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Summary of the work of the 2020 first regular session of the Executive Board

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# Draft summary of the work of the 2020 first regular session of the Executive Board

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## Current and future strategic issues

### 2020/EB.1/1 Opening remarks by the Executive Director

1. The Executive Director began his opening remarks by thanking the outgoing President for his year of service and congratulating the new President on his election.
2. After briefly describing his own experience with COVID-19, from which he had fully recovered, he assured the Board of WFP's commitment to ensuring the health and safety of its staff around the world, including by introducing remote working for all staff whose roles did not require their physical presence in an office. Of the more than 18,000 people working for WFP, 17 employees had contracted the virus, with seven having fully recovered, nine being close to full recovery and one expected to be discharged from the hospital within days. WFP provided medical evacuation services and other support for all of its employees, 97 percent of whom remained in the field continuing their work. In the previous three and a half months, while about 140,000 people around the world had died from COVID-19, almost three million had died as a result of hunger, emphasizing the importance of WFP's life-saving work. It was therefore essential that donors and other partners continue to provide WFP with the financial and other support it required and that governments responding to the pandemic in their own countries seek to minimize the use of export bans and transport restrictions, which could have devastating effects on the availability of food and other essential goods, particularly in countries with fragile economic, environmental and health care systems. In 2019 WFP had received funding of USD 8.3 billion.
3. WFP was contributing to the global humanitarian response to COVID-19 by providing logistics services for United Nations and other partners, delivering medical equipment to 78 countries worldwide and providing passenger and cargo air services while many commercial airlines were shutting down their operations. WFP had launched an appeal for USD 350 million to support core operations for the United Nations-wide COVID-19 response and was working with leaders and the private sector worldwide with a view to maintaining supply chains in the face of severe economic deterioration.
4. Other challenges continued, including conflict in Yemen, war in the Syrian Arab Republic and a complex political and security situation in South Sudan. In addition, the pandemic had resulted in a massive drop in oil prices, with severe negative effects on the revenues and economies of countries that included Nigeria, Senegal and South Sudan, while losses of jobs and access to food brought social and economic instability to many countries worldwide.
5. In closing, the Executive Director said that he hoped to be back in Rome within the next few weeks.
6. Board members thanked the Executive Director for his briefing and welcomed his recovery from COVID-19. They reiterated the Executive Director's thanks to the outgoing President and said that they looked forward to working with the new President. Paying tribute to the courage and dedication of WFP staff working in the field, often in conditions that put their own lives at risk, members expressed satisfaction with the organization of the current session, which was being conducted online and thus enabled the essential work of WFP and its Board to continue despite the exceptional circumstances and the inability of Board member representatives to convene in person.
7. Members flagged the challenging task ahead with only ten years in which to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, noting that indices of undernourishment and hunger had been stagnant or worsening even before the rapid spread of COVID-19 created additional threats to the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. This called for an acceleration of ongoing actions to increase the efficiency and impact of humanitarian and development interventions, including through strengthened partnerships among United Nations agencies, governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector entities and other actors. In that regard,

members welcomed WFP's increased focus on work at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, its active participation in the ongoing reform of the United Nations development system and the introduction of its country strategic plans (CSPs), which provided an appropriate framework for the flexible ways of working that were required. Members emphasized the importance of partnerships for the achievement of operational efficiencies through the fostering of links between humanitarian and development actors and the promotion of a spirit of coordination over competition. They urged WFP to maintain its commitment to and leadership in such work.

8. Members expressed appreciation for WFP's role at the forefront of the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic and commended the speed with which it had designed and begun to implement a common services platform for humanitarian actors. They looked forward to receiving regular updates on progress with the initiative and on the pandemic's impact on WFP's operations, including information on its cooperation with other United Nations agencies. Members called on donors and other stakeholders to continue to support WFP as it sought to strengthen its capacities and workplace culture, including through the implementation of recommendations resulting from recent evaluations of WFP's response to emergencies and its human resources strategy.
9. Board members said that CSPs and investments in common services, such as systems for the use of cash-based transfers, helped to ensure the integrated approach, swift implementation and resources needed for efficient responses to emergencies. They encouraged management to strive to maintain WFP's success, including through capacity building, enhanced prioritization of activities and resources and the development of clear guidance.
10. Members said that they looked forward to providing input for a revised people strategy, which should enunciate a clear vision for building a diverse and inclusive workforce and set forth clear plans for improving gender parity and enhancing the recruitment and retention of staff members, including those with disabilities, and robust metrics for measuring performance. Areas requiring particular attention included the staffing of country offices, workplace culture and compliance with rules and regulations, staff morale and the prevention of all forms of harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination. Members praised management's openness to scrutiny and willingness to discuss findings from reviews, evaluations and audits and requested regular updates on progress in those areas.
11. In addition they said that they looked forward to reviewing and discussing findings from the mid-term review of the WFP Strategic Plan (2017–2021), which would provide an opportunity to reflect on the adjustments needed to accelerate progress towards WFP's strategic objectives and the SDGs. The new strategic plan and second-generation CSPs should reflect a stronger focus on the mainstreaming of gender, protection and disability concerns into all WFP programming and more strategic thinking on environmental issues in humanitarian interventions, including the use of green energy solutions.
12. Turning to specific WFP operations, members noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures had deprived 370 million children worldwide of the school meals on which many depended for their survival. School feeding generated clear benefits for both humanitarian assistance and development, and food distributions were needed for students who were currently unable to attend school.

13. Regarding the humanitarian response in Yemen, members expressed regret that conditions imposed by local authorities prevented WFP and other actors from delivering much needed assistance. Such hindering of humanitarian and development work was unacceptable. It was essential that humanitarian staff and cargo be exempted from travel restrictions imposed in Yemen in response to COVID-19. Some members expressed support for WFP's decision to recalibrate its response in Houthi-controlled areas and urged all parties to the conflict to respect humanitarian principles and facilitate humanitarian assistance by implementing WFP's biometric targeting system. They urged management to provide updates on future steps in this direction and to involve the Board in related decision making.
14. Recognizing the complexity of the situation in the Sahel and the challenges that WFP faced in ensuring a conflict-sensitive response, members called on donors to support the work, describing it as essential.
15. Some members expressed high expectations for the food systems summit that the United Nations Secretary-General planned to hold in 2021. They urged management to ensure that both the Secretariat and Board of WFP be involved in decision making for the summit, which should result in solutions that achieved real change.
16. Expressing their commitment to continuing to support WFP in the years ahead, several members mentioned the financial and other resources that their countries were providing to WFP for its work on the COVID-19 response and on designing and testing solutions for other humanitarian challenges.

**2020/EB.1/1/bis Remarks by Special Guest Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization**

17. Having been unable to address the Board during the opening of the session on 16 April, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) did so on the afternoon of 17 April.
18. The Director-General recalled that WFP had been a strong partner of WHO in the response to the recent Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The two agencies were joining forces again to address the COVID-19 pandemic through a project that covered all countries in Africa and involved all relevant United Nations and other partners, with the Director-General of WHO and the Executive Director of WFP serving as the co-chairs of a taskforce guiding the initiative. With shortages of medical products and equipment and problems with supply chains hampering activities in Africa (and the southern hemisphere in general), WHO, WFP and their partners were working with the private sector and governments with a view to increasing the production of essential supplies and addressing supply chain issues. The strength of the partnership between WHO and WFP had been demonstrated to Member States at a recent joint briefing on those activities held in Geneva.
19. In addition, the two agencies continued to work together on the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All, which involved 12 multilateral agencies, was supported by the United Nations Secretary-General, the Group of Twenty, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and other bodies and had the goal of strengthening collaboration among multilateral agencies in order to accelerate progress towards health-related SDGs.
20. The Director-General expressed WHO's commitment to working with WFP on defeating the pandemic and thanked Board members for their leadership and guidance on strengthening this cooperation.
21. At the request of one member, the Board adopted a decision saying that it had taken note of the remarks of the Director-General of WHO and that a video of his live remarks would be posted on the restricted area of the Board website.

## Other business

### 2020/EB.1/2 Oral update on WFP's response to COVID-19

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

#### **Oral update on the implications for WFP of the guidance on United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks and common country analyses**

22. The Board considered agenda items 9 f), 4 b) and 4 c) together, examining WFP's implementation of United Nations development system reform in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
23. Management gave an overview of WFP's pandemic response. Initial analysis indicated that COVID-19 could leave an additional 130 million people in extreme hunger by the end of 2020, mostly in low- and middle-income countries. Maintaining commercial trade flows would be critically important, and countries must be urged to refrain from introducing trade barriers.
24. WFP was determined to continue to reach the people targeted in the programme of work in 2020, particularly those already facing extreme hunger, who would be at grave risk if humanitarian assistance were to cease. To sustain urgent food and nutrition assistance, WFP had been pre-positioning food and cash support to mitigate supply chain risks and adjusting operations to reduce transmission risks.
25. WFP was currently undertaking assessments and analyses to determine the additional populations facing acute food insecurity. Possible groups at risk included children, women and groups particularly at risk from the pandemic. Management warned that women were disproportionately affected by the socioeconomic risks of COVID-19 and faced an alarming increase in gender-based violence. Meanwhile, in the absence of school meals, millions of children could be at risk of increased malnutrition and therefore much more vulnerable to the virus. WFP was working with governments to reduce transmission risks where schools were still open and to find alternative ways to provide nutritious meals and other support to children whose schools were closed.
26. To respond to new and emerging needs, WFP was assessing the capacities, population groups and funding outlooks and the likely response from partners and was assisting national governments, providing advice and support on supply chains, social protection programmes, cash-based transfer schemes and logistics.
27. As for common services the coordination between the humanitarian and health sectors was very strong: WFP was establishing a global network of hubs and transport services, negotiating access where needed and helping WHO to get much needed equipment to governments. WFP was also working to set up passenger air services where commercial flights were unavailable. Across the United Nations system, measures were being put in place to extend medical evacuation capacity and coverage.
28. Management described the funding landscape, reporting that WFP had a funding requirement of up to USD 3.9 billion for the next six months.
29. Management also reported close collaboration between the Rome-based agencies, particularly through the senior consultative group.
30. Board members welcomed WFP's role in the United Nations global humanitarian response plan to the pandemic, emphasizing that it could only be defeated through close cooperation, strong multilateralism and solidarity. Members praised WFP's efforts to continue its operations and paid tribute to the courage and creativity of its staff.
31. Several members urged WFP to ensure that the crisis did not impede the response to existing humanitarian needs, including efforts to empower women and girls and to combat

- gender-based violence. Some members expressed concern over the impact of school closures on the many children who received WFP school meals. Others reiterated the importance of keeping food supply chains open.
32. Board members asked whether WFP was facing challenges in terms of supplies, personnel and funding. One member called on donors to provide unearmarked funding to optimize WFP's response; another asked management to clarify why WFP should be prioritized for funding at the current time rather than other agencies involved in the response. Two members called for the lifting of unilateral sanctions and similar measures and for WFP to support the appeal of the Secretary-General for the waiving of such sanctions in the context of the pandemic.
  33. Board members acknowledged WFP's role as the logistical backbone of the United Nations response, but one member asked why new hubs were being set up as part of the response when current hubs were not working at full capacity.
  34. Several members highlighted the potential impact of the virus in countries highly dependent on food imports, such as small island developing states, and on countries with fragile institutions, endemic poverty and high exposure to the impacts of climate change.
  35. Turning to the United Nations development system reform process, several members said that the need for change was more urgent than ever, describing joint needs assessments, coordinated planning and shared premises and back offices as essential to efforts to tackle the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 and to safeguard progress towards the SDGs. They urged WFP to provide the Board with comprehensive written reports with clear baselines, milestones and concrete examples of the impact of the changes being made.
  36. Members called on WFP to respond to national priorities, maximize the comparative advantages of each agency and support the resident and humanitarian coordinators. Some members sought feedback on the resident coordinator system and the financial levy, one year into its implementation. Others asked how WFP viewed the reform of regional resources and its potential impact on WFP operations in the field. The importance of strengthening collaboration with the other Rome-based agencies was also highlighted.
  37. Management thanked the members for their comments and support. Regarding reform efforts, management noted that the pandemic response and work on the socioeconomic framework of the Secretary-General was giving fresh impetus to the nexus approach. The regional review process was not yet concluded but more information would be available after the United Nations Economic and Social Council operational activities for development segment in May 2020. The management accountability framework had been in place for a year with positive results and some challenges, the latter largely related to differences in how individual resident coordinators were carrying out their mandates. Meanwhile, the levy had resulted in a WFP contribution of USD 294,000 in 2019, not a particularly significant amount.
  38. With regard to efficiency savings, WFP and other United Nations agencies were making good progress with business operations strategies and the global shared service centre. Given the complexities of the projects, however, progress was slow, as was the drive towards establishing common premises. Other areas such as consolidated fleet management and the humanitarian booking hub were delivering efficiency savings.
  39. Turning to the pandemic response, management confirmed that WFP would be maximizing the use of existing humanitarian response depots such as the one in Brindisi; the new hubs had been set up because of their proximity to numerous medical suppliers in order to serve the needs of the WHO. Management noted that WFP's common services were a lifeline for the United Nations system, enabling the whole humanitarian community to reach those most in need; WFP also had a proven track record in delivering on its commitments to governments and partners, making it an attractive candidate for donor funding.

## Policy issues

### **2020/EB.1/3 Update on the Integrated Road Map: proposed delegations of authority and governance arrangements**

40. The President recalled that the proposed delegations of authority and other governance arrangements had been considered by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Finance Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, whose reports were available on the webpage for the current Board session.
41. The Deputy Executive Director thanked the Board for approving by vote by correspondence an extension to the interim delegations of authority, which had been set to expire on 28 February 2020. The objective of the proposed delegations of authority and other governance arrangements was to develop a risk-based, cost-effective governance model that strengthened the Board's role in approval and oversight of WFP operations while retaining WFP's ability to respond quickly to emergencies. They would also simplify procedures for country offices. If approved, the measures would take effect from 1 May.
42. Board members welcomed the proposed delegations and other governance arrangements, saying that they would help WFP to continue to deliver swift, flexible and sustainable humanitarian responses as the world faced economic and social recession resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. They expressed appreciation for the consultative process used in drafting the proposals and the clear rationale for the changes.
43. Members supported the review of the new delegations of authority after five years, or earlier if requested by the Board. Such flexibility was particularly important given the likely effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on WFP's operating environment. One member said that they looked forward to reviewing efficiency and effectiveness through a "snapshot" of the use of delegated authorities in 2022.
44. While recognizing the efficiency gains anticipated as a result of the delegations of authority, one member welcomed reinstatement of the USD 150 million threshold, in addition to the percentage threshold, for sharing emergency response-related budget revisions with Member States for comment before approval by the Executive Director and, if required the FAO Director-General, saying that it would ensure an appropriate level of Board oversight of planned crisis responses. It was recommended that the five-day review period for emergency-response-related revisions be waived only in exceptional circumstances, with clear communication of the rationale for any such waiver.
45. Members welcomed the email notification system for CSP revisions regardless of value and the opportunity to provide comments during a review period. To date, information on 16 budget revisions had been shared with the Board via an email notification system launched on 28 February 2020. All budget revisions approved by the Executive Director or approved jointly with the FAO Director-General were also shared twice-yearly in the Executive Director's report on the use of delegated authority.
46. Members also welcomed the enhancements to the CSP portal and supported the inclusion of data from limited emergency operations and from CSPs and interim CSPs funded entirely by their host countries.
47. Several members emphasized the need to improve WFP's reporting systems so that they provided the information that members and donors required for oversight and funding decisions. That, they said, would encourage softer earmarking of contributions and more flexible and predictable funding for WFP programmes.
48. Regarding the call for enhanced reporting, management suggested that too much data was being tracked. Management planned to engage with the Board to identify corporate- and country-level information that was not needed for strategic oversight or internal

management, believing that it was important to provide the right information without overburdening headquarters units and country offices.

49. Referring to WFP's General Rules, one member underlined the requirement that the Board draw on advice provided by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the FAO Finance Committee in making decisions related to the financial management of WFP. Another member called for the establishment of a WFP headquarters unit dedicated to the promotion of South-South cooperation.

## **Other business (*continued*)**

### **Matters relating to workplace culture**

#### **2020/EB.1/4 Concrete steps towards implementation of the recommendations of the joint Board/management working group on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination**

##### **Oral update by the co-chairs of the joint Board/management working group on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination**

50. The co-chairs of the joint working group on harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination (HSHAPD) reported that the group had met twice since the last Board session. In December it had met with the newly appointed senior advisor to the Executive Director on workplace culture and in February it had reviewed the findings of two data analysis workshops on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The workshop recommendations had been shared with the senior advisor and included calls to strengthen reporting mechanisms and ensure swift action in response to reports of misconduct.
51. The senior advisor presented her report on concrete steps taken to develop the comprehensive action plan (CAP) called for by the joint working group, outlining several amendments made in response to feedback from Board members. The report described the workplace culture that WFP aspired to achieve by implementing the CAP, which would be presented to the Board in June.
52. Reporting on progress since her appointment, the senior advisor highlighted discussions with external experts, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the United Nations Staff College. She confirmed that external experts would be contracted to assist WFP with the next steps of the CAP, engaging with staff at all levels, and expressed thanks for the feedback on the CAP provided by Board members through an informal e-consultation.
53. Board members welcomed the appointment of the senior advisor and reiterated the importance of eliminating all forms of HSHAPD. Several members expressed regret that the CAP had not been finalized in time for the current session and suggested holding an informal consultation in May to gather additional Board input for the plan.
54. Regarding the content of the CAP, Board members said they expected it to incorporate Joint Inspection Unit recommendations and all planned and ongoing activities that sought to change workplace culture at WFP. Several members pointed to transparency during implementation, well-defined expectations, continual communications and training support and management accountability at the senior and middle levels as key to the success of the initiative.
55. Members encouraged the senior advisor to share best practices with other divisions, particularly the Ethics Office, and to help shape other efforts to change workplace culture, such as the new "people policy" that would be presented to the Board for approval at its 2021 first regular session.



56. Describing the current report as an important step towards changing workplace culture at WFP, Board members were eager to see results and requested regular updates on the implementation of the CAP, saying that it should be a “living document”.
57. Noting the impact of COVID-19 on offices, one member urged WFP to be vigilant for instances of HSHAPD perpetrated in digital workplaces.
58. The senior advisor thanked the Board members for their suggestions and support, assuring them that she would provide regular updates, prioritize transparency, focus on middle management, institute a robust monitoring system and update the CAP as necessary. Regarding the impact of the pandemic, she said that there was a risk of domestic abuse when staff worked remotely, adding that she had recently discussed the issue with an external expert in the field.

### **Oral update on preparations for the 2021 United Nations Summit on Food Systems**

59. Referring to an information note provided by the Secretary-General's special envoy for the planned 2021 United Nations food systems summit, which had been circulated to Board members the previous evening, the President said that the special envoy had offered to hold a virtual meeting with permanent representatives to the Rome-based agencies by the end of April. He asked Board members to communicate their interest in participating in such a meeting, following which the presiding officers of the governing bodies of the three Rome-based agencies would respond jointly to the special envoy's offer.
60. The oral update provided by management focused on WFP's engagement in preparations for the summit, which had been delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The planned objectives and outcomes of the summit were to raise awareness of the importance of food systems to sustainable development; unite stakeholders around a common understanding of a food systems framework; promote recognition that the governance of food systems must be inclusive and innovative; motivate and empower stakeholders who supported food system transformation at all levels; and accelerate and enlarge action for the transformation of food systems. Emerging areas for action being discussed included food for all, healthy people, nature-positive agriculture, environment and biodiversity and fair, economically efficient and resilient food systems.
61. The special envoy and the Deputy Secretary-General were establishing multi-stakeholder support structures, including a summit advisory committee to be chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and to include Member State representatives nominated by the five regional group chairs of the United Nations Secretariat in New York; a scientific group, whose chair would work with the Rome-based agencies and the summit secretariat; and a champions group, the composition of which was still being discussed. All relevant United Nations agencies would be engaged in the summit, leveraging existing structures such as the Committee on World Food Security and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. The summit secretariat and the special envoy were based in Nairobi, with satellite offices in New York and at FAO headquarters in Rome.
62. WFP was responsible for administering a trust fund for the summit, which was ready to receive contributions from Member States, United Nations organizations, foundations and private sector entities. WFP was also working with the special envoy on appointing staff and setting up the facilities for the secretariat.
63. Members reiterated their commitment to contributing to the summit. The COVID-19 pandemic was highlighting the relevance of a summit on global food systems by demonstrating the interdependence of countries' health, economic and food systems. Holistic approaches and coordinated action were needed to address the many challenges that the pandemic posed, including increased hunger, poverty and food insecurity.
64. Summit preparations should focus on outcomes, commitments to immediate action and concrete solutions for strengthening local markets and local procurement while ensuring

that countries avoided measures that restricted trade in food by reducing logistics bottlenecks, border tariffs and other obstacles to the movement of food. Innovative approaches involving the private sector and other stakeholders were necessary, and members welcomed the establishment of a scientific group, saying that it should include scientific representatives from all regions. Involvement of the Committee on World Food Security in summit preparations was suggested given its ongoing development of voluntary guidelines on food systems and nutrition. Outcomes from the planned nutrition for growth summit in Tokyo would also be relevant.

65. Members said that they looked forward to an inclusive, transparent and cost-effective preparatory process in which the Rome-based agencies and their members played a significant role, collaborating with the special envoy to define the scope, objectives and outcomes of the summit. In that regard, they encouraged the Deputy Secretary-General and the special envoy to prepare a document outlining timelines, workstreams, dates and venues for the pre-summit and summit, the composition of committees, and other issues related to the summit. They also said that they would appreciate information on the financial resources required and called for care in the use of funds.
66. Management confirmed that the special envoy was taking into account the disruption to food systems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Deputy Secretary-General had selected the chair of the scientific group that would be responsible for the scientific aspects of the summit. WFP's contribution to the scientific group would be led by the WFP Chief Economist. FAO's contribution to the summit would include staff as well as office space in Rome; the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) was providing USD 1.5 million for the trust fund, which included the cost of two staff members seconded to the summit secretariat. IFAD's grant contribution was expected to be approved at its Executive Board session the following week. WFP was providing USD 1.5 million as well as two staff secondments that were being finalized. The Rome-based agencies had been discussing joint fundraising efforts for the summit. The venue and dates of the summit would be announced by the Office of the Secretary-General. The first meeting of the summit advisory committee would be held in May; the deadline for nominating regional representatives for the committee was 24 April.
67. The President said that he would consult his counterparts at FAO and IFAD with a view to drafting a collective response to the special envoy's invitation to convene another informal briefing and would also provide copies of the statements made during the current discussion and those delivered during the session of IFAD's Executive Board the following week. The WFP Board would continue its discussion of the summit through meetings of the Executive Board Bureau.

## Evaluation reports

### **2020/EB.1/5 Summary report on the strategic evaluation of WFP's capacity to respond to emergencies (2011–2018) and management response**

68. The Director of Evaluation presented the summary report on the strategic evaluation of WFP's capacity to respond to emergencies, covering the period 2011–2018. The report examined WFP's capacity to undertake high-quality emergency responses from three perspectives: the enabling environment, the organizational level and the individual level.
69. In its response, management acknowledged the need for optimized resourcing and innovative mechanisms for addressing the increase in emergency responses that the COVID-19 pandemic was likely to cause. That would entail enhanced engagement with all stakeholders, expanded capacity for preparedness and action, new partners and partnership arrangements, and increased investment in human resources.

70. Members commended the Director of Evaluation and her team for the comprehensive evaluation report and the Emergency Operations Division for its achievements. The CSP framework provided the flexibility that WFP needed to respond rapidly to new emergencies. Members urged management to develop an organization-wide emergency response framework with clear, standardized criteria and processes to facilitate the formulation of high-quality CSP revisions. They looked forward to seeing findings from strengthened monitoring of WFP emergency responses reflected in WFP's corporate results framework.
71. Members commended the plans for continuing to increase the participation of partners in the design, implementation, targeting, monitoring and adaptation of emergency responses; WFP's roles in inter-agency collaboration, including in the reform of the United Nations development system; and WFP's commitment to improving work at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Approaches to partnerships should include support for consistent risk management and the development of practical guidance and tools for partners in the field.
72. Noting that three of the recommendations related to human resources, members called for investments in staff capacity, particularly in core areas such as nutrition, cash-based transfers and cross-cutting issues, and said that they looked forward to the development of a duty of care framework for ensuring staff well-being. With regard to the planned update of WFP's protection policy, members recommended that it take into account the needs of persons with disabilities and promote strengthened accountability to affected populations and guidance on good practices and the mainstreaming of protection issues into emergency responses.
73. Members requested additional information on WFP's plans for scaling up successful partnerships and models and for fostering multi-year strategic partnership agreements and "soft earmarking" of contributions at the country and strategic outcome levels; the strategic outcomes to which preparedness activities would be related; and WFP's goals for the "greening" of its activities as part of the Clean Energy Challenge.
74. In view of problems with the internet connection through which the current session was being conducted, management undertook to reply in writing to the questions raised. Updates on WFP's response to the Clean Energy Challenge could be incorporated into the regular updates on implementation of the WFP Environmental Policy and would cover the mainstreaming of environmental issues into CSPs and the management of WFP assets.

**2020/EB.1/6 Summary report on the evaluation of the WFP People Strategy (2014-2017) and management response**

75. The Director of Evaluation presented the summary report on the evaluation of the WFP People Strategy,<sup>1</sup> which concluded that while progress had been made in human resource management at WFP, important elements of the strategy required significant improvement. WFP urgently needed to attract, develop and use the skills of the best possible workforce while giving effect to the United Nations' commitment to human rights, gender equality, diversity and inclusion.
76. Management agreed with the recommendations, confirming WFP's intention to develop a broad policy document setting out its vision for its workforce. Work was already under way to tackle some of the issues. The organization alignment reviews would continue in 2020, as would digitization and automation efforts to improve workforce planning; leadership programmes would be developed and the performance management platform extended to cover the entire workforce; the Human Resources Division had already begun a

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<sup>1</sup> "WFP People Strategy: A People Management Framework for Achieving WFP's Strategic Plan (2014-2017)" (WFP/EB.2/2014/4-B).

review of contract modalities and was working to address the high number of employees recruited on short-term contracts.

77. Board members welcomed the report, strongly endorsing the recommendation that the new policy should focus on the core values shaping workplace culture, particularly to prevent HSHAPD. They called on WFP to develop a diverse and gender-equal workplace through an inclusive human resources policy.
78. Members described the review of short-term contract use as overdue, pointing out the effect that contract modalities had on the retention of valuable staff in strategic positions. They also cited staff wellness as a critical consideration, linked to better performance at the individual and organizational levels.
79. Several members expressed the hope that the bottom-up strategic budgeting exercise would address issues highlighted in the evaluation. Others recommended that WFP conduct a review of performance management mechanisms and the approach to talent building, ensure more equitable access to training and feedback and allocate programme support and administrative resources to human resources to support corporate areas designated as priority in conjunction with the Board.
80. Members said that the policy should reflect the CAP being drawn up by the senior advisor to the Executive Director on workplace culture, in addition to other reports such as the 2018 global staff survey, the external review of workplace culture and relevant internal audits. They added that, along with a theory of change and a fully costed implementation plan, the new policy should describe the ideal balance between supporting career development and attracting new talent.
81. Board members asked to see a timetable for the development of the new policy in June. They requested regular updates on the change management process, including with regard to indicators, milestones and reviews to identify implementation challenges, and encouraged management to share lessons learned with them.
82. One member asked whether WFP had been able to meet its needs in terms of skills and personnel to tackle the current pandemic.
83. The Assistant Executive Director, Resource Management Department, assured the Board that WFP would research best practices within and outside the United Nations system, particularly when examining contract modalities. Although the bottom-up strategic budgeting exercise deadline had been extended to August 2021, WFP would not wait until the new people strategy was in place before taking action, and many human resources initiatives were already under way. He confirmed that the Board would receive a timetable in June and that management would coordinate with the senior advisor as recommended.
84. Regarding the pandemic response, the Director of the Human Resources Division said that WFP did have the necessary skills and could always augment them through the mechanism in place. The main challenge was maintaining the staff capacity needed for the response, particularly in difficult duty stations. WFP had therefore introduced several measures in order to retain its staff capacity while keeping its staff healthy. Those measures included contract extensions for consultants, expanded medical evacuation coverage and increased leave entitlements to allow staff to care for dependants.

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

### **2020/EB.1/7 Summary of the work of the 2019 second regular session of the Executive Board**

85. The President reported that the Rapporteur for the Board's 2019 second regular session had prepared the summary of that session and that a draft of it had been distributed to Board members in early February 2020. The Rapporteur had revised the draft to reflect comments from members.

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

86. 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 the following week.

**Acronyms**

CAP	comprehensive action plan
CSP	country strategic plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HSAPD	harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization