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## **Current and future strategic issues**

### **Election to fill one vacant seat on the Bureau and appointment of the Rapporteur**

1. Recalling the agreement between Gabon and Chad to share a term of office, the President noted that the seat on the Board would pass to Chad on 1 July 2024. It was therefore necessary to replace the alternate convenor of list A, Ms Chantal Moukoutou Legnongo, Alternate Permanent Representative of Gabon. He invited the Board to approve the nomination of H.E. Fredrick Matwang'a, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kenya, as alternate convenor for list A.
2. The Board was also invited to approve the appointment of Mr Vicente Bezerra, Alternate Permanent Representative of Brazil, as Rapporteur for the session.
3. Both proposed appointments were duly approved.

### **2024/EB.A/1      Opening remarks by the Executive Director**

4. In her opening remarks, the Executive Director reported on the persistent challenges facing WFP as humanitarian needs surged, resources failed to keep pace and political and security environments became increasingly complex. Operational requirements for 2024 were USD 18 billion, against the latest funding forecast of USD 8.9 billion. WFP was adapting to the new financial and operating environment, including by reorganizing its headquarters structure, which had already improved efficiency, effectiveness and cross-departmental collaboration and coherence. The current focus was on refining the division of responsibilities and accountability between headquarters and the regional bureaux in supporting country operations.
5. Work on strengthening the funding base included increased engagement with international and regional financial institutions, including in three-way partnerships with governments; the facilitation of South-South and triangular cooperation; new relationships with private sector partners for funding and technical support; and greater use of innovative financing mechanisms. A new partnerships strategy aimed to promote long-term relationships with partners, increase resource and knowledge transfers, and expand the private sector donor base to include new foundations, more individual giving and philanthropy.
6. Successful fundraising and partnership building depended on maintaining stakeholder trust in WFP. Recognizing that effective assurance controls and processes were central to such efforts and to WFP operations, the Executive Director was issuing a circular that codified the assurance standards for operations and provided enhanced tools and guidance for country offices. Meanwhile, the Ethics Office was formulating a new ethics strategy for 2024–2026.
7. As the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) 2024 Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, the Executive Director's priorities encompassed ensuring that people receiving WFP assistance knew their rights and were protected from risks; establishing protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) as a leadership priority for the humanitarian sector and strengthening PSEA capacities across that sector. WFP had a 45-point action plan to address the recommendations from a recent strategic evaluation of its own work on PSEA.
8. Thanking WFP employees for their work on the front lines of the hunger crisis, the Executive Director sought to ensure that the ongoing organizational changes were implemented as swiftly as possible, prioritizing the protection of employees' positions over non-staffing costs and supporting national employees with increased notice periods, after-service medical coverage, counselling services and other measures. Duty of care would also be a central concern of the newly appointed Assistant Executive Director for Workplace and Management, Stephen Omollo.

9. Turning to WFP operations, the Executive Director described emergency response interventions in Gaza, Haiti, Myanmar, the Sudan – where WFP’s Director of the Supply Chain and Delivery Division had been deployed as the United Nations Regional Emergency Coordinator – the Sahel, Ukraine and Yemen. WFP recognized that ending food insecurity was a shared endeavour and was ready to contribute its technical expertise and operational experience to joint efforts to deliver lasting solutions to hunger, aligning its activities with national or local strategies and harnessing innovation.
10. In closing, the Executive Director affirmed that WFP relied on the support of all Board members, valued the open and honest dialogue it had with them and was grateful for the Board’s counsel and collaboration, including in efforts to ease access constraints, ensure the safety of humanitarian workers and broker political solutions to end the conflicts that fuelled hunger.
11. Commending the Executive Director for her strategic outlook and efforts to strengthen WFP and adapt to changing circumstances, many Board members thanked WFP for its support in addressing challenges in their own countries and regions. Members outlined the financial and other contributions that their countries made to WFP’s work, with several expressing their governments’ plans to increase their support.
12. Offering condolences to the families of WFP personnel who had lost their lives in the call of duty, Board members applauded the commitment of WFP staff to assisting people in need despite the challenges. Many speakers expressed concern at the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, calling for a ceasefire to allow safe, unhindered deliveries of essential goods, the release of all hostages and the restoration of basic services. Board members requested regular updates on the humanitarian situation and WFP’s emergency operations in Gaza. The conflicts in the Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen were also of grave concern, and several Board members warned against neglecting crises in other parts of the world, including drought in Southern Africa, the large-scale displacement of people in Myanmar and into Bangladesh, civil unrest in Haiti, the effects of climate change on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and elsewhere, and deteriorating food security in the Sahel and countries such as Afghanistan and South Sudan.
13. Many Board members expressed alarm at the increased violations of international humanitarian law observed in many conflicts. Condemning actions such as the use of restrictions on access to food, water and other essentials as a weapon of war, the targeting and detention of humanitarian workers, and the politicization of humanitarian assistance, several speakers expressed their governments’ willingness to work with WFP on promoting respect for international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians and safe and sustained access for humanitarian supplies and workers. A small number of speakers called for the lifting of international sanctions on trade with specific countries.
14. Board members endorsed WFP’s role at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, particularly in the areas of food systems strengthening and value chains; sustainable school feeding and nutrition programmes, including through the School Meals Coalition; disability inclusion; and localization and local community engagement aimed at improving the sustainability of interventions.
15. Board members encouraged continued investment in resilience building and anticipatory action, with WFP working with donors, national governments and other partners to promote the funding, sustainability and national ownership of programmes and systems. They also asked management to maintain WFP’s focus on gender concerns, including by swiftly implementing the recommendations from the PSEA evaluation, and called for stronger measures for the protection of beneficiaries and accountability to affected people and continued promotion of global cooperation on issues such as adaptation to climate change, migration and humanitarian access in conflicts.

16. Turning to the internal restructuring initiative, Board members welcomed its positive impacts at the headquarters and regional levels and encouraged management to complete country office reforms swiftly, ensuring that the planned changes were communicated to staff in a timely and transparent manner and that senior staff vacancies were quickly filled.
17. Board members applauded efforts to strengthen oversight and control mechanisms through the global assurance project – including in relation to cooperating partners – and to mitigate the risks of fraud, corruption or theft. Several Board members encouraged management to track and report on the results of those measures and to expedite the implementation of recommendations from oversight bodies.
18. Reiterating their commitment to the governance review process, Board members emphasized the importance of implementing the recommendations made in the working group’s interim report and other actions aimed at ensuring efficient and coherent governance within WFP and throughout the United Nations.
19. Voicing concern at the funding deficit, Board members welcomed WFP’s three-pronged plan for addressing shortfalls by broadening its resource base, prioritizing initiatives aimed at boosting efficiency and effectiveness – with decisions based on evidence and consultations with affected communities – and scaling up partnerships. Members encouraged management to continue to mobilize more flexible and predictable funding, ensuring transparent communication with donors on the risks and trade-offs arising from funding gaps. Several Board members called on the international community to support humanitarian action, urging existing, emerging and potential donors to provide financial and other support to address the unprecedented needs around the world, with each contributing at a level commensurate with their means.
20. The Executive Director thanked the Board members for a productive discussion and for their participation in WFP’s work.

### **Special address by Dr James Mwangi Chief Executive Officer of Equity Group Holdings**

21. Reflecting on Equity Group Holdings’ role in increasing financial inclusion in Kenya, Dr Mwangi highlighted the importance of analysing the root causes of challenges faced, whether in financial inclusion or food security, and addressing them in partnership. Noting the complex pressures on WFP, he saw potential in building the capacity of smallholder farmers and increasing their resilience to the impacts of climate change in order to prevent future food insecurity.
22. Dr Mwangi offered insight into how Equity Group Holdings identified partners, shared risk and supported financial literacy, describing the group’s initiative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where its bank had grown from serving 86,000 to 2.2 million customers in just three years. The group had already made good progress towards increasing the share of loans granted to agriculture, thanks to its efforts to build smallholder farmer capacity, reduce their risk exposure and facilitate their access to credit. The group was also active in other areas relevant to WFP such as post-harvest food losses, the leasing of warehouses and agroprocessing. It was ready to scale up its initiatives and continue working with WFP towards the common goal of changing lives.
23. Three Board members delivered statements on behalf of their respective lists, expressing appreciation for Equity Group Holdings’ work with WFP, with one describing their collaboration in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as an example of how United Nations entities and the private sector could improve food production through market-based approaches. The group’s Africa Recovery and Resilience Plan was commended as showing how cooperation between international organizations, governments and private businesses could bridge the funding gaps that hampered progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2. One Board member highlighted the importance of microfinance in securing

smallholder livelihoods in his region, calling on financial institutions to incorporate “crop-plus” strategies into financing schemes and urging governments to integrate them into value chains and provide a regulatory framework to enforce contracts. Stressing the need for the institutions to provide affordable and effective credit, he asked Dr Mwangi about Equity Group Holdings’ experience in engaging with governments on subsidies and other incentives to encourage banks to cater for smallholder farmers, and its strategy for meeting the credit needs of tenant farmers without legal title to land, especially in rural areas where online banking was the only option.

24. Dr Mwangi was also invited to share his views on how partners could leverage WFP’s experience, access and reach in fragile settings and how donors could increase the commercial banking sector’s engagement in addressing the financing gap in agriculture and food production in Africa. More insight was sought into how his group promoted gender equality; its plans to engage with the next generation of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs; and potential high-impact investments in fragile, conflict-affected situations.
25. Responding to Board members’ questions, Dr Mwangi said that partners could benefit from WFP’s knowledge, relationships with policymakers, scientific capacity and leadership in food security and standing as a United Nations entity and Nobel Peace Prize winner, which was crucial to mobilizing support. Regarding the credit financing gap, the private sector could be the biggest provider of capital but had to reconsider its approach to agriculture, with a focus on sponsoring research and innovation to engage young people and promoting value addition and benefit sharing.
26. Equity Group was an equal opportunity organization and 54 percent of its customers were women. The future of agriculture relied on the technological skills and education of young people, but they needed to be attracted to the sector by more innovative farming, government incentives and job opportunities throughout the value chain.
27. Regarding impact investments in fragile settings, WFP could consider creating a food security ecosystem within the countries concerned, using less fragile areas to produce food, thereby creating jobs, reducing costs and addressing the root causes of fragility, while providing the people it served with locally produced and preferred food. On microfinance and affordable credit, risks could be reduced by training and capacity building for smallholder farmers, permitting lower interest rates. The bank avoided the issue of land titles by considering cash flow rating for potential borrowers and was a leader in online banking, with 99 percent of its transactions taking place on digital platforms and 68 percent of its credit processed digitally.
28. Expressing WFP’s gratitude for its partnership with Equity Group Holdings, the Executive Director said that the ambition for USD 50 million to be invested in value chains in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania under the new agreement signed earlier that day could become a blueprint for unlocking investment in local food systems and supporting sustainable economic development.

## **Operational matters**

### **Oral global overview on humanitarian needs and operational concerns and priorities**

29. The Deputy Executive Director described the continuing impact of conflict, climate shocks and the humanitarian funding crisis on food security around the world. At over 300 million, the number of people estimated to be acutely food insecure had more than doubled in the past three years. The global humanitarian funding crisis was resulting in poorer food consumption and rising tensions, with a disproportionate impact on women and girls. It was also hampering WFP’s ability to access hard-to-reach communities in conflict settings, where more costly approaches were often required. WFP was seeking ways to adapt, including through innovations such as its digital payment tool and through increased localization. It

- continued to prioritize its activities to meet the most urgent needs, using vulnerability-based targeting and engaging in contextual analysis to take into account conditions on the ground.
30. Sixty-five percent of acutely food-insecure people were located in fragile or conflict-affected settings, and operational complexity was exacerbated by shifting regional alliances and changing perceptions of the United Nations presence. The climate crisis was also intensifying food insecurity. WFP, through its emergency preparedness and anticipatory action, was supporting communities in becoming more resilient to climate shocks and adapting to extreme weather and was working with governments and local partners to strengthen national social safety nets to improve emergency preparedness and response.
  31. Emergency operations continued, including Gaza, the Sudan and Myanmar. In Lebanon, preparedness measures were being taken in case of an escalation in the situation. Meanwhile, under its changing lives agenda, WFP was engaged in exciting work, such as expanding school meals programmes, improving access to healthy, nutritious food and promoting local solutions to combat malnutrition.
  32. Expressing deep concern for the deteriorating humanitarian situation around the world, Board members thanked WFP for its continued efforts to save lives and change lives and applauded its staff for their dedication in the face of severe challenges and constrained resources, which required them to take difficult decisions. Members urged WFP to prioritize the most acute needs, using vulnerability-based targeting and gender-sensitive approaches; increase collaboration with other humanitarian actors, including through intersectoral analysis and needs assessments; and focus its resilience efforts in areas where it had an established presence and had demonstrated value added. School meals were cited by several members as an exemplary means of tackling multiple challenges at the same time.
  33. Several members called on donors to increase funding, with some highlighting the advantages of flexible and predictable funding. WFP was encouraged to expand its donor base and to further explore partnerships with the private sector and international financial institutions.
  34. Several members requested more in-depth discussion on prioritization and targeting and their impact on beneficiaries. One also suggested a future discussion on WFP's role in development, resilience and social protection, observing that WFP was often the only agency with the access and capacity to deliver major resilience projects.
  35. Responding to the comments, WFP management thanked Board members for their commitment to supporting WFP's advocacy and acknowledged that prioritization, resilience building and accountability to affected populations were critical issues. WFP was seeking to strike the right balance between saving lives and changing lives in its next strategic plan and the upcoming resilience and climate change policies and looked forward to consulting with the Board on those instruments.
  36. WFP was reviewing its projects to ensure that it was targeting the most vulnerable, taking into account its capacity to act given the operational constraints in many settings. It was also helping its country offices more accurately forecast the financing they could expect to receive, in line with a broader exercise led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs across the entire humanitarian response system. In the lead-up to the finalization of the WFP localization policy, which would have a strong component on accountability to affected populations, WFP was exploring ways to involve people in programmes and assistance that took account of their aspirations as well as their needs, building outwards to involve the local organizations and government agencies that interacted most directly with affected people.



**Oral update on the global assurance project**

37. Introducing the update, the Executive Director announced the recent approval of a circular on the global assurance framework, which established clear assurance standards to be met by every WFP operation and stipulated that exceptional cases where management could not be certain that standards were being met would be brought to members for an open and frank discussion on the way forward.
38. Management reported that all 31 high-risk operations were implementing their augmented assurance plans. Efforts to date had focused on general food assistance; the next phase would address other important programmatic activities, such as nutrition and school feeding. Thirteen operations were rolling out vulnerability-based targeting; communicating the new targeting approach to stakeholders would require careful and thorough messaging to facilitate community acceptance. Another focus area was monitoring and community feedback mechanisms (CFMs), now merged into a single service at headquarters. The finalized circular codifying the minimum monitoring and CFM requirements included a “budgeting and earmarking funding mechanism” for monitoring to set recommended thresholds by country size to ensure appropriate funding, even in declining resource settings. Nearly 80 percent of high-risk operations were using a multi-layered approach to monitoring that included traditional, third-party and remote monitoring combined with improved beneficiary reporting channels. Nine high-risk operations currently met all CFM assurance standards.
39. In the area of commodity management and supply chain, the Logistics Execution Support System Last Mile solution had been rolled out to 26 of the 31 high-risk operations; where appropriate, third-party inventory checks have been conducted and video surveillance put in place. The circular for identity management had been finalized and high-risk operations were rapidly adopting improved registration and verification approaches. A global reconciliation service had been rolled out to support detailed reconciliation and anomaly detection in all operations and for all modalities. WFP had also clarified roles and responsibilities for cooperating partner selection, contracting and management. Partner Connect had been rolled out to 17 high-risk operations and WFP was on track for full coverage by the end of the year. Assurance would feature prominently on the agenda of WFP’s annual partnership consultation.
40. Overall, WFP was taking a risk-based approach whereby each high-risk operation identified and prioritized its biggest risk areas and then implemented its plan to address them, with strong regional bureau engagement. WFP was also attentive to affordability, seeking assurance that assistance was reaching the right people at a reasonable cost. Other strategic issues were operational flexibility, systems integration, and learning and knowledge management.
41. Welcoming the update, Board members underscored the importance of implementing the global assurance framework to strengthen accountability to Member States, donors and beneficiaries. They commended WFP for institutionalizing progress reporting and sharing it with donors, noting its value for compliance, oversight, monitoring, accountability and transparent resource management.
42. Several members characterized assurance-related costs as a continuous investment necessary to ensuring trust in WFP’s model. They called on WFP to invest in strengthening accountability to affected people, especially CFMs, to meet its PSEA and other protection and accountability obligations, and looked forward to a corporate tool that integrated monitoring and CFM data.

43. Affirming that people who needed assistance should be able to receive it safely, fully and without interference, members underscored the importance of training, monitoring, evaluation, risk management and supply chains in that regard. At the same time, they acknowledged the need for flexibility to adapt to fluid operating environments.
44. Noting the need to balance oversight, monitoring, accountability and risk management with the imperative to reach beneficiaries, one Board member asked WFP to continue sharing its strategic approach in this area, adding that strategic considerations should encompass the technical capacity and expertise of WFP and its cooperating partners to identify and handle risks. Members called for a strong focus and updates on the cooperating partner workstream to ensure that it kept pace with WFP's overall progress on assurance measures.
45. Board members requested broad dissemination of WFP's four global assurance standards, including in the public domain, and underscored the importance of timely and transparent communication with the Board when the standards could not be fully guaranteed. WFP was called on to mandate an independent external evaluation to assess each of the new measures adopted, with a view to confirming that WFP was able to handle the budgeting and funding of critical reform measures in the future.
46. Board members also looked forward to final, comprehensive reporting on aid diversion in Tigray, Ethiopia and reports on similar investigations in the Gambela and Somali regions, with one member suggesting that a management review be provided. Some members looked forward to receiving updates on efforts to enhance cooperating partner risk management.
47. Management confirmed that the increase in costs associated with assurance was considered an investment; at the same time, WFP was seeking to ensure that such costs remained under control, particularly in a time of reduced budgets. The utility of CFMs for reporting on sexual exploitation and abuse and the need to strengthen efforts in that regard was a current topic of discussion within WFP; in the wake of the evaluation on PSEA, management would be looking at CFMs as just one means of addressing the issue.
48. Management also welcomed the call for an evaluation of the project in late 2025 or early 2026 and took note of requests for greater focus on cooperating partner management and capacity building and a comprehensive report on the situation in Ethiopia, recalling that the investigation timeline was beyond management's control. New overarching incident escalation protocol had recently been launched to ensure that incidents were brought swiftly to management's attention and to support the flow of accurate information to donors and Member States. WFP was also mainstreaming assurance standards into its regular risk management process for all country offices and ensuring that when country offices were unable to meet the assurance standards, they had an avenue for reporting and escalating issues, thus further supporting full transparency.

## **Regional overviews**

### **Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe portfolio**

49. The Regional Director warned that food insecurity in Gaza, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen was expected to deteriorate in the next six months. The ongoing conflict in Gaza was having widespread repercussions on WFP operations in Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. In addition, hostilities in the Red Sea had driven up shipping prices and the Sudan crisis had caused a significant influx of refugees into Egypt and Libya.
50. In Gaza, the Rafah incursion had undone much of the progress achieved in recent months. The operating environment in Gaza was unlike anything WFP had ever seen; the organization had nonetheless managed to assist more than 1,000,000 people in May.

51. In Yemen, following the detention of United Nations and NGO staff, WFP had paused food assistance to the north while it negotiated a more targeted programme. Given the highly complex situation, a United Nations-wide decision was required on programming in Yemen, and WFP asked for United Nations and Board support as it resumed operations.
52. In the Syrian Arab Republic, 80 percent fewer people received WFP assistance than a year ago although needs remained high. In Lebanon, WFP continued to work on merging the World Bank emergency social safety net and the WFP-funded national poverty targeting programme into a single social safety net but was having to shift its attention to preparing for a potential escalation in hostilities. In Ukraine, where a sharp uptick in civilian deaths was reported and front lines were shifting, WFP was doing double distributions in places at risk while it still had access.
53. Across the region, WFP had aligned its operations with funding realities but continued to seek innovative ways to reach people in need in emergencies and had many positive developments to report, including in the areas of climate-smart programming, reassurance, social protection and PSEA. However, such were the challenges that WFP needed the support of its Board in terms of resources and diplomacy, particularly in Yemen, to secure the release of detained staff, formulate a system-wide position and resume operations; and in Gaza, to facilitate safe and sustained access to people in need. Risks were high, especially in Gaza. WFP provided regular updates on losses and shared risks through a framework developed by its Risk Management Division specifically for Gaza; the membership was asked to inform WFP in the event that the risks exceeded their parameters. Members were also urged to seek political solutions to avoid yet another crisis whose impact risked spreading beyond Lebanon and even beyond the region.
54. Board members thanked the Regional Director for her update and WFP for its relentless life-saving work in the region, particularly in Gaza, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen. One Board member praised WFP's operational transparency and efforts to redesign its programming in the Syrian Arab Republic; others highlighted the value of its social protection work in Lebanon; its support for supply chains, food systems strengthening, school meals and demining in Ukraine; and strong risk management in Gaza. Several members called for more efforts to stabilize the whole region and more investment in anticipatory action, preventative diplomacy, early warning systems and rapid response capacity.
55. Praising WFP's efforts to reach the most vulnerable, one Board member requested updates on retargeting efforts for small programmes, along with any insights that could be shared across the region.
56. Pledging their support for the humanitarian principles and unimpeded access to all those in need, Board members condemned the detention of humanitarian workers in Yemen. One member encouraged WFP to continue to strengthen its response to critical acute malnutrition in the country, including through communications with stakeholders on funding gaps and pipeline breaks.
57. The humanitarian situation in Gaza was of grave concern to many Board members. One requested more details on the access challenges faced in the north and south and an update on access negotiations; he also asked whether WFP was working with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near-East. Another member invited WFP to provide its views on potential advocacy actions by donors and partners to address the access issues in Gaza in particular, along with the imminent famine.
58. In response, the Deputy Executive Director provided additional details on Gaza. While WFP needed to diversify access to food and improve nutritional intake, a multisector approach was required that included water, sanitation, hygiene and basic healthcare. Access had improved in the north, but the situation in the south had worsened owing to the military

operation in Rafah. The main issue was distribution inside the border because of security issues but also lawlessness and massive looting. A plan was needed for overall security and governance, followed by massive recovery and reconstruction work – questions far beyond the mandate of WFP and even the United Nations. The war needed to end and a plan was needed for the day after, and WFP looked to Member States to deliver on that. In the meantime, WFP's role was to do everything it could to keep people alive and bring them some dignity.

59. In Yemen, the resumption of WFP general food assistance using the retargeting pilot analysis was dependent on analysis and consultations with various stakeholders. In the meantime, given the increasing food insecurity after a pause of nine months, WFP would conduct a one-off rapid emergency response in the 34 most critical districts. The requested insights into retargeting exercises for smaller programmes would be shared bilaterally.

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

60. The Regional Director started his overview by highlighting WFP's increasing engagement in SIDS, focusing on climate adaptation and resilience building and the strengthening of national and regional emergency preparedness and response systems.
61. Moving on to other areas, he reported that in Myanmar intense conflict, human rights abuses and the weaponization of food were widespread, and one third of the population was at emergency levels of food insecurity. Humanitarian access was still heavily constrained. WFP was engaging more widely with the parties to the conflict and other stakeholders, including donors. It had delivered food aid to 940,000 people since October 2023 and expected to reach 2 million in 2024. However, more international attention for this "forgotten crisis" was crucial.
62. In Bangladesh, cash entitlements for refugees had been raised and a return to full rations was expected shortly, but violence in the camps had escalated and many refugees were afraid to leave their shelters to attend health clinics, schools and other basic services. WFP had actively supported the Government's response to Cyclone Remal, including through anticipatory action and was now moving into a recovery phase.
63. In Afghanistan, one quarter of the population was acutely food insecure (in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) phase 4) and massive funding cuts had forced WFP to cut 90 percent of its beneficiaries; child mortality was set to soar. WFP was promoting livelihood activities and building resilience to climate shocks: 7,000 women had participated in economic empowerment projects and 784,000 people in critical infrastructure initiatives, including for walls and dams that had provided protection during the recent flash floods, to which WFP had responded within 24 hours.
64. Formal fraud risk assessments had been completed in four high-risk countries, helping WFP to hone partner oversight at key points in the supply chain and tighten other controls.
65. With support from Member States, WFP had increased its efforts to ensure that persons with disabilities, especially school age children, were taken into account in disaster preparedness and response and social welfare programmes, and disability disaggregated data and analysis were informing decision making. WFP was also working with expert partners on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.
66. Board members thanked WFP staff for their dedicated work in challenging environments and welcomed the increased focus on SIDS, disability inclusion and PSEA. Deeply concerned about food insecurity in the region, many pledged additional support to mitigate the serious funding shortfalls. Expressing appreciation of the Deputy Executive Director's efforts to improve humanitarian access and protection in Myanmar, Board members emphasized the importance of increasing attention for such protracted crises. One member commended

WFP for reversing the ration cuts in Bangladesh and another asked about the high malnutrition rates in the Cox's Bazar camps.

67. Board members applauded WFP's efforts to meet the needs of vulnerable Afghans, especially women, children and marginalized groups. Some members underscored the need to invest in anticipatory action to build climate resilience and reduce disaster risks for SIDS.
68. The Deputy Executive Director said that WFP would discuss the risks of its work in Myanmar with donors in order to develop a common understanding of how best to address them. Regarding the high malnutrition rates in Cox's Bazar, the Regional Director said that they in part stemmed from poor dietary choices; WFP was investing in behaviour change communication to increase the demand for healthy food. He encouraged the international community to heed the SIDS's call for reform of the international financial system and the use of a multi-dimensional vulnerability indicator in decision making on concessional loans.

### **Southern Africa portfolio**

69. The Deputy Regional Director said that El Niño induced drought had decimated crops and threatened food security across the region. Anticipatory action had protected lives and livelihoods, but WFP had been able to reach only a fraction of the people in need. It was scaling up emergency food and nutrition support for 5 million people until March 2025 and collaborating with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on preparations for the next planting season. Food production and livelihoods had also been threatened by escalating conflict and violence, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Cabo Delgado in northern Mozambique. Throughout the region, governments were entrusting WFP with the implementation of public programmes and capacity strengthening efforts, as reflected in its country strategic plans (CSPs).
70. WFP was lifting people out of food insecurity through strategic partnerships with governments and international financial institutions, and interventions for smallholder farmers had led to reduced post-harvest losses and improved market access for farmers in several countries, with WFP planning to reach 5 million vulnerable people through multi-partner resilience projects in 2024.
71. Implementation of the global assurance project remained a priority, including through capacity strengthening initiatives, the segregation of duties, an integrated implementation approach, the digitalization of in-kind food distribution in certain countries, and the expansion of vulnerability-based targeting.
72. In 2024, WFP had reached 6.7 million people, half of whom were women and girls, who had also benefitted from WFP's efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and promote gender equality and empowerment of women. WFP required USD 735 million to cover needs over the next six months. In the meantime, the regional bureau was stepping up efforts to expand the donor base, including through blended finance, debt swaps and other innovative approaches.
73. Board members thanked the Deputy Regional Director for the overview and WFP staff for their life-saving work in vulnerable communities. Several members pledged additional support for WFP's work in the region. Speakers applauded WFP's efforts to combat malnutrition and its work on resilience building, disaster preparedness and innovative solutions, including climate-smart agriculture. One, speaking on behalf of an electoral list, called for an integrated and multi-partner approach to address the structural causes of acute food insecurity; another asked about WFP's anticipatory action ahead of the forecast La Niña induced rainfall.

74. Expressing deep concern about the escalating armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, speakers commended WFP's work on mitigating the impacts of forced displacement on food security, and one urged WFP to ensure the necessary monitoring to prevent fraud, waste and sexual exploitation and abuse. Speakers were equally concerned about the violence in Cabo Delgado, with one applauding the recent roll-out of vulnerability-based targeting in the province and encouraging WFP to extend it to other parts of the country and to Zimbabwe.
75. One speaker requested clarification regarding the remedial measures linked to the "ineffective/unsatisfactory" rating in an internal audit of the Madagascar office.
76. The Deputy Executive Director said that the withdrawal of the United Nations stabilization mission from the Democratic Republic of the Congo had led to operational and security related challenges, which WFP, the country's Government and the United Nations system were seeking to address.
77. The acting and deputy regional directors assured Board members that WFP was working with governments and regional organizations on the emergency response to the drought crisis and on resilience building; the regional bureau was scaling up interventions for the reassurance project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and an IPC exercise and the adoption of vulnerability-based targeting in Zimbabwe were under discussion. Information on the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) audit of the Madagascar country office would be made available once the follow up had been completed. The regional bureau was developing a multisectoral nutrition strategy, and anticipatory action ahead of La Niña included scaling up resilience building initiatives such as rainwater harvesting, and efforts to mobilize additional resources.

#### **Latin America and the Caribbean portfolio**

78. The Regional Director updated the Board on the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, where food insecurity was rising and 28.6 million people in the countries with WFP operations were acutely food insecure, including half of the population in Haiti. Increased levels of migration were exerting pressure on government programmes aimed at supporting people on the move, and WFP was working with its counterparts in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru to promote the socioeconomic integration and empowerment of migrants.
79. The transition between El Niño and La Niña was causing droughts and water scarcity in some countries and intense rainfall and flooding in others. While forest fires raged throughout the region, the storm season was starting, forcing people from their homes. WFP was providing food and cash-based assistance, pre-positioning food, entering into food procurement agreements with retailers, and working with governments and the private sector to strengthen national capacities and systems for logistics, early warning and risk analysis.
80. In Haiti, the appointment of a new government improved the prospects for humanitarian response, but the number of internally displaced people had increased by 60 percent since March. WFP was providing emergency assistance, operating flights for the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), upgrading maritime services and managing a logistics corridor between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, but operations faced a funding gap of USD 76 million for the following six months.
81. Under the global assurance project, three country offices in the region had upgraded their monitoring and beneficiary feedback systems, and the regional bureau was developing risk management strategies for country offices and measures for PSEA, including training for WFP staff and partners.

82. The regional bureau was working with seven countries in the Amazon region on developing a regional approach to climate change and was assisting 16 countries in strengthening food systems. WFP continued its active work in advocacy and positioning, in the recent SIDS conference and preparing for the upcoming regional school feeding forum, while also investing in South-South and triangular cooperation, innovative partnerships and donor diversification.
83. Private-sector contributions to WFP were expected to increase by 57 percent in 2024. A new individual giving programme had been launched and WFP continued to mobilize resources from the countries where it operated, including through arrangements with international financial institutions.
84. Board members thanked the Regional Director and her team for their work in responding to emergencies and strengthening social protection and monitoring. They welcomed WFP's work on the climate crisis, disaster preparedness, early warning and anticipatory action. WFP was a source of valuable information on the situation in the field and on migration flows in Latin America. Its school feeding programmes, engagement with local communities and activities aimed at building resilience and combating the root causes of hunger provided useful lessons for work in other countries and regions.
85. Many Board members called for increased international attention and support for the region, concerned that it was often overlooked owing to the more visible crises elsewhere. One Board member recommended that the Rome-based agencies develop a joint programme for addressing the crisis in Haiti, and another requested a side event on Haiti at the 2024 second regular session.
86. Management thanked Board members for their support and advice, providing an overview of a recent visit to Haiti. The Regional Director said that WFP was committed to increasing local procurement from smallholder farmers and was planning a side event on Haiti for the Board session in November.

### **Eastern Africa portfolio**

87. The Regional Director described the deeply concerning situation in Eastern Africa, where WFP aimed to reach 36 million of the 61 million food-insecure people in 2024, and large-scale emergency responses were under way in Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan.
88. In the Sudan, following the outbreak of conflict in 2023, over 10 million people were internally displaced, over 2 million had fled to other countries, and 25 million – more than half the population – could be acutely food insecure and at risk of famine. WFP planned to reach at least 5 million people in 2024 but was challenged by restricted humanitarian access, bureaucratic impediments and continued insecurity and sought the support of Board members in addressing those issues. WFP urgently needed flexible funding to enable rapid response to the changing circumstances in the Sudan and neighbouring countries and would provide regular updates on the situation.
89. In Ethiopia, implementation of the global assurance project had brought dramatic improvements in WFP's work with the Government and other partners, including community-driven vulnerability targeting and the digital registration of 9.4 million beneficiaries as well as the reform of WFP's supply chain processes, reducing the risk of food diversion.
90. Other WFP initiatives in the region included working with host governments on flood response strategies; formulating a regional water strategy with partners; working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and governments to improve support for refugees; and finding new sources of funding, including from foundations and through local private sector companies.

91. Board members commended the Regional Director for his commitment to helping people in need throughout his four-year tenure. They expressed particular appreciation of WFP's innovative work on developing new types of partnership, funding solutions and assistance programmes; its contribution to sustainable and resilient food systems, including through market-based support for local innovators and programmes for young people; and its work on early warning systems and anticipatory action. They welcomed the progress made in strengthening climate adaptation and risk management, school feeding programmes and oversight in the region, and WFP's collaboration with host governments, donors and development partners, including in addressing the effects of El Niño and in rapid needs assessment and crisis response.
92. Expressing concern about the escalating humanitarian crisis in the Sudan, Board members reiterated their readiness to assist WFP in its efforts to secure cross-border and cross-line access for humanitarian assistance and adherence to international humanitarian law. They applauded WFP's scale-up of its regional response, its use of innovative mechanisms to deliver assistance and its collaboration with other actors, including non-traditional partners. Several Board members expressed concern about the spillover effects of the Sudan crisis on neighbouring countries, and one member sought information on the implementation of the international famine response plan for the Sudan, and WFP's role in it.
93. Regarding other aspects of WFP's work in the region, Board members emphasized the importance of maintaining sufficient oversight and risk management mechanisms in high-risk environments. They welcomed WFP's success in addressing the food diversions and other challenges in Ethiopia and Somalia and requested regular updates on those efforts. They also sought further information on WFP's work with UNHCR on engaging with refugees and host communities, including in regard to needs-based versus status-based targeting; and on the objectives of the water strategy, especially in relation to the upcoming policy on resilience building.
94. Warning of the dire consequences of failing to respond rapidly to the food security challenges in Eastern Africa, Board members called on donors and partners to contribute to an immediate humanitarian response for the region.
95. Thanking Board members for their support, the Regional Director reiterated the importance of keeping international attention on the crisis in the Sudan. WFP's new initiative with UNHCR built on established collaboration and would involve identifying the best way to target refugees in each country setting. More details on the water strategy would be shared as it progressed.

### **Western Africa portfolio**

96. The Regional Director warned that Western Africa was facing one of its worst food and nutrition crises, primarily driven by conflict and displacements, and that a change in paradigm was needed in the collective response. WFP planned to reform its lean season response model through further investments in prevention, preparedness and anticipatory action at scale while strengthening national social protection systems. While pushing for further convergence of programmes and investments across all stakeholders, WFP was pursuing efforts to reinforce its engagement with governments and partners to ensure its position was leveraged to promote change and national ownership. Following a joint mission to the central Sahel, there was a consensus among regional directors of various United Nations agencies to redouble efforts to implement joined-up programmes in line with national priorities.
97. In the central Sahel, operations faced significant access constraints, particularly in Burkina Faso. WFP continued to seek ways to safeguard and expand access to those most in need while upholding humanitarian principles and the do-no-harm imperative.



98. Since February, despite challenges, WFP teams had been preparing for unprecedented needs during the 2024 lean season, focusing its limited resources on 7 million people – less than 60 percent of the caseload initially planned. It now needed funding to enable it to draw down urgently needed food assistance from the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF) stockpiles. WFP was also exploring alternative supply chain routes to reach major operations.
99. To break the cycle of recurrent crises, WFP continued to focus on resilience through enhanced partnership approaches, supporting national efforts to strengthen social protection systems, reinforcing smallholder farmers' productive capacity and financial resilience and promoting the use of climate risk financing instruments as effective tools for emergency preparedness and response. WFP was also supporting national efforts to scale up rice fortification and working with the Economic Community of West African States to promote accelerated investment in national home-grown school feeding programmes. WFP reported positive results of debt swap arrangements for food security that WFP was helping to implement in the region.
100. To meet the highest standards of assurance and enhance accountability, country offices in the region had digitized their food and cash interventions, with exceptions only in inaccessible areas, and strengthened their monitoring and community feedback management systems. The regional bureau confirmed its strong commitment to delivering on the PSEA agenda.
101. Board members registered their alarm at the escalating food crisis in Western Africa and the pervasive restriction of access to vulnerable communities across the region. They commended WFP for its critical life-saving work, highlighting its contributions to emergency preparedness, as well as its work in strengthening social protection systems and food systems and nutrition through support for smallholder farmers and the local production of food, including rice and indigenous crops, and efforts to promote innovative financing.
102. Many speakers called on the international community to redouble its efforts in the Sahel and in Chad and other countries affected by macroeconomic instability such as Nigeria. One member advised that WFP incorporate risk assessments and basic, safe and accountable programming and protection principles into its work in Burkina Faso while continuing to reach hard-to-access communities. In light of funding constraints, another member urged WFP to prioritize assistance and focus on reaching the most vulnerable in close coordination with other actors.
103. Further information was sought on WFP's part in the implementation of the Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change (SD3C).
104. Appreciation was voiced of WFP's focus on national priorities during the preparation of CSPs and its efforts to address resource mobilization and humanitarian access challenges. Anticipatory action, resilience strengthening, social protection, school meals and local production as well as the need for strategic partnerships were highlighted as priorities by various speakers.
105. Several speakers commented that senior staff turnover in the region seemed high and stressed the need for continuity.
106. Responding to Board members' comments, the Deputy Executive Director explained that WFP rotated staff every three to four years and that recent staff changes were consistent with that approach. WFP also had a robust handover system with experienced deputies, and management was confident that continuity for Western Africa was assured.

107. The Regional Director underscored the value of promoting the cultivation of indigenous crops, especially in the face of climate change, and supporting local production. He highlighted water challenges in the region, noting that the three major rivers in West Africa and the Sahel all had a single source in Guinea, which therefore needed to be monitored and protected. On the SD3C, the first phase had been completed and a mid-term review carried out. For the second phase, a multi-donor trust fund of USD 18 million was being set up. With respect to decision making in Burkina Faso on the use of convoys, WFP would ensure that timely information was shared with the Board and partners to support shared responsibility and risk.

## Annual reports

### 2024/EB.A/2 Annual performance report for 2023

108. Management presented the annual performance report, highlighting that WFP had assisted 152 million people in 2023, distributing 3.7 million mt of food and USD 2.9 billion in cash and vouchers. However, the funding gap had been the greatest ever recorded, with WFP receiving contributions of USD 8.3 billion against approved needs of USD 22.8 billion. Flexible and multi-year funding had proved critical in enabling the organization to deliver strategic and timely life-saving assistance.
109. WFP had prioritized crisis response, directing 79 percent of total expenditures to humanitarian response and providing assistance for 47 sudden onset emergencies in 32 countries.
110. In early 2023, WFP had launched the global assurance project to provide more effective assurance across its operations. In August, in the face of increased conflicts, access restrictions, operational and supply chain constraints and shrinking resources, WFP had embarked on a restructuring exercise to enhance the efficiency and strategic focus of its operations.
111. Board members applauded WFP's achievements and paid tribute to its staff, expressing their condolences to the families and colleagues of staff who had lost their lives in service. Members also voiced support for the restructuring initiative, although one, noting that such reforms could engender uncertainty for staff, urged management to exercise sensitivity in the process.
112. Many speakers registered their alarm over the ever-widening gap between increasing humanitarian needs and decreasing available resources. Some commended ongoing reprioritization efforts to target those most vulnerable, although others called on WFP to do more towards ensuring the nutritional adequacy of food assistance. WFP was urged to continue engaging strategically with donors to maintain adequate funding for crisis response and to prioritize that focus area over others. A number of options were suggested to address funding constraints, including diversifying and broadening the funding base; further exploring innovative financial mechanisms such as anticipatory action, debt-for-food swaps and blended finance; and revisiting the CSPs for the coming five years to realign programming with expected resourcing and in-country capacities. Donors were also urged to increase flexible and multi-year funding.
113. Going forward, WFP was encouraged to build on progress in advancing cross-cutting issues, especially protection and accountability, gender equality and women's empowerment and environmental sustainability, and to maintain its strong leadership in logistics and active involvement in the School Meals Coalition. Board members also advised WFP to invest additional efforts in the following areas: disability inclusion; an integrated, multisectoral approach to addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity; staff training; collaboration with private-sector partners; transparency and accountability; ongoing evaluation of institutional initiatives; organization-wide innovation to further enhance effectiveness and

efficiency; digitization of humanitarian food assistance; identity management for cash and food transfers; the development of synergies with other relevant organizations; and the nutritional quality of national school meals programmes.

114. Responding to the comments, management acknowledged WFP's disappointing performance on the nutritional adequacy of its food rations, explaining that it stemmed mainly from reductions in the size and frequency of rations but was also attributable to long pipelines and supply chains, limited local food fortification capacity and other issues. Board members were informed that a high-level task force with strong field involvement had been formed to ensure that going forward WFP had clear actions and a road map to address the nutritional adequacy of food assistance. The quality of school meals would be boosted by integrating fortified staples into school meals programmes, while scaling up home-grown school meals would bring more diversity and fresh food to children's diets. In the area of environmental sustainability, WFP was implementing the environmental and social sustainability framework and planning to strengthen the assessment of environmental and social risk across its country operations as well as enhancing its technical advisory and staff capacity to undertake such assessments. It would also explore the potential to leverage the environmental sustainability tracking system.
115. Echoing members' recognition of the value of a multi-year, multi-partner, multisector approach to resilience work, management explained that funds for resilience projects tended to come from different funding lines, even when provided by a single donor, and were increasingly multi-year and earmarked for resilience. As such, resilience funding had not seen the same reductions as crisis response funding, which explained why expenditures on this focus area had been proportionally higher at year-end. Multi-year investments were critical for reducing needs and would be directed, to the extent possible, to areas where communities were most vulnerable and most subject to recurring shocks. Local partnerships were also important, and WFP shared members' emphasis on strengthening local capacity and sharing capacity with local actors, which would be strongly reflected in the upcoming localization policy. Regarding prioritization, planning was key but had been difficult in 2023; however, in early 2024 considerable effort had been made to help country offices revise their budgets to reflect their capacity to deliver in the face of bureaucratic and operational constraints, historical funding trends and market intelligence on funding.

**2024/EB.A/3      Annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2023 and management note**

116. In presenting the report, the Director ad interim of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services (OBD) underscored that in the current challenging times, there was a renewed need for WFP to foster accountability at all levels and strive for a more respectful workplace, despite financial constraints. Since the end of 2023, OBD had received 308 cases, reflecting the average of past years, and had provided 16 in-person support missions across all regions. It had trained 1,800 employees on conflict resolution and effective interpersonal communication skills to enable them to address issues directly with their colleagues before they escalated.
117. Commending OBD for its contribution to creating a respectful and inclusive workplace, WFP management welcomed the recommendations in the report and updated Board members on the actions already under way to address the issues highlighted. In relation to the organizational realignment exercise, management was committed to enhancing communication and supporting employees through the process of change.
118. Board members endorsed the report and recognized the vital role played by OBD in enhancing workplace culture. They noted with satisfaction WFP's acceptance of the recommendations and commended management for its ongoing efforts to support employees. They nevertheless expressed concern at employee unease arising from the

recent organizational realignment and urged WFP to keep prioritizing staff well-being and transparent communication, as well as monitoring evaluative relationships and legal compliance.

119. Board members welcomed the decline in reports of abusive conduct and praised WFP for its efforts to tackle that issue. Some members encouraged OBD to improve access to its services for staff in the field, particularly for offices not covered by an ombuds officer at the regional level.
120. On the issue of accountability, one Board member encouraged WFP to continue integrating the leadership framework across the organization. Highlighting the recommendation to improve the accountability of leaders by giving more weight to supervisory skills in WFP's performance assessment tool, PACE, the Board member asked how the tool could be adapted to address that recommendation.
121. In response, the Director ad interim said that the key to adapting the PACE system was more assistance, training, clarification and coaching for managers, especially intermediate supervisors who might be new to their role. The outreach and ombuds officer added that some supervisors struggled in giving critical feedback in a meaningful way and many supervisees had difficulty accepting critical feedback, but that OBD provided training on giving and receiving feedback. The Director of Human Resources noted that her office offered a performance management help desk and had recently launched a coaching programme to build supervisory skills.

#### **2024/EB.A/4      Annual report of the Ethics Office for 2023**

122. The Director of the Ethics Office presented the annual report, highlighting the activities of her office in the areas of training, outreach, management of conflicts of interest, whistleblowing and protection from PSEA. Requests for advice increased almost 35 percent from 2022, a positive result attributed to pro-active in-person engagement with country offices and regional bureaux, with the office reaching over 9,000 people in 2023. Most country offices with high-risk operations had received ethics training and all would be covered by the end of 2024. A new mandatory e-learning course on ethics had been launched in late 2023 and completion rates already exceeded 90 percent.
123. On PSEA, the office had worked on strengthening WFP's organizational framework and accountability, including the release of an Executive Director's circular on PSEA. The office had supported the strategic evaluation of WFP's work on PSEA and provided capacity strengthening for senior management, PSEA focal points and regional bureau and country office staff. Mandatory e-learning on the prevention of fraud and SEA had been updated and efforts made to integrate PSEA in CSPs and annual country reports. WFP was rolling out the PSEA capacity assessment tool for assessing and providing capacity strengthening for cooperating partners and was engaging in joint initiatives to improve access to information for front-line workers, including financial service providers. An update on the 2024 IASC Championship on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment would be shared with Board members shortly.
124. Board members welcomed the annual report, in particular the additional information provided in response to Board questions on the 2022 report. One member noted, however, that the report did not indicate the proportion of advisories that had originated at headquarters.
125. Members commended the office for its efforts to foster a culture of ethics and responsibility through training and engagement, especially with country offices. The office was encouraged to continue to strengthen its engagement with country offices, especially those working in high-risk environments with culturally diverse staff, and to continue to work with other units to build awareness. Applauding the new ethics e-learning course, one member

said that he looked forward to updates on course completion rates and participant feedback. He also encouraged WFP to advance implementation of its whistleblower policy and requested regular reports on its progress, comparing its work with that of previous years and other United Nations entities.

126. On PSEA, Board members endorsed the integration of prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse into all WFP operations and programmes. Cognizant of the need to address delicate matters with sensitivity and determination, they urged the office to redouble its efforts to increase awareness of the relevant procedures and approaches. More information was sought on WFP's response to PSEA-related incidents and how it ensured that whistleblowers and survivors were able to report them safely, without fear of retaliation.
127. Responding to the comments, the Director underscored her office's determination to intensify its outreach with thematic campaigns; engage with all country offices through targeted approaches; provide a wide range of training; and continue to work with management to ensure that its advice and guidance was concrete, useful and prompt. On the origin of requests, half had come from consultants and the remainder from fixed-term staff; while a significant percentage of requests came from outside headquarters, further data analysis was required to understand location trends as staff moved around. The number of requests related to whistleblower protection was similar to that recorded by comparable agencies; the office would continue to use outreach and training to ensure that staff were aware of the policy.
128. The Senior Advisor, PSEA, added that more information on the integration of PSEA into programmes, CSPs and annual reports, as well as on the approach to addressing cross-cutting issues with programme colleagues and closer collaboration with implementing partners on internal and inter-agency assessments, would be provided under item 7 b).

## Evaluation reports

### **2024/EB.A/5      Summary report on the strategic evaluation of WFP's work on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and management response**

129. Presenting the summary report, the Director of Evaluation highlighted the main findings of the evaluation and the recommended actions to be taken immediately and in the medium term for WFP to bridge the gaps identified, deliver on its commitments and play a transformative role in advancing PSEA within the humanitarian system.
130. Fully supporting the recommendations, the Chief of Staff emphasized that PSEA was a priority for – and the responsibility of – every WFP employee. As the 2024 IASC Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, the Executive Director was striving to raise the profile of PSEA. The Board would be kept informed of the outcomes of the IASC championship and WFP's efforts to mobilize additional resources for its own PSEA programme.
131. The Director of the Ethics Office gave an overview of the 45-point action plan set out by management to address the recommendations. Work had begun on establishing a cross-organizational task force and a PSEA unit, developing PSEA focal point training, and making the use of PSEA tools mandatory. Other planned actions to address the three highest priority recommendations included the creation of a road map to operationalize the Executive Director's circular on PSEA; the integration of PSEA roles and responsibilities into relevant job descriptions and PACE objectives; and the provision of PSEA guidance and budget allocations at the country level. Work was also advanced on actions related to the medium-term recommendations – such as on an Executive Director's circular on assurance standards for CFMs, a PSEA assessment checklist for financial service providers and guidance on mitigating the risk of gender-based violence. WFP was also working with central

- banks to enforce PSEA and national customer protection policies and to design minimum PSEA-related standards for emergency cash operations.
132. One Board member delivered a statement on behalf of all five electoral lists. Expressing thanks for the evaluation and welcoming management's acceptance of all the recommendations, she urged WFP to move at pace to implement them by or before the stated deadlines, consulting the Board on its approach to addressing policy and strategy matters and providing quarterly progress reports, with informal briefings and discussions as appropriate.
  133. The cross-list statement highlighted seven areas for accelerated progress: internal leadership, cultural change, resources, risk management, external coordination, the victim- and survivor-centred approach, and sexual harassment. PSEA should be further prioritized internally by raising awareness and demonstrating measurable progress at the country and regional management level, with direct reporting to the Office of the Executive Director. Internal cultural change was needed to enhance confidence in PSEA measures at the regional and country levels; this could be achieved by operationalizing WFP's commitments, fostering an organization-wide understanding of PSEA and integrating sexual exploitation and abuse risk assessment into CSPs. Country offices and partners must have appropriate budgets to adapt PSEA approaches to local contexts and to ensure more accessible, efficient and victim- and survivor-centred CFMs, reporting channels and case management capacity. The Board would appreciate further details on the actions and timing to develop concrete resourcing plans.
  134. WFP must maximize the use of existing vetting schemes and collective mechanisms at the country or global levels to strengthen risk management across all operations, including through inclusive, gender responsive risk analysis and mitigation and work with affected communities. WFP should also consider how to further its collaboration and engagement with other humanitarian actors, donors and partners in the fields of development and peacebuilding, noting that PSEA was not a one-agency job.
  135. Meanwhile, WFP guidance on operationalizing a victim- and survivor-centred approach and assistance was relatively new and more needed to be done to adapt delivery to different contexts. Case management capacity was also a concern, particularly regarding sexual harassment investigations, which had not been included in the scope of the evaluation, and Board members requested that it be independently evaluated at the earliest opportunity, with a focus on support for victims and survivors.
  136. Endorsing the cross-list statement, another Board member spoke of the need to strengthen safeguarding policies, improve hiring practices and ensure safe reporting mechanisms and whistleblower protection to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, as well as listening to beneficiaries and investing in quality protection and gender-based violence risk mitigation measures at the national and local levels.
  137. Thanking Board members for their comments, the Director of Evaluation took note of the request for an evaluation on sexual harassment and indicated that the Office of Evaluation (OEV) would determine how best to address it. The Director of the Ethics Office confirmed that management's proposed actions would address the points raised and that many would be led by her office through the PSEA unit, in coordination with other divisions and offices, to ensure their rapid implementation. Management fully appreciated the need to seek the Board's input and support and would ensure regular reporting; the frequency, format and timing of progress reports would be set out in a proposal to the Bureau.
  138. The Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations Department added that the evaluation provided the information for the whole organization to support the Executive Director in her role as the 2024 IASC champion as she sought to bring PSEA issues to fore, both internally and in WFP's engagement with partners.

## Administrative and managerial matters

### 2024/EB.A/6 Address by staff representative bodies to the Board

139. The General Secretary of the Union of General Service Staff (UGSS) and the President of the Professional Staff Association (PSA) addressed the Board on behalf of their respective bodies.
140. The General Secretary underscored the commitment of general service staff to supporting WFP and its beneficiaries. UGSS was deeply concerned about the impact of world events and donor fatigue on WFP's ability to fulfil its mandate and called for intensified efforts to mobilize funding. Equally concerning were the long-term effects of the current organizational realignment exercise, in particular the staffing cuts, and UGSS urged management to seek alternative ways to reduce administrative costs, including through more flexible working arrangements. In light of the positive results of the pilot project on hybrid working arrangements, including in terms of increased productivity, cost savings and reduced sick leave, UGSS had been surprised at the decision to end the project and dismayed at the abrupt manner in which colleagues had been told to report physically for duty at the office. Given the lack of staff consultation prior to that decision, UGSS had been compelled to initiate legal proceedings but remained hopeful that the issue could be resolved through dialogue.
141. Management had made strenuous efforts to respond to staff concerns regarding open-space workplaces. The Director-General of FAO, however, had not yet signed off on the UGSS proposal to represent general service staff in country offices; the lack of progress on that issue was particularly disappointing at a time when cuts were being made to budgets and staffing. Other issues included persistent weaknesses in the PACE system, the lack of a diversity and inclusion policy and reports of increased delays experienced by staff seeking justice through the FAO Appeals Committee.
142. In his address, the PSA President recognized the budgetary challenges faced by WFP and the suffering that was causing to its workforce as thousands of staff were being laid off. The PSA had concerns regarding the clarity, communication and accountability for implementation of the rules and procedures governing separations, particularly as many of the norms were new. Concern was also voiced regarding efforts to retain talent and measures to ensure the fair and transparent treatment of staff. Effective communication was vital to prevent uncertainty and confusion for staff and managers alike and prevent disparity in treatment. Of particular note, around 500 colleagues had been separated in the Sudan, many of whom while being displaced, and they had not yet received their full entitlements.
143. The PSA called for more oversight and internal coordination between the Human Resources Division and other functions in order to ensure accountability and fair treatment. The PSA had yet to receive data providing a comprehensive picture of separations across countries. The association looked forward to working with the Executive Board to review the issues and clarify WFP's vision for its future workforce.
144. Meanwhile, work continued on finalizing a recognition agreement between WFP management and the Global Staff Union, which would supersede the PSA to represent all employees, regardless of contract status. Among the priorities of the new union would be support for establishing local staff associations at the regional and country levels and advocacy of increased duty of care and augmented security for employees, including those facing specific risks associated with discrimination based on gender, race or contract status.
145. Commending the staff representative bodies for their vital work, the Executive Director acknowledged the challenges facing staff as WFP adapted to its new financial and operating environment. Duty of care was a top priority and measures had been taken to reduce the impact of changes on staff and ensure equitable treatment and accountability. WFP

leadership, including the Executive Director, would continue to engage in regular, transparent dialogue with staff bodies on a wide range of topics, including ways of ensuring effective communication on changes to the staff representation framework. A new diversity, equity and inclusion strategy was being developed.

## **Resource, financial and budgetary matters**

### **2024/EB.A/7 Annual report of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee**

146. Presenting the report, the Chair of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC) gave an overview of the work undertaken by the committee in 2023. Highlighting progress made by WFP in areas such as risk management, internal audit, cooperating partner management and ethics, he noted that no material weaknesses had been identified in WFP's governance, risk management or control processes by the External Auditor. The IOAC deemed WFP's new organizational structure to be balanced and logical for its size; management was encouraged to implement the reorganization as quickly as possible to minimize the impact on staff morale.
147. Board members commended the IOAC for supporting WFP's efforts to address funding shortfalls and increase efficiency. Of the advice provided by the committee, members highlighted the importance of assigning responsibility for the implementation of individual audit recommendations to senior management and the need for stronger assessment and oversight of government partners, continued focus on managing information technology (IT) and security risk, and the involvement of the IOAC in the external quality assessment of OIG. Observations with regard to resourcing, in particular the need to ensure sufficient resources for OIG, communication of risk to Board members and donors, and increased resources for risk mitigation were also noted. One member welcomed the appointment of a staff member to lead on issues related to assistance provided through government partners and looked forward to the development of guidance in that area.
148. Management was requested to report on the ageing of overdue high-risk actions. The OEV was encouraged to use findings from performance and other audits and joint evaluations to inform their work. On the organizational review, members echoed the IOAC's advice that changes be implemented swiftly to safeguard staff morale and called for an assessment of the impact of downsizing on WFP's functions. Calling for greater attention to the management and oversight of cooperating partners, one member remarked that funding for capacity strengthening was not the primary issue, pointing to stakeholder involvement, leadership and internal engagement as key to addressing concerns.
149. Responding to the final point, the Chair clarified that funding levels for cooperating partners was not within IOAC's mandate but wanted to highlight that in some cases, donor contributions addressed only specific programmatic aspects and did not allow for the continuous training and exchange of expertise required to strengthen cooperating partner capacity. The staffing implications of maintaining certain activities were also not always reflected in funding provided.

### **2024/EB.A/8 Audited annual accounts, 2023**

150. Following management's presentation of the 2023 financial statements, the President of the Bundesrechnungshof, External Auditor of WFP, opened his remarks by repeating his statement given at the previous annual session that WFP is by far the most important humanitarian organization worldwide. He thanked the Board for supporting the concept of a single audit report starting in the current year, with a separate report for field-level audit results, which brought WFP in line with common United Nations practice. He reported that, for the first time since at least 2015, in May 2024 the External Auditor had met with the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in a separate session to discuss the audit report. At the end of May, the report was discussed with the FAO Finance



Committee. The External Auditor's advice had also been regularly sought by the Executive Board working group established to review governance.

151. The External Auditor had issued an unqualified audit opinion for the 2023 financial statements and 51 recommendations for WFP. The External Auditor highlighted the need for WFP to improve the transparency of its regulatory framework and of the budget process in general in order to support informed decisions by the Executive Board.
152. The Chief Risk Officer specified that 37 of the External Auditor's recommendations stemmed from the audit of the 2023 annual accounts. The 14 remaining recommendations arose from performance audits: six related to strengthening governance and monitoring processes for delegation of authority and eight were on consultancy services. WFP agreed with all but two of the recommendations. All longstanding recommendations issued in 2020 and 2021 from the performance reviews on air transport services and management of beneficiary information had been closed during the period. The outstanding recommendations, mainly from 2023 and 2024 audit reports, were largely related to process review, system enhancement, guideline issuance, oversight and accountability framework updates and governance structure reviews, all of which required extended timelines and cross-functional collaboration for successful implementation.
153. Board members took note of the audited annual accounts and welcomed the unqualified audit opinion as well as the observations and recommendations in the report, particularly those on financial processes and internal controls, cooperating partner management, delegation of authority and consultancy services. They urged WFP to expedite implementation of ageing recommendations and report twice a year to the External Auditor and the Board on progress in that endeavour.
154. Concerns were raised in relation to management's handling of the downward revision of funding forecasts following Board approval of the 2024 budget. Speakers highlighted the recommendations of the FAO Finance Committee in that regard and encouraged WFP to improve budget transparency as advised by the External Auditor.
155. While several members also flagged diversion of humanitarian aid by cooperating partners as a matter of grave concern, one noted with appreciation that WFP was already in the process of developing a new framework for cooperating partner monitoring and capacity strengthening. Another encouraged WFP to use insights from the External Auditor to inform that work.
156. Speakers highlighted the importance of improving communication with the Board on events that led to material loss of funds, reputational damage or major disruption to operations; developing an interoperable identity management framework that covered all transfer modalities; delivering full and timely implementation of reassurance plans for high-risk operations and providing regular updates on their application and results at the country level; and diversifying the donor base and investing in more long-term solutions.
157. Questions were raised in relation to delays in filling regular staff positions; increased distribution-related costs despite decreases in funding and volume of food and cash distributed; the inadequacy of evaluation criteria for the engagement of consultants; and the funding deficit, including its impact on programmes supporting SIDS, coastal areas and vulnerable areas, especially programmes for Haiti. More information was sought on measures taken to address the risk of food diversion, protect long-term investments from market risk and address talent management and workforce planning challenges.
158. In response, management reaffirmed its commitment to implementing all outstanding recommendations and drew attention to the addition of External Auditor recommendations to WFP's recommendation tracking system. It was also noted that many of the issues raised in relation to budgetary management and the regulatory framework would be addressed

under other items on the agenda of the present meeting, as well as in the management plan for 2025, and that additional work on the financial regulations would be carried out in connection with the Board's review of the regulations, for which a plan would be presented after the summer.

159. WFP was introducing smart sourcing, a new procurement system and planning process that would address the issue of post factum approvals. The faster reduction in food and cash components than the corresponding reduction in associated distribution costs noted by one member was attributable to a delay in disengaging from partners, vendors and staff in individual operations.
160. With regard to the investment portfolio, the Board was informed that the liquidity portfolio comprised operating balances held for projects and programme implementation and was managed under very stringent, conservative investment management principles. WFP had reduced the investment risk of the employee benefits fund portfolio by reducing its equity allocation from 60 percent to 50 percent but owing to the application of International Public Sector Accounting Standard 41, any volatility would show in the statement of financial performance, which over time could distract from the true underlying financial performance related to the services that WFP provided to beneficiaries.

## **Resource, financial and budgetary matters (continued)**

### **2024/EB.A/9      Update to the management plan (2024–2026)**

161. Management presented the document, which updated the management plan for 2024–2026 and brought it into line with WFP's new internal organizational structure. The document also showed drops in contribution income, projected operational requirements and the provisional implementation plan. Lower contributions would result in reduced indirect support cost (ISC) revenue to fund the programme support and administrative (PSA) budget. Accordingly, management sought the Board's approval for a revision to that budget, the use of the PSA equalization account to fund the shortfall between ISC revenue and the revised PSA budget, and the use of the unearmarked portion of the General Fund rather than the PSA equalization account to fund a critical corporate initiative and a replenishment of the Immediate Response Account (IRA) in 2024.
162. The document had been presented to the United Nations Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the FAO Finance Committee.
163. Board members endorsed the update and thanked management for the opportunity to engage in its formulation. They welcomed the cost savings and efficiency measures being implemented, such as the internal reorganization process, the increased use of cash-based transfers in assistance programmes, greater engagement at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, and innovative partnerships and collaboration arrangements, including with host governments and the private sector and through South–South and triangular cooperation.
164. Regarding the internal reorganization exercise, Board members urged management to pay due attention to the concerns of employees when implementing the planned changes. One Board member asked management to report on the results of the internal reorganization exercise in 2025, and several emphasized the need to maintain adequate funding for WFP's oversight functions and for its work on cross-cutting priorities, such as PSEA.
165. Expressing concern about the effects of reduced funding on operational requirements, particularly requirements for crisis response, Board members welcomed WFP's efforts to diversify its funding base and seek more predictable and flexible contributions, including from thematic and multilateral funds, and urged international donors to increase their support for WFP. Given the need to prioritize certain activities and beneficiary groups over

others when formulating budgets, Board members welcomed WFP's adoption of a country-specific approach to prioritization and encouraged management to accelerate its work on formulating guidance for country offices and mainstreaming the new prioritized needs-based approach to defining operational requirements in CSP budgets.

166. Board members requested additional information on how WFP set its planning figures, the role of and incentives for country offices in fund mobilization, and the costs of implementing the global assurance project.
167. Responding to the points raised, management said that country offices faced the greatest challenges from reduced funding; the Board would continue to receive regular updates on the organizational realignment, but the benefits and costs of the exercise were not expected to be clear until after 2025; the one-off costs of the global assurance project were included in a critical corporate initiative, while recurring costs would be incorporated into CSP budgets; guidance on prioritization for country offices would be presented to the Board once finalized; and the cuts in planned beneficiary numbers had been made in an attempt to avoid the ration cuts that WFP had been forced to make in 2023.

**2024/EB.A/10 Report on the utilization of WFP's strategic financing mechanisms (1 January–31 December 2023)**

168. Management presented the report, which described the strategic financing that WFP had utilized in 2023 through internal project lending, IRA, the GCMF and the advanced financing for corporate services mechanism.
169. Three Board members spoke, thanking management for the clear report and expressing their support for WFP's use of strategic financing mechanisms to facilitate rapid life-saving action and foster efficient engagement in value chains and strengthened partnerships on shared priorities. Dependence on these financing mechanisms demonstrated the need to increase the flexibility and predictability of the donor contributions, especially in the face of current complex and prolonged crises, and speakers called on donors to augment their unearmarked and flexible contributions in accordance with the goals of the Grand Bargain. At the same time, WFP was urged to increase its efforts to raise flexible funding from public and private donors and share best practices in innovative financing with its partners.
170. Management thanked Board members for their support for strategic financing mechanisms and their advice on related policies and strategies, adding that 2024 contributions to the IRA were lower than they had been in 2023, and the IRA balance was in danger of falling below the critical level of USD 85 million.

**2024/EB.A/11 Annual report of the Inspector General and note by the Executive Director**

171. The acting Inspector General presented his report, which had identified no material weaknesses in WFP's governance, risk management or control processes, but some issues required management attention and follow-up. In 2023, OIG had completed 27 engagements. A larger number and proportion of engagements had resulted in a rating of "major improvement needed" or "unsatisfactory" than in 2022; the 265 agreed actions issued by OIG throughout the year related mainly to key operational areas and functions of WFP and some recurring weaknesses. OIG planned to assess the degree to which those issues were addressed by the implementation of the global assurance project in its 2024 audits.
172. The Office of Investigation (OIGI) had received 1,472 investigation cases in 2023, a 38 percent increase since 2022. It had closed 305 cases after investigation, 36 percent more than in 2022, despite receiving no significant increase in resources. The bulk of the cases received related to violations of the anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy by cooperating partners.

173. Management presented the Executive Director's note in which she welcomed the report's overall conclusion and the alignment between the assurance work carried out in 2023 and WFP's priorities and focus on supporting operations. She and the senior leadership team would follow closely the issues identified.
174. Thanking OIG for its work and for keeping the Board informed of internal oversight matters throughout the year, Board members welcomed OIG's risk-based approach to its work, its collaboration with the External Auditor and OEV, and its advisory role in the global assurance project. They urged management to ensure the prompt implementation of open and overdue audit recommendations and to address the slow progress in improving due diligence, capacity assessments and key performance metrics with regard to cooperating partners.
175. Board members emphasized the importance of ensuring that OIG was fully resourced, with staff vacancies filled as quickly as possible. One member suggested that fraud and corruption cases involving low sums of money be transferred from OIGI to country offices for investigation.
176. Board members requested further information on the rating system for country office audits; the mechanism for assessing and addressing frivolous complaints; the impact of OIGI's high caseload on its ability to complete investigations in a timely manner; the steps taken to tackle the risk of underreporting; and accumulated data on the recovery of losses.
177. In reply, the acting Inspector General said that most staff vacancies in OIG had been filled. In its audits, OIG used the rating system widely used by the internal audit offices of the United Nations funds and programmes, with some minor adaptations. The volume of cases received by OIG was a challenge for that office and for WFP. OIGI would seek to close investigation cases where subjects had been suspended from their posts and cases from 2019 and 2020. OIG would also explore ways to adjust parts of its business process. OIGI had a screening mechanism for identifying cases that were frivolous or not relevant to its mandate. Budget shortfalls were likely to pose a major challenge to the global assurance project, and OIG would explore ways of reporting accumulated data on the recovery of losses.

**2024/EB.A/12      Management review of significant risk and control issues, 2023**

178. Presenting the document, management emphasized that all risks described in the review were recognized issues and actions were already under way to address them. Summarizing enhancements made to the Executive Director's assurance exercise, the Chief Risk Officer provided an update on progress on the top four risk and control issues in the areas of talent management and workforce planning; workplace culture and conduct; NGO management; and identity management and IT solutions; and highlighted progress in the implementation of the 2021 revised anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy. WFP remained committed to strengthening controls and learning lessons to continuously improve risk management.
179. Board members welcomed the review, underscoring the importance of strong oversight and risk management to the delivery of efficient and effective humanitarian programmes. The elevation of the risk management function to the executive level was welcome; one member, however, expressed concern that WFP's risk management capacity remained insufficient to support the size, scope and complexity of its operations, advising against cuts to OIG and the Risk Management Division.
180. Recognizing the significant impact of the organizational restructuring and budget realignment on employees, several members spoke of the need for open, inclusive, timely and transparent communication between senior leadership and employees at all levels. They noted the challenges posed by the organizational changes to WFP's ability to attract and retain talent and maintain efforts to improve workplace culture. Management was

- encouraged to engage in transparent, participatory decision making and collegial communication that responded to staff concerns and reassured all employees of their value to the organization. Three members requested that the Board be given the opportunity to respond to the address by staff representative bodies provided under item 10 b) and provide guidance to management on related issues.
181. Continued efforts to create an inclusive work environment were encouraged, including through the rollout of mandatory training on inclusion. Progress on mainstreaming disability inclusion was noted, with further efforts encouraged, particularly at the country level. Several speakers praised the global assurance project, encouraging WFP to continue to prioritize the initiative and ensure it had adequate resources. One noted that the presence of dedicated risk officers in regional bureaux and country offices with high-risk operations was vital to ensuring system improvements were sustained. On the issue of identity management, members appreciated the development of a normative framework and encouraged investment in personal data protection and data responsibility.
  182. NGO management was flagged as an important ongoing concern. One Board member asked management to describe the planned measures to address weaknesses in that area; another encouraged WFP to seek innovative ways to build local partner capacity and streamline processes, especially with regard to due diligence. WFP was also urged to develop guidance and tools on partnerships and engagement with host governments to ensure the organization's operational independence.
  183. Noting that old issues remain long-standing or had resurfaced, and self-reporting indicated a deterioration in key areas, one member urged WFP to analyse the root causes of all significant risk and control issues and address them comprehensively. There were calls for greater effort to strengthen monitoring to ensure accountability and oversight of WFP operations.
  184. Board members requested an update on the implementation status of the staffing framework in light of budget cuts, and regular reports on efforts to improve monitoring. More information was sought on plans to develop guidance and tools for CFMs and work with other United Nations entities on joint mechanisms, and on guidance related to the handover of supply chain and procurement activities to cooperating partners or government entities. Questions were also raised in connection with differentiated approaches to risk management in emergency and resilience settings.
  185. In response to questions, management explained that as a matter of policy, WFP's risk management approach did not distinguish between emergency and resilience operations: the same four categories of risk were applied and while risk appetite might be higher for emergency settings, the methodology remained the same. Root cause analysis was a standard part of risk mitigation processes.
  186. WFP had introduced a new approach to meeting "last mile" assurance standards, which included aspects pertaining to cooperating partner management and identity management. Standards used in the cash assurance framework were being applied to in-kind operations, including end-to-end data assurance, and a global reconciliation service was being rolled out. WFP was providing country offices with people-centred systems and technology to facilitate the collection and use of personal information, and self-registration processes had been used for operations in Ukraine, State of Palestine and Ethiopia. New standards were being issued for cooperating partner management, aligned with global assurance standards. The decrease in self-assessed maturity ratings reported in the Executive Director's assurance exercise was largely attributed to increased awareness of the issues involved in managing cooperating partners effectively. Other measures included more risk-based assessments during competitive selection processes, digitalization of part of the cooperating partner management process and the development of a policy on localization.

187. With regard to fostering an inclusive workplace, engaging in transparent communication and supporting staff during times of change, management highlighted support provided for managers and employees including guidance, regular interaction with directors, change management toolkits for managers, the launch of a WFP internal coaching project, dedicated intranet pages, thematic webinars and information sessions, and employability workshops for staff set to leave WFP. The introduction of the Workday platform would allow WFP to track recruitment lead times and manage core processes. Through the staffing framework, WFP had strengthened the accountability of directors in determining contract modalities. On risks of abuse of power or misconduct, the organization set a clear expectation in that all WFP employees should be treated in the same manner, regardless of contract modality; any allegation of misconduct at any level of the organization was addressed based on findings and with due process.
188. The Deputy Executive Director added that the leadership group had been surprised by the resistance to the introduction of post-COVID-19 working arrangements and would consider the balance between staff well-being, flexibility and cost-effectiveness for future policy changes. As to the anxiety caused by restructuring, management recognized that coordination and communication could have been more effective; it was a top priority for the new Assistant Executive Director for Workplace and Management to correct that.

### **Administrative and managerial matters (continued)**

#### **2024/EB.A/13 Appointment of two members to the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee**

189. Following a brief presentation by the Chair of the selection panel for the appointment of two members of the IOAC, the Board approved the renewal of the term of office for a further three years of the following IOAC members:
- Mr Darshak Shah of Kenya
  - Mr Veerathai Santiprabhob of Thailand
190. With this renewal, the terms of both members would expire on 14 November 2027.

#### **2024/EB.A/14 Replacement of a member of the selection panel for the appointment of Independent Oversight Advisory Committee members**

191. The President introduced the item, noting that one member of the selection panel, Her Excellency, Ms Consolata Nkatha Maina, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya and Representative of List A, had left Rome and had to be replaced. Following consultations, it was proposed that His Excellency, Mr Frederick Matwang'a, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kenya would represent List A on this selection panel.
192. The Board duly approved the appointment of Ambassador Matwang'a to the selection panel.

### **Evaluation reports (continued)**

#### **2024/EB.A/15 Annual evaluation report for 2023 and management response**

193. The Executive Director opened the discussion, saying that evaluation evidence made a vital contribution to evidence-based decision-making. She welcomed the recent report of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, which rated WFP's evaluation function as highly satisfactory, and thanked the Director of Evaluation and her team for their outstanding work.

194. The Director of Evaluation presented the report, which reflected feedback received from the Board in 2023 and had been divided into two sections: one on systemic issues and the other on performance against each of the outcomes of the evaluation policy. The Director summarized the main findings reported in the document.
195. The Chief of Staff presented the management response, noting that guidance on prioritization and targeting for country offices was being formulated; information on the intensity of assistance had been integrated into the annual performance report, including its dimensions of the cost in USD per beneficiary, duration of assistance and ration size; advocacy on flexible funding was being intensified; and work was ongoing to ensure a more integrated CSP design and implementation. WFP's updated community engagement strategy had increased the number of offices with effective CFMs, and progress was being made in cross-cutting areas such as gender, environmental and social safeguards and disability inclusion. Management was seeking opportunities for partnerships on environmental and social safeguards, including with FAO.
196. Welcoming the new format, Board members thanked the Director and OEV for their work and its contribution to accountability, learning and evidence-based decision-making throughout WFP. They applauded the report's positive findings regarding the strategic shift in WFP's role, from direct implementer to enabler of programmes and action, and its work on protection issues, environmental sustainability, food security and nutrition, targeting and prioritization systems, and advocacy of more flexible funding.
197. Board members emphasized the importance of implementing evaluation recommendations regarding the development of partnership strategies; the inclusion in every CSP of a clear theory of change and a dormant strategic outcome on emergency response; and the strengthening of work on cross-cutting issues. They encouraged management to incorporate recommendations regarding resilience building into the upcoming resilience policy; provide clear guidance on prioritization for country offices, ensuring that the responsibility for prioritization decisions be shared at appropriate levels of management; incorporate progress in the building of local partnerships into the upcoming localization policy; and enhance the integration and use of evaluation evidence in WFP programmes and policies. They recommended that OEV continue to evaluate WFP's engagement in different partnerships.
198. Members raised questions regarding the development of dormant emergency response outcomes for the regional level; plans to reduce the scope and length of evaluation reports; and the continued relevance of the principles and methods for monitoring and evaluation approved in 2000.
199. In reply, the Director of Evaluation said that a strategic evaluation on partnership was included in OEV's workplan for 2025. Most of WFP's engagement in joint evaluations was at the decentralized level with other United Nations entities and government counterparts. It was working with the Secretary-General's office with a view to contributing to the new United Nations system-wide evaluation system. OEV employed an external company to carry out post-hoc quality assessments of its evaluations and was exploring options for carrying out joint assessments with the evaluation offices of other organizations. While keeping evaluation reports within current word limits, OEV prepared additional evaluation products highlighting or summarizing evaluation findings and recommendations, such as summaries of evaluation evidence and briefs.
200. The Chief of Staff thanked Board members for their comments and strong engagement, emphasizing the importance of the evaluation function to WFP's organizational learning, accountability, transparency and performance. Management was committed to following up on and ensuring the timely implementation of evaluation recommendations.

**2024/EB.A/16 Implementation status of evaluation recommendations**

201. Management presented statistics on the numbers and percentages of evaluation recommendations implemented in 2023 compared with previous years and summarized developments in WFP's use of evaluation findings, including insights contained in the first qualitative analysis of the impact of evaluation recommendations on WFP's operations, partnerships and beneficiaries.
202. Stressing the importance of evaluations, particularly for the purposes of accountability, learning and programme design, one Board member expressed appreciation for the inclusion of qualitative and quantitative analysis in the report and encouraged WFP to maintain that feature in future reports. Commending efforts to improve the implementation of evaluation recommendations and taking note of WFP's plans to revise the key performance indicator target for the implementation of evaluation recommendations in each year, reducing it from 100 percent implemented to 80 percent, the speaker recommended that 85 percent was a more appropriate target.
203. Reiterating WFP's commitment to enhancing its use of evaluation recommendations, management agreed to assess the feasibility and value of introducing the proposed target of 85 percent.

**Policy issues****2024/EB.A/17 Amendment to the WFP evaluation policy 2022****2024/EB.A/18 Amendment to the policy on country strategic plans**

204. Items 5 e) and 5 f) were discussed together and presented by the Director of Evaluation. They had been drafted in response to recommendations from an evaluation of the CSP policy and a peer review of the evaluation policy and were based on consultations with WFP staff worldwide, the evaluation function steering group, the IOAC and the Board. Under the proposed coverage norm, the OEV would conduct a minimum of 10 CSP evaluations in any given year, to cover at least 70 percent of all the CSPs that in their penultimate year of implementation.
205. Board members expressed their support for the amendments and WFP's efforts to link evaluation work to planning processes, which would lead to more selective, strategic, timely and cost-efficient evaluation coverage. They encouraged WFP to increase its use of evaluation evidence to inform decision making and the development of new CSPs. They also recommended retaining guidance on measuring progress and results against intended outcomes and objectives in CSP evaluations and encouraged OEV to maintain its focus on progress towards gender equality and other cross-cutting corporate results when planning CSP evaluations. Board members would continue to monitor the measurement of progress towards the planned outcomes and objectives of CSPs, and the sustainability and effectiveness of their budgets.
206. Thanking Board members for their support, the Director of Evaluation said that the measurement of progress towards outcomes and outputs remained central to CSP evaluations, as did attention to gender equality and other cross-cutting issues. She confirmed that the amendment changed the number of evaluations to be carried out, but not their substance.



## Western Africa portfolio

### 2024/EB.A/19 Guinea country strategic plan (2024–2029), including evaluation results and recommendations from item 7 c) 1)

207. Presenting the evaluation of the interim country strategic plan (ICSP), the Director of Evaluation noted that the plan had been based on robust food security and nutrition analysis and aligned with national policies. Areas for improvement included the need for long-term engagement in sustainable agricultural development and national capacity strengthening; the prioritization of food-insecure villages in resilience activities; partnerships for resource mobilization, programme synergies and geographical coverage; and strengthened monitoring and evaluation.
208. The Country Director for Guinea presented the CSP, which incorporated findings and recommendations from the evaluation and was aligned with the plans and priorities of the Government of Guinea and the United Nations.
209. Board members welcomed the CSP as marking a shift in WFP's focus, from the direct implementation of humanitarian response to the provision of capacity-strengthening and resilience-building support. Speakers expressed particular appreciation of the CSP's emphasis on health, education, social protection and gender equality issues.
210. Applauding the evaluation's positive findings with regard to WFP's school meals initiatives, especially in improving the retention of girls in school, Board members encouraged the country office to continue to tackle the root causes of the gender gap in education and to address gender inequalities more widely, including by promoting women's participation in village committees. With only 15 percent of school-age children in Guinea receiving school meals, it was also essential that WFP support the Government in establishing a national school meals framework for all primary schoolchildren, with adequate resource allocation.
211. Many Board members welcomed WFP's support for smallholder farmers and other value chain actors in developing climate-resilient agriculture and nutrition-sensitive value chains through initiatives such as the promotion of high-yielding and short-cycle crops, and home-grown school feeding programmes using food procured locally from smallholder farmers.
212. Board members emphasized the importance of partnerships, encouraging WFP to strengthen coordination with its United Nations and other strategic partners, build on synergies with other organizations working at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, and explore potential for South–South and triangular cooperation. There were also calls for enhanced efforts to resolve the issues with unmet beneficiary targets and the lack of exit strategies and to direct more attention to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the planning, targeting and implementation of programmes.
213. Further information was sought on the measures taken to improve coordination with partners; the contingency plans in the event of shortfalls in government and development partner funding for school feeding, health and nutrition programmes; and WFP's efforts to ensure that locally procured food was healthy and in line with cultural preferences.
214. Responding to Board members' comments, the country and regional directors said that efforts to improve coordination between WFP and its United Nations partners focused on the field level and included engagement in the United Nations country team. Another key element was the signing of agreements with key sector ministries and sister United Nations agencies. Local preferences informed decisions regarding local food procurement; at least 80 percent of food for the school feeding programme was sourced locally. The Government was seeking private sector funding for its school meals programme.

215. Following the Board's approval of the CSP, the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation of Guinea thanked WFP and donors for their support for his country and outlined the development plans and initiatives that his government was implementing as part of its commitment to achieving the SDGs.

## **Southern Africa portfolio**

### **2024/EB.A/20 Lesotho country strategic plan (2024–2029), including evaluation results and recommendations from item 7 c) 2)**

216. Presenting the evaluation of the CSP for 2019–2024, the Director of Evaluation noted that the CSP was evidence-based, aligned with national policies and plans and the United Nations framework, and rooted in WFP's comparative advantage. Among the areas identified for improvement were capacity strengthening, resilience building and the humanitarian-development nexus; targeting and prioritization; and engagement with the national social protection system. Systemic issues had also been observed: underfunding had limited the scale of WFP interventions; earmarking of funds had hampered efforts to link humanitarian response to development programming; corporate indicators had been of limited use in strategic decision making; and the country office had been understaffed and somewhat overstretched.
217. The country director for Lesotho confirmed that all six evaluation recommendations had been accepted; all were either completed, under implementation or integrated into the new CSP. Designed to shift WFP's role from implementer to enabler, the new CSP was focused on climate resilience and equitable food systems, resilience building, human capital development and emergency preparedness and response.
218. Board members endorsed the evaluation recommendations, particularly in relation to sustainability and systems strengthening, and welcomed the new CSP, expressing strong support for the shift from direct implementation to capacity strengthening and the provision of technical assistance in areas such as climate-resilient food systems, human capital development and emergency response. WFP was encouraged to ensure that food security and nutrition gains achieved to date were protected, given the severe impact of climate change on the country, and to continue working on the gradual handover of school meals operations to the national authorities.
219. Strong support was voiced for WFP's resource mobilization strategy and for the CSP activities focused on the empowerment of women, although it was noted that the budget allocated to gender-transformative action was lower than under the previous CSP. Members called for increased attention to people with disabilities and highlighted the importance of working in synergy with other organizations, within the mandate of WFP.
220. More detail was sought on monitoring, vulnerability-based targeting, contingency planning and plans for the prioritization of activities in the event of funding shortfalls.
221. Thanking members for their comments, the country director explained that when targeting assistance, WFP looked at issues such as inequality, access to social services and food gaps and, for geographical targeting, prevalence of malnutrition and exposure to climate shocks.
222. Regarding coordination with other actors, the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework (UNSDCF) for 2024–2028 coordination structure had been amended to add the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Working Group, with a mandate to determine how to measure results and avoid duplication of effort. WFP led UNSDCF pillar 2, on equitable food systems, environmental sustainability and climate resilience, which comprised three sub-pillars: production and productivity, led by FAO; nutrition, led by the United Nations Children's Fund; and natural resources management and climate resilience,

led by WFP. As a result, the entire framework was expected to be implemented through joint programmes.

223. Following the approval of the CSP, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations of Lesotho thanked the Board and affirmed his Government's commitment to assisting in the implementation of the CSP and taking urgent action to address the effects of climate change on the economy, agriculture and water resources.

**Special address by Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Evaluation reports**

224. In his address, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator emphasized WFP's crucial role in the humanitarian community, providing logistics and telecommunications support in addition to reaching – in 2023 – 150 million people with food assistance. The organization was also a leader in protection, an increasingly vital aspect of humanitarian interventions, not least given the current challenges such as an absence of firm leadership globally to choose dialogue and negotiation instead of violence to resolve differences, the erosion of respect for international humanitarian law, and ever-more-widespread impunity.
225. Funding shortfalls for humanitarian action were such that radical change was needed, with different ways of levying funds and new levels of generosity. The world also needed to address the disparity between money spent on war and money spent on the needs of ordinary people.
226. Despite the challenges, the high level of consensus and partnership between humanitarian agencies was a valuable asset. In addition, humanitarian diplomacy and humanitarian mediation had become more common, as seen with the Black Sea Initiative, the negotiations with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to keep aid moving in summer 2023, the discussions and negotiations with the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Jeddah negotiations in the Sudan, which had produced a declaration of commitments to humanitarian principles and law from the two warring parties.
227. In closing, the Under-Secretary-General offered advice stemming his flagship initiative, which was to listen to what people said they needed and to let them lead, not only as a matter of respect but also for the efficient use of funds. The challenge for the world was to place the needs of ordinary people above the needs of war, violence, gender-based violence, food insecurity and wanton disrespect for rights and the humanitarian law.
228. Board members thanked the Under-Secretary-General for his leadership and diplomacy and his commitment to the humanitarian principles, peace and the alleviation of suffering. They expressed grave concern at the many complex crises around the world, noting how millions of people were struggling in the face of climate change, conflict, human-induced disasters and economic disruption. They called on WFP to intensify its commitment to using its resources, expertise and partnership to reach those in need.
229. Some members spoke of the dire food security situation in the Gaza Strip and the Sudan, emphasizing the importance of joint efforts to achieve peace and sustainable development. Others welcomed the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) achievements under the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General and his focus on innovation, accountability to affected people and localization of humanitarian response. They invited Mr Griffiths to talk about efforts to transform the humanitarian system to better reflect an increasingly complex humanitarian landscape, and sought his views on a range of topics, including the changes arising from the flagship initiative and the best role for WFP in supporting an improved humanitarian system.

230. The Under-Secretary-General responded that the flagship initiative was beginning to clarify what communities considered to be their priority needs and to generate the evidence needed to drive effective programming prioritization. As the humanitarian community began listening and responding to people, countries were starting to adopt some of the practices being explored by the flagship initiative. Regarding WFP's role in a complex humanitarian landscape, its dual mandate meant that it was already well prepared to address the humanitarian-development nexus.
231. The Executive Director thanked the Under-Secretary-General for his insightful address and for setting out, with passion and candour, the immense challenges faced by humanitarians. He was, she said, a loyal defender and an ally of vulnerable people around the world, inspiring everyone in the humanitarian community to work ever harder for the people they served. Motivated by his example, WFP would continue bringing help and hope to those who needed it most.

## **Latin America and the Caribbean portfolio**

### **2024/EB.A/21      Nicaragua country strategic plan (2024–2029)**

232. The country director for Nicaragua presented the CSP, which sought to optimize resources and maximize the impact of WFP operations in the Dry Corridor. Introducing a series of innovations, the plan focused on strengthening school meals; increasing the resilience of food systems, particularly by supporting smallholder farmers; supporting emergency preparedness and response; and enhancing the effectiveness of institutions and social protection networks. To implement the CSP, WFP would work in partnership with national institutions and other United Nations entities, donors and local actors.
233. Board members welcomed the CSP, particularly its focus on food systems resilience and school meals. Several encouraged WFP to collaborate with other school feeding actors in Nicaragua, especially to share best practices in relation to local procurement. Commending WFP for the plan to supply schools with locally grown fresh produce and dry goods, including fortified rice, beans and maize, one member encouraged further action on improving food quality and food safety.
234. One member expressed appreciation for the proposed flexible approach to identifying vulnerable population groups within diverse subnational settings and asked for details on how WFP planned to reach vulnerable migrants. Another Board member asked how WFP planned to promote South-South and triangular cooperation in Nicaragua, while two others indicated their willingness to provide assistance through such a mechanism. Further information was also sought on WFP's collaboration with FAO and other United Nations entities and a request was made for the Board to receive updates on WFP's performance in Nicaragua.
235. Thanking Board members for their support, the country director confirmed that WFP was already sharing lessons learned and information with other school feeding actors in the country and would continue to do so. WFP coordinated closely with FAO, although the latter worked more on policy and WFP on operations. On South-South and triangular cooperation, WFP had started working with countries in the region on issues related to school feeding and with China on access to sustainable markets; WFP planned to consult the Government of Nicaragua to determine the areas in which they wish to pursue such cooperation.
236. Following the approval of the CSP, the Ambassador and Representative of the Republic of Nicaragua conveyed her Government's support for the plan, which was fully aligned with the national plan for combating poverty and promoting human development. The Government was committed to addressing poverty to make sure that every child in Nicaragua had access to nutritious food and educational opportunities, for the good of their families and their communities.

## Policy issues (continued)

### 2024/EB.A/22 Update on WFP's role in the collective humanitarian response (2023)

237. Introducing the update, the Assistant Executive Director, Partnerships and Innovation, said that partnerships were of prime importance in the current humanitarian environment, where joint advocacy and joint humanitarian diplomacy had become more critical than ever.
238. The Assistant Executive Director, Programme Operations, spoke about WFP's continued engagement in the IASC and cluster leadership responsibilities, the key services it provided to the international humanitarian and development system, such as UNHAS, and other inter-agency collaboration, such as with UNHCR on internally displaced persons and refugees. Collaboration was essential to forming an accurate overview of humanitarian needs, which was in turn critical to prioritization.
239. The Director of the Geneva Global Office added that WFP's success would be measured by its ability to assist those in need, which meant working within the humanitarian framework to ensure the most effective collective response. Partnership could achieve many things, including opening access, making delivery more efficient, improving coordination and perhaps even securing additional funding, including from non-traditional sources.
240. Board members expressed their appreciation for WFP's continued coordination and collaboration efforts within the humanitarian sector, particularly its ongoing engagement in IASC, its provision of critical common services to the wider humanitarian community and its overall leadership in the cluster system. Several applauded the Executive Director for taking on the role of IASC Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment.
241. Several members noted that the upcoming WFP localization policy would provide an opportunity to focus on how to more meaningfully include small local organizations to improve impact for beneficiaries.
242. WFP was encouraged to clearly define and make use of its interventions in the humanitarian-development space; pursue collaboration and data-sharing in support of prioritization; further its work on integrating gender equality into country-level strategic planning; do more to include IFAD in its highly fruitful strategic partnership with FAO; enhance the content and frequency of its hunger hotspots reports; seek new means of cooperation and areas of assistance such as cash-based transfers, climate, logistics and donorship; and support further coordination through IASC and the development system reform, including through "double-hatting" of regional and humanitarian coordinators. The organization was also called on to support OCHA-led system-wide reforms.
243. One member, recognizing the difficult decisions WFP staff faced in prioritizing assistance, called on other donors to join her government in providing supplemental funding to bridge current gaps in the collective humanitarian response. Another advised WFP to seek funding from across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, including climate funding.
244. Responding to the comments, management acknowledged the huge potential to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian responses in many contexts, and the importance of anticipatory action and localization.
245. In terms of humanitarian access, WFP had been revamping and streamlining support for its country offices in dealing with operational access constraints while also strengthening its engagement on access issues, both within the United Nations system, and with Member States where diplomacy might help. WFP was strongly committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable were prioritized and to strengthening monitoring of the impact on both those who were assisted and those who were not, as part of its accountability to affected people. It was also working with the humanitarian and development community to clarify roles and

responsibilities in meeting the needs of internally displaced people in the short and long term. All humanitarian actors sought to direct more development financing to situations that involved internally displaced people. The development of the resilience, climate and localization policies would offer opportunities for WFP to further address those issues.

246. Management also pointed out that participation in inter-agency systems was a considerable investment of time by WFP staff at the country, regional and global levels. WFP sought ways to use that time as effectively as possible, but overall considered it a worthwhile investment.

**2024/EB.A/23      Update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system)**

247. Management shared recent developments in WFP's implementation of the United Nations development system reform. WFP had streamlined its reporting on the matter, including through the United Nations reform checklist, and had made strong progress in many areas, in particular efficiencies and programming. The organization continued to focus on people and delivery rather than on process and bureaucracy. With funding for the development system a significant challenge, WFP supported the Secretary-General's recently launched revised funding compact and looked forward to Member States' feedback on it. The year 2024 was proving to be one of reflection and refinement for many in the United Nations system, and the forthcoming Summit of the Future and its pact for the future would help to offer a way forward.
248. Board members welcomed the update and commended WFP for its proactive approach to the reform process, including its contributions to improving the common country analysis and efforts to align CSPs with the UNSDCF. They encouraged WFP to continue exploring the use of technology, digital services and innovation and to promote remote and digitalized services, including the United Nations Booking Hub and United Nations global mobility programme.
249. One member underscored the importance of WFP's continued engagement in regional reform to strengthen cooperation, address overlaps and clarify the division of labour between different actors. Another, stressing the urgency of collective action to achieve the SDGs, called on all United Nations entities to continue to increase collaboration and joint programming and move away from siloed and sectoral ways of working towards integrated approaches.
250. More information was sought on a number of aspects, including WFP's rollout of common back-office services, plans to improve integrated planning and programme delivery and ways to advance the implementation of the management and accountability framework that underpinned reform at the country level. Questions were also asked in relation to the asset disposal scheme, the road safety academy and the comparatively low level of donor contributions for the resident coordinator system via the 1 percent levy. One member advised that future reports under this item should give visibility to flexible funding, including at the country level.
251. Management confirmed that WFP would continue to seek alignment between CSPs and the UNSDCF, noting that discrepancies could occur in certain settings, especially with short ICSPs: however, even when timeframes did not coincide, WFP would continue to align the content of its CSPs with that of the UNSDCF.
252. In terms of common back-office arrangements, the process was still at the early stages and efficiency gains would become clearer with time. Regarding the management and accountability framework, 74 percent of eligible resident coordinators had completed the performance assessment for WFP country directors in 2023. While WFP was striving for 100 percent, a resident coordinator and a WFP country director had to be in their respective

posts for at least six months before evaluating one another, and that timing did not always align. The level of contributions to the resident coordinator system via the 1 percent levy reflected WFP's operations, since only a small proportion of those were dedicated to development.

253. For asset disposal, WFP worked closely UNHCR and was developing a shared online process for United Nations entities to support vehicle disposal. The academy concept was part of WFP's duty of care, providing training to ensure that vehicles were safe, efficient and effective for country offices.

**2024/EB.A/24 Oral update on disability inclusion**

254. Management updated the Board on developments in WFP's work on disability inclusion, which followed a people-centric, whole-of-organization approach. In 2019, WFP had launched a corporate disability inclusion road map with an implementation plan and dedicated trust fund. Since then, annual workplans had been issued and additional contributions made to the fund. WFP's work on disability inclusion was governed by the United Nations disability inclusion strategy. WFP was a leading agency in implementing the strategy, but accelerated progress was needed in areas that included consultation of persons with disabilities, procurement, evaluation and capacity development.
255. Over the previous year, WFP had participated in a number of high-level conferences and meetings. Priorities identified at those events included capacity strengthening for organizations of persons with disabilities, better coordination among humanitarian actors and governments, the development of inclusive cash transfer programmes, improved collection of data disaggregated by disability, and investments in climate action for persons with disabilities.
256. WFP's annual performance report for 2023 included reporting on two new disability inclusion indicators measuring WFP's performance against system-wide standards. The performance reported was relatively low, but WFP's 2024 workplan focused on meeting or exceeding all of the relevant indicators, making progress in the four priority areas identified in the road map and keeping abreast of emerging issues.
257. Board members welcomed the update and recommended that disability inclusion be a regular item on the agenda of future Board sessions. They commended WFP for the progress made and its leading role in advancing disability inclusion in the humanitarian sector.
258. Urging management to ensure that sufficient staffing and funding were allocated to WFP's work on disability inclusion, especially at the country level, Board members encouraged WFP to focus on mainstreaming disability inclusion into cash transfer programmes; advocating increased attention to disability inclusion throughout the humanitarian system, including through the creation of an official coordination structure within IASC; implementing the recommendations regarding zero hunger in the 2024 disability and development report; preparing to be part of the Global Action on Disability Network organizing committee for the third Global Disability Summit in April 2025; and sharing lessons learned from its efforts to incorporate disability inclusion into its regionalization and localization agenda.
259. One Board member encouraged WFP to publish the 2023 report on its implementation of the United Nations disability inclusion strategy, and another sought further information on how local organizations of persons with disabilities were being encouraged to engage in WFP's country programmes.
260. Management replied that, with support from headquarters and in line with their continued field support, country offices were exploring new modalities for engaging those organizations, as WFP's standard field-level agreements were not appropriate. WFP was providing capacity strengthening support for the organizations and exploring new

modalities for distributing food and cash transfers to persons with disabilities. Regarding other points raised, WFP had received extra-budgetary funding for its disability inclusion efforts so far, and was seeking more sustainable funding streams for the long term. Many of the recommendations in the disability and development report were directed to governments rather than WFP, and WFP was advocating greater attention to food security issues in the agenda of the 2025 Global Disability Summit.

## **Administrative and managerial matters (continued)**

### **2024/EB.A/25 Security report**

261. Presenting the report, the Director described trends in security incidents in 2023 and his division's actions and plans to respond to the associated issues, including the intention to engage in more systematic collaboration with cooperating partners to increase their security management capacity. These efforts were aligned with the ongoing organizational restructuring and with developments within the United Nations system and would be reflected in a multi-year "security strengthening programme", which was currently under development.
262. Paying tribute to WFP security staff, Board members offered their condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of those who had lost their lives in the line of duty. Members commended the Security Division for its work on information and knowledge management, its emphasis on enhancing cooperation with cooperating partners, and its focus on gender issues and women's security awareness training.
263. Concerned at the high number of security incidents and the shrinking humanitarian space, members urged WFP to prioritize the strategic decisions put on hold for budgetary reasons in late 2023, in particular leveraging the use of new technologies and enhanced partnerships. WFP was encouraged to systematically integrate security considerations into programming cycles, engage with affected populations and civil society organizations and strengthen its global security workforce and risk management. Members highlighted the importance of internal coordination processes, duty of care for staff and close coordination with other United Nations entities and cooperating partners to ensure that all stakeholders had the most up-to-date information. Members requested continued reporting to the Board on the budgetary implications of providing adequate security.
264. Thanking Board members for their advocacy and support, the Director said that WFP would continue to prioritize partnerships with cooperating partners and other United Nations entities on training, analysis, operational support and digitalization and with private-sector actors on innovation and Member States on capacity strengthening. Work was ongoing to link the security function to WFP's programming cycles and to devise internal guidelines that would better reflect country-level security costs in CSP budget planning. The division continued to prioritize its activities to maximize impact at the regional bureau and country office levels, with decisions informed by the ongoing corporate reorganization. WFP was also strengthening its work on managing risk in complex settings and monitoring such efforts in order to improve context analysis, mitigate risks for personnel, assets and programmes and define acceptable levels of risk.
265. WFP was working with other United Nations entities to strengthen community engagement and optimize the United Nations security management system, through active engagement in the Inter-Agency Security Management Network.
266. The Deputy Director added that WFP was working with NGO and United Nations partners to strengthen incident data collection and analysis. The Deputy Executive Director emphasized that security and duty of care would always be adequately funded, noting that there was also potential to promote security through investments in other areas such as communication and programming.



## Other business

### 2024/EB.A/26 Interim report on the governance review

267. The Chair of the Executive Board working group on the governance review introduced the interim report, which provided an update on the progress made by the group since its establishment in November 2023 and presented a costed implementation plan for a set of recommendations from the independent consultant's report proposed for implementation by the Executive Board Secretariat (EBS) on the Board's approval.
268. The recommendations included, among others, streamlining the format and agenda of formal Board sessions; conducting a one-day "strategic dialogue" to create an informal space for Board members and observers and WFP management to discuss strategic issues, revising and reinforcing the word limits for Board documents; redesigning the induction session for new Board members and observers; implementing the digital transformation initiatives proposed by EBS; and introducing a half-day introductory session for new Bureau members and producing a handbook on their roles and responsibilities.
269. Over the coming months the working group planned to review the remaining recommendations from the external consultant and consider relevant recommendations from the Joint Inspection Unit, the External Auditor and the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network. An informal consultation for Board members would be held in October, which would inform the drafting of a plan for the remaining recommendations. The working group would submit its final report for approval at the 2024 second regular session.
270. Board members thanked the Chair for his leadership and negotiation skills in helping to build consensus. They also thanked the representative of Canada for first proposing and initiating the governance review process and the Bureau, EBS and the External Auditor for their support and advice. They looked forward to the implementation of the first recommendations by EBS and reflections on the remaining recommendations. One member mentioned in particular the opportunity to discuss a potential code of conduct for Board members.
271. Board members expressed their views regarding the review process and the way forward, urging the working group to complete its work by November 2024 while recognizing the ambitious targets set. They welcomed the Chair's efforts to streamline and accelerate decision making and appreciated the working group's consultations with a wide range of stakeholders within WFP, including senior leadership, OEV and other oversight bodies. Several members endorsed the group's decision to look first at the recommendations from the external consultant and the JIU before moving on to recommendations from the other initiatives included in the road map.
272. One Board member encouraged the group to retain its focus on the ultimate goal of the governance review, which was to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Board's governance and ensure its engagement on strategic issues. Highlighting the mandate of the working group, another member described the importance of addressing the recommendations of the independent consultant as they were proposed in order to avoid lengthy discussions on matters that did not have the consensus of the Board.
273. The Chair thanked Board members for their valuable comments and support and reiterated his belief that the review process could be completed on time. The Deputy Executive Director took the floor to thank all concerned for their work on the review, expressing management's appreciation of the review as a way of helping to ensure efficient governance and strategic engagement with the Board and their commitment to continue proactively supporting the review process.

**Oral report on the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP**

274. The President of the Executive Board reported on the joint meeting held on 31 May at United Nations headquarters in New York and chaired by the President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office of Project Services. The topic of the meeting – the role of effective governance by governing bodies in the United Nations development system in promoting multilateralism and accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals – had been timely, given the recent JIU review of governance and oversight of the Executive Boards of the United Nations funds and programmes, and WFP's ongoing governance review.
275. At the meeting, the Boards had reflected on how well governance was working in their respective entities and exchanged insights from the two governance reviews in New York and Rome. The principals and a deputy from each of the six United Nations entities had then engaged in a panel discussion on how Board guidance and support had enabled their entities to deliver on their mandates more effectively and efficiently, achieve greater impact and enhance collaboration throughout the United Nations development system.
276. Representing WFP on the panel, the Deputy Executive Director had shared his views on how the Executive Boards could better facilitate the work of their entities, highlighting three themes: humanitarian diplomacy in advocating increased access and funding; strategic direction and advice; and a renewed commitment to multilateralism and intergovernmental support, especially in addressing the most pressing humanitarian crises.
277. Participants had explored the role of the Boards in ensuring oversight and accountability and emphasized the importance of continuous improvement, enhanced transparency, greater integration, synergies and coherence, and the sharing of good practices throughout the United Nations development system.
278. Member States had called for the creation of a cross-regional working group to review the recommendations from the JIU report and develop an implementation plan, similar to that of the governance review working group established by the WFP Board. Delegates had highlighted potential synergies between the governance review processes of the JIU and WFP and encouraged the strong spirit of collaboration and determination to translate ideas and solutions into concrete action.
279. In closing his update, the President thanked Board members for their participation and engagement in the joint meeting, a summary report of which would be posted in all WFP official languages prior to the Board's second regular session in November.

**2023/EB.A/27 Update on United Nations Humanitarian Air Service**

280. The Chief, Aviation Service reported that in 2023, a year marked by protracted humanitarian crises, new conflicts, persistent access constraints and reduced funding, UNHAS had continued to deliver vital aid to communities in need. To improve funding flexibility, response predictability and operational efficiency, WFP had operationalized a centralized funding mechanism for UNHAS that had thus far allocated over USD 17 million to 14 field operations. Donor contributions had accounted for 53 percent of the UNHAS budget, which, alongside carry-over balances and funds generated through cost recovery, had ensured effective service delivery throughout the year.

281. Paying tribute to UNHAS and its staff as the service marked 20 years of operations, Board members welcomed the centralized funding mechanism and encouraged donors to contribute to it. One member advised WFP to communicate the benefits of the mechanism to donors and to review lessons learned from its first year of operation. Another advocated diversification of the donor base to ensure adequate and reliable funding for critical UNHAS logistics support.
282. Cost recovery was also a focus, with several members supporting an increase in cost recovery to supplement UNHAS funding. Two members were in favour of an equitable funding spread between donors and passengers and a third supported the use of separate rates for each user category. Several members requested additional information on the topic, including an update on the development of related guidance for country offices.
283. Members urged WFP to ensure that its aviation operations always adhered to humanitarian principles while commending its flexibility and efficiency in service delivery as well as its strides made in environmental sustainability programme implementation. WFP was also encouraged to further enhance UNHAS financial and technical capabilities and to continue supporting learning and capacity-building. Further insight was sought into the potential use of drones for cargo delivery, the reasons behind the fall in the number of organizations using UNHAS in 2023 and the likely impact on UNHAS of the withdrawal of United Nations peacekeepers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
284. On funding, management explained that operating costs had increased significantly in 2023, owing to fleet diversification – arising from a safety concern – and the high insurance premiums required to operate in conflict areas. Cost recovery charges were decided by the steering committee governing each UNHAS operation; some charged development organizations a higher rate than humanitarian organizations. WFP would look into providing additional guidance to its teams on where they might be able to increase cost recovery, but management believed that UNHAS should not differentiate between humanitarian and development actors, although there might be potential to differentiate between, for instance, local civil society organizations conducting humanitarian-development activities and international actors who might have access to greater resources.
285. The drop in the number of user organizations was related to NGOs pulling out from areas experiencing intense conflict, such as in the Sudan. The withdrawal of the mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo would leave UNHAS to fill the gap, which posed a significant burden with cost and security concerns.
286. Going forward, WFP saw opportunities for the use of unmanned aircraft, with due consideration of safety issues, and would keep the Board updated on developments in that area.

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

### **2024/EB.A/28 Summary of the work of the 2024 first regular session of the Executive Board**

287. Thanking the Rapporteur for the 2024 first regular session of the Executive Board for preparing the summary of that session, the President noted that the draft document had been distributed to Board members in early June.
288. The Board approved the summary.

## **Verification of adopted decisions and recommendations**

289. Following the President's introduction of the agenda item, the Rapporteur confirmed that the decisions and recommendations presented in the draft compilation of decisions and recommendations adopted by the Board at the current session corresponded to those that had been agreed during the session. The final versions of the adopted decisions and recommendations would be posted on the Board's website by the next working day, and a draft summary of the discussions that took place during the session would be circulated for comment in due course.

## **Closing remarks by the Executive Director**

290. Thanking Board members for their insights, support and collaboration, the Executive Director noted that the session had covered a wide range of issues, with oversight and accountability at the forefront. Leadership had heard strong support for the organizational reform and for the global assurance framework, a key priority for all. Maintaining the trust of its partners was fundamental for WFP, and she restated her commitment to ensuring that the highest standards of assurance were met.

291. WFP leaders were also focused on ensuring effective protection against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment for the millions of vulnerable people WFP served, especially women and girls. While much remained to be done to achieve gender equality, school meals were one way that WFP was bringing that goal closer. She thanked Member States for their commitment to the work of the School Meals Coalition and pledged to move forward swiftly with the new task force to ensure optimization of the nutritional value of WFP's food assistance.

292. The IPC reports just published for Gaza and the Sudan painted a bleak picture of suffering, starvation and immense humanitarian needs and underscored the urgency of rallying resources and resolve to reverse the rising tide of hunger. Management and the Board had a shared responsibility to ensure that WFP's global team was able to reach those in greatest need, and Board members were asked to do everything in their power to ensure that team members could work safely and without fear. Management, in turn, would ensure that staff had all the support they needed to deliver effectively for the people WFP served.

## Acronyms

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| CSP    | country strategic plan   |
| EBS    | Executive Board Secretariat  |
| FAO    | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  |
| GCMF   | Global Commodity Management Facility   |
| IASC   | Inter-Agency Standing Committee  |
| ICSP   | interim country strategic plan   |
| IFAD   | International Fund for Agricultural Development  |
| IOAC   | Independent Oversight Advisory Committee   |
| IPC    | Integrated Food Security Phase Classification  |
| IRA    | Immediate Response Account   |
| ISC    | indirect support cost  |
| IT     | information technology   |
| OBD    | Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services   |
| OCHA   | Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  |
| OEV    | Office of Evaluation   |
| OIG    | Office of the Inspector General  |
| OIGI   | Office of Investigation  |
| PSA    | programme support and administrative (budget)  |
| PSEA   | protection from sexual exploitation and abuse  |
| SD3C   | Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change |
| SIDS   | Small Island Developing States   |
| UNHAS  | United Nations Humanitarian Air Service  |
| UNHCR  | Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  |
| UNSDCF | United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework   |