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## **Current and future strategic issues**

### **Election to fill two vacant positions in the Bureau and appointment of the Rapporteur**

1. Noting that two Bureau members elected at the 2023 first regular session were no longer available to perform their roles, the President invited the Board to approve the nomination of H.E. Mohammed Shameem Ahsan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh as convenor of List B. List A had advised that a decision on the nomination for the position of alternate convenor for their list would be postponed to the 2023 second regular session.
2. The Board was also invited to approve the appointment of H.E. Zsolt Belánszky-Demkó, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Hungary as Rapporteur for the session.
3. Both proposed appointments were duly approved.

### **2023/EB.A/1      Opening remarks by the Executive Director**

4. In her first address to the Executive Board, the Executive Director warned that the number of hungry people in the world was soaring while the resources that WFP had for assisting them were dwindling. The gap between needs and resources was widening: WFP required USD 25.1 billion to reach just over 170 million people with rations until the end of 2023, but currently expected to receive USD 10 billion or less. The funding outlook for 2024 was even bleaker as donor governments contended with rising prices and other domestic issues, and all United Nations agencies were having to prioritize.
5. Globally, there were 345 million acutely food-insecure people, an estimated 40 million of whom were at risk of famine. However, WFP had been forced to reduce food rations and cash-based transfers (CBTs) for millions of its planned beneficiaries, and more cuts were imminent, creating the conditions for social and political instability, extremism and armed conflict and fuelling migration. The WFP operations affected included those in Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Meanwhile, WFP had announced two corporate scale-up emergencies, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, since April.
6. Emphasizing the need for joint action to address the growing challenges, the Executive Director pledged to focus her leadership on three priorities: expanding the resource base, including through increased engagement with international and regional financial institutions, the private sector and other potential funding sources and asking existing donors to increase their support; sharpening the focus of WFP's work, prioritizing programmes and initiatives and boosting efficiency and effectiveness; and scaling up partnerships to tackle the root causes of hunger.
7. As a start, there would be zero growth in WFP's programme support and administrative (PSA) budget for 2024, leaving it at its 2023 level of USD 576 million with any additional resources redirected to field operations. Changes were also being made to the senior management structure to enhance coherence, integration and accountability and establish a clear chain of command. Recruitment for the four Assistant Executive Director positions would aim to create a leadership team that benefited from both internal continuity and new perspectives and was diverse in terms of the regional origin, gender and life and work experience of personnel.
8. There was also a need to do more to ensure that assistance reached its intended beneficiaries, as demonstrated by the diversion of food assistance uncovered in Ethiopia. WFP had responded by temporarily pausing food distributions while it worked with the Government, donors and other partners, sharing information and strengthening safeguards and controls including for beneficiary selection, monitoring and commodity tracking. Distributions were expected to resume in Tigray and refugee camps in July and in other settings as soon as possible after that. The Executive Director undertook to inform the Board

- of progress in implementing these plans. In addition, an ongoing global review of WFP's operations was informing the design of robust safeguards and support systems for country offices, with clear lines of accountability and transparent reporting to Board members. Such measures were already being rolled out to high-risk operations, and the wider rollout would be included as a priority critical corporate initiative in the management plan for 2024–2026.
9. Other priorities were to continue improving WFP's people management and workplace culture and scaling up partnerships in areas such as climate change adaptation, resilience building and innovation. By clarifying what WFP did and what it did not do, the organization would be able to maintain its comparative advantages, avoid overreaching and ensure the most effective and efficient use of its limited resources.
  10. In closing, the Executive Director said that she intended to reinvigorate the dialogue between WFP leaders and the Executive Board in a spirit of partnership and collaboration, joining forces to achieve common goals while sharing the credit for successes and the responsibility for overcoming obstacles. She expressed her personal commitment to openness, honesty, transparency and accountability, and looked forward to working with the Board throughout the annual session and beyond.
  11. Welcoming the Executive Director, Board members expressed their support for her plans and priorities and their readiness to work with her. They extended their condolences to the families of the WFP personnel who had lost their lives in the Sudan and during the recent earthquake in Türkiye. Many Board members praised WFP and its staff for their dedication in responding to crises and improving food security and nutrition, including in high-risk situations such as the conflict in the Sudan. They endorsed the Executive Director's call for joint action on addressing challenges and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
  12. Many Board members spoke about the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and its repercussions on global food security. Thanking WFP for its contribution to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, Board members urged all parties to the initiative to commit to its full implementation and agree to its extension beyond 17 July. They condemned the use of food as a weapon of war and called for a rapid end to the conflict in Ukraine.
  13. A number of Board members said that too often in situations of conflict or war there were systematic breaches of international humanitarian law by state and non-state actors, including the impeding of humanitarian access to people and communities in need. They encouraged WFP to maintain its leading role in promoting respect for the humanitarian principles and international law and the protection of humanitarian workers, working with the wider United Nations system and other humanitarian partners.
  14. The diversion of food assistance in Ethiopia was another source of concern for many Board members, who said that it had shaken donors' trust in WFP. Several members said that they had been reassured by WFP's rapid, agile and transparent response and the decisive measures that it had taken to strengthen oversight and monitoring systems and prevent similar incidents in the future. They expected WFP to investigate any potential diversion or fraud without delay and to hold the people involved accountable. Donors and the Board should be informed of any case or suspicion of aid diversion and receive regular updates on investigations. Encouraging WFP to remain transparent in its reporting and investigation of problems, members advised management to allocate sufficient resources to internal control systems and processes, which should be as robust for in-kind food assistance as they were for CBTs.
  15. Board members welcomed the Executive Director's focus on ensuring that WFP's operations and corporate processes were fit for purpose. They recommended that efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness include enhancing the coherence of WFP's activities and avoiding overlaps in programming and action, both internally and with respect to the work

- of partners. WFP's engagement at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, its increasing emphasis on anticipatory action and its ongoing shift from the direct provision of food assistance to national capacity strengthening would bring greater coherence to its joint work with partners, while the follow-up to the bottom-up strategic budgeting exercise would provide insight into WFP's internal effectiveness and efficiency.
16. Other opportunities for improving efficiency and effectiveness mentioned by Board members included ensuring the best use of resources by strengthening control and monitoring systems; increasing the use of vulnerability-based targeting and feedback mechanisms; and enhancing WFP's capacity to gather, manage and use high-quality data in decision-making and reporting. Several members welcomed the ongoing governance review as an opportunity to strengthen and streamline the work of the Board and its strategic discussions with WFP management.
  17. Many Board members welcomed plans to strengthen collaboration with other United Nations entities, particularly the other Rome-based agencies (RBAs), following a “no duplication” approach and focusing on activities where WFP had a clear comparative advantage. They also appreciated the Executive Director's commitment to increasing collaboration with the private sector and knowledge institutes, especially on new technology and digitization. They encouraged WFP to increase its partnerships at the local level, including with national and local responders and affected populations, who should be involved in inclusive, locally-led and people-centred needs assessment, planning and decision-making processes. Several members mentioned the importance of localization with one member recommending that management draft a localization policy. Many members described the value of South–South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) and encouraged WFP to facilitate more such exchanges.
  18. Board members also discussed funding, welcoming the commitment to zero growth in the 2024 PSA budget. Much of the discussion focused on the need to increase the quality as well as the quantity of funding and many members emphasized the importance of flexible and non-earmarked contributions. Members recommended that WFP strengthen its partnerships in resource mobilization with local leaders, civil society organizations, government institutions, specialized funding bodies, other United Nations agencies and the private sector in order to diversify the resource base. They also advocated the use of cash assistance and new technologies to help to maximize the impact of resources. One member suggested that a willingness to accept donations of in-kind food items from donors that were unable to cover the related logistics costs would enable more countries to contribute to WFP operations. Two members said that the international sanctions imposed on certain countries prevented the governments concerned from addressing issues in their own countries or contributing to WFP operations elsewhere.
  19. There was general agreement that resilience building and development programmes could compensate for resource shortfalls by contributing to sustainable food security and reducing future humanitarian needs. Many Board members said that it was essential for WFP to maintain its excellence in emergency response through its ability to rapidly scale its programmes up or down. However, there was also a need to tackle the root causes of hunger in a comprehensive and transformative way that fostered equity, gender equality and inclusion. WFP had the necessary experience to lead the development of innovative policies aimed at preventing rather than reacting to food crises. One member mentioned the Sahel resilience initiative as an example of such coordinated efforts carried out at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus by WFP with governments and other partners. Several members pledged their countries' commitment to working with WFP on the development and implementation of robust strategies that addressed both immediate needs and the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition and urged all Board members to share their ideas and experiences, including unconventional approaches, in that area.

20. Board members expressed their support for school feeding and its positive results for education, nutrition, food systems and local and national economies. They also supported WFP's increasing use of CBTs and encouraged the organization to expand its work on building sustainable and resilient food systems, including through local and regional procurement and its smallholder agricultural market support programmes. Members welcomed WFP's continuing commitment to incorporating cross-cutting issues related to gender, protection, inclusion and accountability into the design and implementation of all its programmes. They were pleased that the Executive Director had agreed to be the next Inter-Agency Standing Committee champion for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.
21. Noting that the session coincided with the Muslim festival of Eid-al-Adha and the days of Tashriq, which made it difficult for certain delegates and support staff to attend, one Board member thanked the Board Secretary for undertaking to ensure that such a situation did not arise again.

**Special address by Her Majesty Queen Máxima of the Netherlands United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development**

22. In her address, Her Majesty Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development, described the powerful impact of cash assistance on financial inclusion, community resilience and local economies in crisis-affected countries. Her Majesty called on governments and regulators to set rules that supported and expanded financial inclusion. Key measures included guaranteeing non-citizens access to the formal financial system, introducing tiered and remote know-your-customer requirements, promoting the use of digital ID and developing interoperable payment systems.
23. Donors and multilateral institutions should finance locally developed solutions and encourage collaboration among humanitarian and financial actors. Financial services providers and emerging fintech models could bring innovation to achieve customized and convenient solutions. As digital technology must be introduced responsibly with an emphasis on improved development outcomes, stakeholders must monitor risks, prevent fraud and build financial knowledge and capabilities. Noting that women affected by crises faced steep barriers to financial inclusion, Her Majesty emphasized that programmes must be deliberately designed so that services reached women and increased their capacity to make their own financial choices.
24. The United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advocate concluded by highlighting how WFP's new cash policy was an important step towards financial inclusion.
25. Board members thanked Queen Máxima for her inspiring and thoughtful address. They praised her strong commitment to financial inclusion and recognized the numerous benefits of inclusive finance for development, including better food security, the empowerment of women and girls, poverty alleviation and enhanced community resilience.
26. Several Board members remarked on the importance of financial inclusion in efforts to achieve the SDGs, not least in light of deteriorating global food security; the draft cash policy would boost efforts by WFP to bridge gaps in financial inclusion.
27. One Board member stressed that differences in financial inclusion tended to reinforce inequality. Workers in the informal economy were particularly vulnerable to economic shocks and rarely covered by social protection schemes. Enhancing the financial inclusion of rural populations could help reduce income inequality in urban areas. She called for gender equality to remain a core consideration in financial inclusion, noting that efforts to improve women's access to financial services, especially digital services, could improve their autonomy and economic empowerment. Green finance products could also play an

important role in bridging the humanitarian–development divide and promoting economic resilience.

28. Another Board member advocated greater promotion of financial inclusion in Africa, particularly for women and for smallholder farmers, who produced 80 percent of the continent’s food. Promoting equitable access to inclusive financing would strengthen efforts to address hunger, poverty, vulnerability and environmental challenges while ensuring that no one was left behind.
29. The Executive Director welcomed the insights provided by Her Majesty Queen Máxima on how cash assistance empowered communities. With access to savings accounts, insurance products and small loans, the poor could cope better with financial or food security shocks and invest in their futures. WFP, the largest global provider of humanitarian cash transfers, had distributed USD 3.3 billion to 56 million people in 72 countries in 2022, and the new cash policy would increase WFP’s efforts to deliver long-term benefits to those receiving assistance. The policy would also support progress on gender equality and help break the cycle of poverty and hunger that trapped so many women and girls.

## Policy issues

### 2023/EB.A/2      Cash policy

30. Management introduced the new policy, describing the transformative effects of cash assistance on the lives of the most vulnerable people, especially women, and particularly in crisis situations. Cash transfers helped people to meet their food and nutrition needs while supporting their digital financial inclusion and purchasing power. Cash assistance also provided an opportunity for WFP to work with governments on strengthening and expanding social safety nets.
31. Board members described the policy as well developed and expressed their appreciation for the policy consultation process. They welcomed the policy’s emphasis on providing support to women to advance their economic empowerment, while noting that cash assistance should include marginalized groups such as single, older people, persons with disabilities, and children. They urged WFP to ensure that the platforms used to transfer cash to beneficiaries were secure and that adequate monitoring, risk management and oversight provisions were in place. All staff involved in emergency response should be familiar with cash transfer systems and WFP should ensure sufficient levels of staff trained in cash assistance.
32. Collaboration with governments and other partners was described as key to the implementation of the new policy. Speaking on behalf of his list, one Board member urged WFP to favour locally led humanitarian responses wherever possible and to build the capacities of local actors in cash assistance. Robust complaint and feedback mechanisms, protection measures and a focus on resilience building were also described as important.
33. One Board member encouraged WFP to continue sharing evidence on the multiplier effects of cash transfers and the impact of cash on women and girls; another called on WFP to continue engaging with the Donor Cash Forum, underlined WFP’s central role and critical responsibility in coordination mechanisms, and requested that a detailed budget for the policy implementation plan be provided as soon as possible and that the Board be updated on progress made in policy implementation in June 2024 and regularly thereafter. More insight was also sought into anticipatory cash assistance and into how WFP would measure the results of its cash assistance.
34. Several Board members cautioned that cash, especially unconditional cash, was not always the best form of assistance and called on WFP to assess the specific needs and circumstances of beneficiaries when choosing transfer modalities.

35. Responding to the points raised, management confirmed that cash in emergency contexts could lay foundations for resilience and explained that the cash policy was aligned with the gender policy and was equally focused on the needs of a wide range of vulnerable and marginalized people. They further acknowledged the importance of coordination and localization.
36. The policy implementation plan set out the number of staff working full time on cash transfers; many other staff were involved in cash transfers and coordination as part of their job profiles. A tool had been developed to help country offices determine the staffing levels and skills required to oversee their cash-transfer programmes and identify training needs.
37. The policy implementation plan had a budget of USD 21.5 million over three years for the centralized investments needed to accelerate the change; management expected that implementation of the policy would ultimately reduce the cost of WFP cash programmes. Faster and more efficient ways to transfer cash and manage beneficiary personal data were being developed, including models for delivering cash assistance in high and low digitization scenarios and principles for WFP engagement with governments.
38. The cash assurance framework, in place since 2021, set standards for all cash operations, defined accountability and described minimum measures to mitigate risks; it covered the entire process, from when people registered to when they received the money. Post-distribution risks were mitigated through preventative measures such as communication and sensitization activities, and complaint and feedback mechanisms. WFP would increase its focus on output, process and outcome monitoring.
39. Management cautioned that conditionality could create barriers for vulnerable people to access assistance; however, the focus on unconditional transfers did not preclude the use of conditional assistance in certain contexts.
40. The small scale of cash transfer operations meant that they were unlikely to increase national inflation rates; indeed, they could encourage more suppliers to enter the market and increase the variety of goods available, which could help to stabilize prices. At the local level, CBTs could cause an initial increase but prices tended to stabilize within two weeks.
41. WFP was also exploring ways to expand anticipatory cash transfers to help beneficiaries cope with climate shocks, building on lessons learned and incorporating local and inclusive perspectives.

## **Operational matters**

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

42. The Deputy Executive Director said that in response to the widening gap between humanitarian needs and WFP's resources and capacity to respond, the new Executive Director had laid out an agenda to mobilize more money and increase efficiency and effectiveness while seeking solutions to current needs and reducing future demand for humanitarian assistance. WFP also recognized the need to strengthen its accountability and control systems, building on the lessons learned in Ethiopia.
43. There was cause for hope in recent successes including in emergency responses in the Sudan, Ukraine and Haiti and in resilience building work countering the impact of drought in Nigeria and the cyclone in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the scale of the funding gap had already forced WFP to cut vital assistance including in Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and the State of Palestine; meanwhile, escalating conflict and insecurity, such as in the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was driving up needs still further. WFP was prioritizing its assistance and, wherever possible, engaging in resilience building. Ultimately, however, more funding was needed.

44. Referring to the recent global operational response plan, the Director of Emergencies reported that 345 million people were now acutely food-insecure, with 40 million people across 51 countries at emergency or worse levels of acute food insecurity and an estimated 45 million children under 5 suffering from acute malnutrition. While the plan also revealed some gains, such as the elimination of catastrophic hunger in Haiti, Nigeria and Yemen, the outlook for the rest of 2023 was alarming, with countries at risk of reversing the gains achieved and assistance being scaled back with potentially disastrous consequences.
45. Global food insecurity was being driven by a multifaceted polycrisis in which climate disasters, economic downturns and violent conflict, compounded by the current funding crisis, converged and exacerbated one another. A global economic slowdown appeared imminent amid monetary tightening that furthered the debt crisis in developing economies. Humanitarian needs were enormous and the cost of inaction was dire. However, WFP had received only USD 3.8 billion, a mere 15 percent, of its projected operational requirements for 2023. Faced with the prospect of deeper ration cuts and tough decisions about who received assistance, WFP was using evidence-based monitoring to maximize the impact of available resources, reprioritizing relief for livelihood and resilience programmes, conducting final multi-month transfers to provide capital for livelihood asset investments and ensuring that community engagement and feedback systems were in place to inform communities of cuts and distributions. WFP could not do all that alone, however, and looked forward to working with existing and new partners on the challenges ahead.
46. Board members thanked WFP for its commitment to addressing global humanitarian needs and registered their alarm at the growing levels of humanitarian need. They stressed the importance of extending the donor base and building new partnerships while also calling on WFP to increase efficiency and innovation, prioritize targeting and ensure programming maximized the impact of available funds. Several members also advocated enhanced transparency regarding operations to support collective decision-making on resource prioritization. One member underscored the role of resilience building in reducing humanitarian needs.
47. Some members raised concerns that cutbacks could have a disproportionate effect on women and encouraged WFP to maintain its focus on gender-sensitive and gender-targeted approaches.
48. Several members urged WFP to invest in strengthening its monitoring, evaluation and oversight capacity to build trust among donors and support programme efficiency and effectiveness. One member confirmed that her country would continue to provide non-earmarked, multi-year funding and urged others to do the same. Another member called on WFP to reflect the impact of country co-financing arrangements and SSTC in its financial reports.
49. Responding to these comments, WFP management described flexible funding as an important enabler of efficiency and effectiveness, particularly for emergency response; resilience, climate adaptation and social protection were also essential to curbing the growth in humanitarian needs. The current global operational response plan contained four appeals to decision makers: prioritize flexible and non-earmarked contributions for rapid emergency response; invest in early warning and anticipatory action; support the strengthening of national systems; and help WFP to break the vicious cycle of crises by supporting the scale-up of integrated resilience programming.
50. On efforts to improve safeguards and controls globally, management pointed to investments in digitalization for beneficiary identification management and commodity tracking. Monitoring was being strengthened to ensure system interoperability and improve existing systems including through greater investment in monitoring within country strategic plans (CSPs), the hiring of more monitors and increased use of third-party monitors

to ensure segregation of duties where required, and the ring-fencing of budgets for monitoring activities. WFP was also investing in escalation procedures and systems to ensure that anomalies were flagged to decision makers at the country, regional and global levels as quickly as possible.

## Regional overviews

### Eastern Africa portfolio

51. Warning that the situation in Eastern Africa had never been so grave, the Regional Director described how the crisis in the Sudan was exacerbating a “polycrisis” of conflict, insecurity, flooding, drought and macroeconomic shocks. The number of food-insecure people in the region stood at 75.6 million and was expected to rise with the onset of the lean season. Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan were the countries of greatest concern.
52. The gap between needs and funding was growing rapidly. WFP was providing the equivalent of USD 0.52 per beneficiary while needs were estimated at USD 0.81; an estimated 24.5 million acutely food-insecure people were not receiving any assistance at all. Studies undertaken by WFP provided evidence of the cost of inaction for all countries in the region and could be shared with the Board. Given the rising needs and reduced funding, by the end of 2023 three countries could have significant numbers of people facing catastrophic food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) phase 5).
53. In the Sudan, WFP projected that if the conflict persisted, the number of food-insecure people could reach over 19 million. WFP had declared a corporate scale-up but was working under enormous pressure, with limited access and humanitarian capacity and almost half its in-country stocks looted, along with many of its assets. Nevertheless, the country team had reached 1.2 million people in 14 of the 18 states in the country and was aiming to reach 5.9 million. WFP was also providing services through the emergency telecommunications cluster, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) and the logistics cluster. Donors had pledged USD 1.5 billion at a recent conference for the Sudan in Geneva.
54. The conflict in the Sudan had spilled over into South Sudan, Chad, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia and Egypt, already fragile countries that were receiving refugees but lacked the capacity to meet their needs. South Sudan could receive up to 240,000 refugees, which would require a corporate scale-up; even before the crisis in the Sudan, WFP was only providing 50 percent rations for refugees in South Sudan, 50 percent rations for people in IPC phase 4 and 70 percent rations for people in IPC phase 5.
55. In Somalia, WFP had averted famine in 2022, primarily thanks to the generosity of donors; however, funding was now declining at such a rate that WFP would now be forced to reduce the relief caseload from 4.5 million to 1.8 million people as early as July. Operational requirements amounted to almost USD 400 million for the next six months.
56. In Ethiopia, government representatives had recognized the need to adopt a new approach to humanitarian needs with WFP’s support and to revisit their safety net and social protection systems. WFP was ready to work with the authorities to address the situation and had assigned its Regional Director for Western Africa to lead the exercise, but it also needed its donors’ support.
57. To increase funding, WFP was working with existing donors while exploring ways to broaden its donor base and tap into new funding streams such as climate finance. Donors were asked to pay particular attention to the regional risks associated with the situation in the Sudan.

58. Board members, including one speaking on behalf of his list, commended WFP for its work in the region and expressed concern at the challenges faced, particularly the ongoing drought and the conflict in the Sudan. One Board member highlighted the impact of disparities in food rations between countries on population movements, particularly between Uganda and Kenya, and asked whether WFP was considering harmonizing rations or targeting criteria in response.
59. Several members focused their comments on the diversion of food in Ethiopia. They urged WFP to assess the structural challenges, identify areas of improvement such as monitoring, develop reforms with the Government and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian response, all with the aim of retaining public trust. One member said that food assistance should be subject to the same guarantees as cash transfers. There was general support for restarting food distributions as soon as possible but one member asked that it be subject to the meeting of critical reform objectives rather than scheduled for a specific date, advising WFP to be cautious in its public messaging to avoid raising beneficiary expectations.
60. The Regional Director thanked Board members for their comments and donors for their support. On ration disparities, he noted that more flexible funding would assist in this regard, because much of WFP's funding was country-specific; while WFP never reduced rations below 50 percent, the organization did not wish to penalize some beneficiaries just because other countries had less funding. He expressed concern about the situation in Uganda, where the Government had recently indicated that because of major funding shortfalls, it was reconsidering its open borders policy.
61. The Regional Director assured the Board that while WFP was aiming to resume food distributions in Ethiopia in July, it would work with the Government to ensure that the appropriate precautions and measures were first in place. A budget revision was being prepared to account for the pause in operations and the resulting potential increase in needs. An additional concern was the new influx of refugees from the Sudan and Somalia, which added to the urgency of resuming operations.

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

62. In his update, the Regional Director described the devastation wrought by Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar in May 2023, which had compounded the enormous challenges in the country linked to widespread violence, rampant inflation and rising debt. The cost of the basic food basket had risen by almost 70 percent since 2022 and almost half the population was taking on debt in order to eat. Although WFP had reached 390,000 people in the immediate aftermath of the cyclone, on 7 June the de facto authorities had effectively suspended all international humanitarian assistance to affected populations. WFP was engaged in intense negotiations to restore access and ensure neutral and independent delivery and oversight of humanitarian assistance. Although the organization had reached 1.3 million people since early 2023, operations faced a USD 67 million funding gap and WFP was having to prioritize assistance.
63. In Bangladesh, WFP had assisted a small subset of the 800,000 people affected by the cyclone, distributing anticipatory cash transfers and hot meals for refugees. However, funding for refugee operations was down 45 percent from 2022 and WFP had been forced to cut the monthly cash entitlement to USD 8, which covered just two thirds of the minimum food basket; USD 85 million was urgently needed to continue operations until the end of December. WFP estimated that the cuts would push more than 75 percent of the refugee population into IPC phase 3 or above. If funding ran out completely, 85 percent of refugees would fall into IPC phase 4 or worse within weeks.

64. In Afghanistan, falling wheat production, poor pasture conditions and economic stagnation had driven down incomes; 8 percent of households had no income at all. Despite the restrictions imposed on women, almost 80 percent of the Afghan women registered for WFP's emergency distributions continued to collect assistance. WFP was operating only where it could independently choose who received assistance and ensure the dignity and safety of beneficiaries as well as the safety of humanitarian personnel. WFP had reached 12.4 million people between January and March 2023; however, having received just 10 percent of net funding requirements for 2023, it was being forced to make dramatic cuts and was withdrawing assistance completely for 8 million people. As a result, growing numbers of young children were presenting with acute malnutrition. WFP was striving to mobilize more funding, including climate financing to address the repercussions of increasingly severe and frequent droughts.
65. Board members commended WFP's work in the region and expressed deep concern over the situation in Myanmar and Afghanistan. They urged WFP to ensure that women were equally represented in aid delivery and had equal access to assistance. Several members sought more details of plans to address funding shortfalls and the potential impact of future ration cuts; one asked about the consequences of high fertilizer prices for regional food production.
66. One Board member said that WFP should continue to highlight the impact of ration cuts, tackle misinformation and strengthen its fundraising efforts in relation to operations in Cox's Bazar; in Myanmar, WFP should immediately report any programming issues and encourage strong United Nations leadership for the response. Another Board member urged continued engagement in the region, emphasizing the vulnerability of small island developing states to climate change and other shocks.
67. In response to Board questions, the Regional Director explained that WFP prioritized assistance on the basis of food security analysis and the knowledge of local communities and WFP partners. Although WFP was sometimes forced to make difficult choices, it always focused assistance on areas with the highest food insecurity and malnutrition and closely monitored the impact of ration cuts. The regional bureau was stepping up efforts to ensure that its tight targeting criteria were being enforced, enhancing oversight of cooperating partners, including government authorities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which were often responsible for compiling and verifying beneficiary lists. Throughout the region, WFP would retain a strong focus on women in humanitarian action and women's rights.
68. Although fertilizer prices were falling, they remained very high and governments were being forced to choose between purchasing fertilizer and funding social protection programmes.
69. On funding, the regional bureau was prioritizing its requests to donors, highlighting funding needs in areas where there was the highest risk of loss of life. It was redoubling fundraising efforts, in particular to secure flexible funding for Cox's Bazar. Measures had been introduced to increase efficiency such as the promotion of local procurement, which could cut transport costs, and reductions in staff and delivery sites; in Cox's Bazar, these efforts had generated annual savings of USD 13 million. WFP was also exploring the potential use of development funding in Myanmar through negotiations with the Asian Development Bank and other international financial institutions.
70. WFP used radio broadcasts and face-to-face meetings to inform beneficiaries as early as possible of any impending ration cuts. WFP was aware of growing unrest in Cox's Bazar following the latest round of ration cuts and was very concerned that, as people became increasingly desperate, threats could be made against humanitarian workers in the camps.

### **Southern Africa portfolio**

71. The Regional Director for Southern Africa began his presentation by describing WFP's response to the devastating impact of Cyclone Freddy in Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique in March 2023. In addition to providing cash and food assistance, WFP had played a vital convening role ahead of the storm, supporting government coordination of humanitarian and development partners to ensure an impactful response. Quick and flexible funding from the Immediate Response Account had also been key to enabling swift and effective crisis response operations.
72. In 2022, WFP had distributed over 315,000 mt of food and USD 174 million in cash and vouchers to distressed communities in Southern Africa. Thanks to its resilience building activities, 610,000 people now lived close to a functional community asset, such as an irrigation scheme, 220,000 people were benefitting from smallholder agricultural market support and 3 million children and pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls were receiving nutritional support. Vulnerability-based targeting had been introduced in northern Mozambique: WFP had collected vulnerability data for 1.65 million people in nine Cabo Delgado districts, which had helped the transition from internally displaced person status to vulnerability-based assistance. The region had also made progress in monitoring, anticipatory action and regional and local food procurement. In 2023, WFP planned to reach 17 million food-insecure people, and the regional net funding requirements for the following six months stood at over USD 1 billion.
73. The Regional Director drew attention to the rapidly deteriorating situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was far worse than it had been for years. He warned that conflict, insecurity and instability were causing untold human suffering. As the situation deteriorated, more people were likely to migrate to the already overcrowded internally displaced person camps around Goma, where rates of hunger, child malnutrition, cholera and measles infections and gender-based sexual violence were soaring. Several massacres had been perpetrated in recent months by armed groups. Over 2,100 schools were closed and at least 750,000 children were reported to be out of school; WFP partners were reporting record numbers of unaccompanied minors. Despite the corporate scale-up, WFP operations faced serious funding gaps, with food and cash expected to run out in September unless new funding was forthcoming; USD 759 million was urgently needed to scale up operations and reach the planned caseload of 3.6 million people in the following six months.
74. WFP had engaged with the African Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which were convening a summit to address the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Through WFP's advocacy, conflict-induced food insecurity, humanitarian access and protection risks had been included on the agenda.
75. Board members praised WFP for its proactive preparations to mitigate the impact of Cyclone Freddy. Speaking on behalf of his list, one Board member commended WFP for coordinating and leading efforts during recent floods in Southern Africa and for supporting the creation of indigenous food value chains in the region. His list encouraged WFP to align its interventions with the development initiatives launched by regional stakeholders, including SADC and the African Union, and to expand the Rapid Rural Transformation Programme implemented in Madagascar throughout the region in order to address the root causes of food insecurity and support sustainable development and environmental conservation.
76. Board members also commended WFP for the scale-up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and echoed the Regional Director's call for increased attention on the crisis unfolding in eastern parts of the country and funding to support a scale-up of operations. They asked WFP to continue to highlight the crisis and urged the international community to redouble its efforts to find a solution to the conflict.

77. WFP's rollout of vulnerability-based targeting was welcome as it had the potential to reduce funding needs. One Board member called on WFP to accelerate the rollout of such targeting in Mozambique and to consider prioritizing full rations to the most vulnerable and short-term rations for less vulnerable households, describing the current caseload of 785,000 people as unsustainable for donors. He also called on WFP to advocate an IPC analysis in Zimbabwe in 2023. Another Board member welcomed WFP's increased attention to strengthening its partnerships with other United Nations entities, NGOs and local partners in the region.
78. Thanking Board members for their support, the Regional Director explained that WFP was rapidly expanding its use of vulnerability assessments in Mozambique, which were likely to reduce the number of beneficiaries and contain costs. WFP would continue to encourage the Government of Zimbabwe to consent to an IPC analysis while also working with the Famine Early Warning Systems Network and exploring technological solutions to improve data availability in the country. The Regional Director further reiterated WFP's commitment to continue strengthening its coordination with other United Nations entities in Southern Africa, including the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

### **Western Africa portfolio**

79. The Regional Director warned of the depth and complexity of the food crisis in Western Africa, where food and nutrition insecurity had deteriorated in both scale and severity particularly in the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) and the Gulf of Guinea (Benin, Togo, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire). An estimated 47.2 million people would be food insecure during the 2023 lean season in the region; more than 45,000 people were expected to face catastrophic hunger (IPC phase 5) and 16.5 million children under 5 were projected to suffer acute malnutrition in 2023, an 83 percent increase from the 2015–2022 average.
80. The exacerbation of food and nutrition insecurity was mainly conflict-driven, with security incidents and related fatalities almost doubling since 2019. This translated into a record number of displacements; the region had 1.6 million refugees and 7.8 million internally displaced persons, including over 2 million in Burkina Faso alone. The number of asylum seekers fleeing the Central Sahel crisis and internally displaced persons across the four Gulf of Guinea countries had also nearly quadrupled since January. Meanwhile, the crisis in the Sudan had driven nearly 150,000 people across the border into Chad, adding to the 600,000 refugees already in that country.
81. Operational agility was crucial to WFP's response in the region. WFP had scaled up air-supported operations in Burkina Faso and was using advance financing mechanisms to meet the immediate needs of Sudanese refugees in Chad. In the Central Sahel, supply chain corridors had been activated through Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in response to insecurity along the Lomé corridor; facilities in Niamey were being used to store and supply food within Niger and to northern Burkina Faso and Mali. WFP was also using climate-risk financing instruments to support governments in either responding early to climate-related shocks or mitigating the impact of such shocks before they hit.
82. In conjunction with the four Gulf of Guinea governments and with partners, WFP had developed a subregional strategy to avert an escalation of needs in the northern parts of those countries; some funding had been secured but an additional USD 20.6 million was needed to assist 210,000 people over the next six months.
83. Overall, escalating needs were far outpacing resources, forcing WFP to cut assistance drastically at a time when conditions were harshest. WFP crisis response operations across the eight most affected countries were only 34 percent funded for the next six months. Unless funding improved, assistance would be cut for an additional 6 million people, leaving

13 million without assistance and increasing the risk of large-scale displacement into the northern parts of the Gulf of Guinea countries. The total funding gap for the region for the next six months stood at USD 950 million.

84. As a buffer to growing needs, WFP was pursuing its resilience-building efforts in the Sahel and broadening its partnerships. It had been supporting the governments of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Senegal since 2021 in strengthening smallholders' resilience as part of the Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflicts and Climate Change (SD3C), working closely with FAO to target the same areas with complementary programmes. WFP was also working with IFAD and the Green Climate Fund to support the G5 Sahel countries, Senegal and the Gambia in rolling out a microinsurance programme. WFP was supporting an Economic Community of West African States conference to be held in September, aimed at accelerating investments in home-grown school feeding.
85. Board members expressed alarm at the escalating food crisis in the region and commended WFP on its continued delivery of humanitarian assistance, particularly in the face of growing access constraints in the Central Sahel. They also expressed support for resilience building and efforts to strengthen partnerships in that regard. Several welcomed efforts to encourage local food consumption and production; one member speaking on behalf of a list also highlighted the vital role of WFP's work on insurance. One member commended WFP for its efforts to diversify its funding sources; another highlighted the importance of flexible and multi-year funding.
86. Thanking Board members for their comments, the Regional Director said that WFP was developing a regional food system strategy to support local production and further leverage institutional procurement, including for school-feeding programmes. He noted that the first phase of the SD3C programme was focused on working with frontier communities to improve food production; the second phase would further support cross-border trade. Regarding humanitarian access, WFP had a comprehensive strategy that involved scaling up staff and partner capacity for humanitarian negotiations and using data to analyse access issues. Donors also had a role to play in facilitating access and were invited to further support WFP's efforts in engaging with governments. In the face of the rapid spillover of the Sahelian crisis, WFP was strengthening its presence in the northern parts of the Gulf of Guinea countries and supporting national governments in strengthening their own response capability, including through training for national disaster management agencies.

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

87. The Regional Director began her overview with a summary of the situation in Ukraine, where the recent collapse of the Kakhovka dam had exacerbated the already worsening conditions in the country. WFP had started food deliveries within four hours of the collapse, using a combination of road and river transport. Throughout Ukraine, WFP was following a localization-based approach that included partnering with local organizations, procuring 90 percent of its food requirements locally, restoring bakeries, shifting from in-kind food to voucher distributions, providing multi-purpose cash transfers to people who were not covered by the Government's social safety net and working with partners to de-mine agricultural land.
88. Throughout the region, challenges included food price inflation, water scarcity, high rates of unemployment and economic slowdown. Funding shortfalls would be forcing WFP to cut its programmes by 25 percent, preventing it from assisting 9 million of its planned beneficiaries. According to estimates, the cuts would drive 25 percent of WFP beneficiaries currently in IPC phase 3 into IPC phase 4 within six months; those affected were likely to accept degrading jobs, send their children to work, or relocate in order to cope. Irregular migration to Europe had recently increased by 70 percent, and more people were becoming

- involved in militias, extremist organizations or the smuggling of people and drugs owing to a lack of alternative employment opportunities.
89. To mitigate risks related to the cuts, WFP planned to prioritize the most vulnerable people, monitor the impacts of the cuts and put in place alternative programmes. WFP was engaging in more resilience building activities, working with partners to rehabilitate agricultural land and irrigation systems, promote social protection and self-reliance for refugees, develop unified social protection systems and provide CBTs for vulnerable people.
  90. Given the difficulties that lay ahead, it was more important than ever for WFP, its partners and donors to reach vulnerable people with the support and assistance that they needed.
  91. Board members thanked the Regional Director for the overview and praised WFP staff for their work, including in dangerous and challenging conditions. They reiterated their countries' continued commitment to supporting WFP activities across the region.
  92. Expressing concern about the high levels of food insecurity, and the compounding effects of pipeline breaks, ration cuts and the blocking of humanitarian access in many settings, members encouraged WFP to implement a gradual and evidence-based approach to the prioritization of its assistance, ensuring that the most vulnerable people were targeted and taking into account the needs of both refugees and host communities. Echoing the Regional Director's warning of the costs of inaction in terms of increased migration and recruitment into extremist groups, members called on governments and other donors, particularly those within the region, to join efforts to address the severe and highly volatile situation.
  93. A number of Board members commended WFP for its operations in Ukraine, where its experience of localization and collaboration with government social protection schemes would generate lessons for operations elsewhere. WFP had also played a valuable role in addressing the effects of the Ukraine conflict on global food security, including through the Black Sea Grain Initiative; members urged all actors to continue working together to keep the Black Sea corridor operational.
  94. Thanking the Regional Director for the recent meeting of ambassadors and WFP country directors from the region, one member encouraged her to organize more such exchanges. Another asked how the regional bureau was applying the lessons learned from the systematic food diversion recently uncovered in Ethiopia to its oversight and controls for preventing similar cases of fraud.
  95. The Regional Director thanked Board members for their support. In response to their questions, she said that she intended to continue holding more meetings with regional ambassadors. As planned, assistance in Ukraine had been temporarily reduced over the summer, when people had fewer expenses, and would be reinstated in full towards the end of the year. To mitigate the risk of diversion, in Yemen WFP tracked its food assistance from the port of arrival to the final distribution point through a QR code system. WFP had halted its biometric registration programme for beneficiaries in northern Yemen because of data protection issues, which it was working to resolve with the northern authorities. In Lebanon, 100,000 people who had been receiving assistance from both WFP and government programmes had been removed from WFP's beneficiary lists, resulting in monthly savings of USD 3.5 million.

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

96. The Regional Director started her presentation with a short video showing WFP's operations in Haiti, which she and the Executive Director had recently visited. Violence and instability were worsening in the country, where 4.9 million people were in IPC phases 3 or 4. After South Sudan, Haiti was the country with the largest share of its population (18 percent) in emergency food insecurity (IPC phase 4). WFP was assisting 1.4 million people including with school feeding and resilience building through the local procurement of food from

- smallholder farmers. The organization needed an additional USD 123 million to feed 1 million people in the coming months.
97. In Colombia, the Government was making progress with its peace plan, but challenges such as continuing violence and food price inflation were leaving 15.5 million Colombians (30 percent of the population) and 1.5 million migrants food insecure. WFP was assisting 500,000 people with resilience and livelihoods building, school feeding programmes, activities for social integration and purchases from local farmers. In El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, where 8 million people were food insecure, the organization was working with governments on building disaster risk management capacity in response to the impact of El Niño, which would affect an additional 1.4 million people in the Dry Corridor.
  98. El Niño had already impacted 200,000 people in Haiti and 780,000 in South America and was likely to continue until 2024. WFP was working with local governments to address the additional needs by, for example, distributing food or electronic cash cards and providing capacity building support.
  99. Food insecurity affected 40 million people in the region and was one of the main drivers of migration. Darien crossings had increased by up to fivefold and the blocking of routes into North America had led to an increase in new asylum applications in Mexico. The governments of Panama, Costa Rica and Honduras had requested WFP's technical assistance for their efforts to support people in transit.
  100. WFP was also increasing its focus on building resilience to the causes of food insecurity and migration, including by facilitating bi-national climate change adaptation projects for marginalized communities, such as in Colombia and Ecuador; developing value chains through local and regional procurement, the use of national strategic reserves for public sector procurement, the development of commercial connections between smallholder farmers and the private sector; and providing technical assistance in risk management for social protection during emergencies.
  101. Latin America and the Caribbean faced a challenging future, with one third of the population living in poverty and average economic growth in 2023 forecast at 1.2 percent compared with 6.7 percent in 2021. In 2023, WFP intended to assist 9.9 million people directly and 25 million indirectly. Many governments in the region contributed directly to WFP programmes in their countries, and WFP's capacity building efforts and facilitation of SSTC would help to reduce humanitarian needs in the medium to long term. However, requirements had increased by 24 percent since 2022 and funding gaps were likely to make it impossible to reach 2.5 million of WFP's planned direct beneficiaries.
  102. Board members thanked the Regional Director for her commitment to working with governments to find innovative and flexible solutions to the problems in the region, including through resilience building and disaster preparedness efforts. They appealed for greater international support for addressing both the emergency needs and the structural problems in Latin America and the Caribbean and welcomed the Executive Director's increased attention to the region. Many Board members from the region spoke of WFP as a key partner in combating food insecurity and building resilience. They outlined the support that their governments were providing to WFP programmes in their own and other countries and mentioned the region's potential to contribute to global solutions for combatting hunger and poverty through knowledge sharing and South-South cooperation.
  103. Members encouraged WFP to expand its programme in Venezuela. They also recommended using vulnerability-based targeting not status-based targeting in the region especially related to refugees and migrants and to work with the other RBAs to formulate an integrated joint programme in Haiti.

104. Thanking Board members for their comments, the Regional Director took note of the points raised. In Venezuela, WFP was expanding its school feeding programmes into three additional states and was working on local procurement with FAO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). During her visit to Haiti, the Executive Director had met with RBA country directors and had seen strong collaboration for joint projects. In Colombia, the country office was using data from emergency food security assessments to target food-insecure nationals, migrants and refugees.

## Annual reports

### 2023/EB.A/3 Annual performance report for 2022

105. Management presented highlights of the annual performance report, noting that WFP had reached a record 160 million people in 2022, distributing 4.8 million mt of food and USD 3.3 billion in cash-based transfers. Despite the corporate scale-up in response to the global food crisis, however, WFP had been unable to keep pace with the unprecedented demand for assistance. The humanitarian situation in 2023 remained extremely challenging and WFP would continue efforts to diversify its funding base, including by engaging with private sector stakeholders.
106. Board members, including three speaking on behalf of their lists, applauded WFP's achievements and paid tribute to its staff. They urged WFP to strengthen its coordination with other humanitarian stakeholders, including through the Global Network Against Food Crises, and warmly welcomed the launch of the Joint and Intersectoral Analysis Framework.
107. One Board member commended WFP's use of cash-based transfers; another advocated vulnerability-based targeting and sought to understand what proportion of WFP operations used such an approach. Further details were requested on WFP's engagement with the private sector and individual donors, including through the ShareTheMeal platform; country office implementation of gender-transformative approaches; and WFP's efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. With regard to protection, accountability and gender equality, one member noted that expert staff and dedicated funding were needed to ensure that these principles were upheld across all WFP operations.
108. Board members expressed grave concern at the ration cuts that some country offices had been forced to introduce. One Board member asked how WFP was mitigating the impact of the cuts, while another asked what steps WFP was taking to mobilize additional funding. Board members reiterated concerns regarding the low levels of flexible funding and WFP's dependence on a small number of major donors. Pledging their continued support for efforts to expand its donor base, they also called on WFP to increase efficiency, including through rigorous needs-based targeting and comprehensive monitoring of activities.
109. One Board member encouraged WFP to explore innovative financing mechanisms to address funding gaps and ensure the sustainability of its activities; WFP should also conduct a comprehensive assessment of its field operations and human resources to ascertain how best to deploy any additional resources that might be made available. Several members urged WFP to give sufficient attention to resilience building in order to reduce future humanitarian needs.
110. WFP's adoption of improved performance measurement metrics and community feedback mechanisms was welcome. WFP should continue to strengthen the latter, as well as its gender policy and environmental management systems, and should redouble its efforts to achieve all the key performance indicator targets. One Board member requested more information on disability inclusion indicators within the corporate results framework for 2022–2025.

111. Responding to Board questions and comments, management explained that WFP was increasing its focus on resilience building and anticipatory action and was developing indicators to measure the reduction in humanitarian needs achieved through resilience programming; these indicators would figure in future annual performance reports. WFP and partner staff were being trained on vulnerability-based targeting and an internal directive had been issued on targeting. WFP was also working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the governments of countries hosting refugees to develop ways of shifting from status-based to vulnerability-based targeting. Although WFP did everything it could to mitigate the impact of ration cuts, there was a threshold below which mitigation was not possible. WFP therefore appealed to Board members to provide additional support so that it could scale up emergency assistance as required.
112. To date, 66 percent of country offices had established community feedback mechanisms; plans were in place to establish such mechanisms in the remaining country offices. WFP had introduced two indicators on disability inclusion at the country office level and progress in that area would be reviewed in the annual performance report for 2023. It had also revised its policy on abusive conduct, developed e-learning tools and conducted awareness-raising campaigns with a view to preventing and combating abusive behaviour. Managers were empowered to address misconduct promptly through the staff performance review system. WFP hoped to achieve its gender policy goals by 2025.
113. Private sector partners were increasing their investments in nutrition and delivery systems, helping WFP to reduce its operational costs. Through the individual giving programme and ShareTheMeal, WFP had raised USD 31.2 million in 2022. WFP was engaging in discussions with debtors and creditors on debt for food swaps, which were particularly important for governments with limited fiscal space.
114. WFP was implementing all the recommendations of the internal audit on the bottom-up strategic budgeting exercise. The organization had also launched a global payments system and was strengthening coordination between headquarters and country offices. Environmental management systems had been implemented in more than 200 WFP offices and were being introduced in a further 43 offices.

#### **2023/EB.A/4      Annual report of the Ethics Office for 2022**

115. In her address, the outgoing Director *ad interim* of the Ethics Office gave highlights of the 2022 annual report and an update on 2023 activities, noting that the Ethics Office had achieved all the objectives in its strategy for 2021–2022. Requests for advice had remained at similar levels to previous years and were most frequently related to the compatibility of outside activities with WFP employment. To improve staff knowledge in this area, the office had held awareness raising sessions and was drafting a revised Executive Director's circular on the topic. Progress had also been made in the completion rates of the annual conflicts of interest and financial disclosure exercise, internal procedures on whistleblower protection and the updating of the online ethics course, which was mandatory for all staff.
116. The Senior Adviser on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) updated the Board on the Executive Director's circular on PSEA, which sought to increase the integration of PSEA into programme design and improve the management of PSEA risks with WFP partners and country offices. A WFP-wide awareness campaign had been launched to accompany the new circular. In January 2024, the Executive Director would assume the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Championship on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment. The Ethics Office had also developed new training for country office senior managers and worked with the NGO Partnerships Unit on PSEA partnerships; all cooperating partners registered in the United Nations Partner Portal were

now required to complete the United Nations implementing partner PSEA capacity assessment.

117. The specialized training for PSEA focal points was being updated, with the new version planned for release in September 2023. Materials had also been developed for frontline workers. The Ethics Office supported regional bureaux and country offices in the integration of PSEA into the design and drafting of CSPs and the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of country programmes.
118. Board members commended WFP's commitment to fostering a culture of ethics and accountability. One member asked how WFP planned to improve its guidance to staff on conflicts of interest with regard to outside activities and how it intended to enforce training requirements in connection with the annual conflicts of interest and financial disclosure programme; the delegate also sought to understand action taken by WFP to protect whistleblowers from retaliation and requested year-on-year data on whistleblowing at WFP and other comparable United Nations entities. Another member asked how often staff were required to complete ethics training and whether any incentives were offered to encourage staff to take the courses. A third Board member asked what more could be done to reduce the number of cases in which staff at WFP and its partners contacted the Ethics Office for advice.
119. In response to Board questions, the Ethics Office team said that WFP encouraged staff at all its offices to report any potential conflicts of interest. The revised Executive Director's circular on conflicts of interest regarding outside activities would reflect the changing nature of employment and the fact that increasing numbers of people working with WFP were hired on contracts that allowed them to take up employment with other employers. The office had updated the modalities for conducting the annual conflicts of interest and financial disclosure programme, leading to a substantial increase in compliance rates. It was anticipated that 100 percent of employees would successfully complete the course by the end of the summer.
120. All WFP staff had to complete ethics training, including on PSEA, every three years. The Ethics Office was also working with the Risk Management Division to strengthen PSEA in risk management tools. The data requested on whistleblowing would be provided after the session.

**2023/EB.A/5      Annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2023 and management note**

121. In presenting the report, the Director of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services (OBD) said that since the end of 2022, two ombuds officers (including one senior officer) had been appointed, a third was being recruited, and one full-time and two part-time consultants were working for the office. OBD had received almost 360 cases since the start of 2023. The office planned to increase the number of respectful workplace advisors from 155 to 200 by the end of 2023.
122. The acting Assistant Executive Director of the Workplace Culture Department said that management and OBD met regularly to discuss and address systemic issues, and management agreed with the recommendations included in the report.
123. Two Board members spoke. They applauded the positive trends reported and acknowledged the time-consuming and complex nature of efforts to bring cultural change. Expressing concern about the significant increase in reported cases of gender and racial discrimination, one member welcomed the development of the inclusive leadership programme and the anti-racism action plan and asked how leaders would be held accountable for fostering an inclusive environment and how success would be assessed. The same member encouraged WFP to make the seeking of informal resolution the first

step in its internal justice system; to administer training on performance management more widely; and to clarify its use of upwards feedback in performance management.

124. Management thanked the Board members for their support. The integration of informal resolution in the internal justice system was being considered with FAO. Upwards feedback had been rolled out. Managers found to have behaved abusively were being held to account and a help desk was being set up to provide the supervisor of those managers with resources for handling such cases using the performance management framework. The leadership framework clarified expectations regarding the behaviour of WFP leaders and personnel, and change was measured through the global staff survey and the tracking of certain senior managers to assess any improvements made.

## **Policy issues (continued)**

### **2023/EB.A/6 Update on WFP's role in the collective humanitarian response (2022)**

125. The Director of the WFP Geneva Global Office introduced the update, warning that the deterioration of the humanitarian situation worldwide was drastically increasing humanitarian needs, with requirements rising from USD 41 billion in early 2022 to USD 55 billion in June 2023. Globally, 248 million people needed assistance, and the forecast for the coming year was even more dire. The Assistant Executive Director, Partnerships and Advocacy Department, added that for the past year, the focus for humanitarian response had been on cooperating with three categories of partner: donors; WFP's peers within the United Nations as well as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in Geneva; and local actors, to bring civil society into the system.
126. Board members thanked WFP for its engagement with IASC and welcomed work in areas including localization, PSEA and sexual harassment, mental health and psychological support, accountability to affected populations, gender, early warning and early action, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and UNHAS. WFP was urged to work with IASC on the revised joint intersectional analysis framework to ensure that it addressed the specific and intersectional needs of vulnerable populations in humanitarian action and to share the outcomes of IASC humanitarian evaluations with the Board.
127. On partnerships, WFP was encouraged to scale up joint initiatives such as the UNHCR/WFP joint targeting hub and engage in more joint needs assessments and analysis. Board members also called on the organization to prioritize partnerships with organizations led by marginalized groups; work with the World Bank on strategic resource prioritization for acute humanitarian needs; ensure that its work with social protection schemes supported national ownership; continue to invest in the clusters, aiming for greater effectiveness and closer inter-cluster collaboration; increase its use of cash assistance, including through social protection systems; step up its collaboration with partners and the global Cash Advisory Group to enhance intervention efficiency, programming harmonization, system interoperability and cash coordination; and continue to invest in its own capacity for securing humanitarian access and that of its partners on the ground. One Board member sought insight into how WFP would implement commitments under the Secretary-General's action agenda on internal displacement.
128. Another Board member recommended that SSTC be considered a source of innovative solutions and best practices in humanitarian action and resilience, and a means of fostering synergies in the quest for sustainable solutions. Remarking that governments needed to be able to invest in humanitarian assistance in their own countries, a third member requested that IASC analyse the potential use of debt swaps and debt relief to fund humanitarian assistance.

129. Responding to these comments, management highlighted WFP's two major commitments in relation to the Secretary-General's action agenda: accountability to internally displaced persons, which focused on engaging with local organizations and communities of internally displaced persons to better design and implement integrated food assistance programmes; and risk intersection, which leveraged WFP's capacity to analyse the drivers of displacement and food insecurity, as well as its anticipatory action and other financing streams to support sustainable nationally led solutions for internally displaced persons.
130. WFP was formulating a comprehensive localization strategy informed by internal and external consultations, including with national and local partners and actors. Preparation of the strategy would include defining a localization conceptual framework; elaborating on opportunities and risks associated with localization; reviewing WFP's corporate localization objectives, commitments and targets; and creating implementation plans.
131. With respect to SSTC, WFP relied on its regional bureaux to engage within their regions and leveraged its centres of excellence to increase access to zero hunger solutions from the Global South. On innovative financing, WFP worked with different partners to design and implement a range of interventions, including debt swaps, and had used nine debt swaps to mobilize USD 143 million.
132. WFP was also increasing its engagement with international financial institutions and holding systematic discussions in all countries where it had operations in order to position itself as the main implementer for entities such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and regional development banks particularly for fragility, conflict and violence facilities. Banks were increasingly committed to dealing with climate financing, which presented an opportunity to discuss climate finance solutions and social protection systems with national governments; in some countries, there was potential to use debt swaps to finance climate adaptation solutions. WFP was also interacting systematically with the World Bank on the bank's new food security crisis preparedness plans which, in combination with climate analysis, offered an entry point for engaging with governments on zero hunger.

#### **2023/EB.A/7 South-South and triangular cooperation policy update**

133. In their presentations, WFP management described SSTC as being at the heart of WFP strategic outcome 4, enabling national stakeholders to strengthen their food security and nutrition capacity, programmes and systems. The updated SSTC policy, crafted through an inclusive and consultative process including three rounds of consultations with the Executive Board, aimed to accelerate WFP's strengths to broker SSTC among Member States for sustainable development and crisis resilience. The policy addressed diverse action areas such as financing, programme support, results and learning, communication, strategic workforce planning and internal coordination. Implementation of the update required a corporate investment of USD 9 million over five years; field-based activities would be resourced through the SSTC component of individual CSPs.
134. Welcoming the policy update, Board members voiced strong support for SSTC and WFP's role in facilitating such exchanges. Several praised the six principles set out in the document, especially those on gender equality and women's rights, innovation and national ownership. One list encouraged WFP to produce guidance on developing and implementing climate resilient agricultural practices, ensuring access to nutritional foods and strengthening social safety nets.
135. One Board member invited WFP to strengthen and complement existing partnership programmes in areas such as zero hunger and climate change resilience. Another urged WFP to dedicate resources to supporting countries that provide cooperation in order to facilitate the development of high quality, country-owned solutions. A third Board member asked WFP to ensure that SSTC did not become a mechanism by which provider countries promoted their own development agendas.

136. One Board member encouraged WFP to continue measuring the success and effectiveness of SSTC programmes and to assess outcomes in four years' time, gathering examples of how it made use of its comparative advantage in its SSTC work with the other RBAs and the countries of his region. Other members called on WFP to respond to growing demands for support in areas of its global expertise, including supply chain management and emergency preparedness and response, while coordinating its engagement in resilience and development activities with other United Nations entities. One member noted with approval that the policy update called for WFP to be proactive in generating evidence and seeking out successful initiatives in the field that could be offered to other countries; however, the process needed to be driven by the countries of the Global South.
137. Responding to Board comments, WFP management confirmed that SSTC activities would be aligned with the strategic plan and would therefore be people-centric and evidence-based and promote gender equality and women's empowerment; the organization would also seek to be proactive while being guided by the needs of the Global South.
138. WFP management also explained that the SSTC directors of the three RBAs met regularly and conducted joint field missions, a form of collaboration that would continue as WFP implemented the policy update. WFP had recently run an SSTC innovation challenge with the Innovation Accelerator in Munich, marking the start of a partnership between the two entities in this area. WFP would also explore opportunities to facilitate engagement with countries where it did not have a country office. As much of SSTC involved knowledge exchange, technology could be leveraged at little cost to share ideas and transfer knowledge.
139. SSTC initiatives often sought to strengthen institutional capacity, which was inherently difficult to measure, especially at the outcome level. Even so, the corporate results framework for 2022–2025 included SSTC indicators at the outcome and output levels, plus optional indicators for country offices more deeply engaged in this work. About 90 percent of CSPs prepared in 2021 referred to SSTC and 59 percent of annual country reports had mentioned it in 2022. At the outcome level, 39 national programmes had been enhanced in 2022 as a result of SSTC support, all for a very small investment.

## **Administrative and managerial matters**

### **Address by staff representative bodies to the Board**

140. The President of the Professional Staff Association commended the Executive Director for her ongoing efforts to improve workplace culture and support staff well-being. Emphasizing the importance of zero tolerance towards harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination, the association called on management to adopt and implement its anti-racism plan before the end of 2023.
141. An overwhelming majority of Professional Staff Association members had declared their support for expanding membership of the body to all contract categories and for the creation of a global staff union that would provide better support and representation for all WFP employees. The global staff union would partner with WFP management to ensure that all staff enjoyed the best possible employment and working conditions; the association trusted that management would approve the recognition agreement with the new union at the earliest opportunity.
142. The Professional Staff Association was concerned that certain types of contracts afforded staff insufficient protection from arbitrary hiring and termination decisions or from abusive behaviour or sexual harassment by managers. The association remained committed to advocating a work environment characterized by professionalism, open communication, transparency, fairness and accountability.

143. Underscoring the commitment of general service staff to supporting WFP in its mandate, the General Secretary of the Union of General Service Staff (UGSS) updated the Board on the status of UGSS plans to expand its mandate to cover general service staff in country offices. While WFP had clearly expressed its support for the proposal, the Director-General of FAO had yet to agree. The reason for the lack of support was unknown and UGSS was disappointed that no progress had been achieved in the past three years.
144. Regarding the proposed global staff union, UGSS was concerned that such a body would encounter inherent conflicts of interest between the different staff categories it sought to represent, which would ultimately be detrimental to the interests of weaker categories of staff.
145. UGSS welcomed changes to the Performance Assessment and Competency Enhancement programme including the possibility for staff who were unhappy with the performance review from their first-level supervisor to request the intervention of their second-level supervisor. However, the new policy on step determination upon recruitment to WFP was viewed as unfair as it allowed previous employment experience to be used in determining starting salaries. Staff with little WFP experience could therefore be placed on higher salaries than staff who had worked for many years on WFP temporary contracts before being hired. UGSS hoped to negotiate a more equitable solution for the latter.
146. General service staff welcomed the pilot hybrid working arrangements policy and UGSS trusted that staff preferences would be taken into consideration when drafting the final policy. UGSS reiterated its call for WFP to reconsider its approach to open space and to promote a more enabling work environment, noting that despite some layout improvements at headquarters, the positioning of some workstations made it difficult for staff to concentrate. The new appeals process committee and new recruitment and selection processes for general service staff were appreciated, and UGSS would continue to engage with the Workplace Culture Department in support of diversity and inclusion.
147. The Executive Director thanked all staff for their commitment and service, saying that she looked forward to continuing to build on her positive relationship with them. She also welcomed the interest shown by Professional Staff Association and UGSS in expanding their memberships. She would continue to welcome suggestions and constructive criticism from across WFP. Taking note of the comments on flexible working arrangements, she stressed that, moving forward, management would strive to ensure that all employees had appropriate workspaces and facilities.
148. Several Board members expressed their appreciation to WFP staff for their service and welcomed the opportunity to hear the views of their representatives. Members also called on WFP to continue to promote diversity and to counter all forms of discrimination, harassment and abuse within its workforce.

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

### **2023/EB.A/8 Annual report of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee**

149. The Chair of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC) presented highlights from the committee's annual report, noting that no material weaknesses had been found in the governance, risk management or control processes of WFP during the reporting period.
150. Board members welcomed the report and its main observations. One member called for key issues identified in audits conducted by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to be shared with the Board in a timely manner; she also asked how management should be addressing persistent issues in areas such as CBTs, beneficiary management, cooperating partner oversight and supply chain management. Another Board member supported the IOAC's recommendation that WFP increase the visibility of its accountability framework and

build cooperating partner capacity; he also called for stronger oversight of NGOs. A third Board member asked the Chair about the operational challenges identified by the IOAC during its field visit to Eastern Africa, especially challenges faced in Ethiopia, and requested clarification of how increased donor reporting on misconduct could affect staff willingness to come forward with concerns.

151. The Chair of the IOAC suggested that, in order to accelerate efforts to address the recurring issues highlighted in oversight reports, the Board should request quarterly or six-monthly updates on progress made in addressing high-risk audit observations and, if progress was limited, the Board should ascertain the cause of the delay. He cautioned against entering into the details of how observations were addressed, which was the purview of management. In Eastern Africa, the IOAC had been impressed with the implementation of WFP's operations in what were often high-risk environments. The committee had been struck by the warm praise from government officials for WFP, which they perceived as a strategic partner. With regard to donor reporting requirements, the Chair explained that as specific reporting conditions placed a burden on the organization, the donor community would be advised to rely on standard reporting modalities as much as possible.
152. Management said that the Executive Director was giving particular attention to addressing the various weaknesses and deficiencies observed by OIG. Internal management workplans would be prepared to address these issues, some of which were structural and would require considerable time to resolve. Staff were increasingly willing to voice their concerns, as demonstrated by OIG statistics. Allegations of wrongdoing were taken seriously by management and timely action was taken to address misconduct.

#### **2023/EB.A/9      Audited annual accounts, 2022**

153. The Director, Corporate Finance Division, introduced highlights from the financial statements for 2022. In his remarks, the President of the Bundesrechnungshof, External Auditor of WFP reported that an unqualified audit opinion had been issued for the 2022 financial statements. In addition to the financial audit, which had generated 27 recommendations, the External Auditor had conducted two performance audits, on support services and on fuel management, which together had led to 30 recommendations.
154. Harboursing concern that WFP structures and systems may not have kept pace with the rapid growth of the organization in the past decade, the External Auditor strongly supported WFP's emphasis on accountability, transparency and clear roles and responsibilities, together with inter-agency collaboration and partnerships, but planned to review delegation of authority in the upcoming audit cycle in terms of its consistency. The External Auditor was also following the development of the ongoing governance review and would provide comments on outcomes as needed.
155. Board members, including one speaking on behalf of a list and another speaking on behalf of a group of countries, took note of the 2022 financial statements and welcomed the report of the External Auditor and its unqualified audit opinion, findings and recommendations. Several Board members welcomed the changes made to the presentation of the financial statements and encouraged WFP to continue making such changes as recommended by the External Auditor, although the member speaking on behalf of a list raised a concern that the new revenue recognition policy could create a discrepancy between donors' intentions and the accounting treatment of contributions.
156. Those who spoke generally concurred with the recommendations in the audit report, particularly those pertaining to inventory management, contribution agreements, expense recognition and analysis of the costs and benefits of outsourcing payroll functions. Some members urged WFP to continue efforts to diversify its funding base in order to reduce the risks incurred by its reliance on a small number of donors.

157. One member asked how existing WFP systems could be adapted to implement the External Auditor's recommendation on commodity tracking. Another member requested regular updates on the impact of the new normative framework on beneficiary identity management and on efforts to address the four issues from the 2021 Executive Director's statement on internal control that had been identified for prioritization and further attention in the Executive Director's 2022 statement; he also called for increased investment in tackling challenges related to monitoring, emergency response and humanitarian access. A third member recommended accelerated efforts to streamline recruitment processes and increased attention to the mobilization of innovative funding including through better controls, staff capacity and partnerships. Collaboration with governments on the implementation of internal controls was also highlighted as important.
158. Management explained that expense recognition for food handed over to cooperating partners was determined by a judgement on who had control over the commodity when it was in the cooperating partner's warehouse. End-to-end traceability of commodities was of high importance for WFP but was hindered by the current information systems. WFP's capacity to track commodities in real time needed to be enhanced, but that would take time; the organization was still at the stage of determining what needed to be done and would report back in due course.
159. Regarding the recommended comprehensive cost-benefit analysis on outsourcing part of the payroll process, WFP had a processing agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for parts of the payroll. While WFP could process payroll in-house using Workday, the human capital management system, it was still working on getting that system up and running in 2024. WFP would therefore not be in a position to in-source payroll in the near term but would nevertheless proceed with a feasibility study and cost-benefit analysis.
160. The timing of the revenue recognition was determined by International Public Sector Accounting Standard 23, which stated that revenue recognition might need to be deferred if there was a performance obligation attached to the revenue. Notwithstanding the accounting treatment of revenue recognition driven by the standard requirements, operationally WFP would continue to use the resources in full compliance with donor intentions.

**2023/EB.A/10      Report of the External Auditor on support services and WFP management response to the External Auditor's recommendations**

161. The President of the Bundesrechnungshof, External Auditor of WFP, presented the audit report on support services, which covered procurement, human resources and information and communication technology services. Thanking the External Auditor for constructive collaboration during the review, WFP management confirmed that the key findings and recommendations in the report were closely aligned with initiatives already being implemented by WFP to improve its business model, oversight mechanisms, operational tools and guidance.
162. One Board member took the floor to express appreciation for the report and management response and concurred with the External Auditor's view that support services were crucial to effective programme implementation. Noting that many of the observations and issues cited could be traced to weaknesses in internal oversight and controls, she urged management to pay adequate attention to effective and sustainable oversight of the services reviewed in the audit. She applauded WFP's continuing efforts to implement the new staffing framework to regularize the use of the different types of contract and the upcoming corporate guidance on record-keeping for personnel files and welcomed the attention paid by the External Auditor to WFP's information technology landscape, noting the observations regarding software development outside of corporate solutions. She voiced particular support for recommendations 11 and 12. Management was also urged to

ensure that all policies and related guidance materials, which were important control mechanisms, were kept up to date.

163. Management took note of the comments made.

**2023/EB.A/11 Report of the External Auditor on fuel management and WFP management response to the External Auditor's recommendations**

164. The President of the Bundesrechnungshof, External Auditor of WFP, presented the performance audit report, which contained findings and recommendations related to aviation and vehicle fuel and renewable power. WFP management thanked the External Auditor and welcomed all 17 recommendations, which when implemented would strengthen fuel management. WFP had already implemented three of the recommendations and work was ongoing to implement the remaining 14, with target implementation dates between September 2023 and June 2024.

165. One Board member took the floor to praise the report and echo the view of the External Auditor that processes for managing fuel should be standardized to prioritize long-term agreements, reduce cash payments and improve data management practices. WFP was encouraged to provide further analysis and guidance to country offices on fuel management and to consider fuel shortage problems in developing the guidance because such shortages could lead to greater use of short-term contracts and cash payments. WFP was also urged to coordinate with other United Nations entities to approach potential contractors jointly, which could help in obtaining more cost-effective and longer-term contracts. The Board member concurred with the recommendation to revise the Fleet Management System dashboard to make it easier to use and recommended that system users be consulted during the revision process. She applauded WFP's commitment to transitioning to clean, renewable power sources and urged WFP to consider more robust data collection and analysis on when, where and why renewable energy was used, in order to facilitate that transition.

166. Thanking the Board member for her comments, WFP management took note of the points raised, as did the President of the Bundesrechnungshof, who added that capitalizing fuel held on stock was very important for improving oversight and thus for good fuel management.

**2023/EB.A/12 Utilization of the Programme Support and Administrative Equalization Account reserve**

167. The Director, Corporate Planning and Performance Division and Deputy Chief Financial Officer presented a request to transfer USD 100 million from the PSA Equalization Account to the Immediate Response Account, with the goal of enabling timely delivery of assistance. The transfer would ensure a sufficient operational balance from July onwards and improve funding availability at the start of 2024, while leaving the balance of the PSA Equalization Account well above the target set for the PSA expenditures for the remainder of 2023.

**2023/EB.A/13 Report on the utilization of WFP's strategic financing mechanisms (1 January–31 December 2022)**

168. Management gave an overview of WFP strategic financing mechanisms, which comprised advance financing, including internal project lending and the Immediate Response Account; the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF); and advance financing for corporate services, which consisted of the capital budgeting facility, fees for service financing and the fleet centre financing. At its 2022 second regular session, the Board approved a shift from fixed ceilings for internal project lending and the GCMF to a dynamic ceiling equivalent to 10 percent of the prevailing global contribution forecast. WFP had started the year with forecast contributions revenue of USD 11 billion for 2023 and established the ceilings accordingly; when the revenue forecast was revised, the ceilings were adjusted from

USD 1.1 billion each to USD 1 billion. WFP would continue monitoring the forecast and revising the ceilings as needed.

169. Speaking on behalf of her list, one Board member thanked management for the report, describing advance financing mechanisms as more important than ever given the pressure on WFP resources in 2023. As these mechanisms were essential for prompt, efficient and cost-effective humanitarian response, she encouraged donors to allow their contributions to be used in this way. She particularly welcomed the enhanced use of internal project lending, which had proved to minimize operational disruption in the most acute humanitarian crises. She sought more information on a number of aspects, including the risk of losses and risk mitigation related to non-reimbursement of internal project lending; the forecast financing of the Immediate Response Account and plans to handle any drop in financing; efforts to diversify the donor base for strategic financing mechanisms; the downward trend in local and regional GCMF procurement; and the potential impact on the advance financing mechanisms of the new definition of flexible financing applied by WFP since 2022.
170. Welcoming these comments and questions, management reiterated the importance of the strategic financing mechanisms. Transferring funds from the PSA Equalization Account, as discussed under another agenda item, was not the best way of financing the Immediate Response Account as the PSA Equalization Account was not intended for that purpose. Flexible contributions offered an alternative. WFP was monitoring the Immediate Response Account closely and using fully flexible funds to keep it at a certain level, and members were encouraged to support WFP in that regard. WFP had to have confidence in future contributions that would allow the use of the strategic financing mechanisms in order to maximize their deployment.
171. In terms of internal project lending, the 2022 macro advance financing outstanding at the end of 2022 for the Sudan had been fully repaid, and the 2023 report would reflect that repayment. Measures to mitigate losses included insurance and the preservation of inventory. For the GCMF, WFP had developed a robust system to forecast needs and likely resourcing, which in combination with demand aggregation enabled it to balance the risk of losses.
172. WFP continued to buy as much as possible in local and regional markets. However, global and regional supply chains and regional markets had come under pressure in 2022, with drought in Eastern Africa in particular affecting markets and WFP's ability to buy locally.
173. Internal project lending was only provided when a donor contribution was likely; similarly, for the GCMF, demand was aggregated to harness economies of scale and other efficiencies but procurement was driven by donor funding of CSPs. WFP had requested flexibility in the ceilings in order to cope with significant, unexpected changes in demand, as triggered, for example, by the crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine. Changes in ceiling levels did not affect risks as these were layered and risk mitigation measures remained the same.
174. Regarding flexible financing, the definition had been expanded in 2022 to include thematic and regional-level contributions, which were defined as softly earmarked. Donor contributions for advance financing, regardless of earmarking, were also an important form of flexible funding, as was multi-year funding.

**2023/EB.A/14 Annual report of the Inspector General and note by the Executive Director**

175. The Inspector General presented the annual report, noting that based on the risk-based oversight activities performed in 2022, no material weaknesses had been identified in 2022 in the governance, risk management or control processes at WFP that would seriously compromise the achievement of the organization's strategic and operational objectives.

Scope for improvement had been identified in areas such as beneficiary management, the management of cooperating partners, CBT and supply chain processes, accountability, risk management, monitoring and management oversight, human capital, information technology, data management and information security including cybersecurity.

176. Presenting the Executive Director's note, the Chief of Staff said that management had appreciated the strong focus of OIG on field operations throughout 2022 and welcomed the insights and recommendations in the annual report. Management had started to address the issues that had arisen in Ethiopia and was also reviewing WFP's high-risk operations. The Executive Director fully supported WFP's efforts to improve transparency and accountability and address outstanding audit actions; all instances of misconduct were unacceptable and would not be tolerated. In light of the additional resources allocated to the Office of Inspections and Investigations in 2022, the Executive Director hoped that the timeline for investigations could be shortened to allow faster resolution for all involved.
177. Board members warmly welcomed the report. One member said that it was critical that management continued to promote transparency and investigate all allegations of misconduct in a timely manner in order to retain stakeholder trust. Another Board member asked whether the number of OIG investigations was likely to peak and whether investigation trends were similar to those of other humanitarian organizations. Other Board members urged a review of WFP's internal controls systems including roles and responsibilities, stressed the importance of adequate funding for oversight mechanisms and sought further information on how OIG analysed and used investigation findings, particularly to inform prevention and awareness-raising activities. One member asked how long it took for investigations to be launched into allegations of misconduct brought to the attention of OIG.
178. Speaking on behalf of a list, one Board member expressed concern that WFP's internal systems were insufficient to support the current size, scope and complexity of its operations. She said that systemic failures had contributed to the diversion of food assistance in Ethiopia and called for full transparency on the findings of WFP's investigation and actions taken to address internal control weaknesses. Within three months, WFP should present the Board with a plan for resourcing country-level monitoring for all operations and for the entire programme cycle. The corporate monitoring strategy should be reviewed and a road map established to remedy monitoring deficiencies swiftly. Welcoming the task force on monitoring, the Board member urged management to ensure that monitoring was also a top priority at the country and regional levels. Her list requested a quarterly update on efforts to strengthen monitoring, beneficiary management, CBTs and supply chain management; performance management and reporting were also highlighted as areas for increased management attention.
179. The list invited management to respond to the challenges and solutions identified by OIG in relation to the allocation of responsibilities between headquarters and country offices. They also called for greater attention to resolving overdue audit actions, adequate resources for OIG and measures to prevent future misconduct. They asked OIG to include in future annual reports information on actions taken by WFP following substantiated cases of misconduct.
180. Responding to the issues raised, the Inspector General said that she expected the number of investigations to plateau although it was not possible to determine when this would occur. The increasing number of complaints was likely due, in part, to a growing willingness to report misconduct and to strengthened awareness raising. She recalled that not all allegations were substantiated and that lessons learned were shared through various mechanisms. She welcomed the request for including in future annual reports information on actions taken by WFP following substantiated investigations. She noted that the length of investigations varied and stressed that OIG prioritized complaints related to certain types of behaviour.

181. The Deputy Executive Director added that the task force established to enhance accountability and integrity had drawn up an action plan designed to strengthen operational oversight, including through an end-to-end supply chain track and trace mechanism and the rollout of innovative digital monitoring systems. WFP was focusing on high-risk countries to ensure that any shortcomings were addressed as a matter of priority. Budgetary constraints were forcing many country offices to make difficult prioritization decisions; however, headquarters would continue to provide technical oversight and support to country offices, including through the task force, to support critical monitoring, assurance and safeguarding mechanisms.
182. Other members of WFP management spoke to affirm WFP's commitment to enhancing its corporate monitoring strategy and ensuring adequate resources for country office oversight activities. WFP was strengthening beneficiary identity management and its oversight of cooperating partners. For substantiated cases of misconduct, a disciplinary report was issued setting out actions taken by WFP. Management continued to promote the Speak Up campaign and other initiatives to foster a safe and respectful work environment in country offices. Work was ongoing to clarify the responsibilities of headquarters, regional bureaux and other stakeholders; WFP was also streamlining internal controls and raising country-level awareness of the need to combat fraud and corruption. In that regard, there had been an uptick in requests for fraud risk assessments, especially following the aid diversion in Ethiopia.

**2023/EB.A/15      Management review of significant risk and control issues, 2022**

183. Management presented the report, which contained an analysis of four significant risk and control matters and progress made by WFP in addressing them in 2022. Work was under way to improve workplace culture and conduct, talent management and workforce planning, NGO management, and beneficiary management and information technology solutions. Over time, staff were becoming more open in their feedback for the Executive Director's assurance exercise. Following suggestions from some respondents, the next exercise would capture greater detail on risk and control areas in supply chain operations, security, working with host governments and gender inclusion.
184. Board members welcomed the comprehensive report and its careful risk analysis. They commended WFP for ensuring continued controls and risk mitigation despite the many challenges it faced. They concurred that there was a need for continual improvement in WFP's overall control environment, especially in the areas of beneficiary management and NGO management.
185. One Board member praised WFP for promoting a speak-up culture around misconduct, developing informal conflict resolution mechanisms and taking steps to address concerns linked to gender equality, diversity and inclusion. He invited WFP leadership to respond to the reported loss of momentum perceived by staff in relation to improving workplace culture. He also urged WFP to strengthen its oversight of government entities and implementing partners and to continue to safeguard its humanitarian independence and impartiality.
186. Another Board member called on WFP to improve gender parity, including in technical positions and at the D-1 level, and expressed concern at the low numbers of qualified female candidates for positions in country offices and in remote and hardship locations. The Board member also asked how WFP would address data gaps, including on vulnerability, which continued to undermine accountability, and how it countered government attempts to exert influence during the preparation of beneficiary lists. She also requested an update on food diversion, fraud and corruption in Somalia, which has been identified in the report as a material event that needed strengthened controls.

187. Management said that workplace culture remained a cross-cutting priority for the Executive Director and senior leadership. The activities of the Workplace Culture Department continued at pace and a range of formal and informal channels were used to update staff on initiatives; WFP had also taken steps to improve the visibility of workplace culture at the field level. As part of its zero tolerance for misconduct, WFP was strengthening its performance management tools and investigative and disciplinary procedures to ensure that any areas of concern were identified and addressed as early as possible.
188. Through reassignment, management was striving to increase the number of female managerial staff at WFP country offices and had made significant progress in increasing the percentage of female national staff at those offices. WFP had almost achieved gender parity at the D-1 level, where women now comprised 45 percent of staff, and was focused on promoting gender parity at the D-2 level.
189. WFP trained local partners in anti-fraud and anti-corruption measures and was strengthening the oversight of its NGO partnerships, including in Ethiopia, Somalia and Ukraine, through dedicated digital management tools.
190. On monitoring, WFP was reviewing the composition of its field teams to ensure that they included food assistance monitors, including from third parties, and a mix of international and national staff. It was also establishing independent staff reporting lines to enhance impartiality and ran training courses for monitors. In Somalia, WFP had established a risk management unit, which was analysing post-delivery aid diversion risks, along with the inter-agency task force, and conducting a fraud risk assessment on mobile money transfers. Staff in Somalia also underwent ethics and conflict-sensitive risk analysis training and were made aware of best practices and lessons learned through WFP operations in the country.

**2023/EB.A/16 Report on the implementation of the External Auditor's recommendations**

191. The Deputy Director and Officer-in-Charge of the Risk Management Division reported on the progress made in implementing the 46 recommendations from the External Auditor that were outstanding at the annual session in June 2022. The 21 recommendations closed since then represented a closure rate of 46 percent and included most of the longstanding recommendations issued between 2017 and 2020. An additional three recommendations had been implemented and passed on to the External Auditor for validation, leaving 22 recommendations still outstanding. Most of those 22 related to changes that required long timeframes and cross-functional coordination for implementation, but management expected to complete 17 of them in 2023. The 27 new recommendations from the 2022 audited annual accounts were also included in the report.
192. One Board member took the floor to welcome the closure of all outstanding recommendations from 2017 and 2018 and applaud management for closing all other actions as agreed.

**Asia and the Pacific portfolio**

**2023/EB.A/17 Pacific multi-country strategic plan (2023–2027)**

193. In his presentation, the Country Director of the Pacific multi-country office said that the Pacific multi-country strategic plan (MCSP) was designed to facilitate the delivery of nationally led responses through national systems and programmes and sought to strengthen national and regional capacities to anticipate, prepare for and respond to disasters. Aligned with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, the plan also had a contingency for the delivery of mandated services to humanitarian partners when required.

194. Noting the vulnerability of many Pacific island countries and territories to the impacts of climate change, Board members welcomed the MCSP and its focus on enhancing shock-responsive social protection mechanisms and strengthening WFP's relationships in the region. Praising the approach to anticipatory action set out in the plan, one Board member urged WFP to deepen its collaboration with other humanitarian organizations, including the other RBAs, so as to make optimal use of its limited staff resources in the Pacific region. Another member commended plans to pre-position equipment and diversify procurement to include regional suppliers in order to mitigate the risk of supply chain disruptions. A third Board member called for WFP to ensure that it remained sensitive to the priorities of governments and described the value of SSTC in efforts to eradicate global hunger.
195. Responding to these comments, the Country Director said that WFP worked closely with FAO and IFAD including through joint programmes on food security and nutrition analysis in five Pacific island countries; together with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the RBAs had also launched a programme to support the economic empowerment of rural women. With regard to staffing, WFP was expanding its presence in the region and trusted that funds would be made available to support that process. WFP strongly believed that greater private sector engagement, including the engagement of local suppliers, could strengthen food security and nutrition across the region.
196. The Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific acknowledged that a lack of high-quality data continued to impede WFP activities in the Pacific region. WFP was therefore striving to improve data collection through food security surveillance mechanisms, including for the collection of data on gender and disability status. WFP would, moreover, continue to promote SSTC, including the sharing of technical expertise.
197. Following the approval of the MCSP, in a short video address the Deputy Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat described the challenges faced in the Pacific region, particularly the high rates of diet-related, non-communicable diseases. He welcomed WFP's support to the region, including for the rapid deployment of the Pacific Humanitarian Air Service during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and its willingness to partner with regional institutions, align its activities with Pacific priorities and share its global expertise.

## Evaluation reports

### **2023/EB.A/18      Annual evaluation report for 2022 and management response**

198. In introductory remarks, the Executive Director said that evaluation, which played a key role in oversight and transparency, underpinned her vision of a strong culture of accountability and learning throughout WFP. She looked forward to working closely with the Office of Evaluation (OEV), with a view to building WFP's evidence base and using it to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of WFP operations.
199. The interim Director of Evaluation presented the annual evaluation report, giving an overview of evaluations completed in 2022. A strategic evaluation of WFP's work in the area of PSEA had been launched and the Evaluation Methods Advisory Panel established to foster innovation in evaluation processes. CSP evaluations had identified systemic issues such as the limited use of evidence for timely decision-making, siloed management, sustainability challenges, a lack of technical expertise in specific areas and limited predictable funding. The Chief of Staff presented the management response to the report and acknowledged OEV's continued efforts to foster a culture of learning and accountability and expressed its commitment to addressing the systemic issues identified in the report.

200. Praising the quality of the report, Board members welcomed the broad range of evaluations conducted and urged management to implement all outstanding centralized evaluation recommendations. One Board member called on WFP to dedicate greater attention and resources to centralized evaluations of policies and strategies so as to identify and address weaknesses in decision-making and optimize its programming.
201. Another member said that future annual reports and management responses should include more information on systemic issues identified from evaluations other than CSP evaluations; reporting should also cover the findings and recommendations of joint and inter-agency evaluations and corresponding management responses. Two Board members were concerned that evaluation evidence was not systematically used in strategic decision-making and evidence-based programming, and that monitoring and reporting systems were not adequately linked to results-based management at the country office level. One member sought to understand how well WFP absorbed evaluation findings; she also asked whether further capacity building work would enable OEV to increase the organization's demand for and ability to use evaluation findings.
202. Turning to the PSEA evaluation, one Board member asked how the findings would be used to strengthen WFP's PSEA systems and approaches. Another member asked how OEV and management planned to work together in order to address challenges impacting the work of WFP and asked why evaluation teams had not provided timely information to management on the diversion of food assistance in Ethiopia.
203. Responding to the points raised by Board members, the interim Director of Evaluation said that OEV dedicated considerable attention to centralized evaluations and consulted regularly with management, regional bureaux, country offices and Board members on completed and upcoming evaluations of key strategic issues, including PSEA. OEV would study the feasibility of providing full information on systemic issues in future annual evaluation reports, including data usually provided in the annexes to the annual performance report. OEV was keen to engage in more regular communication with senior management in order to alert them directly and as early as possible of any systemic issues. OEV briefed the membership on the outcomes of joint and inter-agency evaluations but was ready to engage with the Bureau to find more efficient ways to communicate the results of those evaluations; OEV was, moreover, engaging with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to find ways to raise the profile of the associated management responses. To promote the use of evaluation evidence in decision-making and programming, OEV sought to raise awareness among managers of the evidence it had gathered on certain issues and prepared thematic summaries of evidence.
204. With regard to WFP's absorptive capacity, OEV was careful to prioritize recommendations to avoid overloading offices and engaged regularly with stakeholders throughout the evaluation process to keep them apprised of any issues coming to light; post-data collection debriefing sessions and workshops on evaluation findings were held with country offices, managers and other actors.
205. OEV was updating its technical note on the quality of recommendations to ensure that they were pitched appropriately. Given the significant increase in the number of joint evaluations being conducted, OEV was striving to ensure that, for every joint evaluation, there was a joint management response, and that WFP followed up on any relevant actions taken in that regard.

#### **2023/EB.A/19      Implementation status of evaluation recommendations**

206. Management introduced the report, noting that the overall implementation rate for the 206 recommendations due for implementation in 2022 stood at 66 percent, an 8 percentage-point increase over the figure for 2021. The average implementation rate from 2020 to 2022 was just under 80 percent, which approached the benchmark of 85 percent

over three years set by the Joint Inspection Unit to indicate a “high level of use” of evaluation. Regional implementation rates varied as a function of the number of evaluations carried out, the number of actions required to implement each recommendation, the availability of funding for implementation, especially in relation to CSPs, and the availability of human resources to address the rapid increase in the number of evaluations requested.

207. Welcoming the improvement in the overall implementation rate, one Board member expressed concern at the limited progress made in reducing the time between the completion of evaluations and the implementation of recommendations. WFP should establish realistic timeframes for the completion of actions when drafting management responses, particularly in connection with strategic and policy matters. The same Board member was also concerned that two regional bureaux had implemented none of the evaluation actions due in 2022 and that some lead offices had implementation rates of less than 50 percent. It was important to monitor the implementation of recommendations, identify issues hindering implementation and provide support to offices struggling to complete recommendation actions. WFP should, moreover, redouble its efforts to increase the recommendation implementation rate so as to achieve the JIU benchmark.
208. Responding to the points raised, management assured Board members that it would continue to focus on improving implementation rates and on supporting offices that were finding it challenging to close recommendations. Evaluation recommendations were an integral part of the performance management system. WFP was piloting the use of artificial intelligence in its efforts to identify emerging recommendation trends. To address systemic weaknesses and areas of concern, management not only took into consideration the outcomes of WFP evaluations but also the findings of reports issued by the External Auditor, OIG and the Joint Inspection Unit.

**2023/EB.A/20      Summary report on the evaluation of the policy on country strategic plans and management response**

209. Presenting the summary report, the acting Director of Evaluation said that the CSP policy was part of WFP’s efforts to align its work with the 2030 Agenda and the commitments stemming from the World Humanitarian Summit. There had been a dramatic growth in humanitarian needs during the implementation of the policy. The evaluation had focused on WFP’s strategic repositioning, the quality and results of programmes, and management, governance and accountability under the policy. It had found the policy to be relevant, timely, coherent with WFP’s policy framework and aligned with national and United Nations priorities. Weaknesses included a lack of clarity regarding WFP’s comparative advantages, limited progress in establishing the national ownership and sustainability of CSP interventions, and the length and complexity of the CSP approval process.
210. The Director of the Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division said that WFP’s implementation of the CSP policy had evolved significantly since 2016 and brought it in line with the United Nations development system reform. Management had agreed with the six recommendations included in the report and the Director outlined the plans for implementing them.
211. Board members welcomed the positive findings of the evaluation and shared their views on how to address the issues raised in the report. They encouraged management to base the prioritization of programmes on WFP’s capabilities, the available resources and needs at the country level, coordinating its decisions with partners and communicating them to donors and other stakeholders. CSPs provided an opportunity for WFP to clarify its role at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus and members welcomed management’s plans for doing so, saying that the Board must be involved in those discussions and in decision-making, particularly with regard to the definition of WFP’s role in peacebuilding, which should take into account the mandates of other United Nations entities.

212. Given the importance of maintaining WFP's expertise and capacity in emergency response, members said that the design and implementation of CSPs should make adequate provision for WFP's work in emergency assistance, the management and strengthening of supply chains and the planning of exit and handover strategies. Careful workforce planning, the strengthening of internal systems and the consistent application of monitoring and oversight measures were also essential. Members looked forward to seeing the results of WFP's efforts to simplify CSP approval and review processes and encouraged management to formulate guidance for country offices on the development of multiannual needs-based budgets for work on building resilience and addressing the root causes of food insecurity.
213. In response to questions raised by Board members, the acting Director of Evaluation said that WFP policies were evaluated between four and six years after the start of their implementation and could be evaluated again at a later date, at management's request. A policy evaluation did not necessarily lead to the updating of a policy or the design of a new one. Management took note of the other comments and undertook to work with the Executive Board Bureau on deciding how best to involve the Board in implementing evaluation recommendations, including with regard to WFP's role at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

**2023/EB.A/21      Summary report on the evaluation of the disaster risk reduction and climate change policies and management response**

214. The interim Director of Evaluation presented the evaluation, which had assessed the quality, results and factors influencing the results of WFP's policies on disaster risk reduction and management and climate change. Both policies were found to have clear conceptual frameworks and strong context analysis and were well aligned with WFP strategic plans and international frameworks in place at the time. However, they lacked clarity on implementation mechanisms. Policy influence on operational results varied. The climate change policy facilitated access to new funding opportunities and the growth of innovative interventions. The evaluation resulted in eight recommendations which encompassed repositioning disaster risk reduction and management across relevant WFP policies and guidance; updating WFP's climate change policy and developing a costed implementation plan; increasing access to flexible and multi-year funding; improving WFP's monitoring, evaluation and learning on climate action; ensuring sufficient staffing capacities and skills; supporting country offices in implementing a multi-risk, multi-stakeholder and locally led approach on climate action and disaster risk reduction and management; and enhancing strategic partnerships.
215. Management welcomed the approach of evaluating relevant policies together and agreed with all eight recommendations, noting that implementation had already started on several of them.
216. Board members endorsed the report and its recommendations, particularly the recommendation on updating the climate change policy and positioning climate change as a cross-cutting issue. Various members encouraged WFP to work on climate action with its partners, particularly the other RBAs, and ensure that climate action was anchored in national systems and locally led actors. WFP was called on to engage in joint climate risk analysis, share lessons learned on climate resilience and anticipatory action for climate shocks, develop a single climate strategy for the three RBAs and develop indicators and results frameworks to gauge its contribution to resilience, the triple nexus and institutional learning.
217. On the recommendation to reposition the disaster risk reduction and management policy across the different functional areas, WFP was encouraged to maintain its commitment to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and strengthen reporting on Sendai indicators. Board members called for a clear vision and a set of principles to further

develop disaster risk-related interventions, with consideration of how to proactively and comprehensively address all hazards and risks.

218. More generally, WFP was encouraged to pay more attention to disability, map its partnerships to clarify where it added value through the evaluated policies and present a costed implementation plan for the climate change policy update. One member asked how WFP was working with partners and national governments to advance the implementation of the loss and damage mechanism established at the 2022 United Nations conference on climate change.
219. Responding to these comments, OEV explained that disability inclusion was not mentioned in the evaluation because the two policies pre-dated the United Nations disability inclusion strategy and the WFP disability inclusion road map; both policies nevertheless included clear commitments to reaching the most vulnerable. Guidelines on evaluating disability inclusion in policies and programmes had recently been developed, but it would take time for the impact of the disability inclusion road map to be fully visible in programmes.
220. On the call for an RBA climate strategy, WFP management said that the three agencies consulted each other when drafting their climate change policies, yielding alignment at the global level. At the country level, the situation was often dynamic, and the RBAs benefited from the latitude provided by their individual policies, relying on consultations and their country plans to ensure that engagement was well aligned and duplication avoided.
221. Regarding the potential to use climate finance to reduce humanitarian needs, management reported that through targeted work with bilateral and multilateral climate finance partners, WFP had facilitated the greatest coverage of food-insecure people with climate risk insurance of all United Nations entities. Climate finance also enabled the development of systems for early warning and anticipatory action for floods and droughts, reducing relief costs. WFP was engaged in the debate around loss and damage, with a primary focus on climate protection for the most vulnerable and food-insecure people. Climate-smart school feeding, which WFP was championing in partnership with the global School Meals Coalition, was a good example of the link between climate action and food systems transformation, which would be one of the focus themes at the upcoming United Nations climate change conference.
222. Disaster risk reduction and management would be repositioned across thematic policies and WFP would continue to serve as the interface with the Sendai Framework and engage in United Nations-wide reporting and dialogue on disaster risk. Climate action was already a cross-cutting theme, as seen in the strong links between climate risk insurance and shock responsive social protection, anticipatory action and emergency preparedness and response, sustainable energy and smallholder support, and climate risk analysis and supply chain; this more integrated way of working would be reflected in the climate change policy update. On risk analysis, the analysis that underpinned resilience programmes could be complemented with additional climate risk information; externally, WFP would ensure that its risk information was integrated with that from the other RBAs as well as the World Meteorological Organization, the World Bank and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.
223. Climate action-related field support, programme integration, thought leadership and resource mobilization were the focus of the WFP climate crisis task force, which comprised representatives from each WFP region and from key functions including supply chain, research, assessment and monitoring, and emergency operations.

**2023/EB.A/22 Summary report on the evaluation of the policy on building resilience for food security and nutrition and management response**

224. The acting Director of Evaluation presented the summary report on the evaluation, which had found the policy to have remained broadly relevant but to be in need of an update to clarify the terminology used and the policy's theory of change and accountability framework. The evaluation had also called for shared ownership of integrated resilience programming throughout WFP, the allocation of sufficient human and financial resources for resilience building work, and increased monitoring of, and learning from, resilience activities.
225. Management agreed with the evaluation findings and outlined the plans for implementing the five recommendations.
226. Board members took note of the evaluation findings, which several members said were similar to those of other evaluations, including the recommendations regarding the need to clarify WFP's role in resilience building, prioritize resilience building work in the face of constrained resources and develop staff capacity and skills.
227. Many members welcomed the planned policy update as an opportunity to define WFP's contribution to and comparative advantage in resilience building work with a view to boosting donor support in this area. Beneficiaries and partners, including host governments, civil society and the private sector, should be involved in the update, which should define an approach to resilience building that could be adapted to all environments including emergency, conflict and urban settings. WFP staff should receive customized guidance on how to integrate resilience programming into their respective areas of work, with examples of relevant activities. Emphasizing the contribution of resilience building to development and humanitarian objectives would make it easier to define the value and role of WFP in that work.
228. Expressing concern about the shortcomings of WFP's current reporting and monitoring systems related to the outcomes of resilience building, Board members said that they looked forward to seeing the results of management's efforts to address this issue and recommended engaging the other RBAs and other partners in that work. An effective monitoring system should be capable of assessing the short- and long-term impacts of resilience building initiatives on the reduction of humanitarian needs, including when such initiatives were implemented in emergency or crisis settings. In particular, members said that it was important to track the effects of resilience building on the nutrition status of women and children and encouraged management to develop a comprehensive approach to the integration of gender- and social inclusion-related objectives into WFP's resilience work.
229. Members said that decisions on resilience building should be taken strategically at the corporate level rather than being based on the availability of funding. Priority should be given to work that leveraged WFP's comparative advantage, and management should carry out a global assessment of WFP's resilience building capacity with a view to ensuring that the organization had the necessary resources, staff and systems.
230. Thanking Board members for their comments, the acting Director of Evaluation said that while more needed to be done on embedding resilience building in WFP's emergency response, examples such as in the Lebanon pointed to some progress in this area. The results of an impact evaluation of WFP's resilience activities would be available shortly.
231. Management described other recent developments, including the formulation of new indicators of resilience, the establishment of a high-level working group on measuring resilience and the drafting of programme guidance on resilience. A consultation on resilience-related performance measurement and evidence gathering would be held with the Board in December 2023.

## Middle East, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe portfolio

### **2023/EB.A/23 Egypt country strategic plan (2023–2028), including an abbreviated presentation of the evaluation results and recommendations from item 7 e) 1) Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Egypt (2018–2023)**

232. The acting Director of Evaluation presented the evaluation of the CSP for 2018–2023, which had found WFP to be on track towards the achievement of its intended results in child and maternal nutrition, food security for refugees, climate change adaptation and the use of technology and innovation. Challenges included a fragmented approach to the identification and implementation of interventions, a lack of long-term planning in WFP's work with other United Nations entities, cases of the suboptimal use of WFP's vulnerability analysis capacity and shortages of human and financial resources for monitoring.
233. The Country Director for Egypt presented the new CSP for 2023–2028, which focused on assisting food-insecure people and communities, enhancing human capital development and strengthening social protection and food systems. It was based on national and United Nations priorities and the findings and five recommendations from the evaluation.
234. Board members welcomed the new CSP, highlighting its support for the national school feeding programme, integrated nutrition interventions, South–South and triangular cooperation and smallholder farmers. Commending the CSP's consistency with national plans and WFP's strong collaboration with the Government of Egypt, including its use of government systems for the targeting of most CSP activities, Board members encouraged WFP to continue supporting national efforts to improve food security and nutrition.
235. Members also praised the integration of evaluation findings into the CSP, particularly those concerning capacity strengthening activities. One member welcomed WFP's development of a joint targeting hub with UNHCR and several commended WFP's rapid response to the recent arrival of refugees from the Sudan, with one requesting information on the implications of that response for WFP's strategic priorities and the CSP budget. Members also expressed their appreciation of the Government's generous approach to hosting Sudanese refugees and its commitment to co-financing the programmes of WFP and other humanitarian and development actors.
236. The Country Director thanked the Board for its inputs throughout the CSP development process. He said that WFP's assistance for Sudanese refugees in Egypt was part of a joint United Nations refugee response plan with a budget of USD 114 million, of which WFP represented USD 16 million. The WFP plan was almost 50 percent funded, with contributions from donor governments and the Central Emergency Response Fund. WFP had requested resources for six months, but an extension was likely to be needed. WFP was assessing future needs, but it was too early to tell how the Sudanese refugee response would affect its other activities in Egypt.
237. The Governor of the Central Bank of Egypt thanked the Board and staff of WFP for their support in Egypt and reiterated his country's commitment to promoting food security and reducing hunger for Egyptians and the 10 million people hosted in Egypt. The CSP would help the Government and people of Egypt to address the challenges they faced and move towards their development goals.

## Eastern Africa portfolio

### **2023/EB.A/24 Kenya country strategic plan (2023–2027), including an abbreviated presentation of the evaluation results and recommendations from item 7 e) 2) Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Kenya (2018–2023)**

238. The acting Director of Evaluation presented the CSP evaluation, which had found positive results in the areas of asset creation and livelihoods support, support for national social protection and emergency preparedness and response systems, and supply chain management. The six evaluation recommendations set out improvements in organizational structure, skillsets, monitoring and evaluation and greater investment in self-reliance and resilience for refugees and host communities.
239. The Country Director for Kenya then presented the new CSP, which was the outcome of extensive stakeholder consultations and reflected the evaluation recommendations.
240. Board members welcomed the evaluation recommendations and the new CSP. There was strong support for the focus on strengthening food systems and integrating refugees into host communities. Speaking on behalf of a group of countries, one member welcomed the combination of increased emergency response funding and the shift towards addressing the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition; another member asked how WFP intended to balance the planned shift towards capacity strengthening with the large budget allocation to emergency response. A third member suggested that WFP needed to better articulate its role within the complex architecture of food security that included international financial institutions, the private sector and the national government.
241. With regard to refugees, one Board member described the use of cash and safety nets as crucial in moving from a status-based to a needs-based approach and urged WFP to work with UNHCR to address all needs. Another member welcomed the Government's transition to a settlement model and the inclusive and gender-responsive capacity building and technical support to be provided to refugees, host communities and market actors, underscoring the importance of ensuring that vulnerable groups were included in these programmes. A third member sought more information on innovative solutions for building resilience at the field level.
242. Responding to Board questions, the Country Director said that WFP engaged in continuous dialogue with the Government to synchronize its approach to food systems, food security and school feeding. The budget for emergency response reflected the increased frequency and intensity of droughts in the region.
243. For refugees, a new joint action plan between WFP, UNHCR and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, in conjunction with the municipal developments recently approved by the Government, meant that WFP was now developing food systems for what used to be refugee camps.
244. With respect to innovation, the country office was exploring how WFP could work with communities and young people to find local solutions for local food systems problems. After the worst drought in 40 years, for instance, WFP was working with the private sector and the local government in northern Kenya to desalinate groundwater in order to dramatically expand the availability of cultivatable land.
245. Following the approval of the CSP, the Cabinet Secretary of the National Treasury and Economic Planning of Kenya spoke about his Government's development agenda and the reforms being introduced to achieve Kenya Vision 2030. The Government appreciated the alignment of the CSP with national priorities and its focus on meeting immediate needs and addressing the root causes of food insecurity in order to strengthen national food systems.

The CSP would also support the implementation of the settlement approach aimed at integrating refugees into host communities.

## **Southern Africa portfolio**

### **2023/EB.A/25 Zambia country strategic plan (2023–2028), including an abbreviated presentation of the evaluation results and recommendations from item 7 e) 3) Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Zambia (2019–2023)**

246. The acting Director of Evaluation gave an overview of the evaluation of the CSP for Zambia (2019–2023), which had found WFP to have been effective in responding to COVID-19, improving smallholder resilience, strengthening government capacity related to nutrition and improving partner response capacity. However, funding shortfalls and delays had hampered drought and refugee operations and nutrition support, and WFP had made limited progress in shifting away from the direct provision of food assistance. The evaluation had made six recommendations in the areas of targeting, nutrition, social protection, cross-cutting issues, advocacy and resilience building.
247. The Country Director for Zambia then presented the CSP for Zambia for 2023–2028, which built on the achievements of the previous CSP and sought to address food insecurity through a comprehensive food systems approach. The new CSP reflected the recommendations stemming from the evaluation.
248. Board members welcomed the evaluation recommendations and their incorporation into the design of the new CSP. They indicated strong support for the CSP and particular appreciation for WFP's engagement in transitioning from direct assistance to resilience building, the explicit inclusion of refugees and advocacy for improved refugee integration, and WFP's ongoing support for the scale-up of the home-grown school feeding programme. One member encouraged the Government of Zambia and WFP to share their successes and challenges in scaling up home-grown school meals with other countries in the region, particularly with respect to funding.
249. Noting the emphasis on capacity strengthening and resilience building, one Board member asked WFP to ensure adequate capacity to meet humanitarian needs. Members also sought additional information on plans to strengthen funding and enhance CSP implementation; measures to minimize the use of negative coping strategies by refugees in the event of ration cuts; WFP's proposed livelihoods and early recovery programme and its inclusion of refugees outside of Manatapala; the partnership with the World Bank on shock-responsive social protection programmes; and WFP's concerns regarding coordination mechanisms in Zambia.
250. Responding to Board questions, the Country Director said that the country office was working on various funding sources, including the private sector and the Government. On crisis response, the Government of Zambia had developed sufficient capacity to respond to shocks and WFP only intervened when needs exceeded the Government's capacity. With respect to refugees, WFP worked closely with UNHCR and the joint UNHCR/WFP hub to support refugees in the Manatapala refugee camp; the proposed self-reliance initiative for Manatapala also included the host communities. On home-grown school meals, representatives of a number of African countries had travelled to Zambia in the past two years to learn from its experience of transitioning to a government-led programme; this initiative would continue.
251. Following the approval of the CSP, the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Zambia welcomed the plan and affirmed his Government's commitment to supporting the implementation of WFP's initiatives and the CSP. The plan was aligned with national development priorities and in particular with the Government's own efforts to enhance

smallholder farmers' resilience to climate change and other shocks and their access to markets, credit and agricultural inputs.

## Policy issues (continued)

### **2023/EB.A/26 Update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system)**

252. Management shared recent developments in WFP's implementation of United Nations development system (UNDS) reform and repositioning, which were also described in other Board documents including the annual performance report. Despite advancements, efforts to achieve the SDGs had been gravely impacted by the intense and unprecedented "polycrisis" unfolding around the world; progress had been reversed for more than 30 percent of SDG targets and was insufficient for a further 50 percent. There was therefore a growing need to focus on the results on the ground rather than processes.
253. As a member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group's Programme Working Group and related Advisory Group on Joint Programmes, WFP had contributed to a guidance note on a new generation of joint programmes. Released in late 2022, the guidance note was aimed at introducing a more streamlined joint programme process to enable rapid implementation with fewer transaction costs. Subsequently, WFP developed a practical tip sheet to provide advice for country offices throughout the life cycle of joint programmes.
254. Speaking on behalf of a list, one Board member called for the full commitment of UNDS entities to implement reform and described the resident coordinator system as essential to accelerating country-level progress towards the SDGs. The list recommended four actions to be taken by WFP: to support the resident and humanitarian coordinators in utilizing their convening authority to bring the system together to do more than the sum of its parts; to further eliminate duplication and generate synergies at the country and regional levels; to ensure full compliance with the renewed management and accountability framework; and to report annually on the full UNDS reform checklist as an annex to its existing reporting. In connection with the framework, WFP was requested to ensure full alignment of CSPs with United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks (UNSDCFs), reinforce the role of resident coordinators in the performance reviews of agency heads including in more 360-degree appraisals and consult resident coordinators ahead of the selection progress for United Nations country team members to ensure a fostering of leadership with the necessary skillsets to leverage each entity's comparative advantages.
255. In response, WFP management highlighted its dedicated workstream for the implementation of the management and accountability framework and its engagement in webinars and induction courses to inform country office leadership of the approach; the organization would also contribute to the next review of the framework. WFP management further welcomed consulting with resident coordinators on the skillsets and profiles of leadership for United Nations country team members while noting the Executive Director's role in the selection and appointment process of WFP country representatives. Management also indicated that the Human Resources Division and the Executive Director would continue to discuss this process. On the UNDS reform checklist, WFP welcomed this approach of annexing the checklist to the existing annual reporting.
256. WFP recognized the pivotal role of resident coordinators in facilitating interventions at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Over 85 percent of approved CSPs were aligned with the UNSDCFs, from which WFP derived its country portfolios of resilience and root causes interventions; the crisis response components of CSPs were aligned with humanitarian response plans. WFP continued to use its operational presence to facilitate the work of other United Nations entities. Work also continued on the reform of regional

architecture including through the inter-agency programme working group. Management would keep the Board informed on further progress in all these areas.

## **Administrative and managerial matters**

### **2023/EB.A/27 Appointment of the Director of Evaluation**

257. The interim Assistant Executive Director of the Workplace Culture Department outlined the process for the selection of the new Director of Evaluation and presented Ms Anne-Claire Luzot, currently the interim Director of Evaluation, as the candidate recommended by the selection panel and the Executive Director.
258. Several Board members took the floor to thank the selection panel for its work and express their support for the appointment of Ms Luzot. The Board then endorsed her appointment as Director of Evaluation.

### **2023/EB.A/28 Appointment of one member to the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee**

259. As chair of the selection panel for the appointment of one member to the IOAC, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Kenya introduced the item. She outlined the process for the selection of the new member, who would replace an IOAC member whose term would expire in July 2023.
260. The selection panel recommended that the Board appoint Ms Margaret Dezse of Hungary to the IOAC. Recognizing the quality of another shortlisted candidate, the panel wished to note that in the event that the first recommended candidate was unavailable, the Board should consider the next candidate on the shortlist, who was also a female national of a List E Member State.
261. On the recommendation of the selection panel, the Board approved the appointment of Ms Margaret Dezse to serve as member of the IOAC. Her three-year term would begin on 30 July 2023.

### **2023/EB.A/29 Security report**

262. The Director of the Security Division presented an overview of the 2022 report, describing trends in security incidents, her division's support to WFP programming and its priorities for 2023 and beyond. She also updated the Board on the security response in Haiti and the Sudan, where WFP had scaled up its security presence including through increased use of technology. In Haiti, the Security Division had worked in cooperation with other United Nations partners and local counterparts to respond to crime and had delivered security training to local and international staff. In the Sudan, the division had played a central role in coordinating the evacuation of international staff and had supported the self-relocation of national staff; as operations resumed, teams had been deployed to increase civil-military coordination, lead access negotiations and augment the capacity of the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) for the entire United Nations system.
263. Board members applauded the Security Division for its important and often dangerous work and expressed their condolences to the families and colleagues of those who had lost their lives in the service of the most vulnerable. Members expressed concern at the growing number of threats and attacks against humanitarian personnel, particularly the increase in incidents affecting female personnel, and appreciated the additional steps taken to address that trend. One member asked WFP to continue to report on incidents involving female personnel and to share feedback on mitigation measures introduced. Members also requested additional information on WFP's support for local personnel, the organizational structure of the Security Division and the budget implications of providing security services.

264. Responding to the points raised, the Director said that WFP was improving its planning mechanisms to make better use of available resources. She stressed, however, that as the scope of WFP operations widened, the division would require additional resources if it were to continue to provide robust security to WFP personnel and ensure continuity of operations worldwide. On the safety of female personnel, WFP was gathering data through its global women's security awareness training course and analysing it to provide more targeted information for women. As national personnel were more at risk, WFP was reassessing its approach to their security risk management including in coordination with the wider Inter-Agency Security Management Network.
265. The division interacted with many different units within WFP, particularly with the divisions of Emergency Operations, Human Resources, Risk Management and Technology.
266. In the Sudan, a fact-finding mission had been launched for the deaths of WFP personnel in collaboration with DSS; a lessons learned exercise would be used to improve future security crisis response. The Security Division had also engaged external expertise to advise on hybrid actors, and knowledge and information management. As for budgetary implications, funding for staff safety and security came from different sources including the PSA budget, the broader United Nations system and country office budgets. The division was working with DSS to streamline the different processes including the mission security clearance process in order to reduce the bureaucratic burden.

**2023/EB.A/30 Report on global losses for the period 1 January–31 December 2022**

267. Presenting the report, management said that while food losses had decreased between 2021 and 2022, WFP was maintaining its focus on risk mitigation and controls in light of the growing complexity of supply chains. As part of this work, WFP was re-engineering supply chain processes, including its procurement procedures and tracking and tracing systems.
268. Most losses in 2022 had involved cereals and had often occurred in contexts of conflict and insecurity and in countries with poor logistics infrastructure. Inadequate transport, improper storage and issues related to reconstitution and repacking had accounted for 64 percent of total post-delivery losses. WFP remained committed to capturing food losses throughout the supply chain, recognizing that the "last mile" had always posed a challenge.
269. One Board member took the floor to express appreciation for the detailed report, particularly the breakdown of losses by country. He asked how country offices monitored, reported and addressed unintended uses of food after distribution. He also called on WFP to revisit its analysis of food distribution losses in Eastern Africa and explain the measures it was taking to strengthen commodity management in that region. Further information was sought on efforts to improve bag checks and whether these were reducing bag breakage rates; steps taken to address the issue of "inadequate transport"; and the reasons for the almost six-fold increase in the share of losses attributable to improper or overlong storage. All regional bureaux were urged to minimize losses through more robust oversight and compliance measures.
270. Responding to the points raised, management said that, in order to minimize post-distribution losses, WFP was reinforcing its oversight activities, carrying out system improvements and facilitating shorter food distribution distances, striving to strengthen its supply chains further.
271. Most food losses had occurred in Eastern Africa in 2022 primarily because that region had received very large volumes of food assistance and hosted large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. As many beneficiaries resided in inaccessible areas, supply chains were often very complex, increasing the risk of food losses. The Procurement Branch was following up on WFP's request for more stringent bag checks. The rise in losses attributable to the improper or overlong storage of food had occurred while WFP was

handling large volumes of food deliveries; those losses were covered by insurance or recovered from the companies responsible for transporting or storing the lost food. The term “inadequate transport” referred to the use of non-food grade vehicles to transport food; to combat that practice and minimize losses, WFP was increasing the use of its own trucks and had stepped up inspections of transport vehicles used by private sector contractors.

### **2023/EB.A/31 Update on food procurement**

272. Management reported that total food procurement had amounted to 4.2 million mt in 2022. Compared with 2021, this represented a 5 percent decrease in volume but a 37 percent increase in value, reflecting significant rises in global food prices and certain programmatic decisions made by WFP. Of the total value of food procured, 50 percent had been procured in local and regional markets, including from smallholder farmers.
273. Board members commended WFP’s efforts to procure food locally and regionally, which shortened supply chains, reduced costs, supported local food systems and strengthened local economies. Members encouraged WFP to work with local and national governments and other partners in building relevant capacities and fostering the sustainability and national and local ownership of the agrifood sector. Coordination with the work of FAO and IFAD would be particularly valuable in those efforts, and WFP should also explore opportunities for expanding its local procurement of fortified foods. Several members emphasized the importance of enhancing the capacities of smallholder farmers, especially women and vulnerable communities, and ensuring that women farmers, merchants and traders were included in its supply chains whenever possible. Members asked about WFP’s plans for addressing current and future risks to its procurement practices, including its goal of procuring 10 percent of food needs from smallholder farmers by 2027.
274. Regarding other aspects of the update, members encouraged WFP to continue tracking and minimizing the impact of its assistance on the environment and looked forward to seeing the results of the piloting of alternative food packaging. They also requested additional information on WFP’s involvement in third-party procurement on behalf of governments or other partners and urged all parties to support the continuation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. One member said that transparent global procurement was also important in underpinning global humanitarian relief work.
275. Responding to the questions raised, management said that WFP was carrying out a study on the impact of its supply chains on local economies and would share the results with the Board, along with updates on mitigation measures taken. The organization also planned to expand its local procurement of fortified foods. WFP entered into third-party procurement arrangements only when requested by a government and had no plans to expand such activities. It was working with regional entities, international financial institutions and the other RBAs to develop a support package for countries seeking to rebuild their grain reserves. Management would share with the Board the results of an ongoing analysis of the impact of food price inflation on WFP’s local procurement.
276. Regarding the significance of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and WFP’s exemption from the food export bans imposed by certain countries, the Board heard that of the 780,000 mt of wheat purchased by WFP in 2022, 435,000 mt had been purchased in Ukraine, 406,000 mt had been transported under the Black Sea Grain Initiative and 235,000 mt had been purchased from Pakistan.

### **Oral update from the President on the Governance Review Project**

277. The President of the Executive Board summarized the main actions carried out under the governance review project, the first such exercise for 20 years. An ad hoc governance review steering committee had been established by the Board Bureau comprising one Board member from each of the electoral lists; a consultant had completed a review of WFP's current governance arrangements in May. The findings and recommendations from that review – which focused on the respective roles and responsibilities of the Executive Board and the Bureau, the processes for informal Board meetings and good practices from other United Nations agencies – had been circulated to the membership via the Bureau.
278. The Bureau was currently discussing the arrangements for informal Board consultations on those findings, which would give Board members the opportunity to identify the recommendations that they supported and suggest any additional areas of governance that they wished to reflect on. The President proposed that following the consultations, a working group on governance could be established during the second regular session of the Board, tasked with working on the recommendations to be proposed for Board approval. In the meantime, the governance review would continue to be discussed at Bureau meetings.
279. A number of Board members took the floor to thank all concerned for their work on the review and to express their agreement with the President's proposals and their commitment to supporting the completion of the project.

### **Other business**

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

280. The President presented an overview of the 2023 Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office of Project Services, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP, which had taken place on 2 June 2023 on the theme of "the importance of joint development solutions and quality financing in the face of multiple crises".
281. During a panel discussion among the principals of the organizations, the WFP Executive Director had stressed the importance of strengthening collaboration across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and mobilizing every potential source of financing, including through expanded engagement with international financial institutions and the private sector. She had also called on Member States to step up their financial commitments to achieving the SDGs.
282. The collective membership had called for greater investment and synergies across humanitarian, development and climate action in alignment with national development priorities. There had also been calls for inclusive, equitable and innovative financing, including through debt swaps. Member States had applauded WFP's leadership in resilience building, anticipatory action, nutrition and social protection, especially through its school feeding programmes.
283. The President had delivered closing remarks at the meeting, encouraging delegates to maintain a strong spirit of collaboration and to take forward the ideas and solutions discussed and translate them into concrete action.
284. A summary report of the meeting would be posted ahead of the 2023 second regular session of the WFP Executive Board.

**2023/EB.A/32 Update on United Nations Humanitarian Air Service**

285. Management reported that UNHAS had provided reliable transport for passengers and humanitarian cargo in 2022 despite facing operational and funding challenges. To address these, the service was introducing and scaling up new emergency response solutions; exploring sustainable alternative air transport options, new approaches to its fleet and route optimization in connection with infrastructure rehabilitation; and building coalitions in areas such as environmental efficiency, flexible financing and digitalization. Significant efficiency gains had been achieved in 2022, with CO<sub>2</sub> emissions down nearly 23 percent since 2020 and UNHAS user satisfaction rising to 95 percent from 83 percent in 2020.
286. In the face of serious budget constraints, UNHAS had launched a centralized funding mechanism in order to increase flexibility on funding allocations and permit swifter response to urgent needs. It was also exploring ways to establish and nurture more dynamic and effective private sector partnerships and seeking investment in aviation infrastructure rehabilitation projects to optimize its routes and fleet configuration.
287. Acknowledging that the service was a crucial enabler for the humanitarian community, Board members commended UNHAS for continuing to deliver timely services in 2022 despite unprecedented challenges and applauded progress made in reducing the environmental impact of UNHAS operations, improving airport infrastructure and optimizing routes.
288. With respect to funding, members welcomed the new strategy for funding mobilization and the establishment of the central funding mechanism. One member underscored the importance of timely and generous contributions and several called for increased support from the donor community. Another member proposed addressing the gap between resources and needs by strengthening partnerships with the private sector, governments and regional organizations to ensure that everyone was focused on the same approach.
289. One member expressed concern about UNHAS financial management and transparency, urging the service to ensure consistent practices globally through transparent sharing of budgets and plans for its operations and routes, and financial sustainability through fair and equitable sharing of the financial burden by all UNHAS users. The same member encouraged UNHAS to be transparent in sharing details on passengers and cargo to increase confidence and trust in its principled humanitarian role and to share its criteria for providing medical and security evacuations. Another member invited UNHAS to provide more information on its infrastructure improvement activities, sustainable aviation fuel options and the development of strategic partnerships to improve access.
290. The Chief of Aviation took note of the comments, particularly those related to increasing the donor base and strengthening links with the private sector and development partners. With respect to both humanitarian access and the central financing mechanism, he proposed holding dedicated sessions with the "Friends of UNHAS", which could be extended to the entire Board at a later stage.

**Summary of the work of the Executive Board****2023/EB.A/33 Summary of the work of the 2023 first regular session of the Executive Board**

291. The President thanked the Rapporteur for the 2023 first regular session of the Executive Board for preparing the summary of that session and reported that the draft summary had been distributed to the Board members. The Board then approved the summary.

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

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

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

293. Thanking Board members for their support and friendship, the Executive Director said that the session had been a very valuable opportunity to understand their issues and concerns. These insights would shape the way in which WFP worked on the three priorities that she had proposed during her opening remarks: expanding its resource base, sharpening its focus on boosting efficiency and effectiveness, and scaling up partnerships to tackle the causes of hunger. Early progress in those areas included the establishment of a task force on global accountability charged with ensuring the strongest possible monitoring safeguards and controls in all WFP operations. In addition, she advised that the senior management group had now agreed to present a reduced PSA budget in the management plan for 2024–2026; ways of lowering and possibly redirecting PSA spending in 2023 were also being explored.
294. The Executive Director paid tribute to the dedication of WFP staff in working to end food insecurity and pledged to do everything that she could to support them in helping vulnerable communities to build a future free from hunger. She underscored WFP's commitment to being fully transparent and accountable to the Board, including through updates on all developments, adding that working together as a united team, WFP would do whatever it took to end hunger and save lives.

## ANNEX I

### Decisions and recommendations

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

#### Adoption of the agenda

The Board adopted the agenda for the session.

*26 June 2023*

#### Election to fill two vacant positions in the Bureau and appointment of the Rapporteur

In accordance with the rules of procedure of the Board, the Board elected H.E. Md. Shameem Ahsan (Bangladesh, List B) as member of the Bureau.

In accordance with rule XII of its rules of procedure, the Board appointed H.E. Zsolt Belánszky-Demkó (Hungary, List E) as Rapporteur for its 2023 annual session.

*26 June 2023*

#### Current and future strategic issues

##### 2023/EB.A/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.

*26 June 2023*

#### Annual reports

##### 2023/EB.A/2 Annual performance report for 2022

The Board approved the annual performance report for 2022 (WFP/EB.A/2023/4-A/Rev.1), noting that it provided a comprehensive record of WFP performance for the year. In accordance with General Regulation VI.3, and pursuant to its decisions 2000/EB.A/2 and 2004/EB.A/11, to resolution E/2013/L.17 of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the decision adopted by the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations at its 148th Session in 2013, the Board requested that the annual performance report for 2022 be forwarded to the Economic and Social Council and the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization, along with the present decision and the Board's decisions and recommendations for 2022.

*27 June 2023*

##### 2023/EB.A/3 Annual report of the Ethics Office for 2022

The Board took note of the annual report of the Ethics Office for 2022 (WFP/EB.A/2023/4-B).

*27 June 2023*

##### 2023/EB.A/4 Annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2022 and management note

The Board took note of the annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2022 (WFP/EB.A/2023/4-C).

The Board also took note of the management note to the annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2022 (WFP/EB.A/2023/4-C/Add.1).

*27 June 2023*

**Policy issues****2023/EB.A/5 Cash policy**

The Board approved the cash policy set out in document WFP/EB.A/2023/5-A.

*26 June 2023*

**2023/EB.A/6 Update on WFP's role in the collective humanitarian response (2022)**

The Board took note of the update on WFP's role in the collective humanitarian response (2022) (WFP/EB.A/2023/5-B).

*28 June 2023*

**2023/EB.A/7 South-South and triangular cooperation policy update**

The Board approved the South-South and triangular cooperation policy update set out in document WFP/EB.A/2023/5-C.

*28 June 2023*

**2023/EB.A/8 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) set out in document WFP/EB.A/2023/5-D.

*29 June 2023*

**Resource, financial and budgetary matters****2023/EB.A/9 Audited annual accounts, 2022**

The Board:

- i) approved the 2022 annual financial statements of WFP, taking note of the report of the External Auditor, submitted to the Board pursuant to Article XIV.6 (b) of the General Regulations;
- ii) noted the funding from the General Fund of USD 1,570,232 during 2022 for the ex-gratia payments and the wrote off of cash losses and receivables;
- iii) noted losses of commodities and other losses during 2022 forming part of operating expenses for the same period.

The Board also took note of the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/2) and the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/3).

*28 June 2023*

**2023/EB.A/10 Report on the utilization of WFP's strategic financing mechanisms (1 January–31 December 2022)**

The Board took note of the report on the utilization of WFP's strategic financing mechanisms for the period 1 January–31 December 2022 (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-B/1/Rev.1).

The Board also took note of the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/2) and the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/3).

*28 June 2023*

**2023/EB.A/11 Annual report of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee**

The Board took note of the annual report of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-C/1).

The Board also took note of the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/2) and the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/3).

*28 June 2023*

**2023/EB.A/12 Annual report of the Inspector General and note by the Executive Director**

The Board took note of the annual report of the Inspector General for 2022 (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-D/1) and noted that, based on the risk-based oversight work performed and reported in 2022, no material weaknesses had been identified in the governance, risk management or control processes in place across WFP that would seriously compromise the overall achievement of WFP's strategic and operational objectives. The Board encouraged management to take advantage of the opportunities for improvement highlighted in the report.

The Board also took note of the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/2) and the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/3).

*28 June 2023*

**2023/EB.A/13 Management review of significant risk and control issues, 2022**

The Board took note of the management review of significant risk and control issues, 2022 (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-E/1).

The Board also took note of the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/2) and the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/3).

*28 June 2023*

**2023/EB.A/14 Report of the External Auditor on support service and WFP management response to the External Auditor's recommendations**

The Board took note of the report of the External Auditor on support services (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-F/1) and management's response (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-F/1/Add.1) and encouraged further action on the External Auditor's recommendations, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

The Board also took note of the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/2) and the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/3).

*28 June 2023*

**2023/EB.A/15 Report of the External Auditor on fuel management and WFP management response to the External Auditor's recommendations**

The Board took note of the report of the External Auditor on fuel management (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-G/1) and management's response (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-G/1/Add.1) and encourages further action on the External Auditor's recommendations, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

The Board also took note of the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/2) and the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/3).

28 June 2023

**2023/EB.A/16 Report on the implementation of the External Auditor's recommendations**

The Board took note of the report on the implementation of the External Auditor's recommendations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-H/1).

- i) This report described WFP's progress in implementing recommendations made by the External Auditor. It covered recommendations outstanding at the Board's 2022 annual session (WFP/EB.A/2022/6-J/1/Rev.1) and recommendations from the 2022 reports of the External Auditor on the management of cooperating partners (WFP/EB.A/2022/6-H/1); oversight by management (WFP/EB.A/2022/6-I/1); and audited annual accounts of WFP for 2022 (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-A/1).
- ii) Table 1 showed WFP's progress in implementing the External Auditor's outstanding recommendations since the 2022 annual session of the Board. Table 2 provided an update on each of the outstanding recommendations and the External Auditor's comments on closed recommendations.

The Board also took note of the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/2) and the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/3).

28 June 2023

**2023/EB.A/17 Utilization of the Programme Support and Administrative Equalization Account reserve**

Having considered the document "Utilization of the Programme Support and Administrative Equalization Account reserve" (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-J/1), the Board:

- i) approved a transfer from the Programme Support and Administrative Equalization Account to the Immediate Response Account in the amount USD 100.0 million; and
- ii) took note of the situation in the Sudan and noted the potential for a future request to approve a replenishment of the self-insurance special account.

The Board also took note of the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/2) and the Finance Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WFP/EB.A/2023/6-(A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,I,J)/3).

28 June 2023

## Evaluation reports

### **2023/EB.A/18 Annual evaluation report for 2022 and management response**

The Board took note of the annual evaluation report for 2022 (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-A) and the management response (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-A/Add.1), and encouraged further action, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

*29 June 2023*

### **2023/EB.A/19 Summary report on the evaluation of WFP's policy on country strategic plans and management response**

The Board took note of the summary report on the evaluation of WFP's policy on country strategic plans (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-B) and management response (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-B/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.

*29 June 2023*

### **2023/EB.A/20 Summary report on the evaluation of WFP's disaster risk reduction and management and climate change policies and management response**

The Board took note of the summary report on the evaluation of WFP's disaster risk reduction and management and climate change policies (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-C) and management response (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-C/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.

*29 June 2023*

### **2023/EB.A/21 Summary report on the evaluation of WFP's policy on building resilience for food security and nutrition and management response**

The Board took note of the summary report on the evaluation of WFP's policy on building resilience for food security and nutrition (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-D) and management response (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-D/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.

*29 June 2023*

## Asia and the Pacific portfolio

### **2023/EB.A/22 Pacific multi-country strategic plan (2023–2027)**

The Board approved the Pacific multi-country strategic plan (2023–2027) (WFP/EB.A/2023/8-A/3) at a total cost to WFP of USD 49,320,192.

*29 June 2023*

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

### **2023/EB.A/23 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Egypt (2018–2023) and management response**

#### **Egypt country strategic plan (2023–2028)**

The Board took note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Egypt (2018–2023) (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-E/1) and management response (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-E/1/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.

The Board approved the Egypt country strategic plan (2023–2028) (WFP/EB.A/2023/8-A/1) at a total cost to WFP of USD 431,312,019.

*29 June 2023*

**Eastern Africa portfolio****2023/EB.A/24 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Kenya (2018–2023) and management response  
Kenya country strategic plan (2023–2027)**

The Board took note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Kenya (2018–2023) (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-E/2) and management response (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-E/2/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.

The Board approved the Kenya country strategic plan (2023–2027) (WFP/EB.A/2023/8-A/2) at a total cost to WFP of USD 1,433,999,462.

*29 June 2023*

**Southern Africa portfolio****2023/EB.A/25 Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Zambia (2019–2023) and management response  
Zambia country strategic plan (2023–2028)**

The Board took note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Zambia (2019–2023) (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-E/3) and management response (WFP/EB.A/2023/7-E/3/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.

The Board approved the Zambia country strategic plan (2023–2028) (WFP/EB.A/2023/8-A/4) at a total cost to WFP of USD 98,463,341.

*29 June 2023*

**Administrative and managerial matters****2023/EB.A/26 Appointment of the Director of Evaluation**

Following the recommendation by the Executive Director, the Board approved the appointment of Ms Anne-Claire Luzot (Belgium) as Director of Evaluation. According to the 2022 evaluation policy (WFP/EB.1/2022/4-C), the term of office of the Director of Evaluation should be five years, with the possibility of renewal for a second term. The Executive Director may renew the appointment of the incumbent Director of Evaluation for a second term, with the prior consent of the Executive Board. The Director of Evaluation will not be permitted re-entry into the organization at the end of her final term.

*30 June 2023*

**2023/EB.A/27 Appointment of one member to the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee**

The Board approved the appointment of the following candidate as member of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee:

- Ms Margaret Dezse (Hungary).

Her three-year term would begin on 30 July 2023 and expire on 29 July 2026.

*30 June 2023*

**Summary of the work of the Executive Board****2023/EB.A/28 Summary of the work of the 2023 first regular session of the Executive Board**

The Board approved the draft summary of the work of its 2023 first regular session, the final version of which would be embodied in document WFP/EB.1/2023/12.

*30 June 2023*

**ANNEX II****Agenda**

- 1. Adoption of the agenda** *(for approval)*
- 2. Election to fill vacant positions in the Bureau and appointment of the Rapporteur**
- 3. Opening remarks by the Executive Director**
- 4. Annual reports**
  - a) Annual performance report for 2022 *(for approval)*
  - b) Annual report of the Ethics Office for 2022 *(for consideration)*
  - c) Annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services for 2022 and management note *(for consideration)*
- 5. Policy issues**
  - a) Cash policy *(for approval)*
  - b) Update on WFP's role in the collective humanitarian response *(for consideration)*
  - c) South-South and triangular cooperation policy update *(for approval)*
  - d) Update on WFP's implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 (repositioning the United Nations development system) *(for consideration)*
  - e) Update on WFP's response to HIV and AIDS *(for information)*
- 6. Resource, financial and budgetary matters**
  - a) Audited annual accounts, 2022 *(for approval)*
  - b) Report on the utilization of WFP's strategic financing mechanisms (1 January–31 December 2022) *(for consideration)*
  - c) Annual report of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee *(for consideration)*
  - d) Annual report of the Inspector General *(for consideration)* and note by the Executive Director *(for consideration)*
  - e) Management review of significant risk and control issues, 2022 *(for consideration)*
  - f) Report of the External Auditor on support services *(for consideration)* and WFP management response to the External Auditor's recommendations *(for consideration)*
  - g) Report of the External Auditor on fuel management *(for consideration)* and WFP management response to the External Auditor's recommendations *(for consideration)*
  - h) Report on the implementation of the External Auditor's recommendations *(for consideration)*
  - i) Report of the Executive Director on contributions, reductions and waivers of costs under General Rule XIII.4 (f) in 2022 *(for information)*
  - j) Utilization of the Programme Support and Administrative Equalization Account reserve *(for approval)*
- 7. Evaluation reports** *(for consideration)*
  - a) Annual evaluation report for 2022 and management response
  - b) Summary report on the evaluation of the policy on country strategic plans and management response

- c) Summary report on the evaluation of the disaster risk reduction and climate change policies and management response
- d) Summary report on the evaluation of the policy on building resilience for food security and nutrition and management response
- e) Summary evaluation reports on country strategic plans and management responses:
  - 1. Egypt (2018–2023)
  - 2. Kenya (2018–2023)
  - 3. Zambia (2019–2023)
- f) Implementation status of evaluation recommendations

#### **8. Operational matters**

- a) Country strategic plans (*for approval*)
  - 1. Egypt country strategic plan (2023-2028)
  - 2. Kenya country strategic plan (2023-2027)
  - 3. Pacific multi-country strategic plan (2023-2027)
  - 4. Zambia country strategic plan (2023-2028)
- b) Oral global overview of humanitarian needs and operational concerns and priorities (*for information*)\*

#### **9. Organizational and procedural matters**

- a) Biennial programme of work of the Executive Board (2023–2024) (*for information*)

#### **10. Administrative and managerial matters**

- a) Appointment of the Director of Evaluation (*for approval*)
- b) Appointment of one member to the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (*for approval*)
- c) Address by staff representative bodies to the Board
- d) Report on global losses for the period 1 January–31 December 2022 (*for information*)\*
- e) Update on food procurement (*for information*)\*
- f) Statistical report on international professional staff and higher categories at 31 December 2022 (*for information*)
- g) Security report (*for information*)\*
- h) Oral update from the President on the Governance Review Project (*for information*)\*

#### **11. Summary of the work of the 2023 first regular session of the Executive Board (*for approval*)**

#### **12. Other business**

- a) Oral report on the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP (*for information*)\*
- b) Update on United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (*for information*)\*

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

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\* Items marked with an asterisk are to be presented for information only but will nevertheless be discussed during the session.

## Acronyms

CBT	cash-based transfer
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSP	country strategic plan
DSS	Department of Safety and Security
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GCMF	Global Commodity Management Facility
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IOAC	Independent Oversight Advisory Committee
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
MCSPP	multi-country strategic plan
NGO	non-governmental organization
OBD	Office of the Ombudsman and Mediation Services
OEV	Office of Evaluation
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
PSA	programme support and administrative (budget)
PSEA	protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
RBA	Rome-based agency
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SD3C	Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflicts and Climate Change
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSTC	South-South and triangular cooperation
UGSS	Union of General Service Staff
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	United Nations development system
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women