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

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Current and future strategic issues

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

1. Looking back on a very difficult year in which the COVID-19 pandemic had created economic as well as health crises for both developing and developed countries, the Executive Director congratulated world leaders for mitigating the worst effects of the pandemic through relief and stimulus packages, including debt swap arrangements that had enabled developing countries to allocate more resources to their social safety net programmes.
2. With the pandemic exacerbating the already dramatic effects of conflict and climate change, household incomes had dropped, food prices were spiking and the number of people on the brink of starvation had increased from 135 million at the start of 2020 to 270 million, of whom 34 million were dependent on humanitarian assistance for their survival.
3. In 2020 WFP had broken several of its own records by reaching 114 million people and raising revenue of USD 8.9 billion, including USD 292 million from international financial institutions and USD 161 million from the private sector. In 2021, however, many donor countries would find it difficult to increase their contributions to WFP; forecast income was USD 7.8 billion, while needs were expected to double to USD 15 billion. WFP already faced large funding gaps in many of its programmes, including in the conflict-affected Tigray region of Ethiopia, where WFP had negotiated access and was providing logistics and transport support to reach an additional 1 million people, and in Yemen, where the designation – since revoked – of the Houthi forces as a terrorist group in December 2020 had intensified existing supply problems and WFP had been forced to cut rations for the majority of beneficiaries.
4. With regard to oversight issues – a topic of concern for many Board members, who among other things were concerned about the challenges of carrying out audits when pandemic-related travel restrictions made field visits impossible – the Executive Director said that management had completed an internal assurance exercise that covered more than 90 percent of WFP field expenditure in eight core functional areas and had found that WFP was fully compliant with 89 percent of minimum controls. A report on the exercise had been sent to the Audit Committee for review. Where full compliance had not been achieved the risk level had been assessed as moderate or higher in fewer than 3 percent of cases. To strengthen risk management and ensure that risk and control concerns were reported to and addressed by senior management and that decision making processes regarding risk were transparent and robust, the Executive Director had requested the leadership group to report periodically on risks and the protocols, controls and systems used to manage them.
5. Turning to WFP's increasing engagement at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, the Executive Director outlined some of the organization's achievements in building resilience in crisis-prone communities, which had resulted in the rehabilitation of 1.4 million ha of land, the building or improvement of roads and irrigation infrastructure and the planting of 6 billion trees. Cash-based transfers had increased from USD 10 million to USD 2.1 billion in ten years and the value of locally procured food from USD 315 million to USD 950 million in five years.
6. Progress had also been made in the improvement of WFP's workplace culture, with plans to move about 2,400 people from short-term service contracts to fixed-term appointments and an increase in the proportion of women employees to 40 percent. Given the nature of their work and the need for travel in and out of the field, it was essential that WFP personnel be vaccinated against COVID-19, and the Executive Director closed with an appeal for Member States to contribute vaccines for WFP staff from their own supplies.
7. Applauding WFP management and staff for their dedication in serving the world's most vulnerable people in spite of the challenges and risks involved, many Board members reiterated their countries' commitment to maintaining or even increasing their contributions to WFP in 2021, domestic finances permitting. Countries unable to provide financial support

were encouraged to provide in-kind contributions and technical assistance, including through South–South cooperation. Members congratulated the Executive Director on his successful advocacy and fundraising for WFP throughout 2020 and urged the international community to explore the potential for debt swap arrangements and other innovative funding solutions. With the pandemic reversing progress made in the fight against hunger, WFP had to maximize the impact of every dollar by aligning its programmes with local priorities and adapting interventions to changing conditions and the diverse needs of countries. Strong and transparent oversight and accountability mechanisms would help to build trust in WFP and facilitate fundraising. The management assurance exercise mentioned by the Executive Director and the bottom up strategic budgeting exercise would help ensure the efficient and effective use of resources to meet WFP's priorities, and members said they looked forward to reports on their results.

8. Welcoming work on expanding the donor base and exploring innovative financing options such as technical partnerships with international financial institutions and private sector entities, members said that partnerships with local organizations provided cost benefits and access to local knowledge that facilitated local development and resilience building. Flexible multi-year funding was essential to WFP's efforts to enhance preparedness and respond rapidly to crises, and there were calls for government and private sector donors to reduce the earmarking of their contributions. All new sources of funding and partnerships should be aligned with WFP's objectives, should be carefully tracked and coordinated and should generate real benefits.
9. The COVID-19 pandemic had revealed the need to continue to strengthen risk assessment and preparedness for crises. Members encouraged management to continue to enhance WFP's engagement in resilience building and work at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and one member suggested that WFP management and Board members hold a brainstorming session on national-level actions at the nexus. With challenges growing, the pandemic had made strategic planning more important than ever, and members said that they looked forward to discussing the WFP strategic plan for 2022–2026 and exploring how WFP could use its experience in joint efforts to “build back better” after the COVID-19 pandemic, adapt to accelerated climate change and enhance coordination among humanitarian, development and peace actors.
10. Members said that work at the nexus implied increased engagement in peacebuilding, protection and security issues, and they applauded WFP's enhanced capacity and efforts in those areas, emphasizing the need to ensure that interventions in fragile, conflict-affected settings were conflict-sensitive, built trust and contributed to peace. Members welcomed the protection and accountability policy approved at the Board's second regular session in 2020 and encouraged management to continue to mainstream the consideration of protection issues in all WFP operations and actions. They emphasized the importance of negotiating and maintaining unimpeded humanitarian access to communities affected by conflict and other crises and they condemned attacks against humanitarian workers, urging management to continue to advocate adherence to humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.
11. Many members reiterated their satisfaction with ongoing initiatives to improve workplace culture, address discrimination, racism, harassment and fraud and promote gender equality and disability inclusion in the staffing of WFP. Expressing disappointment that the development of a new people policy had been delayed, Board members encouraged management to prioritize completion of the policy while continuing to pursue improvements in human resource management and workforce planning, including through implementation of recommendations included in the comprehensive action plan on addressing harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of power and discrimination. The budgetary impact of the policies and strategies adopted should be quantified and communicated to the Board.

12. Members said that they looked forward to participating in the preparations for the United Nations food systems summit to be held later in 2021 and welcomed the decision to hold a pre-summit meeting in Rome. The summit would provide an excellent opportunity to identify actions for transforming food systems in ways that fostered global peace, prosperity and health.
13. Referring to the disparities between developed and developing countries in their access to COVID-19 vaccines, members called for global solidarity to ensure more equitable distribution through donations of vaccines between countries and advocacy in forums such as the United Nations Security Council.
14. During the discussion under this agenda item the Executive Director received news of the ambush and killing of the Italian Ambassador, his bodyguard and a WFP driver in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On behalf of WFP staff and Member States, the Executive Director and the President and members of the Board offered condolences to the families of the victims and observed a minute's silence.

Special guest: Mr Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross

15. The current session included remarks by a special guest, Mr Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Mr Maurer outlined the global situation from the viewpoint of the ICRC, focusing on the main causes of recent dramatic increases in humanitarian needs. He expressed appreciation for WFP's cooperation with the ICRC in recent years and thanked the Executive Director and the Board for their support and leadership.
16. Humanitarian response in conflict settings was the core of the ICRC's mandate, and armed violence was increasing in complexity and duration worldwide, with new impacts of conflict merging with existing ones. Changing dynamics included the urbanization of conflict, leading to broader systemic impacts on education, social, food, water and sanitation systems; and the imperative to address complex humanitarian needs, such as those arising from sexual and gender-based violence and the traumatization of children, which required mental health and psychosocial support. Another factor complicating humanitarian work was the increasing number of actors involved in conflict, with more non-state armed groups emerging in the previous seven years than in the previous seven decades; the ICRC had identified 615 armed groups of relevance to its operations around the world and was currently in contact with more than 460.
17. In conflict settings access to people in need was crucial, particularly in the case of the estimated 60–80 million people worldwide who lived beyond the reach of state services. Humanitarian actors often needed to engage with armed groups when negotiating access so that they could deliver services. The ability to carry out such negotiations, however, was frequently hampered by factors including counterterrorism legislation, the imposition of international sanctions and the risk avoidance practices of donors.
18. The convergence of conflict with climate change had particularly grave humanitarian consequences, and 12 of the 20 countries considered most vulnerable to climate change were also affected by conflict. Worldwide, communities were increasingly citing climate shock as a key issue of concern.
19. The COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated existing problems in conflict zones. Basic mitigation practices such as hand washing and maintaining social distance were difficult for people living in cramped accommodations with limited hygiene facilities, and school closures, travel restrictions and other measures were causing protection issues such as a surge in sexual and gender-based violence, the stranding of migrants and displaced people and an increase in illegal trafficking of people, weapons and drugs as a way for armed groups to generate income. Inequitable distribution of vaccines and treatment and testing materials

- was another concern, making multisector cooperation, such as the COVAX international COVID-19 vaccine initiative, essential.
20. Mr Maurer called on countries and humanitarian agencies to work together in new ways to facilitate effective and efficient responses to the world's increasingly complex challenges that also addressed root causes, thereby providing vulnerable people with a pathway out of dependence on humanitarian assistance.
 21. Welcoming the collaboration between WFP and the ICRC, Board members asked Mr Maurer to elaborate on the opportunities for strengthening the two organizations' joint response to acute emergencies and protracted crises, including through the engagement of political leaders, development actors and international financial institutions.
 22. Turning to issues related to protection and humanitarian space, Board members observed that Member States had a key role in ensuring humanitarian access and upholding humanitarian principles, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. They asked Mr Maurer for his views on how the international community could ensure the protection of humanitarian workers and their freedom of action and reinforce adherence to international humanitarian law, including through systematic, independent and impartial investigation of alleged violations.
 23. Members said that there was a need for a coordinated global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in ensuring equitable access to vaccines, including for development workers. Consensus among United Nations agencies and Member States was essential, and Board members suggested that the United Nations lead efforts to engage Member States in planning, in the production of vaccines for worldwide distribution and in the mobilization of resources.
 24. In response to points raised, Mr Maurer said that as part of the COVID-19 response the ICRC and the United Nations system were identifying priority areas and helping to channel vaccines, treatment and tests to those areas. The ICRC also aimed to work with Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers on vaccine delivery and to strengthen health services in conflict areas.
 25. Ways of improving humanitarian response included the adoption of more systematic approaches to the design of programmes, new financial instruments and innovative tools for assessment and the delivery of assistance. For development work, cooperation agreements such as with the World Bank enabled the ICRC to engage in the building of sustainable food, health and other essential services in fragile settings where it was often difficult to raise funding from traditional donors.
 26. The ICRC's efforts to ensure access to people affected by conflict included working with WFP and other partners on the development of training materials and the establishment of the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation in Geneva, which served as a platform for the exchange of lessons learned and experiences among frontline humanitarian negotiators. The negotiation of access with non-state armed groups required that humanitarians have the space to gain the trust of belligerents. Accountability for violations of international law and conventions remained with states rather than humanitarian organizations, whose role was to assist states with compliance and implementation.

Other business

Oral global overview on humanitarian needs and operational concerns and priorities

27. The Senior Director of Operations reported that food security and nutrition were continuing to deteriorate around the world; in countries with WFP presence, 270 million people were estimated to be acutely food insecure or at risk and over 34 million were in Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) phase 4 or 5. Funding of USD 5 billion was urgently required to prevent famine, which was already taking hold in pockets of Yemen and South Sudan. An additional

- 6.7 million children were expected to suffer acute malnutrition as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
28. Global food insecurity was expected to worsen throughout 2021, driven by conflict, civil unrest, political volatility and deteriorating humanitarian access. For many populations access to food was hampered by income losses, currency depreciation, rising prices and growing public debt. La Niña weather patterns in the first half of the year were expected to reduce food production and trigger displacement.
 29. WFP had identified 26 operations in most urgent need of attention due to the severity and scale of food insecurity, the scale of WFP operations and the size of funding gaps. They included those in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, Yemen and Zimbabwe.
 30. WFP planned to assist 109 million people in 2021, although updated plans indicated that the 2021 caseload was likely to surpass 120 million. WFP would be scaling up food and nutrition assistance, reinforcing community-based resilience and investing in long-term systems recovery while maintaining its focus on cash-based transfers, urban assistance, support for government social protection systems and service provision.
 31. The funding requirements for WFP's global 2021 needs-based plan stood at USD 13.5 billion; USD 4.2 billion was urgently needed to close the funding gap for the next six months. Despite generous contributions, the global funding forecast was USD 7.8 billion, just under 50 percent of the amount needed. Flexible, unearmarked and frontloaded funding was needed to facilitate rapid response and avert catastrophes through the pre-positioning of stocks, preparedness actions, real-time monitoring and early warning mechanisms.
 32. Board members expressed grave concern over the risk of famine in a number of countries. Several commended WFP for continuing to deliver assistance in extremely challenging conditions exacerbated by COVID-19. One Board member said that innovation and flexibility were needed to overcome funding, targeting and access challenges.
 33. One Board member asked how WFP planned to address the funding gap for the next six months. Another called for an increase in flexible funding that would facilitate urgent assistance to the 30 million people already in dire food insecurity. He asked that the Board be kept informed of developments in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, welcoming improvements in access achieved there during the recent visit of the Executive Director. He also urged WFP to invest in early warning, early action and anticipatory financing.
 34. Several members encouraged WFP to look to non-traditional donors to expand its funding base.
 35. Management reported that the funding gap up to 1 July 2021 was USD 308 million, almost 48 percent of requirements. WFP continued to seek additional resources by highlighting areas of concern and through its global operational plan. The figures presented were dynamic as needs-based plans continued to be adjusted, with consequent revisions of operational requirements, which would be discussed under agenda item 5 b).
 36. The Deputy Executive Director highlighted the Immediate Response Account as a means of making funding available for the most urgent emergency needs. WFP was studying ways of encouraging more contributions to the account and increasing its efficiency.

Policy issues

2021/EB.1/2 Update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system)

37. Reporting on WFP's implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 with regard to United Nations development system reform, the Deputy Executive Director said that WFP welcomed the new United Nations quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) resolution, which encompassed key themes for WFP such as social protection, quality education, gender, climate change, digital cooperation and innovation. The organization was assessing how best to integrate QCPR guidance into the new strategic plan.
38. Reform-related work continued apace: globally 43 common country analyses (CCAs) had been completed and 34 United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks (UNSDCFs) had been signed, and WFP country strategic plans (CSPs) were aligned with them. WFP was supporting the CCAs by contributing with its analytical tools and was often leading or co-leading food security and nutrition results groups under the United Nations country teams. Seven WFP staff had been seconded to resident coordinator positions, the third highest number among United Nations entities.
39. An internal coordination mechanism for second-generation CSPs had been set up, with a workstream on WFP's engagement in CCA and UNSDCF processes. Seven country offices were developing their next CSPs, which would be submitted to the Board in November.
40. One member, speaking on behalf of her list and two other Member States, presented a summary of a joint statement made during a session of the United Nations Development Programme Executive Board in early February 2021. The group hailed the QCPR as a landmark achievement that for the first time set out a strategic direction related to issues such as climate, digital technologies, inclusion and gender-based violence, paving the way for greener and more inclusive development in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
41. The group encouraged all entities to fully support the resident coordinator system and expected agencies to play their parts in consolidating the reforms, including by working to ensure full implementation of the management and accountability framework, harmonized business operations and the alignment of agency country documents (CSPs in WFP's case) with UNSDCFs.
42. It highlighted the call for progress on the interlinked agendas of climate and biodiversity, including through the mainstreaming of climate and environment-responsive approaches, support for countries in meeting Paris Agreement commitments and a reduction in the environmental footprint of the entire United Nations development system.
43. Calling for the acceleration of gender mainstreaming, the group said that gender equality was a prerequisite to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that evidence-based policies, disaggregated data, early joint risk-informed analysis and planning and conflict-sensitive approaches would be vital to fostering inclusion and preventing conflict. It welcomed the opportunity to engage in an open and continued dialogue on the new WFP strategic plan and the implications of the QCPR.
44. Other Board members praised WFP for progress made in implementing reforms. They asked for updates on the move to common premises; WFP engagement in the multi-country office review; the cost-sharing formula for funding the resident coordinator system; and the joint Rome-based agency assessment of the feasibility of merging certain administrative and oversight functions.
45. Some Board members sought an explanation of the collaboration model underpinning the online platform for common services; one member urged WFP to ensure that all digitalization was accompanied by due diligence and risk mitigation measures to prevent

- security issues. Others voiced support for WFP's continued engagement in preparations for the United Nations food systems summit and in the management and accountability framework review.
46. Several Board members asked how WFP could increase its representation among the resident coordinators; one called for increased resources for the resident coordinators for programme implementation. Others highlighted the value of South-South and triangular cooperation, increased Rome-based agency collaboration and the joint programming opportunities presented by the CCAs, CSPs and UNSDCFs.
 47. One Board member encouraged WFP to explore non-traditional donors as a funding source for the resident coordinator system, saying that the role of resident coordinator required independence and technical skills to achieve coherence and collaboration within the United Nations country teams. She also voiced support for the full exclusion of humanitarian programmes from the agency cost-sharing formula for the resident coordinator system.
 48. Management assured the Board that it had been closely following the joint statement delivered at the United Nations Development Programme Executive Board session. It also clarified that the services offered through the digital platform were common services that had been ramped up in response to COVID-19, explaining that they did not interfere with the individual mandates of United Nations agencies but rather offered efficiency gains through shared logistics support. The resident coordinator pool included 21 WFP candidates; work to increase the number of WFP staff serving as resident coordinators was ongoing. While progress had been made in setting up common premises, 12 new offices would need to be converted if WFP was to reach the ambitious target of 50 percent by the end of 2021.
 49. Management observed that the QCPR was ambitious and included many programme themes, and management would need to determine with the Board how far to pursue those themes through the new strategic plan. Joint programming was a priority in United Nations agency discussions; the other Rome-based agencies and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were very important partners for WFP in that regard.
 50. Two multi-country CSPs, embodying WFP's innovative regional approaches in the Caribbean and Pacific regions, would be presented to the Board over the next 18 months. South-South cooperation and country capacity strengthening also continued to be priorities for the organization.

Resource, financial and budgetary matters

2021/EB.1/3 Update on the bottom up strategic budgeting exercise

51. The President recalled that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Finance Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations had heard updates on the WFP bottom up strategic budgeting exercise initiated by the Executive Director in 2020 (BUSBE) at their most recent meetings, the reports of which were available on the webpage for the current Board session.
52. The Director of the BUSBE project then provided an update for the Board, reporting that phase I of the exercise had been largely completed and phase II was beginning. BUSBE was not a cost-cutting exercise and would have no impact on the 2021 budget or management plan; it would, however, result in greater consistency and transparency and more optimal use of resources starting with the management plan for 2022-2024.
53. Phase I had revealed that USD 530 million was required for WFP to address baseline needs, whereas only USD 340 million had been made available to cover those needs from the programme support and administrative (PSA) budget for 2021. WFP would need to address

- that funding gap and could decide to fund baseline activities from sources outside the PSA budget.
54. The successful implementation of BUSBE depended on critical input from management. In that connection, the continuation of the indirect support cost rate for 2022 at 6.5 percent had facilitated budgetary forecasts. Although the total PSA budget would not change in the light of BUSBE, allocations under the PSA budget might be revised. It was envisaged that BUSBE would ensure consistent and predictable funding for baseline activities and help prevent the duplication of activities by headquarters and the regional bureaux.
 55. Board members welcomed the update. One member, while welcoming senior leadership's participation in various forums and greater input from country offices and regional bureaux, emphasized the need for all participating stakeholders to ensure that they respected their mandates, as set forth in the matrix recently developed by the BUSBE team. That matrix should, moreover, be updated in the light of stakeholder feedback. The allocation of equitable and stable PSA budgetary resources to country offices was essential. It was crucial, however, to assess, on an annual basis, the PSA resources allocated to country offices to ensure that they reflected changing needs. The proposed review committee should focus on cross-functional activities and address fragmented budget requests and objections when business deliverables were vague. Several members expressed concern that only limited information on the BUSBE findings had been made available and called for members to be involved in the dialogue on the relationship between BUSBE and the strategic plan for 2022-2026. Members asked how a lower or higher indirect support cost rate would influence the scope and delivery of organization-wide services provided through PSA-funded offices and posts. They also sought further information on how BUSBE would help ensure that WFP upheld key priorities, including gender equality and equity and environmental protection, on the role of extrabudgetary funding in WFP's operational and administrative activities, and on the work and progress of the working group on cost recovery. In addition there was a need for a clear plan of action or at least options for enhancing employment arrangements for consultants on short-term contracts; staff performing core functions should not be employed on such contracts. One member expressed concern at what they described as a lack of clarity regarding how BUSBE would affect the strategic budgeting process. Another member asked how the PSA budget would be affected if there was an increase or decrease in contributions to WFP and how the equalization account could mitigate budgetary uncertainty. One member called on management to report regularly to members on progress made in the implementation of BUSBE and on the use of extrabudgetary resources in the field and cautioned that the wider involvement of country offices in the preparation of budgets could increase competition for funding.
 56. Responding to Board members' questions, the BUSBE project Director said that BUSBE had been launched precisely in order to provide members with clarity on many of the issues raised. For example, it was helping WFP understand how many consultants had been hired for baseline activities and would facilitate efforts to uphold key priorities; ongoing information gaps, however, were impeding the formulation of solutions to some identified challenges. Mechanisms had been devised to address an increase or decrease in available resources, and the resources from the PSA equalization account were available to mitigate the repercussions of a sudden decrease in available funding. By strengthening transparency, BUSBE would help WFP enhance funding alignment.
 57. The Chief of Staff and Director of the Office of the Executive Director emphasized that, while not a panacea, BUSBE would allow WFP to gather certain data that it had been trying to collect for a long time and would bring clarity about its future direction. Management would hold regular consultations with the Board as the process moved forward.
 58. The Assistant Executive Director, Resource Management Department, and Chief Financial Officer said that it was important to understand where WFP could achieve PSA savings before recommending any changes in the indirect support cost rate. Previous management

plans and PSA proposals had provided for programme and operational support activities to be funded using extrabudgetary resources. Under BUSBE a single consolidated template was being used to analyse all such activities with a view to prioritizing needs and providing appropriate financial support in the context of the management plan for 2022–2024. A 0.5 percent change in the indirect support cost rate would result in a USD 35 million change in indirect support cost income. In the management plan for 2020–2022 indirect support cost income had been USD 79 million higher than the approved PSA budget.

59. Management took note of the concerns regarding potential increased competition for resources among country offices and would provide further information on the activities of the working group on cost recovery at the earliest opportunity.

2021/EB.1/4 Update on operational requirements and funding forecast for 2021

60. The Director, Corporate Planning and Performance Division, reported that by mid-January 2021 operational funding requirements for the year had already risen 9 percent from the figures in the published management plan, reaching USD 13.5 billion for an estimated global caseload of 109 million beneficiaries. The amount continued to rise as needs-based plans were updated, and with global funding forecast at USD 7.8 billion the outlook was deeply concerning.
61. The greatest increase in operational requirements was reported by the Regional Bureau for the Middle East and Northern Africa, including an additional USD 88 million required for operations in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Regional Bureau for Western Africa had seen the biggest increase in the number of people requiring assistance, a reflection of numerous humanitarian crises and growing insecurity.
62. The PSA equalization account balance reported in the 2021 management plan remained unchanged. Due to the higher funding forecast, however, the projected balance for 31 December 2021 was expected to be USD 243 million, well above the target of five months' PSA expenditure.
63. Board members expressed concern about the funding gap and asked how management planned to address it, suggesting that management should work to broaden WFP's funding base, enhance efficiency and work to increase flexible multi-year funding and innovative funding mechanisms such as debt swaps and co-financing. Another asked how WFP was estimating 2021 funding from non-traditional sources in the light of the widespread economic damage caused by COVID-19.
64. One member asked WFP to outline its plans to develop and implement in conjunction with FAO and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs an extraordinary resource mobilization strategy for famine prevention including USD 5 billion in emergency food assistance, as requested by the Secretary-General, seeking to understand how priority areas of need would be identified and whether WFP had any major concerns related to the initiative.
65. Another member sought to understand the timing of and reasons for WFP's decision to move several country offices to different regional bureaux. She also requested details of how management planned to use the PSA equalization account and confirmation that the Board would be notified before any drawdown from the account.
66. One member asked why WFP expenditure had spiked in December 2020, noting that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations report had recommended that WFP explain this anomaly.
67. Management explained that the USD 5 billion appeal for emergency food assistance would be used to provide one meal a day for one year for about 30 million people estimated to be in IPC phase 4 or worse around the world. Having flexible and unearmarked contributions would ensure a quick and cost-efficient response. WFP had decided to use the Immediate Response Account to mobilize these resources rather than create a separate funding

mechanism, lest the latter approach encourage the earmarking of contributions. WFP was working with FAO and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on a United Nations-wide funding strategy for famine prevention because the USD 5 billion covered planned WFP operations only.

68. Management warned that at least seven donors could be reducing their contributions in 2021, which would add to the considerable funding challenges. Around USD 500 million was expected to be raised through international financial institutions, although that estimate could be conservative. Results achieved by the private sector fundraising team were promising; the day before the session an anonymous donor had made a USD 5 million contribution through WFP USA, an unprecedented amount for an individual donation.
69. The changes in regional bureau responsibilities for country offices had been made following a recommendation by the External Auditor in 2019. The new structure was a better reflection of the geographic location of country offices and the regional bureaux.
70. Management also confirmed that WFP would consult the Board before drawing down the PSA equalization account. The increased expenditure in December 2020 could reflect delays in spending, which usually peaked in November due to end-of-year financial closure and management assurance processes, attributable to COVID-19.

Administrative and managerial matters

2021/EB.1/5 Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit relevant to the work of WFP

71. The Chief Risk Officer and Director, Enterprise Risk Management Division, presented WFP's responses to seven new Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) reports issued in 2020 and an update on the implementation of 54 recommendations from earlier reports. Management had implemented 46 of the latter (85 percent) and 40 of the 42 new JIU recommendations (95 percent) issued in 2020 – the highest percentages achieved since 2013. One key recommendation issued in 2018 had been closed when standard operating procedures for addressing retaliation against whistleblowers had been issued in an Executive Director circular of December 2020.
72. Board members applauded WFP's firm commitment to ensuring a coherent and efficient United Nations system, which was reflected in the high number of JIU recommendations accepted and fully implemented by management despite the challenges faced in 2020. In respect of recommendations regarding training, members welcomed the development of a joint training approach among United Nations agencies and looked forward to reviewing a common framework for training. Underscoring the importance of providing training materials and activities in all the languages relevant to potential trainees, they encouraged management to implement the JIU recommendations on multilingualism and requested an update on progress at the Board's 2021 annual session.
73. Members said that implementation of the recommendations on oversight was particularly important and that the reputational risk to WFP posed by fraud or corruption on the part of cooperating partners meant that all allegations of such misconduct should be investigated by the Office of the Inspector General. They inquired as to the delay behind the exercise to map the occurrence and registration of risks related to organizational conflicts of interest, originally scheduled to be completed by December 2019 but postponed to July 2021, and urged management to complete pending oversight-related tasks by year end. Due to the additional assurance it would provide to the Board, members looked forward to seeing the evaluation function included in the revised terms of reference of the Audit Committee, to be presented at the Board's 2021 second regular session.
74. Members also encouraged management to strengthen WFP's online booking platform for air travel and to maintain momentum in the implementation of JIU recommendations related to the reform of the United Nations development system, including those regarding

shared premises. One member asked whether WFP management would contribute to the JIU's planned review of FAO's management and administration in 2021.

75. Management, the Inspector General and the Chief Ethics Officer responded to the points raised. The formulation of management's response to the JIU's recommendations regarding multilingualism was in process, with five of the six recommendations directed to the agencies having been fully accepted to date; they would be shared with the Board and could be presented at its annual session if sufficient time was available. Updated terms of reference of the Audit Committee would cover oversight of the evaluation function, self-assessment of the committee's effectiveness and review of the investigation function.
76. All allegations of fraud or corruption involving the staff of WFP or a cooperating partner had to be reported to the Office of Inspections and Investigations (OIGI). When a cooperating partner was involved, OIGI referred the allegations to the partner's independent investigation office if it was deemed sufficiently qualified based on due diligence checks. OIGI then reviewed the partner's investigation report. If a partner lacked an adequate investigation office, OIGI carried out the investigation itself. The Office of the Inspector General's review of whistleblower reporting requirements would be presented at the Board's annual session. A consultant had recently been appointed to map WFP's organizational conflicts of interest, and materials that facilitated implementation of the disclosure policy were being reviewed by management.
77. WFP aimed to integrate the United Nations online booking system for air travel into its own WeTravel platform by the end of 2021. During the COVID-19 pandemic WFP had worked with its global travel agent to find the most reliable travel options for staff and to recover funds potentially lost as a result of cancelled travel plans. More than 46 percent of WFP's premises were shared with other United Nations agencies, close to the Secretary-General's goal of 50 percent by the end of 2021.
78. The Chief Risk Officer thanked Board members for their support, noting that implementation of some JIU recommendations required additional expenditure for which funding was needed.

Western Africa portfolio

79. The Regional Director for Western Africa reported that the region was set to face unprecedented challenges in 2021, with growing insurgency and violence, a deteriorating macroeconomic situation, soaring food prices and persistently high rates of malnutrition exacerbated by climate shocks and COVID-19. He also highlighted the recent Ebola outbreak in Guinea. Food insecurity was expected to increase by nearly 20 percent from 2020, as projected by the November 2020 cadre harmonisé, leaving 28.9 million people in IPC phase 3 and above.
80. The Sahel continued to be beset by insecurity, particularly in the border areas of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. The United Nations report "Sahel 2043: A prospective analysis" identified actions that would foster resilience at the community and systems levels and prosperity in the region; WFP had a role to play in supporting government efforts to strengthen national systems and capacities, building community resilience and developing human capital. Meanwhile, the WFP Integrated Resilience Scale-up in the Sahel initiative was starting to demonstrate positive effects on food consumption and households' ability to meet non-food-related needs; beneficiaries also reported improvements in access to markets and essential services and preservation of the natural environment.

81. In 2021, WFP would focus on promoting integration and innovation, strengthening national social protection and food systems, deepening collaboration with partners through joint efforts and increased convergence of interventions and supporting national and regional agendas. Collaboration with partners such as UNICEF, the Rome-based agencies, GIZ,¹ national institutions and international financial institutions would also be continued and strengthened.
82. Board members expressed concern over growing food insecurity, particularly in the Sahel. They commended WFP for its life-saving work and paid tribute to staff working under very challenging circumstances. Several Board members said that there was a need for more abundant and flexible funding for operations in the Sahel. One member urged donors to act on pledges made during the Sahel pledging conference in September 2020; others asked how WFP would seek to increase funding and adapt its operations if funding gaps were to persist.
83. Several Board members called for strict adherence to humanitarian law and unfettered humanitarian access; one asked how donors could support humanitarian civil and military coordination mechanisms to ensure safe and unhindered access to populations in need.
84. Board members praised WFP's partnerships with other United Nations agencies, international financial institutions and academia, particularly in relation to resilience building, social protection and social cohesion. They also expressed support for work across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus through emergency operations designed to reduce future needs and called on WFP to expand multi-year resilience programming in the Sahel, prioritize evidence generation and employ conflict-sensitive approaches based on joint risk and vulnerability analysis.
85. One member welcomed the signing of financing agreements related to the Rome-based agencies' Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change (SD3C) at a recent summit in N'Djamena, Chad. She invited WFP to provide details on its contribution to the SD3C joint action plan, as had been requested by several lists during the Board's 2020 second regular session. She also asked the Regional Director to share his analysis of the main access problems faced in the region and details of efforts to ensure humanitarian access and staff safety. She welcomed WFP's intention to strengthen resilience building work, particularly in support of national social protection systems, and asked what difficulties were envisaged in that regard.
86. The Regional Director echoed the call for donors to act on their pledges for the Sahel. He confirmed that WFP would continue to advocate increased funding for the region and to expand its donor base through increased collaboration with governments, regional bodies and international financial institutions. He also hoped that the Group of Seven would address issues related to the Sahel at its forthcoming session in Italy and thus spark increased international attention and engagement.
87. He said that access was an issue of serious concern, and he encouraged donor countries to examine whether their own anti-terrorism laws might constrain innovative ways of engaging with groups in some of the conflict areas. He added that in some instances host governments' low risk tolerance hindered access, for example when military escorts were made mandatory as a condition for humanitarian workers to operate in certain locations.
88. Although the WFP–World Bank impact evaluation of WFP's resilience work had been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, progress was being made and concept notes were close to finalization for Mali and the Niger for the joint impact evaluation for WFP resilience programming in the Sahel.

¹ *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH* (German Corporation for International Cooperation).

89. The Deputy Executive Director added that an update on the SD3C would be provided following a meeting of the Senior Consultative Group of the three Rome-based agencies in March 2021.

Southern Africa portfolio

90. Providing an overview of the situation in Southern Africa, the Regional Director began by offering the condolences of her team to the families of the WFP colleague and members of the Italian mission who had lost their lives in the ambush in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as to the families of the three WFP colleagues who had lost their lives to COVID-19 since January.
91. In the Southern Africa region the COVID-19 pandemic was compounding the effects of climate change, flood and drought, growing social and political instability and large-scale population displacement. Of the 50 million food-insecure people in the region, WFP had reached 20.6 million, with 460,000 mt of food and USD 162 million in cash-based transfers. An investment of USD 99 million in advance procurement had reduced the time between food procurement and distribution by an average of 83 days.
92. In response to the pandemic, WFP had scaled up its support for government nutrition and national social protection systems, including by assisting an additional 1.4 million people in urban areas. WFP had made great progress in placing anticipatory action at the centre of its assistance model. Technology was used to forecast needs and data collection facilitated real-time analysis of hard-to-reach communities, and WFP was working with the Southern African Development Community, governments and national disaster management agencies to strengthen national capacity for emergency preparedness and response.
93. In collaboration with governments, the other Rome-based agencies and NGOs, WFP was supporting national dialogues in preparation for the United Nations food systems summit to take place in September 2021; WFP was applying a food systems approach to its own work on strengthening linkages between smallholder farmers and local and regional markets, developing efficient transport networks and transferring knowledge and skills in food fortification and quality assurance to private sector partners.
94. In countries across the region, WFP was providing technical assistance in school feeding and nutrition interventions, assisting displaced people and focusing on building resilience with regard to climate-related and other crises. It urgently required USD 571 million to cover operations in 12 Southern African countries over the following six months; total needs were USD 885 million. The Regional Director thanked Board members for their support in the region.
95. Board members welcomed WFP's work at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, its focus on building resilience, developing the capacity of regional organizations and national disaster management organizations and the anticipatory actions that it took to save lives and increase cost-effectiveness. Observing that resilience building required long-term commitments of time and funding, they said there was a need to engage the private sector as well as national governments and the other Rome-based agencies in such efforts. Cooperation with United Nations and other partners was also essential to WFP's programmes for displaced people, its work on adaptation to climate change and its engagement at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
96. Referring to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to humanitarian assistance in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, one member urged management to continue its investigations and enhance its systems and procedures for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.
97. Responding to questions raised, the Regional Director said that WFP was using green climate change and adaptation funds in its programmes in eight Southern African countries. Private

sector entities with which WFP engaged in its resilience building activities included smallholder farmers, local breweries, flour fortification and food processing companies and companies involved in transport, water and other elements of value and supply chains.

98. In response to the allegations of exploitation and abuse in Cabo Delgado, WFP had scaled up its interventions for the protection of affected populations, including its hotline for the reporting of all such issues; was working with the International Organization for Migration and the government on improving beneficiary registration; and had increased its capacity building activities in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse for government, local authorities, NGOs and social partners and WFP staff. All allegations were fully investigated, with follow-up from United Nations agencies in the protection cluster.

Eastern Africa portfolio

99. The Regional Director for Eastern Africa said that the region accounted for 4 percent of the global population but 20 percent of people categorized as food-insecure. Conflict, insecurity and climate-induced shocks were the primary drivers of food insecurity in East Africa. Drier than average conditions at the start of the growing season and plagues of locusts, particularly in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, were also exacerbating food insecurity across the region.
100. WFP had provided food assistance to some 26 million people in 2020, including 13 million who had received in-kind food assistance, 5.3 million who had received cash-based transfers and 4.4 million children and women who had received specialized nutritious food. Some 2.6 million children had received school meals and take-home rations.
101. WFP operations had been very negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including a disproportionate impact on urban dwellers, who had experienced a sharp increase in unemployment and some 14 million of whom were food-insecure. WFP was working with a number of East African governments and international financial institutions to rollout social protection programmes to address the needs of the urban poor and was strengthening its capacity to deliver assistance to urban populations. WFP was also working with the University of Wolverhampton in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to develop a social protection learning facility to promote the sharing of best practices.
102. Remittances to the region from nationals residing abroad had fallen sharply in 2020, undermining poverty reduction efforts. In addition COVID-19 had negatively affected the provision of health care, and many countries had closed schools for extended periods. In Kenya, for example, schools had been closed for almost ten months, and many children who relied on school feeding programmes had been forced to have take-home rations or go without.
103. Since March 2020 some 280 WFP staff members had contracted COVID-19, and one had died. Board members were urged to provide additional support to WFP, including possible access to vaccines, so that its staff members could continue to carry out their duties safely.
104. WFP believed that food assistance could promote peace and stability and was conducting a number of studies, including with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, to enhance its operations and the guidance it provided to its country offices. A conflict advisor had recently been appointed to the Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa to provide further guidance regarding how WFP could support governments and other stakeholders in fostering peace and enhancing food security across the region.
105. Due to funding shortfalls WFP was being forced to reduce the rations it provided to refugees and internally displaced persons in East Africa. Rations would be reduced by 40 percent in Uganda and Kenya and by 60 percent in Rwanda. The Regional Director appealed to Board members to provide additional support so that WFP could continue to provide adequate assistance to the extremely vulnerable populations in those countries.

106. To ensure that its programmes were adequately funded WFP was working closely with its partners, including the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
107. In Ethiopia the Government had asked WFP to scale up its food distribution and supplementary feeding programmes in the Tigray area, where 2.98 million people were in immediate need of food relief; to provide logistical support to governmental and civil society actors; and to underwrite response plans. WFP would require a further USD 107 million in funding to address food-related needs in Tigray for the next six months, but less than 20 percent of that amount had been received. The Regional Director appealed to Board members to address that funding gap.
108. WFP had recently established an innovation hub to identify local solutions to food-related challenges. It was also working with universities, the Hult Prize Foundation and the Danish Government to promote the empowerment of young people and to identify innovative solutions to hunger and food security issues. It was also establishing partnerships with a range of international stakeholders, including the African Development Bank, the East African Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations Environment Programme.
109. A total of USD 2.1 billion in contributions had been received in 2020. With the Government of the United States of America providing 63 percent of all funding for the region, more needed to be done to expand the donor base, particularly as USD 3.7 billion would be required in 2021. This was particularly important because multi-year funding had decreased in recent years and 81 percent of funds received were earmarked for specific activities.
110. Board members thanked the Regional Director for the update and commended WFP's approach to addressing food system challenges in the region. One member asked how WFP was enhancing collaboration among WFP country offices to address cross-cutting issues such as the Tigray conflict, desert locusts and refugees at the regional level; how it planned to expand and diversify its donor base and help populations end their reliance on humanitarian assistance; how it was seeking to address acute food insecurity among urban populations; how it sought to overcome bureaucratic impediments to humanitarian access imposed by host governments; and how it might prevent the diversion and theft of emergency supplies by armed actors operating in the region. Another member asked whether donors were likely to provide additional funds to cover food-related needs in Tigray if WFP could successfully overcome the bureaucratic impediments currently preventing humanitarian access there.
111. Responding to Board members' questions the Regional Director said that the recent incorporation of the Sudan country office into the Regional Bureau for Eastern Africa would enhance cross-border initiatives conducted by WFP in Ethiopia, South Sudan and the Sudan and help WFP address the needs of affected populations in those countries. WFP was constantly striving to build strong partnerships, including with multilateral organizations, and to mobilize additional funds with a view to moving beyond emergency humanitarian responses and building resilience among populations. In that connection, the World Bank and the Government of Somalia were providing critical support for many WFP initiatives in that country. WFP was also working closely with several governments to provide support for those living in urban areas; COVID-19 had accelerated the provision of that support, and WFP would endeavour to build on the experience it was gaining in that regard. While WFP aspired to uphold humanitarian principles, it was important to be realistic regarding humanitarian access. WFP always needed to coordinate its activities with host governments, and it had established good working relations with all countries in East Africa. The security situation in several countries continued to impede WFP activities on a daily basis, but WFP would continue to work with host governments to ensure the security and safety of humanitarian actors. A secure environment allowed WFP staff to operate safely and to reach the people it endeavoured to serve. Only limited resources had been provided for

humanitarian relief in Tigray. Donors were monitoring the situation there closely, and further assistance could be forthcoming if WFP expanded its operations; paradoxically, WFP would be unable to expand its operations significantly until additional resources were made available.

Middle East and Northern Africa portfolio

112. The Regional Director for the Middle East and Northern Africa outlined WFP's engagement in the region, where the COVID-19 pandemic had compounded the effects of conflict and economic fragility, resulting in GDP reductions of an average 10 percent and food price increases of up to threefold in a year. At 55 million, the number of food-insecure people had risen by 32 percent since the start of the pandemic and continued to grow. The outlook for 2021 was highly uncertain, and WFP required USD 1.3 billion to fund its programmes in the region over the following six months.
113. In Yemen 16.2 million people suffered acute food insecurity and 2.3 million children under 5 were at risk of acute malnutrition, with almost 400,000 requiring urgent life-saving treatment. WFP aimed to reach 13 million people with general food assistance but had had to halve its rations in most districts. Following a prioritization exercise, almost half of WFP's beneficiaries would receive a top-up ration if funding allowed. A retargeting exercise and the biometric registration of beneficiaries continued.
114. In the Syrian Arab Republic the number of food-insecure people had risen from 7.9 million in 2019 to 12.4 million in 2020, while the number facing severe food insecurity had more than doubled, from 600,000 to 1.3 million. With insufficient funding WFP was reaching only 5 million of its 8 million planned beneficiaries, and the food basket had been reduced by 30 percent.
115. Food insecurity was also increasing in Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt, which together hosted 6 million refugees, in Libya and the State of Palestine and among refugees in Algeria and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In Lebanon WFP in 2021 would be the Government's main partner in using an expected loan of USD 246 million from the World Bank to implement an emergency social safety net programme that would provide cash transfers for 147,000 families and 87,000 students.
116. WFP's support for local economies had included the distribution of more than USD 1 billion in cash-based transfers in 2020; job creation programmes for community work in urban areas; vocational training for refugees, women, young people and small businesses; school feeding programmes, which had distributed cash-based transfers and take-home rations when schools were closed during the pandemic; support for community and household food production through climate-sensitive urban agriculture, fish farming and hydroponic gardening programmes; and livelihood and community asset building programmes. Partnerships with national governments included support for Egypt's national school feeding programme and resilience-building programmes in support of smallholder farmers, which were funded through innovative mechanisms such as debt swaps with Italy and Germany and contributions from the private sector and the central bank; modernization of the public distribution system in Iraq; and support for Tunisia's government-funded school feeding programme.
117. Thanking the Regional Director and her team for their work in the region, Board members expressed particular appreciation for WFP's provision of life-saving assistance in Yemen and its use of cash-based transfers to address the urgent food needs of Syrian refugees. Members expressed concern regarding the situation in Iraq and the State of Palestine and requested information on WFP's plans for reaching people in need in Iraq following the recent closure of camps for internally displaced persons and devaluation of the Iraqi currency. They also requested further details on WFP's plans for expanding its donor base and prioritizing its budget in the face of funding shortfalls.

118. The Regional Director said that WFP's efforts to find new sources of funding included advocacy with current and potential donors in the region, including private sector entities, and collaboration on programmes funded through governments and the World Bank. When allocating scarce resources in Yemen WFP prioritized conflict-affected areas where food insecurity was high, marginalized communities and vulnerable internally displaced persons. Household targeting was being refined in the Syrian Arab Republic with a view to informing prioritization exercises, and prioritization criteria had been established for refugee programmes in Jordan and in Egypt.

Latin America and the Caribbean portfolio

119. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had overwhelmed health system capacity and triggered the worst recession in a century. The number of people facing severe food insecurity was four times higher than it had been; despite the lifting of restrictions on movement, recovery was expected to be slow, and resilience had been greatly eroded.
120. Food security and economic indicators were deteriorating in Haiti, where 46 percent of the population required urgent assistance. In Cuba WFP had supported the government response to Hurricane Eta and COVID-19, in addition to pre-positioning stocks ahead of the 2020 hurricane season; funding was urgently required to enhance preparedness and pre-position stocks for 2021. WFP had assisted 652,000 people in 2020 and planned to assist 673,000 in 2021.
121. Through its Caribbean multi-country office in Barbados, WFP continued to support national and subregional COVID-19 response efforts with cash-based transfers and capacity building in social protection, logistics and food distribution. Across Central America and the Caribbean, hurricane response capacities were being strengthened through the pre-positioning of staff, food kits and logistics assets.
122. COVID-19 had caused major economic damage in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, and WFP had declared an L2 emergency in response to the subregional migrant crisis there. Around 2.1 million migrants were moderately or severely food-insecure in the three countries. WFP was seeking to leverage national social protection systems to extend access to basic services and social protection to vulnerable migrants and refugees; direct assistance was also being provided through community canteens, food kits, school meals and cash-based transfers. WFP welcomed as an act of humanity and solidarity the announcement of the Government of Colombia that refugees and migrants would be regularized.
123. WFP continued to assist populations affected by hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020 in Central America, shifting from direct support to capacity building. However, food insecurity, malnutrition, gang violence, organized crime and inequality were generating pressures in Central America, even outside the Dry Corridor, driving internal displacement and migration. WFP emergency operations incorporated livelihood recovery support such as vouchers, seeds and agricultural tools, strengthening food systems while saving lives.
124. Board members highlighted how COVID-19 was reversing progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those related to ending hunger and eradicating gender inequality.
125. One member called for stronger partnerships in the region; another said that there was an urgent need for humanitarian assistance and technical support, particularly in countries exposed to hurricane risks, urging WFP to build resilience as well as respond to emergencies.
126. One member, echoed by an observer, called for an end to economic sanctions, saying that they impeded development and exacerbated the impact of COVID-19.
127. One member called on WFP to continue its robust hurricane preparedness strategy and to tailor its response to reflect the increased humanitarian needs triggered by COVID-19. She

voiced concern over the lack of funding for the L2 response and asked how WFP planned to expand its donor base for the region and adapt operations in the event of insufficient funding. She also asked how the decision of the Government of Colombia to grant migrants temporary protective legal status would affect WFP programming.

128. One member said that the impact of COVID-19 had led to an increase in emergency operations at the expense of development work. He encouraged the President to initiate an informal dialogue with all members to seek ways of improving the implementation of WFP's dual mandate. He also underscored the importance of ensuring that the work of WFP continue unhindered by political differences, calling for swift approval of the CSP for Cuba.
129. The Regional Director reassured Board members that WFP operations in Cuba would continue uninterrupted pending the adoption of the CSP. He noted that as part of WFP's strategy to inject resources through national social protection systems a pilot programme was being launched in Colombia; if successful, it could form the basis of future work to include migrants in national systems, including in Peru and Ecuador. WFP was exploring alternative sources of funding for the region, with contributions from international financial institutions complementing private sector and government investments. He added that in many cases the most vulnerable people were migrants, who were not citizens of the countries where they were present and were therefore unprotected by national safety nets; that was why the support of the international community was also required.

2021/EB.1/6 Country strategic plan – Colombia (2021–2024)

130. The Country Director for Colombia presented the CSP for that country, explaining that its aim was to complement government efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and zero hunger by reinforcing and scaling up WFP's contribution to peace and enhancing its focus on socioeconomic reintegration and livelihood regeneration among combatants, ex-combatants and vulnerable, violence-affected communities in Colombia, where WFP was already providing assistance to more than 1.1 million migrants, including returning Colombians, as well as providing flexible responses to new challenges, including COVID-19. Although the country office would continue to strive to diversify its funding sources, the support of key donors and partners would prove critical to WFP's ability to continue to deliver on its mandate.
131. Members expressed appreciation for what they described as a clear and well-structured CSP, with one noting that poverty, afflicting more than 44 percent of the population, had been sharply exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and that the proposed CSP would be particularly beneficial to women and children, who were especially vulnerable to food insecurity. It was also noted that the CSP had been formulated in line with the country's UNSDCF for 2020–2023 and would support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Members commended the recent decision of the Colombian Government to offer temporary protection to Venezuelan migrants, including access to legal employment, healthcare and education.
132. Saying that successful implementation of the CSP would depend on partnerships with national and territorial authorities and others, members asked for further details on how WFP was helping the Government to strengthen social protection systems, on partnerships through which humanitarian assistance would be linked to early recovery and development, and on collaboration with regard to cash-based transfers, beneficiary registration, the security of beneficiary data and the use of WFP's SCOPE beneficiary data management system. Members urged WFP to work with partners in neighbouring countries to address the needs of migrants, protect the environment and promote the sustainable use of natural resources. One member asked how capacity building was conceived and targeted, how the quality of capacity-building was assured and how its outcomes would be monitored and measured.

133. Noting that the CSP would complement government efforts to support vulnerable communities, members asked how WFP would ensure that it fully respected humanitarian principles and factor in the needs of vulnerable people with special needs. They also asked for information on a study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus that had informed the CSP, on how targeting would be aligned with shifting vulnerabilities and available resources, on the approach to and timeline for handing programmes and activities, including school feeding, over to the Colombian Government, on the prioritization of crisis response and resilience building activities in case of funding shortfalls, and on how protection would be ensured. One member asked how the withdrawal of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs from Colombia and its replacement with a humanitarian advisory team would affect WFP operations and requested further information on the integration of cash-based transfer and registration systems across United Nations agencies and NGOs and how WFP would ensure the security of beneficiary data.
134. The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela said that the challenges faced by Colombia, including the displacement of people, were due primarily to the years of conflict in the country. As for the Venezuelan migration crisis, it had been caused first and foremost by the sanctions imposed on that country, and the Government of Colombia had failed to provide certain data in that regard. The representative of Colombia rejected the assertions of the Venezuelan representative and thanked WFP for formulating the CSP, saying that it would strengthen efforts to support vulnerable populations in her country, including the 1.1 million migrants who had crossed the Venezuelan border.
135. Responding to the points raised the Country Director said that the CSP would allow WFP to address protection concerns, including gender-related aspects of protection, more effectively. Protection assessments were an integral part of the intervention design process, and WFP was providing leadership and developing common approaches for other humanitarian actors in Colombia. WFP had carefully considered the recommendations of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute study, which had endorsed the approach used by WFP in Colombia. The CSP in principle envisaged a gradual scaling down of WFP interventions in the context of a scenario of gradual decrease in migrant flows and other humanitarian needs, and WFP would coordinate with national institutions and civil society to ensure a smooth handover that reflected developments on the ground.
136. Capacity building was an integral part of all WFP interventions, and WFP was collaborating with national institutions to expand social protection systems and help them address protection-related challenges. Many migrants wished to remain in Colombia but others shuttled between countries. The variety of migrant situations meant that cash-based transfers were not always appropriate and had to be complemented with in-kind transfers. WFP had been leading a cash-based transfer working group in Colombia to streamline transfer procedures and had formulated mechanisms for registering and protecting the identities of beneficiaries.
137. The Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean added that it might not be necessary to formulate a handover strategy for school feeding activities funded by the Government because the latter might request that WFP continue to manage them. Answering other questions, he said that WFP was developing key performance indicators for measuring the impact of capacity building more effectively, was taking a lead role in collaboration both in individual countries and regionally with regard to SCOPE-related activities and, in collaboration with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration, was seeking to enhance effectiveness in various areas, including minimum food basket expenditure assessment, cash-based transfers and social protection, by taking a regional approach, developing models and approaches and sharing lessons learned that could be used across Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

Asia and the Pacific portfolio

138. The Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific reported that WFP had assisted 16.3 million people in 2020, over 4 million more than in 2019. While WFP's focus had shifted towards relief activities, it had also continued its chronic malnutrition care, school feeding and a portion of its resilience activities. It had also invested in staff safety and wellness and managed 220 positive COVID-19 cases within the WFP family. As COVID-19 continued to cause suffering and disruption, a La Niña event was starting to bring dry weather to Central Asia and was poised to bring wetter weather further east.
139. Despite movement restrictions, school closures and challenges related to bringing commodities and staff into the country, WFP had continued to operate in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, reaching over half a million malnourished women and children in 2020. With no access to areas outside Pyongyang for more than a year, it had been impossible for WFP and its partners to ascertain the impact of climatic shocks on household food security. Although government food rations had continued throughout most of 2020, they had fallen significantly since October. WFP had been unable to bring food into the country since June 2020 on account of COVID-19-related restrictions but it had continued to operate at close to full capacity thanks to food supplies pre-positioned in the country prior to the lockdown. Stocks would run out in March 2021, however, and it was unclear when WFP food imports could resume.
140. Due to COVID-19-related restrictions on movement WFP had been compelled to operate in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with very few staff during most of 2020. The WFP Country Director and an information technology specialist from the United Nations Development Programme were currently the only international United Nations personnel remaining in the country. Although the Country Director would leave the country when WFP food stocks ran out, he and his 15-person international team were eager to return as soon as COVID-19 restrictions were eased and WFP could resume food imports.
141. In Myanmar, WFP had continued its programme and had experienced no major delays in obtaining required permits to travel or to distribute assistance, despite the recent military takeover. It had, moreover, received approval from the military authorities to continue to operate humanitarian flights from Kuala Lumpur to Yangon. WFP was focusing on maintaining monthly life-saving assistance to 360,000 internally displaced and other highly vulnerable people in the country, who had almost no source of income or food other than WFP. Challenges related to withdrawing cash were hampering WFP's ability to distribute cash-based transfers in a timely manner. In response, WFP was purchasing contingency stocks of food, which would allow food to be substituted for cash on short notice should that be required. Those stocks would also give WFP the flexibility to respond to additional needs as they arose.
142. WFP was appealing to donors to provide USD 37 million in funding to cover the next six months of operations in Myanmar. Disruptions in WFP operations were occurring at a time when income-based poverty had already risen sharply on account of the downturn in economic activity triggered by COVID-19. Four out of five households had reported income losses of close to 50 percent in 2020, and according to the International Food Policy Research Institute income-based poverty in Myanmar had risen from 16 to 63 percent of the surveyed population between January and September 2020. WFP was seeing sharp increases in the prices of fuel and certain food staples. Moreover, a shortage of medical staff in public hospitals had sharply curtailed COVID-19 testing.
143. In Afghanistan humanitarian needs had doubled since 2019 and over 18 million people, close to half the population, were in need of humanitarian assistance. Inadequate rain and snowfall since October 2020, caused by the ongoing La Niña event, would affect the winter wheat crop and increase the national food deficit. In the previous 12 months urban centres had seen significantly higher food prices, which were likely to persist. Humanitarian needs

- would, at best, remain at their current elevated levels but could rise towards the middle of 2021 due to drought.
144. The number of security incidents had increased dramatically in January and February 2021, and civilian casualties had been numerous. A lack of clarity regarding whether international military forces would remain in Afghanistan beyond May 2021 was adding to the unpredictability of the security situation.
 145. WFP's programmes had expanded significantly in 2020, reaching 9 million people. In 2021 they would need to expand further to reach 13 million people, 40 percent of the country's population.
 146. Supply corridors into Afghanistan were unpredictable, and dedicated trucking capacity in the country was limited. The Taliban controlled increasingly broad swathes of territory, areas of the country experiencing active combat had expanded, and humanitarian access had become riskier. Non-state armed actors continued to demand payments from humanitarian partners and were closing down health clinics and other basic services when their demands were not met. WFP was reinforcing an already outstanding team in Afghanistan, advancing funding to procure food and working on supply chain enhancements that would give it the agility and speed to deliver.
 147. WFP's Afghanistan programme faced a funding gap of USD 380 million for 2021 and urgently needed additional financial support to cover critical humanitarian needs.
 148. Board members thanked the Regional Director for the update and commended WFP's approach to addressing food system challenges in the region. Members asked for further information regarding COVID-19 vaccinations in the region, any positive developments in WFP's areas of operation in the previous 12 months and WFP's work in the Pacific. Another member thanked management for its reporting and exchange of information with stakeholders during the military coup in Myanmar.
 149. Responding to the Board members' questions, the Regional Director said that no major problems had been reported as WFP scaled up cash-based transfers, which had covered approximately 32 percent of WFP beneficiaries in 2020. Vaccinations of WFP staff in the Asia-Pacific region had yet to begin. The resilience of people in the region and the response of governments to the COVID-19 pandemic had been inspiring. WFP was supporting more than 1 million school children in the region through take-home rations, which in many cases had replaced in-school feeding. WFP was working with food producers, governments and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation to facilitate the distribution and sale of rice and other food staples fortified with essential micronutrients and was also supporting home learning and home delivery initiatives. It was too early to predict the impact of the recent military takeover in Myanmar on Bangladesh and Myanmar's Rohingya people. Any movements of refugees must be safe and dignified and should be coordinated with the United Nations. In the Pacific, WFP had launched a food security surveillance system and was supporting governments' efforts to streamline mechanisms for communicating health information, including pandemic-related data, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of responses. Funding provided by Australia, the European Union and the United States of America had enabled WFP to transport passengers and more than 200 mt of cargo by air to Pacific island States.

2021/EB.1/7 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Bangladesh (2017–2020) and management response

150. The Director of Evaluation presented highlights of the summary report on the evaluation of the CSP for Bangladesh for the period 2017–2020, which had found the CSP to be appropriately aligned with national priorities and the corresponding United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework. The evaluation had found that WFP's response to the Rohingya crisis had addressed vulnerability concerns adequately, but that

greater attention needed to be given to cross-cutting areas such as inclusion, protection and gender. Further efforts were also needed to strengthen accountability and partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

151. WFP had made progress on strategic outcomes and had increased the coverage and scale of governmental programmes while striving to uphold humanitarian principles. Food security and nutrition for disaster-affected people, including refugees, had been enhanced and efficient use had been made of supply chains and logistics services. The country office had successfully piloted new approaches and helped increase Government capacity. WFP had also provided reliable common services for a coordinated humanitarian response. Risk management had been strengthened, including for the Rohingya response, but greater effort was needed to increase staff capacity to support the shift to institutional capacity strengthening.
152. Compartmentalization of monitoring and evaluation had hampered the effective use of data to manage performance. To achieve the dual humanitarian and development mandate, more strategic engagement across the Government was needed. When preparing the country's next CSP, WFP should consider reprioritizing to strengthen its strategic engagement in national nutrition-sensitive social safety nets.
153. Management warmly welcomed the summary report and the recommendations it contained, noting that the CSP had been developed before the massive influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh in 2017. Management believed that WFP had adapted well to a sudden and significant escalation in its responsibilities and a fivefold increase in its budget. Over the previous year during the COVID-19 crisis WFP staff had managed to continue to feed 1 million refugees, respond to floods and a cyclone and provide significant support for the Government's COVID-19 response. They had done that at great personal risk, which was nothing short of heroic.
154. Management was committed to ensuring that a strong consultative process accompanied the formulation of the CSP for Bangladesh, and that greater focus was placed on the generation and use of evidence throughout the CSP cycle. WFP would, moreover, strengthen its efforts to achieve gender, equity and social inclusion objectives.
155. Board members welcomed management's acceptance of the six recommendations set forth in the summary report and its planned responses. They praised the work of WFP in Bangladesh, in particular to address the Rohingya refugee crisis, and urged it to continue its efforts to reduce the vulnerability of the Rohingya through activities that promoted self-reliance where possible and to ensure that the recently-established protection, gender, disability and inclusion units had adequate resources. It was said that social inclusion, particularly for women and persons with disabilities, should be further promoted, and management was praised for undertaking to prioritize the recommendations of the new disability inclusion advisor in the next CSP for Bangladesh. One member called on WFP to develop practical measures to address discouraging factors in the field, including the conservative culture of the Rohingya and the Majhi system, and expressed regret that WFP's Level 3 response did not encompass other WFP activities in the country, continued focus on rice fortification in the next CSP and enhanced cooperation with other organizations, including the International Organization for Migration, UNICEF and FAO. One member requested more information on partnerships with other major actors in the Rohingya crisis and on efforts to align the WFP and UNHCR beneficiary systems. WFP was encouraged to share the evaluation and its recommendations broadly with its staff to facilitate organizational learning.
156. Responding to members' comments and questions, the Director of Evaluation said that all WFP evaluation reports, along with two-page briefs on the reports, were disseminated both internally and externally. In addition, virtual learning workshops on evaluation reports were

- held for WFP staff, and there was regular discussion of evaluations by the Oversight and Policy Committee.
157. The Deputy Executive Director said that the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh had been the first sudden onset crisis that WFP had sought to address in the context of a country's CSP rather than through a new emergency operation. WFP was re-evaluating its crisis response mechanisms and studying how it could enhance crisis preparedness in all 83 countries in which it operated.
 158. The Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific said that the points raised by Board members would inform the new CSP for Bangladesh. WFP's efforts to address the needs of refugees were in fact already linked to its other initiatives in the country, and it had been able to expand many of its established programmes in Bangladesh following the influx of Rohingya refugees in 2017. It would, however, endeavour to strengthen those links further.
 159. The Country Director said that WFP had sought to align its work with the broader national objectives of the Government of Bangladesh. UNHCR and WFP had aligned their beneficiary lists, and the comment on alignment in the report referred to the early pre-emergency phase in Cox's Bazar. WFP and other United Nations agencies were using an open-source blockchain-based platform to make cash transfers and distribute commodities to beneficiaries. As part of its COVID-19 response WFP had piloted an urban nutrition programme, the outcomes of which would inform the next CSP. Because of its scale, the Rohingya refugee crisis had initially been treated almost in isolation but was currently being integrated into WFP's broader work in Bangladesh. WFP was in particular promoting inclusion, including of women and persons with disabilities, which would feature in the next CSP. WFP would continue to work closely with the Government of Bangladesh.
 160. The representative of Bangladesh said that the Rohingya refugee crisis had had significant societal, economic and environmental repercussions for her country. She commended WFP for shifting its focus from the direct delivery of assistance to capacity building activities and for providing increasing support for government development initiatives. She strongly urged WFP to channel assistance to her country through her country's economic relations authority, which mobilized external resources for socioeconomic development on behalf of the Government

Other business

2021/EB.1/8 Appointment of five members from the electoral lists of the Executive Board to the selection panel for the appointment of Audit Committee members

161. At the request of the President the Secretary reported that the second and final terms of three members of the Audit Committee, including the Committee's Chair, would expire on 14 November 2021 and that it had been proposed that the term of the Chair be extended for one year. In accordance with the Committee's terms of reference the Board would need to appoint a five-member selection panel to assist it in its selection of three new Committee members to succeed the outgoing members upon the conclusion of their service. Following consultations within the electoral lists five candidates had been proposed. The Board then approved the establishment of the panel and the appointment of the five candidates.

2021/EB.1/9 Extension of the term of one Audit Committee member for one year

162. At the request of the President the Secretary reported that, as noted above, the terms of three members of the Committee, including its Chair, would end on 14 November 2021. In order to avoid any disruption that that might cause and to ensure adequate succession planning, institutional memory and the continued effectiveness of the Committee, the Audit Committee had proposed that the Board extend the term of the Audit Committee Chair for one year. The Board then approved the extension of the term of the Audit Committee Chair for one year

2021/EB.1/10 Oral update on preparations for the 2021 United Nations food systems summit

163. The Director, Rome-Based Agencies and Committee on World Food Security Division, and the Director, Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, updated the Board on WFP's involvement in preparations for the United Nations food systems summit, due to take place in New York in September 2021, and a pre-summit meeting to be held in Rome from 19 to 21 July. WFP was supporting the preparations through membership in the pre-summit steering committee. It had also seconded staff to the summit secretariat, and staff in human resources, procurement, finance and the Nairobi office were providing back office support. WFP was also supporting Member State dialogues, working with country offices, governments and resident coordinators to ensure that country-level concerns were taken into account during summit discussions.
164. As anchor agency for action track 5, WFP would convene an update meeting for all Member States in March in order to increase visibility, information sharing and engagement for all Member States. A dedicated WFP team was providing substantive inputs for work on action track 5, including on fragility and conflict; it was also finalizing a shared definition of resilience and contributing to a new set of resilience indicators. The team had ensured expertise for all five sub-working groups, which were evaluating "game-changing initiatives" submitted by stakeholders, including WFP.
165. The summit budget set by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the summit process was estimated at USD 20.6 million, excluding the summit and the pre-summit meeting; confirmed contributions to date totalled USD 12.4 million.
166. As representative of the host country for the pre-summit meeting, the Italian delegation reported that the event would take place at FAO headquarters from 19 to 21 July; whether the meeting would be virtual or hybrid was still under discussion. Further details would be shared with stakeholders soon.
167. Board members welcomed the update and the details provided by the representative of Italy. They praised WFP efforts to support country-level dialogue and to link action track 5 to the other action tracks. They described the summit as an opportunity to build resilience through COVID-19 recovery plans and underscored the importance of defining clear, measurable targets and establishing transparent feedback mechanisms to bringing about meaningful change.
168. Many Board members called for greater involvement of Member States in summit preparations, particularly regarding the game-changing initiatives, budgetary issues and any structures set up that would go beyond the summit. Several said that there was a lack of structured feedback to Member States on progress in the preparations for the summit.
169. Some Board members said that WFP should convene an extraordinary Board session for discussion of WFP's substantive proposals for the summit. Several sought clarification regarding the game-changing initiatives, including whether the proposed initiatives were new or already being implemented, how they would be organized into a coherent set of actions, and how financing and feasibility were being reflected in the evaluation of the

- proposals. Board members underscored the importance of scalable solutions and innovation.
170. One Board member said that local procurement was important in fostering robust local food systems; another encouraged WFP to work in partnership to achieve a nexus approach and embed resilience building in emergency response programming.
 171. One Board member requested an update on the due diligence being performed on summit spending. Another warned of a potential imbalance in Member State participation in the pre-summit meeting. He also sought to clarify the addition to the action of tracks of new elements such as oceans, which could complicate negotiations further. Several members warned against using language that was not internationally recognized and agreed, such as “nature-positive initiatives” or “nature-based solutions”.
 172. Some members said it was vital to ensure that work continued after the summit; one cautioned against establishing new structures for monitoring the outcomes of the summit.
 173. Management reassured the Board that the Rome-based agencies were coordinating as much as possible on all aspects of the summit preparations. There was considerable Member State involvement in each action track, with 17 Member States formally participating in action track 5 alone. All action tracks also involved actors from the private sector and civil society. Member States could nonetheless ask the chairs of each action track to facilitate further Member State involvement if desired.
 174. Management agreed that work was required to make the game-changing initiatives more transformative. Hundreds of proposals had been submitted; they would be assessed and grouped into clusters where possible, and their potential impact at scale, feasibility and sustainability would be analysed. There would then be further consultation with the members and other stakeholders on the shortlist, which would be available by the time of the 2021 annual session of the Executive Board.
 175. WFP had submitted a number of initiatives, which were a mix of new ideas and proven concepts.
 176. Management agreed that summit-related information had not been presented by the summit secretariat in a comprehensive manner except at meetings of the summit advisory committee. A website had been set up to bring all information together; it included real-time information on the progress of country-level dialogues and updates on the process related to the game-changing initiatives.
 177. The summit secretariat had asked the action track anchors to ensure that whenever possible agreed language was followed. Oceans had not been included in the issues to be addressed by the summit thus far; there were other global summits during the year, including one that addressed oceans. The Secretary-General was establishing links among the special envoys for the various summits to ensure coherence and explore linkages.
 178. Management expressed its commitment to facilitating greater exchange of information between the summit coordinators and the Member States. They also understood that there was a need for a substantive discussion with Member States on action track 5, the game-changing initiatives and other action tracks. They would work with the Executive Board Secretariat to set up an informal consultation in the second half of March or early April.
 179. There was no intention to establish new structures as an outcome of the summit; the trust fund was due to end in March 2022. WFP was responsible for presenting financial statements as part of the closure of the summit process.
 180. Regarding the pre-summit meeting, it was very likely that it would be a hybrid given safety considerations. The Special Envoy and the Secretary-General would ultimately decide on the best process for the pre-summit meeting and the summit itself.

181. WFP was involved in all four cross-cutting levers of change: finance, gender, human rights and innovation. In particular, WFP was supporting a recently launched food systems innovation hub and several innovative development-finance activities.
182. Regarding the follow-up to the summit, WFP would seek to understand how to implement the game-changing initiatives to ensure transformational change. The output of the summit would inform the WFP strategic planning process and, by implication, the next generation of CSPs.

Oral update on WFP's support to the implementation of the Committee on World Food Security food systems and nutrition guidelines

183. The Director of the Rome-Based Agencies and Committee on World Food Security Division recalled that the Committee's food systems and nutrition guidelines supported national and global efforts to strengthen food systems and improve nutrition. As a permanent member of the Committee's advisory group and a member of the technical task team on the guidelines, WFP had been deeply involved in their development, supporting regional consultations and actively participating in the negotiations by providing inputs and technical advice. WFP's engagement had been well coordinated with other relevant United Nations agencies through UN Nutrition, the newly created entity merging the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition and the United Nations Network for Scaling Up Nutrition. WFP's contribution to the guidelines had focused on resilient food systems and nutrition in humanitarian settings, equitable access to healthy diets, maternal and child nutrition outcomes and the roles that effective and inclusive food value chains, social protection, gender-transformative policies, home-grown school feeding and fortification could play in the transformation of food systems.
184. The guidelines reinforced WFP's ongoing work to promote nutrition-sensitive food systems, improve coordination of humanitarian and development work and focus on building resilience. Next steps for WFP's implementation of the guidelines included fostering the scale-up of actions and coordination across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, working with partners and leveraging the country-level coordination mechanisms established through the Scaling Up Nutrition movement in 62 countries and globally. The relevant role of the private sector in making food systems work for nutrition was highlighted. WFP would share its experience and expertise in this area, including in programmes focused on supporting smallholder farmers and small- and medium-sized enterprises and initiatives in other areas such as food fortification.
185. Board members thanked management for its positive response to the guidelines, which they said served as a concrete tool for governments, United Nations agencies, including WFP, and private sector, civil society, financial institutions and other development actors to use in addressing malnutrition in all its forms through holistic food systems approaches. They welcomed WFP's plans for supporting the implementation of the guidelines and stressed that WFP's ongoing activities in the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia and the home-grown school feeding programme provided excellent examples that should be scaled up and be at the heart of the implementation of the guidelines. Member States and other Committee on World Food Security stakeholders had the responsibility for promoting the implementation and uptake of the guidelines and translating them into concrete action at the country level in order to improve food security and nutrition for all people.
186. The Director thanked Board members for their comments and assured them that WFP would continue to contribute to the work of the Committee, including by ensuring that the guidelines were taken up by field offices and regional bureaux so that they were integrated into the work of WFP at the field level.

Summary of the work of the Executive Board

2021/EB.1/11 Summary of the work of the 2020 second regular session of the Executive Board

187. The President reported that the Rapporteur for the Board's 2020 second regular session had prepared the summary of that session and that in January 2021 a draft of it had been distributed to Board members, who had made several suggestions that had then been incorporated into the draft. The Board then approved the summary.

Verification of adopted decisions and recommendations

188. Introducing the item the President observed that the current session had, like previous sessions, proceeded smoothly despite being conducted remotely through electronic means, and he commended the Secretariat and the technical staff who had made it possible. He highlighted some of the discussions that took place during the session, including those with the special guest, those on the first ever global overview of humanitarian needs and operational concerns and priorities and those on the bottom up strategic budgeting exercise.

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

190. The Board then approved the decisions and recommendations.

ANNEX I

Decisions and recommendations

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

The Board hereby decided that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and consistent with WFP Executive Board Rule of Procedure I.4, it would hold its first regular session of 2021 by digital means from 22 to 24 February 2021.

22 February 2021

Adoption of the agenda

The Board adopted the agenda.

22 February 2021

Election of the Bureau and appointment of the Rapporteur

In accordance with its rules of procedure the Board elected H.E. Luis Fernando Carranza Cifuentes (Guatemala, List C) President for a one-year term. Mr Benito Santiago Jiménez Sauma (Mexico, List C) was elected Alternate.

The Board elected Dr. Bommakanti Rajender (India, List B) Vice-President. Ms KANG Hyo Joo (Republic of Korea, List B) was elected Alternate.

The Board elected as members of the Bureau, representing the other three WFP electoral lists, for a one-year term, H.E. Youssef Balla (Morocco, List A); Her Excellency Marie-Therese Sarch (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, List D); and H.E. Victor L. Vasiliev (Russian Federation, List E). Elected as Alternates were H.E. Seydou Cissé (Côte d'Ivoire, List A); Ms Jette Michelsen (Denmark, List D); and H.E. Zsolt Belánszky-Demkó (Hungary, List E).

In accordance with rule XII of its rules of procedure, the Board appointed H.E. Mario Arvelo Caamaño (Dominican Republic, List C) as Rapporteur for its 2021 first regular session.

22 February 2021

Current and future strategic issues

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

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

22 February 2021

Policy issues**2021/EB.1/2 Update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system)**

The Board took note of the update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system) (WFP/EB.1/2021/4-B).

23 February 2021

Resource, financial and budgetary matters**2021/EB.1/3 Update on the bottom up strategic budgeting exercise**

The Board took note of the update on the bottom up strategic budgeting exercise (WFP/EB.1/2021/5-A/1).

The Board also took note of the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations (WFP/EB.1/2021/5(A,B)/2) and the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WFP/EB.1/2021/5(A,B)/3).

23 February 2021

2021/EB.1/4 Update on operational requirements and funding forecast for 2021

The Board took note of the update on operational requirements and funding forecast for 2021 (WFP/EB.1/2021/5-B/1).

The Board also took note of the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations (WFP/EB.1/2021/5(A,B)/2) and the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WFP/EB.1/2021/5(A,B)/3).

23 February 2021

Administrative and managerial matters**2021/EB.1/5 Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit relevant to the work of WFP**

The Board took note of the information and recommendations in the document entitled "Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit relevant to the work of WFP" (WFP/EB.1/2021/9-A/Rev.1) and endorsed the responses to the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendations to the legislative bodies included in the annexes to the document.

23 February 2021

Latin America and the Caribbean portfolio**2021/EB.1/6 Country strategic plan – Colombia (2021–2024)**

The Board approved the Colombia country strategic plan (2021–2024) (WFP/EB.1/2021/7-A/1) at a total cost to WFP of USD 654,322,693.

23 February 2021

Asia and the Pacific portfolio**2021/EB.1/7 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Bangladesh (2017–2020) and management response**

The Board took note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Bangladesh (2017–2020) (WFP/EB.1/2021/6-A) and management response (WFP/EB.1/2021/6-A/Add.1) and encouraged further action on the recommendations set out in the report, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

24 February 2021

Other business**2021/EB.1/8 Appointment of five members from the Electoral Lists of the Executive Board to the selection panel for the appointment of Audit Committee members**

The Board approved the establishment of a selection panel in relation to the appointment of Audit Committee members. The Board also approved the appointment to the panel of the following members:

- Ms Lamia Ben Redouane, Alternate Permanent Representative of Algeria, as representative of List A.
- Mr Bommakanti Rajender, Alternate Permanent Representative of India, as representative of List B
- Ms Liudmila Kuzmicheva, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic, as representative of List C
- Ms Elizabeth Petrovski, Alternate Permanent Representative of the United States of America, as representative of List D
- Mr Denis Cherednichenko, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, as representative of List E

The Board requested the selection panel to convene and to report its recommendations to the Executive Board in accordance with the terms of reference of the Audit Committee.

24 February 2021

2021/EB.1/9 Extension of the term of one Audit Committee member for one year

The Board:

- i) noted the recommendation of the Audit Committee to extend the term of Mr Suresh Kana (South Africa) beyond his second term as an Audit Committee member for the reasons detailed in the document entitled "Extension of the term of one Audit Committee member for one year" (WFP/EB.1/2021/11-B);
- ii) further noted that paragraph 22 of the Audit Committee terms of reference places a maximum two-term limit for Audit Committee membership; and
- iii) decided, on an exceptional basis, to approve the extension of Mr Suresh Kana's term for an additional year, from 15 November 2021 to 14 November 2022.

24 February 2021

2021/EB.1/10 Oral update on preparations for the 2021 United Nations food systems summit

The Executive Board took note of the oral update on preparations for the 2021 United Nations food systems summit, encouraged WFP to continue its involvement in the summit preparatory process and looked forward to a regular exchange with WFP management in the coming months leading to the summit, and particularly in the framework of the pre-summit which will take place in Rome, on the progress achieved with regard to Action Track Five for which WFP is the United Nations anchor agency.

The Board invited WFP to collaborate with the other Rome-based agencies – FAO and IFAD – and with the other specialized agencies of the United Nations system with a view to elaborate common strategies, in particular as part of the effort to break down silos within the United Nations system.

The Board invited WFP to set up informal consultations with the membership to discuss WFP's substantial input to the pre-summit and to the summit, especially related to Action Track 5, and discuss the results of these consultations in the next session of the Executive Board in June 2021.

24 February 2021

Summary of the work of the Executive Board**2021/EB.1/11 Summary of the work of the 2020 second regular session of the Executive Board**

The Board approved the draft summary of the work of its 2020 second regular session, the final version of which would be embodied in document WFP/EB.2/2020/12.

24 February 2021

ANNEX II**Agenda**

1. **Adoption of the agenda** (*for approval*)
2. **Election of the Bureau and appointment of the Rapporteur**
3. **Opening remarks by the Executive Director**
4. **Policy issues**
 - a) WFP People Policy (*for approval*) — ITEM POSTPONED TO THE 2021 ANNUAL SESSION
 - b) Update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system) (*for information*)¹
5. **Resource, financial and budgetary matters**
 - a) Update on the bottom up strategic budgeting exercise (*for consideration*)
 - b) Update on operational requirements and funding forecast for 2021 (*for consideration*)
6. **Evaluation reports** (*for consideration*)
 - a) Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Bangladesh (2017–2020) and management response
7. **Operational matters**
 - a) Country strategic plans (*for approval*)
 1. Colombia (2021–2024)
 2. Cuba (2021–2024) — ITEM POSTPONED TO THE 2021 ANNUAL SESSION
 - b) Reports of the Executive Director on operational matters (*for information*)
 1. Revisions of country strategic plans and interim country strategic plans and corresponding budget increases approved by the Executive Director or jointly by the Executive Director and the Director-General of FAO (1 July–31 December 2020)
 2. Limited emergency operations and immediate response activities approved by the Executive Director or jointly by the Executive Director and the Director-General of FAO (1 July–31 December 2020)
8. **Organizational and procedural matters**
 - a) Biennial programme of work of the Executive Board (2021–2022) (*for information*)
9. **Administrative and managerial matters**
 - a) Reports by the Joint Inspection Unit relevant to the work of WFP (*for consideration*)
10. **Summary of the work of the 2020 second regular session of the Executive Board** (*for approval*)

¹ To be discussed at the session.

11. **Other business**

- a) Appointment of five members from the Electoral Lists of the Executive Board to the selection panel for the appointment of Audit Committee members (*for approval*)
- b) Extension of the term of one Audit Committee member for one year (*for approval*)
- c) Oral update on preparations for the 2021 United Nations food systems summit (*for consideration*)
- d) Oral global overview on humanitarian needs and operational concerns and priorities (*for information*)*
- e) Oral update on WFP's support to the implementation of the CFS food systems and nutrition guidelines (*for information*)*

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

Acronyms

BUSBE	bottom up strategic budgeting exercise
CCA	common country analyses
CSP	country strategic plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IPC	Integrated Phase Classification
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
OIGI	Office of Inspections and Investigations
PSA	programme support and administrative
QCPR	quadrennial comprehensive policy review
SD3C	Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks