members, including several speaking on behalf of lists and one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the management plan for 2022–2024, including its provisional implementation plan and the supplementary note on BUSBE, saying that the new plan was of notable importance in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic impact.
126. Many of those who spoke, including those speaking for lists and on behalf of a group of countries, noted with concern the gap between operational requirements and available resources but commended WFP for its fundraising efforts and encouraged it to continue to broaden its funding base, develop innovative financing approaches, strengthen SSTC and seek efficiencies through collaboration with other United Nation entities.
127. Members, including several speaking for lists and one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, expressed appreciation for BUSBE and the resulting positive changes, including increased transparency and improved allocation of resources, and encouraged WFP to report regularly to the Board on its continued implementation.
128. Members also noted with appreciation various specific aspects of the management plan, including the emphasis on crisis response; planned investments in core areas of work such as beneficiary management, supply chain capacity, data protection, oversight and evaluation and cross-cutting issues such as gender; the maintenance of indirect support costs at 6.5 percent; the critical corporate initiative (CCI) on investing in people; the inclusion of well-defined and transparent key performance indicators; and the budget increases for the Workplace Culture and Programme and Policy Development departments.
129. WFP was encouraged, among other things, to continue to prioritize saving lives; to focus on activities where it had a comparative advantage and demonstrated effectiveness; to improve efficiency through anticipatory action; to ensure the shock responsiveness of social protection systems; to be vigilant regarding the application of humanitarian principles, notably independence and impartiality; to report regularly on its engagement with international financial institutions, particularly concerning work with governments on social protection systems; to

- commit to increasing flexible and multi-year contributions; to set feasible yet ambitious targets in the corporate results framework; to report on the progress of CCIs through the annual performance reports; to improve inter-cluster coordination; to boost funding for local food purchases for school feeding programmes; and to include CCIs in the regular budget process while avoiding recurring unforeseen costs for what were ostensibly one-time investments.
130. Additional information was requested on WFP's efforts to bridge the funding gap; the baseline budget; the programme support and administrative budget, including allocations to regional bureaux and funding sources; and actions to address pipeline breaks.
 131. Responding to the comments and questions, the Chief Financial Officer said that the provisional implementation plan had been included in the management plan pursuant to the External Auditor's recommendation and that initial implementation plan numbers on a country by country basis would be posted on the CSP portal by year's end. He also confirmed that important elements of BUSBE were still in progress or had yet to be started and that progress would be reported throughout the 2023 management plan preparation process.
 132. The new management plan was the first to show funding sources for the baseline budget other than indirect support costs but the organization, like many others, had used such other funding sources before. The baseline budget increased transparency and accountability by specifying all essential indirect costs irrespective of their funding source, and WFP would present a baseline budget every year, allowing comparisons between years. The Chief Financial Officer advocated contributions to new trust funds or special accounts to meet a USD 16.2 million funding gap in the baseline budget for a range of thematic activities.
 133. Of the 12 percent increase in the baseline budget for 2022, 3 percent was for structural adjustments arising from BUSBE such as changes in the treatment of direct and indirect costs; 1 percent was primarily due to switching long-term consultancy functions to staff positions; and 8 percent arose from a higher volume of transactions, increased oversight, improved quality of services and new activities. The 12 percent budget increase could be compared to a 13 percent increase in funding and indirect support cost income in the new management plan.
 134. On the funding gap, the Assistant Executive Director, Partnerships and Advocacy Department, said that management was working to increase bilateral and multilateral thematic funding for climate adaptation, school feeding and social protection. It had achieved good results at the Glasgow climate change conference and already received substantial funding from the World Bank but was working to diversify its engagement with international financial institutions and regional banks.
 135. The private-sector strategy was well on its way. A new approach of targeting billionaires had been launched, and a task team had been established to explore innovative financing instruments and lending solutions. In terms of bridging the funding gap through efficiency gains, it was assumed that investments in resilience would result in decreasing humanitarian costs over time. Flexible multi-year contributions also enabled efficiency gains, and WFP aimed to encourage more contributions of that nature.
 136. The Assistant Executive Director, Programme and Policy Development Department, underscored the close link between the management plan and the new strategic plan and the even closer link that could be expected in 2022, when the management plan would fully reflect the new strategic plan. The management plan emphasized saving lives, with 77 percent of the plan of work devoted to crisis response and 19 percent and 4 percent allocated to resilience building and root causes, respectively. Referring to support expressed for areas such as beneficiary management, gender and the Programme and Policy Development Department more broadly, she observed that the management plan for 2022–2024 had been WFP's first opportunity to mainstream certain resources or budget components that had previously been supported by extrabudgetary contributions from donors.

137. The Chief of Staff, who was also the BUSBE project coordinator, responding to a question regarding regional bureau needs and budget increases, said that the budget increases were attributable to investment cases, historically not part of the management plan budget; the transfer of the cost of staff positions from the headquarters budget to the regional bureau budgets; and the fact that the full budget from all funding sources was being shown for the first time. As part of BUSBE, the Operation Management Support Office was reviewing all regional bureau budgets in order to harmonize activity descriptions for the next budget exercise, which would enhance the comparability of regional bureau budgets.
138. Responding to the suggestion that CCIs be integrated into WFP's normal budget process to avoid subsequent significant additional costs, the Assistant Executive Director, Workplace Culture Department, said that management aimed to include CCIs in existing budgets to avoid additional costs in the long term. The one-time activities identified through the budget process were often linked to the setting up of new arrangements or to the completion of recommendations from initiatives such as strategic workforce planning.
139. On the question of recurring costs for CCIs, the Chief Financial Officer added that WFP was getting better at identifying the "total cost of ownership", including anticipating the recurring costs following the initial investment period. On the persistent funding gap, he called for more funding for the Immediate Response Account, which he said was a highly valuable funding mechanism for addressing pipeline breaks and life-threatening situations. WFP's internal project lending mechanisms and the Global Commodity Management Facility were also critical for avoiding pipeline breaks. Noting that not all donors allowed the use of internal project lending, he encouraged them to do so.

2021/EB.2/4 Appointment of the WFP External Auditor for the term 1 July 2022–30 June 2028

140. The President, in his capacity as chair of the evaluation panel for the selection of the new External Auditor, which would serve from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2028, recalled that in accordance with the decision of the Board at its 2020 second regular session the 2021 Bureau of the Board had served as the evaluation panel, which was responsible for evaluating candidates and presenting recommendations to the Board for action at the current session. Having completed the process of evaluating candidates, the panel was recommending that the Board appoint the Bundesrechnungshof (the supreme audit institution of Germany) as the WFP External Auditor for the term 1 July 2022–30 June 2028.
141. A member speaking on behalf of a list congratulated the Bundesrechnungshof on its selection and expressed appreciation for the transparency of the selection process, including the technical and financial evaluations of the candidates that had been undertaken. He also asked for information regarding remuneration for the new External Auditor relative to the current one.
142. The Secretary reported that the annual remuneration of the new External Auditor would be USD 398,492 per year, representing a slight increase over the USD 380,000 annual remuneration of the current External Auditor, the Cour des comptes of France.
143. A representative of France congratulated the Bundesrechnungshof on its appointment and reported that, coincidentally, the Fifth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly had very recently selected the Cour des comptes of France to take over from the Bundesrechnungshof as a member of the United Nations Board of Auditors. Stressing the importance that France attached to the role of External Auditor for international organizations, he recalled that the six-year mandate was non-renewable, in accordance with United Nations system best practices. The selection procedure for the External Auditor, which was responsible for not only financial audits but also performance and management audits, was very robust, comprising objective and very specific criteria. He said that the Bundesrechnungshof had well recognized experience in external auditing for international organizations and he wished it success in its mission.

Policy issues (continued)

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

144. Management underscored WFP's continued commitment to working with partners at all levels to create a more coherent and effective United Nations development system. WFP was on track with its reform efforts, implementing new working arrangements for regional collaboration platforms and supporting the development of issue-based coalitions, peer support groups and the newly endorsed management and accountability framework.
145. The current approval schedule for new CSPs would see 65 brought in line with the timing and content of UNSDCF's; systems were in place to ensure regular review of this alignment, and an internal working group was coordinating the implications of development system reform for second-generation CSPs. WFP continued to be an active member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) advisory group on joint programming and was contributing to an update of related global guidance that was scheduled for release in early 2022. Emerging reform issues related to programmes were being addressed through the reactivated UNSDG programme development and results task team and included the configuration of United Nations country teams, the sequencing of UNSDCF's and the application of UNSDCF's in fragile contexts. WFP remained firmly committed to aligning its work with the 2020 QCPR approach to measuring corporate contributions, as reflected in the new corporate results framework that would be presented for Board approval in February 2022.
146. Noting that United Nations development system reform had been mainstreamed into WFP activities, the Deputy Executive Director proposed changing how management reported on the topic, suggesting that the current standing item on the agenda of each Board session be replaced by an update provided through the annual performance report at each annual session, based on QCPR indicators. Other United Nations funds and programmes were seeking to adopt a similar approach.
147. Board members welcomed the update and praised WFP's corporate and inter-agency contributions to United Nations development system reform, including progress made in establishing shared premises and business services. They expressed appreciation for WFP's participation in the UNSDG programme development and results group and other efforts to improve joint programming.
148. Several members asked when QCPR indicators would be included in WFP reporting and sought to understand the challenges, benefits and lessons learned from the reform process. One asked for a detailed report on the common premises and agencies involved in co-location and shared business services initiatives. Highlighting the issues of transparency and accountability, various members urged WFP to harmonize the use of resources to ensure accountability and support collective decision making.
149. Some Board members said that implementation of the outcomes of the food systems summit was primarily the responsibility of Member States and that a more inclusive process would ensure ownership and sustainable results aligned with national priorities. Others said it was important that WFP, the other RBAs, the Committee on World Food Security and other United Nations organizations were involved in the implementation process. Many Board members requested more information on the proposed change to WFP reporting on development reform and said that more time would be needed to consider it.
150. On challenges to reform efforts, management highlighted duplication of processes, administrative burdens and increased reporting requirements. Member States had recently decided to maintain the current architecture for funding the resident coordinator system, which had yet to secure its full annual funding requirement of USD 281 million. The new QCPR's indicators would be in place for the next four years.

151. National dialogues were key to ensuring inclusive implementation of the food systems summit outcomes. Through the United Nations country teams, WFP had a role in helping governments translate the results of those dialogues into national development planning, which in turn would ensure that food systems were considered in UNSDCFs and CSPs. Food systems were already being taken into account in the design of CSPs for El Salvador, Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.
152. On the timeframe for United Nations reform, management said that while the process was inherently unending, the completion of the next QCPR in 2024 would mark a plateau in reform efforts, coinciding with the end of the terms of current UNSDCFs. Most CSPs would also end in 2024, with the third generation of plans due to commence in 2025.
153. Among areas for improvement, management flagged the potential for year-on-year joint planning and challenges presented by humanitarian-development-peace nexus programming. Related to efficiency savings, it highlighted a need to ensure that the potential for shared services was considered at the global as well as the country level.
154. The Deputy Executive Director gave a brief overview of the proposed future system-wide reporting on reform efforts and suggested that the changes proposed for WFP reporting could be discussed in depth by the Executive Board Bureau.

2021/EB.2/5 Update on the WFP disability inclusion road map (2020–2021)

155. The Deputy Executive Director emphasized WFP's commitment to disability inclusion, as seen in the new strategic plan and corporate results framework. The Director, Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, said that the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) had strongly influenced the development of the WFP road map, adding that in pursuing the road map the organization had made steady progress on addressing "missing" scores across UNDIS indicators and was on track to meet or exceed the thresholds for almost all UNDIS indicators by 2022, as well as the QCPR indicators. WFP had secured cost-efficient access to expertise in disability inclusion through partnerships, particularly with Trinity College Dublin and CBM International, which were operating a disability inclusion helpdesk. Four country initiatives in the Asia and the Pacific region had been successfully piloted and would be expanded to other countries. All work in the area, including a forthcoming reasonable accommodation policy as part of efforts to build a more inclusive workplace, would take a people-centred approach and be consistent with WFP strategic objectives, corporate human resources strategies and frameworks and the QCPR.
156. Board members welcomed the one-year extension of the disability inclusion road map, commending WFP for progress made and encouraging the organization to use the extra time to ensure that disability inclusion was fully mainstreamed. Many members praised the inclusion of disability in the new strategic plan and urged WFP to ensure that the corporate results framework included well-articulated indicators on disability inclusion that would facilitate reporting and accountability.
157. Among the priorities highlighted by Board members were improving digital accessibility, addressing the interplay of disability, gender, youth and protection and implementing and reporting on staff training and action plans. Board members encouraged WFP to expand its relevant private sector partnerships; another praised the partnership with Trinity College Dublin on data disaggregation and asked WFP to share best practices on data collection and analysis in places where in-person collection was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
158. Several Board members encouraged WFP to consult people with disabilities, their families and organizations that worked with them to identify barriers to obtaining assistance, both internally and in the services WFP delivered. Members applauded the initiatives rolled out by the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific; they urged WFP to ensure that best practices were shared with other offices and asked how the projects would be scaled up and adapted to the needs of other regions.

159. The Regional Director, Asia and the Pacific region, reported that the four country initiatives would be extended to several other countries in the Asia and the Pacific region; discussions with other regional bureaux interested in replicating the initiatives in their own regions were under way. WFP had recently completed a technical assessment that examined digital accessibility and was striving to ensure that disability inclusion was properly reflected in data collection and the design of the next generation of CSPs. It was also embarking on a new partnership with British social enterprise Diversity and Ability on internal capacity development and was exploring ways to consult with organizations that worked with people with disabilities, including through its annual NGO consultation. Conscious of the interplay between disability, gender, youth and indigenous people, WFP was working to achieve an integrated programmatic approach to disability inclusion for cross-cutting issues.

Evaluation reports

2021/EB.2/6 Summary report on the evaluation of the WFP South-South and triangular cooperation policy and management response

160. The Director of Evaluation presented the summary report on the evaluation of WFP's SSTC policy, which described WFP as an established broker of SSTC, particularly with regard to school feeding. It contained eight recommendations that addressed issues such as staff capacity strengthening, advocacy, evidence generation and the integration of SSTC into policies and programming.
161. The Director, Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, welcomed the report and confirmed WFP's commitment to integrating its findings into a revised SSTC policy that would be submitted to the Board in 2023. Describing SSTC as key enabler of progress towards achieving SDG 2, he said he agreed with the recommendations put forward in the report, including those on enhancing inter-agency collaboration, SSTC monitoring and internal SSTC guidance.
162. Endorsing the recommendations of the report, Board members commended WFP for progress made since the introduction of the SSTC policy, particularly the establishment of two new centres of excellence. Several members underscored the importance of solidarity and international cooperation in the face of current global challenges.
163. Board members highlighted the positive impacts of SSTC, including in forming partnerships between countries and supporting country capacity strengthening across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Initiatives related to nutrition, including school feeding, food security and smallholder farmer support and emergency preparedness and response, were particularly valued.
164. Board members asked how WFP intended to address the shortcomings highlighted in the report and requested a timeline for implementation, saying that timely implementation of recommendations was important. Some members called on WFP to clarify roles and responsibilities related to SSTC at all levels of the organization; others urged the organization to integrate SSTC into all relevant operations and thematic areas. One Board member asked WFP to ensure regular SSTC reporting. Another called on Member States to work together to support countries by sharing technology, experience and funding through SSTC mechanisms.
165. The Director, Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, described ongoing work to tackle some of the shortcomings identified in the report. WFP would consider hiring a gender expert to support the SSTC policy revision. Global, regional and local partnerships, including with the other RBAs, were being explored as avenues for strengthening SSTC as efficiently and effectively as possible. Work on joint programming and joint piloting was continuing with the other RBAs; the joint RBA road map that had been prepared for the second high-level United Nations conference on South-South cooperation would be updated. Other areas of focus included support for innovation related to SSTC, a potential expansion of catalytic funding for pilot activities and the strengthening of SSTC monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including through the new corporate results framework.

2021/EB.2/7 Summary report on the joint evaluation of United Nations Rome-based agency collaboration and coordinated response

166. The Director of Evaluation presented the report on the joint evaluation of RBA collaboration and coordinated response, which had been commissioned by the offices of evaluation of the three RBAs following calls from their governing bodies.
167. The Senior Director, Strategic Partnerships Division, presented the joint coordinated response of RBA management, which agreed with the evaluation's five recommendations. He cited the evaluation itself as an excellent example of RBA collaboration, saying that it had come at a crucial moment in the world's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
168. Members, including those representing electoral lists, welcomed the joint evaluation of RBA collaboration as the first of its kind, praising the agencies' commitment to implementing the related recommendations and the relevance of the evaluation's findings to the strategic objectives of the agencies, the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations development system reform agenda. One member said that the RBAs' coordinated support for the Group of 20 presidency in 2021 had led to the formulation of a joint declaration on food security, nutrition and sustainable food systems.
169. Members said that they were pleased with progress in certain areas but also expressed concern about the findings related to competition and limited reduction in overlap, encouraging WFP to work with FAO to address them. Members also said that it was important to assess the costs and benefits of joint intervention and ensure that the benefits outweighed the costs, including the cost of communicating the benefits to the RBAs, Member States and the countries and governments involved. They encouraged the three agencies to carefully consider funding United Nations and RBA collaboration at the country level from the agencies' overhead resources; progress in reducing overlaps, competition and duplication among the three agencies; and apparent confusion over the mandates of FAO and WFP in certain countries.
170. Specific suggestions put forward by members included the development of technological tools and digital solutions that supported work in the field; increased joint engagement in common country analyses and UNSDCF; joint advocacy with donors on the funding of RBA collaboration and with host governments on humanitarian principles and humanitarian access; and the development of guidance on assessment of the costs, benefits and potential risks of proposed joint projects and programmes. Members also requested additional information on indicators for measuring the results of RBA collaboration for each agency; on the cost savings generated through efficiency gains and how such savings were used; and on the implementation and results of successful joint projects.
171. The Director of Evaluation said that an updated evaluation policy and a strategic evaluation of WFP's use of technology in constrained environments would be presented at the Board's first regular session in 2022. The number of joint evaluations carried out had increased from two between 2010 and 2017 to four since 2018, and an indicator of the results of joint evaluation, including with the other RBAs, was included in her office's regular reporting to the Board. The Senior Director, Strategic Partnerships Division, said that the costs of collaboration included the time required to formulate and develop joint projects and programmes and that, in addition to the other RBAs, WFP collaborated with other United Nations partners such as UNICEF. On collaboration with donors, he noted that FAO and WFP had sent a joint letter to the World Bank outlining a proposal for collaboration between FAO, WFP and the World Bank in Afghanistan, highlighting their comparative advantages, and he suggested that such a proposal could be a model for joint engagement in other countries. The Chief Financial Officer added that information on the savings to WFP generated through collaboration on matters such as business operations strategies and common back offices and premises was included in the annual performance reports. In his view, RBA collaboration on headquarters administrative services was best channelled through the existing functional units of the agencies.

Western Africa portfolio

2021/EB.2/8 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for the Gambia (2019–2021) and management response

172. The Deputy Director of Evaluation presented the summary report on the evaluation of the CSP for the Gambia for 2019–2021, which covered the 2018 transitional CSP for the Gambia as well as the first two years of the CSP, to October 2020. In general, the CSP had been found to be well aligned with national policies and responsive to needs despite delays in the COVID-19 response in 2020. The Regional Director, Western Africa region, outlined management's plans for implementing the five recommendations stemming from the evaluation, which focused on the inclusion of some additional themes, national capacity strengthening, including the development of a capacity strengthening strategy, gender issues, monitoring and local procurement. The recommendations would inform the formulation of a new CSP and WFP's contribution to the UNSDCF for the Gambia.
173. Two Board members, including one speaking on behalf of a list, welcomed the evaluation and its findings, applauding the country office for its adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic, attention to gender issues and collaboration on programmes with the Government. They encouraged WFP to continue to engage developing countries in the design and implementation of programmes and to expand its local procurement, including by addressing the obstacles to smallholder participation in certain programmes. One member expressed concern that progress in resilience building had been limited and called for improvements in that area.
174. The Country Director said that local procurement and resilience building for smallholder farmers linked with school feeding would be a main pillar of the new CSP. Many of the problems faced in resilience building activities had been caused by delays in the confirmation of donor contributions, which had been resolved. WFP currently had two new development projects with the Government that would start soon, one on agriculture and food security and the other on adaptation to climate change. The Regional Director said that a regional approach to country capacity strengthening was being developed, with specific modules dedicated to work in challenging areas.

Middle East and Northern Africa portfolio

2021/EB.2/9 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Lebanon (2018–2021) and management response

175. The Director of Evaluation presented the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the summary evaluation report for the CSP for Lebanon (2018–2021), noting that WFP had responded effectively and efficiently to evolving needs in the country, leveraging its comparative advantage. Scope for improvement had been identified with regard to clarifying WFP's dual mandate and added value, strengthening the effectiveness of its operations through more joined-up strategies, focusing donor engagement on establishing flexible funding and response to national priorities, boosting emergency preparedness, improving performance management and outcome analysis, ensuring sufficient human resources for responding to the increased challenges, and the mainstreaming of transformative gender approaches.
176. Welcoming the evaluation, the Regional Director, Middle East and Northern Africa region, confirmed that WFP would address the issues raised, primarily through the theory of change for the next CSP, which would incorporate livelihood and resilience strategies along with protection, gender and accountability to affected populations. WFP would also strengthen its regional and country-level analysis and engage with donors on core funding, flexibility and response to national priorities.
177. Board members, including one speaking on behalf of a list, commended the country office for what they said was excellent work carried out in very challenging circumstances. Several members referred to the dramatic economic deterioration in the country since the evaluation

and called for a corresponding increase in in-kind assistance and an expansion of support for vulnerable host populations. Support for agriculture, social services, safety nets and government efforts to tackle unemployment were key focus areas. One Board member asked WFP to ensure that assistance was prioritized based on assessed humanitarian needs; another called on the country office to redouble its efforts related to gender and protection.

178. The Director of Evaluation replied that while the evaluation covered through the end of 2020 and hence had not considered data from 2021, its results were still valid and relevant to informing current programming. The recommendations were expected to be implemented in the light of evolving circumstances, including market price trends, exchange rates and the availability of funding.
179. The Lebanon Country Director took note of the Board member comments, particularly regarding the provision of in-kind assistance and the need for operational flexibility. He reported that WFP support had been extended to vulnerable Lebanese from early 2020 and would continue to be scaled up. Implementation of an agricultural protection programme that enabled smallholder farmers to purchase inputs had begun, with the intention of increasing national agricultural production.

2021/EB.2/10 Interim country strategic plan – Syrian Arab Republic (2022–2023)

180. Describing the severe economic decline in the Syrian Arab Republic since 2019, the Country Director reported that at least 60 percent of the population was food insecure, the highest proportion since the crisis had begun. In that context, the new interim CSP for the country, covering 2022 and 2023, focused on delivering life-saving food and nutrition, investing in malnutrition prevention, building resilience and livelihoods and providing common services for the humanitarian community.
181. Expressing grave concern at the rise in food insecurity in the Syrian Arab Republic, Board members, including one speaking on behalf of a list, endorsed the interim CSP with its focus on emergency response. One member praised WFP's expertise in food distribution and logistics in extremely challenging environments, adding that its continued presence in the country was vital to supporting people affected by the conflict.
182. Targeting was described as a challenge by several members, including one speaking for a list, who said it was vital to ensure a fair distribution of support for those in need regardless of their regions. One member urged WFP to prioritize support for vulnerable women and girls; another called on WFP to mainstream gender and protection considerations in all its operations. One Board member said it was vital to take a needs-based approach in line with the humanitarian principles; another urged WFP to use all modalities to reach those in need, including cross-border and cross-line operations.
183. Several members said that it was important to work towards the implementation of sustainable interventions aimed at reducing dependency on assistance, including through support for household and community resilience and asset rehabilitation schemes. One Board member praised efforts to tackle challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, water and sanitation, environmental degradation and climate change.
184. Board members sought clarification of recent changes in the use of specialized food for malnutrition prevention and WFP plans for balancing emergency response with resilience activities, including in its budgets. They encouraged WFP to work in partnership with other entities to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 while ensuring due diligence and compliance with corporate risk assessments and standards when working with cooperating partners.
185. Thanking Board members for their support, including through advocacy and funding, the Country Director explained that the same vulnerability-based targeting criteria were used across the country to ensure that the most vulnerable populations were identified regardless of region. In an ongoing vulnerability needs review 1.2 million households were being surveyed; the

exercise was halfway complete, and its results would be central to the implementation of the ICSP.

186. With regard to recent cross-line operations, the Country Director observed that they were not a substitute for cross-border deliveries, which reached more than 1 million people in the northwest. Regarding resource allocation, 86 percent of funding for the interim CSP was allocated to crisis response. The impact of resilience activities such as irrigation projects jointly implemented with FAO was nonetheless considerable. WFP had over 50 partnerships in the Syrian Arab Republic and invested in each to ensure that its gender and protection approaches were implemented on the frontline of assistance delivery.
187. The Country Director described efforts to strengthen the bread value chain through investments in irrigation and the rehabilitation of bakeries and mills, adding that this was one of the most cost efficient and effective ways of counteracting growing food insecurity and reducing future needs. He clarified that a lipid-based specialized food continued to be used to prevent malnutrition and confirmed that climate change was having a big impact in the Syrian Arab Republic, with record drought and low water levels affecting harvest production.
188. Following approval of the interim CSP, Mr Ayman Raad, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, thanked the Board for its approval, saying that his country's relationship with WFP was among the most productive of its relationships with the United Nations entities working in his country. He praised the interim CSP for its reference to the promotion and scale-up of partnerships for policy, capacity building and service provision and said his country looked forward to implementing initiatives on other shared services in logistics, communications, air transport and other services, among others. He expressed concern, however, that only 11 percent of current funding was allocated to livelihood support, saying that a shift was needed whereby early recovery and socioeconomic resilience and sustainability were prioritized, including through the restoration of productive assets in the agriculture sector. He called on donors to provide unrestricted funding to enable WFP to shift from emergency response to early recovery and livelihood improvement.

2021/EB.2/11 Country strategic plan – Tunisia (2022–2025)

189. The Tunisia Country Director presented the CSP for Tunisia for 2022–2025, saying that it sought to address the increasingly complex challenges facing the country as a result of a 9 percent drop in gross domestic product and unemployment rates of 18 percent overall and 24 percent among women. The focus of the CSP was on capacity strengthening for smallholder farmers and communities, including through enhanced access to school feeding markets for smallholder farmers and the digitalization of national social protection and other systems. The country office was working with the central and local governments and WFP's cooperating and operational partners. Fifteen percent of the CSP budget was dedicated to gender activities.
190. Three members spoke, one on behalf of a list. They welcomed the CSP, particularly its focus on building the resilience of vulnerable rural communities to shocks and weather-related disasters; monitoring the food security situation in the most vulnerable regions; contributing to the development of inclusive social protection nets, including school feeding; increasing local procurement from smallholder farmers; and ensuring the consideration of gender issues. Individual members expressed particular approval of the plans for working with partners and for providing technical assistance and policy advice to smallholder farmers – especially women – and capacity strengthening on social protection programmes for the Government and communities.
191. Members expressed satisfaction with the design of the CSP, which was based on robust analysis of needs and risks and closely aligned with the Government's plans for working towards zero hunger and with the UNSDCF for the country.
192. The Country Director thanked Board members for their positive comments and committed to maintaining strong coordination with the Government and other partners with a view to making interventions increasingly efficient and cost-effective.

193. Following approval of the CSP Mr Fethi Sellaouti, Minister of Education of Tunisia, expressed his country's support for it, in particular its focus on school feeding. Outlining the many benefits of school feeding for children and the larger society, he said that it had long been a policy focus for his country, which autonomously administered its own programmes with technical support from WFP and the generous support of donors. Highlighting successes under the CSP for 2018–2021 such as innovation in implementation methods and the strengthening of local production by linking it to school feeding, he pledged his Government's resolve to enhance the quality of school feeding and its reach to more children by improving canteens, hygiene and meal quality; increasing purchases of local produce; digitalizing the school feeding value chain; investing in human resources; and improving beneficiary targeting. His country, he concluded, was committed to working with WFP, its preferred partner, on school feeding and other critical areas such as social protection and resilience building.

Eastern Africa portfolio

2021/EB.2/12 Country strategic plan – Somalia (2022–2025)

194. The Somalia Country Director presented the CSP for that country for 2022–2025 which, as noted by the Eastern Africa Regional Director in introductory remarks, was the region's first second generation CSP to be fully aligned with the new requirements resulting from United Nations development system reform. The CSP built on the progress made under the interim CSP and on a growing strategic partnership with the Government of Somalia that extended to the regional and district levels. It was designed to address the challenges of growing urbanization, increasing numbers of internally displaced people and the food security impacts of recurrent climate shocks and instability through work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
195. Several members, including one speaking on behalf of a list and another on behalf of a group of countries, expressed alarm at the fragility of the situation in Somalia owing to conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters. Nevertheless, they, along with other members, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the CSP, highlighting positive aspects such as its alignment with the overarching priorities identified by the Government of Somalia in its national development plan; capacity strengthening and technical assistance for shock-responsive social protection and disaster risk reduction and mitigation; explicit engagement across the three dimensions of the triple nexus; resilience building programming, including through joint programmes with both UNICEF and FAO; mainstreaming of gender into programme design; inclusion of emergency and resilience-oriented indicators and eventually indicators for reporting on WFP's contribution to stability and peace; and ongoing provision of services to humanitarian partners. The member speaking on behalf of a group of countries also said, however, that saving lives in emergencies was WFP's highest priority and that the CSP's strong focus on resilience should not detract from emergency response.
196. Two members, including one speaking on behalf of a group of countries, encouraged prioritization of the outcomes of the CSP in case of inadequate funding. Another said that there was a need for detailed targeting criteria for safety net programmes and for their alignment with government approaches and called for emphasis on understanding the specific needs and demands of women producers and the barriers they faced in obtaining inputs and technologies for the proposed supply chain activities. One member speaking on behalf of a list noted with appreciation WFP's contribution in setting up a database but voiced concern regarding the potential misuse of data.
197. Responding, the Country Director said that WFP had very robust data protection policies and systems and had agreed measures in place with the Government of Somalia, both for the humanitarian response and the safety net. Addressing a comment on localization as a means to withdraw from protracted situations such as the one in Somalia, he said that it was being looked at on both the humanitarian and the development fronts and was reflected vertically in the CSP in strategic objective 4 and embedded horizontally in strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3.

198. In terms of accountability to affected populations, WFP already engaged directly with the community through a call centre but would increase its community engagement through the new CSP, applying good practices learned in Somalia and elsewhere. With regard to the conflict analysis referred to in the CSP, the outcome would be shared once available and would be used to ensure that programming was conflict-sensitive over the whole programme cycle.
199. Following approval of the CSP, Mr Gamal M. Hassan, Minister of Planning, Investment and Economic Development for Somalia, made a brief statement underscoring the challenges of climate change, environmental change and urbanization faced by Somalia and welcoming what he described as a clear, ongoing and incremental move towards recovery, resilience and development through the CSP. The Minister voiced reservations that the country office had not yet completed a full relocation into Somalia itself and said that he hoped to receive detailed information on the subject.

Organizational and procedural matters

2021/EB.2/13 Biennial programme of work of the Executive Board (2022–2023)

200. The Secretary recalled that, in accordance with a recommendation by the working group on governance approved by the Board in 2000, at each second regular session the Board approved its programme of work for the forthcoming biennium. Noting that the programme of work included both items required by the WFP rules and regulations and items requested by the Board as well as by management, he said that it was a living document that with the advice of the Bureau was updated as needed, including in response to Member State requests submitted through the list convenors, and that among other things it served as a basis for the scheduling of intersessional consultations, updates and similar events.

Administrative and managerial matters

2021/EB.2/14 Revised title and terms of reference of the Audit Committee

201. The Secretary to the Executive Board recalled that in 2019 and 2020 the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations system had issued two reports recommending changes in the terms of reference of the audit and oversight committees of the United Nations system. The Board had reviewed and endorsed the recommendations, along with the Board and management responses, at its 2021 first regular session, and revised terms of reference had accordingly been prepared for the Board's consideration, along with a proposal to rename the Audit Committee the "Independent Oversight Advisory Committee".
202. One member voiced approval for the revised terms of reference and title, saying that the proposed updated responsibilities of the committee, including internal oversight and investigation, were important for strengthening accountability and governance at WFP and that the new title reflected the multiple responsibilities of the committee and its advisory role.

2021/EB.2/15 Establishment of a selection panel for the appointment of Audit Committee members

203. The Secretary to the Executive Board recalled that the terms of two Audit Committee members would end in 2022 and that the resulting vacancies would need to be filled. The document on the subject before the Board (WFP/EB.2/2021/9-B) outlined the process for establishing a selection panel and presented the electoral list representatives proposed for appointment to the panel.
204. One member, observing that her country would be represented on a selection panel for the second time and considered it an honour to do so, said that it was important to ensure equitable geographical and gender balance when selecting new committee members.

Asia and the Pacific portfolio

2021/EB.2/16 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for the Lao People's Democratic Republic (2017–2021) and management response

Country strategic plan – Lao People's Democratic Republic (2022–2026)

205. The President introduced two agenda items related to CSPs in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. As agreed by the Executive Board Bureau, the two items were to be presented and discussed together, with management presenting first the findings of an evaluation of the CSP for 2017–2021 and then a new CSP for 2022–2026, which incorporated actions to implement the recommendations stemming from the evaluation.
206. The Deputy Director, Office of Evaluation, outlined the main findings of the evaluation and the five related recommendations. The recommendations pertained to the use of evidence in CSP formulation, enhanced engagement with partners and donors, the development of a country office approach to resilience strengthening and emergency preparedness and response, the strengthening of WFP's capacity for the design and implementation of country capacity strengthening, and the reinforcement of WFP's approach to the handover of school feeding programmes to the Government.
207. The Country Director presented the new CSP, which was based on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, the United Nations common country assessment and extensive consultations with stakeholders. It was aligned with the Government's socioeconomic development plan and the UNSDCF for the country. Major features of the CSP were the provision of support for the national school feeding programme as part of a broader social protection system; the improvement of nutrition, with actions to address obesity and micronutrient deficiencies as well as undernutrition; increasing government and community preparedness and resilience with regard to emergencies; and equipping WFP to respond to emergencies when the Government's capacity was overstretched. Capacity strengthening was a critical component of WFP's strategy for the handover of programmes to the Government, and partnerships – particularly with the other RBAs and UNICEF – were central to the design and implementation of CSP activities.
208. Board members welcomed the CSP, its basis on a thorough analysis of the nutrition, socioeconomic and political situation in the country and its emphasis on developing more strategic partnerships, including with international financial institutions, NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector. In particular members expressed approval of the CSP's focus on nutrition, gender, capacity strengthening for improved risk management and response to climate-related disasters and targeting of the most vulnerable population groups. They commended the commitment of the Government and WFP to establishing a nationally managed and funded school feeding programme and encouraged WFP to maintain that commitment.
209. Expressing concern that there was a lack of detailed, disaggregated data, members urged the country office to contribute to the collection and analysis of reliable data on gender and disability issues and other themes. Projections of future population growth were also important given the importance of demographic trends in influencing food security.
210. The Country Director thanked Board members for their positive response to the document. Addressing the concerns expressed, he said that the analysis used to inform the design of the CSP included analysis of demographic trends, which indicated that there could be a surplus of labour in the Lao People's Democratic Republic in 20 years. To address that eventuality, WFP was investing in combating malnutrition and supporting primary and further education, including through programmes for improving literacy and school infrastructure. WFP was also helping the Government to target vulnerable areas for social security programmes. Plans for enhancing data collection included collaboration with the national bureau of statistics, the World Bank and other

United Nations agencies. In particular, WFP sought to improve the availability and quality of data on education, school feeding and food security and malnutrition.

211. Following approval of the CSP Mr Latsamy Keomany, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, thanked the Board for its approval and expressed particular gratitude for the generous support provided by donor countries. His Government was pleased both with the implementation of the CSP for 2017–2021 and the approval of the new CSP. As to the latter he highlighted as virtues that it had been developed through a highly inclusive consultative process, was well aligned with the national socioeconomic development plan for 2021–2025 and the 2030 Agenda and was both streamlined and comprehensive, providing for technical assistance and capacity building that would promote sustainability and resilience in the face of disasters. To ensure its success, he called for an active publicity campaign to facilitate participation by all stakeholders in its implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as technical assistance and capacity building for implementing agencies at the local and national levels. He asked too for WFP support for his country's efforts to graduate from least developed country status in 2026, and he thanked WFP for its invaluable support to date, pledging his Government's commitment to work closely with WFP going forward.

2021/EB.2/17 Country strategic plan – Bangladesh (2022–2026)

212. The Country Director presented the CSP for Bangladesh for 2022–2026, saying that it aimed to build resilience, support the scale-up of the national school feeding programme, strengthen food systems and continue the delivery of vital assistance to Rohingya refugees. The CSP was founded on the strong partnership between WFP and the Government and close collaboration with other United Nations agencies, NGOs and civil society organizations.
213. Board members welcomed the CSP, particularly its alignment with the UNSDCF for the country and national development plans and its increased focus on gender, protection, accountability and inclusion. One member praised the shift towards sustainable solutions aimed at increasing self-reliance and enhancing social cohesion. Another highlighted WFP's engagement with private sector partners, technology transfer related to smallholder agricultural practices and the use of digital technology for refugee food assistance.
214. Board members encouraged WFP to develop more strategic partnerships, increase its focus on emergency preparedness and resilience building, strengthen evidence generation and increase funding for resilience building, including from non-traditional donors. Two members asked for more information on targeting criteria and the protection of vulnerable groups, remarking that the available data on disabilities were insufficient.
215. Several Board members expressed concern at the deteriorating food security and persistent vulnerability of Rohingya refugees, including constraints on their access to food distribution sites. Some members urged WFP and the international community to engage regarding the safe and dignified repatriation of refugees. One member asked for details of WFP plans to address the protection- and gender-related risks faced by refugees and a timeline for the potential revision of the CSP to reflect operations planned for Bhasan Char.
216. One Board member sought details of the transition and handover strategy for CSP activities, adding that it was important to advocate sustainable national funding for school feeding. Another requested clarification of the CSP beneficiary analysis.
217. The Country Director confirmed that protection, disability inclusion and social cohesion were key priorities of the CSP. WFP was continuing to seek out new partnerships like the one with the World Bank related to the refugee programme and the COVID-19 response. Partnerships with other United Nations agencies addressed issues such as forecast-based financing, shock response and digital assistance modalities for urban populations. He highlighted WFP's engagement with the private sector on rice fortification, a project with great potential for strengthening nutrition outcomes in Bangladesh and beyond. The country office was also engaged in innovative urban programming built on lessons learned from the COVID-19 response.

218. Turning to Bhasan Char, he reported that the budget for the service component of the CSP envisaged the potential provision of common services on the island. Assessment missions to Bhasan Char were ongoing.
219. Responding to the question on beneficiary numbers, he clarified that they would fall as a result of the phase-out of WFP's school feeding programme, concurrent with the rollout of the nationally owned programme.
220. Following approval of the CSP Mr Mohamed Tofazzal Hossain, Joint Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance of Bangladesh, said that his country greatly appreciated the support of WFP in both emergencies and development, highlighting a number of programmes run by WFP in Bangladesh that he described as remarkable and singling out for praise WFP's role in providing assistance to Rohingya refugees. Noting that his country was set to graduate to lower-middle-income status by 2026, he said that while it still welcomed traditional forms of assistance it would increasingly need capacity building to enable it to achieve its potential. Fortunately the new CSP would strengthen such assistance, which had been well begun under the previous CSP. He praised the consultations that had informed the CSP, saying that they had resulted in a plan that was well aligned with his country's needs and his Government's priorities in areas such as disaster preparedness, social protection, anticipatory action and technological innovation. In closing he thanked the Board for its endorsement of the CSP for his country.

Evaluation reports (continued)

2021/EB.2/18 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for China (2017–2021) and management response

221. The Director of Evaluation presented the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the summary report on the evaluation of the CSP for China for 2017–2021, noting that the CSP had been well aligned with national priorities and the direction of the Government and remained relevant to meeting China's nutrition objectives and supporting South–South cooperation and fundraising. Potential improvements identified had included strengthening strategic engagement, enhancing partnerships, improving learning from both national and internal experiences and firming up China's long-term contributions to WFP.
222. Management had already begun to implement the four recommendations presented in the report, strengthening its strategic engagement with the Government, preparing a country partnership action plan, strengthening processes for monitoring and reporting on programme results and reinforcing plans for tapping into China's financial and knowledge resources, including through SSTC.
223. One Board member took the floor to commend the WFP evaluation team for its contribution to strengthening WFP's accountability and generating best practices. He praised the work carried out by the centre for excellence in China and welcomed efforts to maximize the impact of the partnership between WFP and China.

Summary of the work of the Executive Board

2021/EB.2/19 Summary of the work of the 2021 annual session of the Executive Board

224. The President reported that the Rapporteur for the Board's 2021 annual session had prepared the summary of that session and that in October 2021 a draft of it had been distributed to Board members, none of whom had requested that it be revised in any particular. The Board then approved the summary.

Verification of adopted decisions and recommendations

225. Introducing the item the President observed that the current session had proceeded smoothly despite being the Board's first hybrid session, with some participants attending in person and others remotely, and he commended the Secretariat and the technical staff who had made it possible. He highlighted some of the discussions that took place during the session, including those concerning the management plan for 2022–2024, which would give the organization the resources it needed to carry out its operations, evaluations of key policies of the organization and the review of the implementation of the disability inclusion road map and its extension by one year.
226. The Rapporteur then confirmed that the decisions and recommendations presented in the draft compilation of decisions and recommendations adopted by the Board at the current session corresponded to those that had been agreed during the session. The final versions of the adopted decisions and recommendations would be posted on the Board's website in the next several days, and a draft summary of the discussions that took place during the session would be circulated for comment in due course.

Acronyms

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
QCPR	quadrennial comprehensive policy review
RBA	Rome-based agencies
SD3C	Emergency and Rural Development in the Sahel: A Joint RBA - G5 Sahel + Senegal Response to the 3C Challenges (COVID-19, Conflicts and Climate Change)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSTC	South-South and triangular cooperation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework