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Programme, the United Nations
Population Fund and the
United Nations Office for
Project Services**

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Organizational matters

**Report of the special session 2017
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I. Organizational matters

1. The special session 2017 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 28 November 2017.
2. The Executive Board approved the agenda and workplan for its special session 2017 (DP/2017/L.4).
3. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at the special session 2017 appeared in document DP/2018/3, which was available on the [Executive Board website](#).

UNDP segment

II. & III. Statement by the Administrator and UNDP strategic plan, 2018-2021, including financial, budgetary and administrative matters

4. In his address to the Executive Board (available on the [Executive Board website](#)), the Administrator of UNDP highlighted that the intense effort, reflection and dialogue on how best to position UNDP in an ever-changing world had forged the new UNDP strategic plan, 2018-2021 (DP/2017/38 and annexes). The plan's finalization and adoption marked a milestone in the collective efforts to reshape UNDP for the Sustainable Development Goals era. The new plan reflected the feedback and contributions of the Board as well as United Nations development system organizations, whose partnership was vital to the plan's success.
5. His address also included the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2018-2021 (DP/2017/39 and annexes) and the report of the ACABQ on the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget estimates, 2018-2021 (DP/2017/40).
6. The Administrator underscored that the scale and pace of global changes had left United Nations system organizations struggling to keep up. The United Nations had been tasked with supporting the international community and countries in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1). The Secretary-General aimed to make the United Nations fit for purpose for this task through his new reform agenda, which UNDP fully supported. The Administrator stressed that the new plan responded boldly to the ambition of the Goals and was 'reform ready'.
7. The new plan was responsive to the diversity of countries UNDP served and reflected three broad development objectives: eradicating poverty, structural transformations and building resilience. Its two new global and country level platforms would enable UNDP to deliver more effectively. And its six signature solutions, against which the organization would align its resources and expertise, would ensure real impact on poverty, governance, energy access, gender equality, resilience, and environmental sustainability. Innovation and dynamism were interwoven throughout the plan and, to enhance delivery, UNDP was reorganizing its business and operational models to make it more responsive, effective and cost-efficient.
8. Strong partnerships were at the heart of the new plan. UNDP would support countries in achieving the 2030 Agenda through revitalized partnerships with United Nations development system organizations. UNDP had a unique responsibility in uniting the United Nations development system to provide integrated, high quality support to countries, underpinned by United Nations values and the 2030 Agenda principle of leaving no one behind. The Administrator stressed, however, that the 2030 Agenda was a 'whole of society' effort that required an array of partners outside the United Nations system. The

plan foresaw UNDP as an open platform for policy advice and service provision that convened partners and stakeholders in the public and private sectors and civil society.

9. The Executive Board welcomed the new strategic plan, 2018-2021, and expressed strong appreciation for the open, transparent consultative process UNDP conducted in the run up to the special session and the personal engagement of the Administrator throughout. They noted that the new strategic plan was aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 71/243), and clearly defined the UNDP role within the system to support Sustainable Development Goals implementation.

10. Board members broadly agreed that that the new strategic plan was ‘reform ready’ in line with the vision of the Secretary-General and flexible for the repositioning and strengthening of the United Nations development system, set to begin in 2018. A few delegations pointed to the need for UNDP to hold regular consultations with the Board on the implications of United Nations repositioning. A number of delegations welcomed the UNDP approach to working with United Nations organizations and commended the inclusion in the new plan of a common chapter among UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), which they considered a step forward for coordination and joint work.

11. The Board strongly underscored the need for UNDP to pursue and strengthen partnerships at all levels and with all stakeholders, in particular with the international financial institutions, the private sector and other United Nations organizations, as crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Goals. Delegations also stressed the need to bolster South-South cooperation and to make multi-stakeholder partnerships the standard approach at country level.

12. A broad cross-section of delegations welcomed the plan’s prioritization of poverty eradication and the principle to leave no one behind as the ultimate purpose of UNDP support to countries, including least developed countries, small-island developing states and middle-income countries. Many delegations also stressed the importance of national ownership and leadership and demand-driven solutions tailored to national contexts.

13. Other Board members pointed to the importance of governance and the human rights-based approach to development, and viewed the UNDP mandate within the larger context of conflict prevention, sustaining peace and resilience building, which they posited as the ultimate objectives of development. In this context, while some delegations showed strong support for the UNDP role in the humanitarian-development nexus, others expressed concern with the potential politicization of its work in conflict prevention. A broad cross-section of delegations supported the mainstreaming of gender equality across all UNDP programmes, while others, agreeing, also saw the benefits of a gender-focused outcome.

14. Decreased funding continued to be a major concern. Board members pointed to the ongoing imbalance between regular (core) and other (non-core) resources as a potential risk to the ability of UNDP to deliver on its mandate and the 2030 Agenda. Delegations called on Member States to abide by their funding commitments and, for those in a position to do so, to step up their contributions to core resources. Adequate, multi-year, stable core resources, it was noted, were the key to safeguarding the organization’s independence and objectivity. Board members encouraged UNDP to continue to seek ways in which to diversify its funding base. They suggested that UNDP create more attractive incentives for both traditional and emerging donors by improving its visibility and better communicating results.

15. Overall, Board members were pleased with the integrated budget and its support for the new strategic plan. Some delegations, however, noted that the budget could benefit

from better theories of change that linked the signature solutions to outputs and outcomes, which would help to translate the new plan and its signature solutions into actions at the regional and country levels. They looked forward to a UNDP workplan for engagement with the Board and regular updates on the improved link between results and resources in the midterm review. On budget-related topics, other delegations supported differentiated cost recovery rates for countries, especially for government cost-sharing, and the need to improve budget information and cost recovery practices in future. Delegations also welcomed the proposed improvements to the UNDP business model and looked forward to regular updates on its development. As part of that effort, there was a call for fewer, more focused and transformative programmes and for the strengthening of staff capacity and performance measurements.

16. In response, the Administrator emphasized the centrality of trust in the strategic plan – built on focus, accountability, transparency and continuous dialogue with the Board. It was especially important given the need to respond to an ever-changing development landscape. Trust would allow the Board and UNDP to take impactful decisions together. He reiterated UNDP commitment to leading United Nations system-wide coherence and taking a multidimensional approach to poverty that was demand-driven and responsive. UNDP looked forward to being a trailblazer in smart development solutions under Board guidance. He noted that UNDP had a specific mandate, in accordance with country demand, to address the governance and human rights focus of Goal 16, and was committed to working on gender as both a signature and a mainstreaming solution. UNDP would continue to work closely with the Board to improve its funding situation, the core/non-core imbalance, and financing for development, including through better communication and promoting the value of multilateralism. He reassured Board members that UNDP understood Board concerns on the organization’s role in the humanitarian-development nexus, peace and security, which UNDP only engaged in through country demand. He noted the UNDP comparative advantages – including its size/scope, surge capacity, and non-sectoral specialization – were responsive and flexible to country demand, and, when combined with the work of other United Nations organizations, had a multiplier impact on the Goals. A more efficient and effective business model, he noted, would create the conditions for greater and better investments and confidence in UNDP.

17. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/30 on the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018-2021.

18. The Executive Board adopted decision 2017/31 on the UNDP integrated resources plan and integrated budget, 2018-2021.
