



UNOPS



## Joint response of the Executive Board secretariats of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP on Executive Board working methods

*This paper is a follow-up to the discussion on Executive Board working methods held on 1 June 2018 at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP. It responds to the requests made in various decisions adopted at the respective annual sessions of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP.*

### Introduction

1. The “Executive Board working methods” is understood as the body of rules, decisions and customs or standard practice followed by the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP to conduct their work, including Bureau meetings, formal sessions, informal consultations, briefings, general conduct of business, participation of observers, field visits and inter-agency coordination, among others.
2. Since the creation of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP in General Assembly resolution [48/162](#) of 20 December 1993 on further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, and the subsequent addition of UNOPS and UN-Women, each Executive Board has adapted its own working methods according to the specific needs and respective mandate of the agency they govern.
3. Harmonization efforts to improve and streamline the working methods of the Executive Boards on common issues across the United Nations development system have been ongoing for many years. Momentum has been building for greater coherence on matters common to all the Executive Boards. Efforts for a more effective coordination among the United Nations agencies have also contributed to the strengthening of inter-agency collaboration and to sharing of common practices across the Boards.
4. More recently, in General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) of 21 December 2016 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations System (QCPR), Member States integrated section IV on *strengthening the governance of the United Nations operational activities for development*.
5. Accordingly, the QCPR operational paragraph 46 stressed “the need to enhance system-wide coherence and efficiency, reduce duplication and build synergy across governing bodies of the entities of United Nations development system”, calling upon:
  - (a) The respective bureaux to initiate discussions on improving the working methods of the joint meetings of the Executive Boards so that they offer a platform for exchange on issues with cross-cutting impact;

(b) Member States to initiate discussions on the working methods of the respective governing bodies in order to improve the efficiency, transparency and quality of official sessions, ensure more systematic follow-up by the entities of the United Nations development system on issues raised by their governing bodies and ensure timely follow-up on the implementation of the present resolution; and

(c) Entities of the United Nations development system to adopt and abide by clear rules, including on the dissemination of all documents and draft decisions, thereby allowing adequate time for prior consultation with Member States in their decision-making processes;

6. In response to this request in QCPR OP46, the Presidents of the 2017 Executive Boards of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP initiated discussions on the working methods of the Executive Boards, which resulted in a non-paper that was shared with the wider Board members in December 2017.

7. This non-paper of the 2017 Presidents of the Executive Boards was the focus of an informal discussion entitled: “Reflections on improving the working methods of the Executive Boards,” at the 2018 joint meeting of the Executive Boards of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP (JMB), held on 1 June 2018 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

8. This open dialogue among Member States only was organized to address issues of direct relevance to the working methods of the Executive Boards, and to determine convergence of opinion among various Board members on issues related to the working methods.

9. The session was organized around the discussions of four working groups that were constituted from the participating delegates, bringing together over 40 Member States. Each working group was tasked to discuss and identify potential areas for improving the working methods of the Executive Boards, concentrating on broad aspects drawn from the 2017 non-paper of the Presidents. The outcomes of each of the four group discussions were then presented in plenary to all the participants. Each working group focused on the same set of questions, thus making it possible to better identify convergence through similarities in their individual responses.

10. Following the JMB session, a “President’s Summary” recorded the outcome of the session discussions on the working methods of the Executive Boards, drawing some conclusions on issues where there was a clear convergence in the discussions among the four working groups. The President’s Summary constitutes a core of common issues on working methods that could potentially form a basis for a road map in taking forward the recommendations aimed at improving the working methods of the Executive Boards.

11. Convergence of views were noted in the following areas:

**(1) Bureaux**

- Making documentation related to each Board and each Bureau available to a wider readership, as a means of fostering greater transparency regarding the work of the Boards;

**(2) Sessions**

- Fostering a greater degree of transparency in Board and Bureau meetings, and identifying new and novel ways for members of regional groups to be briefed on Bureau proceedings;

### **(3) Participation**

- Encouraging participation of the representatives of non-governmental and civil society organizations and the private sector in future joint meetings of the Boards;

### **(4) Field visits**

- Limiting the number of annual field visits: one joint field visit and one individual Board visit;
- Promoting a higher level of participation in field visits and striking a better balance between high-level and expert-level participation;

### **(5) Joint meeting of the Executive Boards**

- Utilizing the joint meeting of the Executive Boards as an opportunity to discuss issues of common interest to all the Boards, including, *inter alia*, reports on (a) the status of implementation of the common chapter of the respective strategic plans;<sup>1</sup> (b) audit, ethics and evaluation; (c) gender strategy; and (d) sexual exploitation and abuse and on sexual harassment.

12. The 2018 joint meeting of the Executive Boards was timely as one day earlier, on 31 May 2018, the General Assembly adopted resolution [72/279](#) on repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the QCPR. Notably, in Operational Paragraph 21, the Assembly urged:

... Member States to continue making practical changes to further enhance the working methods of the Boards with the aim of improving the efficiency, transparency and quality of governance structures, including through deciding on ways to improve the functions of the joint meeting of the Boards.

13. At the respective 2018 annual sessions of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP that soon followed the JMB, the Boards all adopted decisions encouraging the secretariats of the Executive Boards to:

... work together [...] to produce a joint response to the 2018 joint meeting of the Executive Boards segment on working methods by no later than four weeks before the second regular session 2018, allowing for a consultation process among Member States ahead of that session....

14. This document presents a joint response from the six secretariats to the converging views of Member States participating in session 2 of the 2018 JMB. The joint response is presented in matrix form. Such views were articulated in the form of summary conclusions on working methods around the following five topics:

- 1. Bureaux**
- 2. Sessions**
- 3. Participation**
- 4. Field visits**
- 5. Joint meeting of the Executive Boards**

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<sup>1</sup> While not party to the common chapter because the WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021) was approved in November 2016, WFP is compliant with its spirit on the ground through its country strategic plan process.

CONVERGING VIEWS	LEGISLATIVE MANDATE OR ESTABLISHED PRACTICE	POSSIBLE ACTIONS
<b>1. BUREAUX</b>		
<p>Making Board and Bureau related documentation available to a wider readership, as a means of fostering greater transparency regarding the work of the Boards.</p>	<p><i>UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board. Rules of Procedure, V. Rule 7 and 8.</i></p> <p><i>UNICEF decision 2011/11, Rules of procedure (1994, E/ICEF/177/Rev.6).</i></p> <p><i>UN-Women Executive Board Rules of Procedure Rule 7 and Rule 8.</i> The Executive Board Secretariat makes sure the Bureau receives relevant documents through email at least a work day in advance of a Bureau meeting. The meeting minutes are provided for the Bureau members' distribution to their respective groups as they see fit, often within the same day.</p> <p><i>WFP Rules of Procedure XIV.</i> All Member States receive the same information translated in the languages of the Board, e.g. Bureau Notes for the Record. Mailing lists of Electoral Lists are updated and shared with the List Convenors to ensure information is widely distributed also</p>	<p>(a) Board secretariat to work with each regional/electoral group President/Vice-President in support of strengthening information sharing and consultation mechanisms, e.g. through bi-monthly meetings of the Presidents.</p> <p>(b) Definition of a set of similar agenda items common to all the Boards; coordination in defining dates for the elections; strengthening of coordination in setting up an individual calendar of informal meetings and briefings.</p> <p>(c) Establishment of Bureau member terms and succession planning, e.g. Vice-President of current year to serve as President of the following year.</p>
<b>2. SESSIONS</b>		
<p>Fostering a greater degree of transparency in Bureau and Board meetings, and identifying new and novel ways for members of regional groups to be briefed on Bureau proceedings.</p>	<p>UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS: Annual Session is mandated per General Assembly resolution 48/162 (para. 26). However, other/regular sessions are at the discretion of the Executive Board per <i>Rules of Procedure I. Rule 1.2</i>. Changes to be decided by the Executive Board.</p> <p>UNICEF – GA resolution 48/162 (para. 27) – Regular sessions and <i>Rules of procedure (Rules 1 and 2)</i> (1994, E/ICEF/177/Rev.6) – Annual and regular sessions.</p>	<p>(a) Reducing the number of days per session and/or the number of sessions per year: Changes in the number of formal sessions and their duration may be made by each Executive Board according to its respective rules of procedure. This could be balanced with any required informal briefings or consultations.</p>

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	<p>The UN-Women Executive Board adopted its Rules of Procedure in 2011, which contain <i>Rule 1 on Convening of sessions</i>, such as the number of sessions each year.</p> <p>From 2005, WFP reduced the number of formal sessions from four to three annually (first regular session in February, annual session in June and second regular session in November).</p>	<p>(b) Encouraging both focused regional group briefings in addition to Board-wide briefings, particularly in areas where more detailed technical discussions may be useful.</p> <p>(c) Expanding access to Board-related documentation (also see 1).</p>
<b>3. PARTICIPATION</b>		
<p>Encouraging participation of the representatives of non-governmental and civil society organizations and the private sector in future joint meetings of the Boards.</p>	<p><i>UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Rule of procedure 16.3</i> – The Executive Board may also invite, when it considers it appropriate, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council to participate in its deliberations for questions that relate to their activities.</p> <p>In accordance with the rules of procedure of the UNICEF Executive Board, the Board may invite participants to its deliberations without the right to vote (<i>Rules of procedure 50 and 51</i>) (E/ICEF/177/Rev.6 1994).</p> <p>As per UN-Women Executive Board <i>rule of procedure 16</i>, the “Executive Board may invite, when it considers it appropriate, representatives of the United Nations Secretariat, specialized agencies, any other organizations of the United Nations system, including the international financial institutions, and the regional development banks, to participate in the deliberations,” and “may also invite, when it considers it appropriate, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council”.</p>	<p>(a) Changing the criteria for partners allowed to participate in the Board meetings is a Member State prerogative, but the Secretariats may support the Bureau in encouraging more non-Member State participation should Board members wish to do so.</p>

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	<p>As per <i>Rule XV.4 of the WFP Board Rules of Procedures</i>, “non-governmental organizations interested and cooperating with the Programme may be invited by the Executive Director, subject to the direction of the Board as appropriate, to attend sessions of the Board, without the right to vote.</p>	
<b>4. FIELD VISITS</b>		
<p>Limiting the number of annual field visits: one joint field visit and one individual Board visit;</p> <p>Promoting a higher level of participation in field visits, and striking a better balance between high-level and expert-level participation.</p>	<p>UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS: Changes to be decided by the Executive Board.</p> <p><i>UNICEF Board decision 2004/13</i> – Adopts the guidelines for Executive Board field visits as proposed in E/ICEF/2004/19.</p> <p>The general rules for UN-Women field visits are in <i>decision 2017/8</i>. Changes to be decided by Executive Board.</p> <p>WFP: From 2003, one joint and one individual field visit per year became the standard practice. Since 2008, a day visit to the WFP-run United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot in Brindisi, Italy, which is co-located with the United Nations Logistics Base, has also become the standard practice, and is conducted in conjunction with the annual simulation exercise Functional and Support Training for Emergency Response (FASTER) for WFP staff.</p>	<p>(a) Changes may be made to the field visit guidelines of the respective Boards (i.e. types, frequency, rotation of field visits, composition of delegations) by the respective Executive Boards.</p>
<b>5. JOINT MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARDS</b>		
<p>Utilizing the joint meeting of the Executive Boards as an opportunity to discuss issues of common interest to all the Boards, including, <i>inter alia</i>, reports on (a) the status of implementation of the common chapter of the respective strategic plans;</p>	<p>All six agencies agree to continue supporting the development of topic papers covering key cross-cutting issues of concern to the Executive Boards, e.g., audit; ethics; gender; sexual exploitation and abuse; harassment; sexual harassment; discrimination and abuse of power/authority; cost recovery; and the common chapter in the strategic plans.</p>	<p>(a) Selection of JMB topics could be directly linked to ongoing joint discussions (i.e. common chapter, cost-recovery) or other areas of common interest to all Boards (i.e. audit, sexual exploitation and abuse, etc.).</p>

<b>CONVERGING VIEWS</b>	<b>LEGISLATIVE MANDATE OR ESTABLISHED PRACTICE</b>	<b>POSSIBLE ACTIONS</b>
(b) audit, ethics and evaluation; (c) gender strategy; and (d) sexual exploitation and abuse and on sexual harassment.		(b) JMB may be transformed into an annual one-day joint session of the Boards to discuss these areas of common interest.