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Statement by Andrea Cook

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on

Item 6:

I. UNFPA transitional biennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2014-2015

and

II. UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (2008-2012)

UNFPA/ UNDP/UNOPS Executive Board

First Regular Session 2014

Tuesday 28 January 2014

**Monsieur le Président,
Mesdames et Messieurs les Représentants au Conseil d'Administration,
Mesdames, Messieurs,**

It is my pleasure to present to you today, on behalf of the UNFPA Evaluation Office, the UNFPA transitional biennial budgeted evaluation plan for 2014-2015 as well as the main results and recommendations of the UNFPA-UNICEF joint evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme on female genital mutilation/cutting or FGM/C.

First, let me start with **the transitional biennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2014-2015**. The purpose of the plan is to (i) demonstrate accountability to stakeholders, (ii) support evidence-based decision-making, and (iii) contribute important lessons learned. The approach which guided the selection of the evaluations included in the plan is threefold. First, applying the selection criteria, which are set out in the revised UNFPA evaluation policy. Second, ensuring a wide coverage of UNFPA interventions. Corporate evaluations seek to provide thematic coverage, address organization-wide issues, evaluate the remaining outcomes of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, and are responsive to gender equality and human rights. Geographical coverage is largely ensured through programme-level evaluations. Third, the biennial evaluation plan is the result of a transparent and participatory process carried out between May and October 2013.

Monsieur le Président,

The proposed plan for 2014-2015 foresees that the Evaluation Office will undertake three corporate evaluations: (i) UNFPA support to the availability of quality family planning services for the period 2008-2014; (ii) UNFPA support to adolescents and youth for the period 2008-2013; and (iii) UNFPA support to data availability to inform decision-making and policy formulation for the period 2008-2013. The office will also evaluate UNFPA country programmes in Turkey and Bangladesh thereby completing its coverage of all UNFPA regions. You may have noticed that the plan does not include any joint evaluations. The Evaluation Office has undertaken two joint evaluations in 2013, and consultation with other UN organisations in preparation of the plan revealed that there were no opportunities for joint evaluations in relation to the remaining outcome areas which will be covered.

Thirty-six programme-level evaluations are planned for 2014-2015, covering all six UNFPA regions. It is strongly hoped that these will provide good quality, useful and relevant evaluations to contribute to broader efforts to help the organization fulfill its mandate.

The overall budget allocated to evaluation for 2014-2015 is estimated at USD 7.1 million. This represents one per cent of regular resources for 2014-2015. Corporate evaluation costs amount to USD 1.6 million as is reflected in the UNFPA integrated budget approved by the Executive Board in September 2013. Programme-level evaluation costs amount to USD 2.5 million and are borne by the programmes themselves. The remaining USD 2.9 million corresponds to the costs of the Evaluation Office, also included in the budget approved by the Board

Monsieur le Président,

I will now share the results of the **UNFPA-UNICEF joint evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme on female genital mutilation and cutting** on behalf of the UNFPA Evaluation Office and together with our colleagues from the UNICEF Evaluation Office.

The evaluation aimed at assessing the extent to which and under what circumstances the UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme holistic approach accelerated the abandonment of FGM/C in the 15 programme countries over the last five years. The goal of the joint programme was to contribute to a forty per cent reduction of the practice among girls aged 0–15 years, with at least one country declared free of FGM/C by 2012; and to support, in a catalytic way, existing efforts at country and regional levels.

The evaluation was started in 2012 and concluded in 2013. It was conducted jointly by the evaluation offices of UNFPA and UNICEF which worked in unison throughout. An external team of experts supported the exercise, under the supervision and guidance of a joint evaluation management group.

Monsieur Le President,

The evaluation showed that the joint programme helped accelerate existing change processes towards FGM/C abandonment at national, sub-national and community levels. It also contributed to strengthening the momentum for change at the global level. While some achievements are likely to be sustained without additional support, further efforts are needed to turn existing potential changes of attitudes into actual behavioural changes.

The evaluation found that the joint programme human and financial resources were adequate in light of the programme catalytic nature, but were insufficient to fulfil existing needs and expectations of programme countries. Coordination worked well in general at the global level and, to a varying degree, at the country level. The lack of predictability of funds constrained the effective and efficient use of resources. In addition, the annual planning, budgeting and reporting cycle hindered the work of the two agencies and their partners by limiting the ability to engage in consistent and longer-term programme implementation.

The evaluation concluded that the joint programme implementation reflected the assumptions, related to the social norms perspective and the human rights and culturally sensitive approach, on which it was based. Further, the evaluation helped validate some of these assumptions. At the same time, UNFPA and UNICEF faced some challenges in fully operationalizing the overall design, in particular in implementing the envisaged regional component. Regarding the transition from changes in social norms to visible changes in individual and collective behaviours and, in the long term, a decrease in FGM/C prevalence, it was noted that a knowledge and evidence gap remains.

Monsieur Le President,

The evaluation made six key recommendations to improve and enhance the design, management and implementation of future interventions in the field of FGM/C.

First, both agencies should pursue a second phase of the joint programme, building upon the lessons learned from the first phase, and maintaining the catalytic nature of the joint support.

Second, UNFPA and UNICEF should continue to help strengthen the commitment and capacity of government authorities at central and decentralized levels, and to support the reinforcement of government systems for FGM/C abandonment. Further, to foster local-level commitment within practising communities, the two organizations should maintain their efforts to involve non-governmental change agents.

Third, given that the regional aspect was not fully put in practice during the first phase, agencies should test their assumptions on the benefits of cross-community and cross-border dynamics for change, and operationalize them if confirmed.

Fourth, UNFPA and UNICEF should ensure that the FGM/C-related components of the UNFPA and UNICEF country programmes reflect the existing consensus on the use of a holistic and culturally sensitive approach to FGM/C abandonment.

Fifth, UNFPA and UNICEF should engage with existing and potential donors interested in contributing to FGM/C abandonment, and advocate for predictable, longer-term financing.

Sixth, both agencies should take action to further strengthen agency-specific as well as joint systems, tools and capacities for monitoring and reporting on progress towards results.

And finally, the two organizations, jointly or separately, should invest more in in-depth research on social norms' change and its linkages to changes in individual and collective behaviour.

Monsieur Le President,

The Evaluation Offices of both organisations hope that the joint evaluation will help further strengthen the considerable work, experience and results of UNFPA and UNICEF towards the abandonment of FGM/C, and provide lessons for FGM/C programming.

Monsieur le President,

Distinguished Delegates,

We thank you for your attention and are at your disposal for any questions you may have.