

Check against delivery



Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS
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Statement by

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Mr. President,

Distinguished Delegates,

Colleagues and friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning! We are here at this Annual Session of the Executive Board with heavy hearts, but also hope for the future. This session provides an opportunity to look back at what we have achieved, take stock of our progress and challenges, and most importantly, reflect and build upon what we have learned.

This is essential as we work to build a better UNFPA, deliver strong results for women, girls and young people, and support countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action.

The annual report that you have before you highlights our achievements over the past three years. It shows that we have done what we set out to do and are on track to meet most of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan targets, although funding constraints continue to make this challenging.

Going forward, it is important to note that UNFPA faces a significant funding crisis, not least for core resources – a challenge we hope we can solve together in support of women and girls.

UNFPA staff and our partners are doing life-saving and life-changing work around the world.

In 2014-2016, UNFPA's work helped avert 93,000 maternal deaths and prevent 11 million unsafe abortions and 35 million unintended pregnancies.

We reached over 16 million women and girls in humanitarian crises with services for sexual and reproductive health and to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

We helped 272,000 girls avoid genital mutilation.

We provided well over a billion male and female condoms, which helped prevent more than 8 million sexually transmitted infections.

We reached 54 million users with voluntary family planning services.

More than 8 million pregnancies and deliveries were assisted by UNFPA-supported midwives.

And the common thread linking all of these efforts is this: In every country where we work, we stand with those left furthest behind.

We stand with girls like Faouzia Yaya, forced into marriage at 14 and beaten daily by her husband. With the help of a UNFPA-supported women's organization, Faouzia was able to escape her abusive husband, learn about her sexual and reproductive health, and gain tailoring skills

to earn an income. Moreover, thanks to advocacy by UNFPA and others, the Government of Cameroon passed a law last year protecting girls like Faouzia from child marriage.

We stand with fistula survivors like Noor Jahan in Afghanistan. After suffering in silence for nearly 50 years, she now wakes up every day in a dry bed and is able to play with her grandchildren.

We stand with women like Rose Matuulane of Botswana. Thanks to UNFPA, Rose can now access antenatal care, cervical cancer screening, HIV testing and family planning – all at the same clinic in her remote village. In the past, she had to travel over 80 kilometres to the nearest clinic and queue for hours for care.

We stand with the millions of girls at risk of female genital mutilation around the world and with women – and men – from Colombia to Gambia to Egypt and the United Kingdom who are pushing to end the practice in their communities.

We stand with the countries in Asia and the Caucuses trying to end the harmful practice of gender-biased sex selection.

We stand with the uncouneted and unreached by supporting countries to collect and analyse census data and use it to shape development policies and priorities that leave no one behind.

Member States are our essential partners in this work. The progress and achievements we have made would not have been possible without your political and financial support.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

We need this support now more than ever. We need you to stand with us – and not only because of UNFPA’s significant funding shortfall for 2017 and beyond.

We need you to stand with us because while women’s rights are being acknowledged as never before, they are also being challenged on a daily basis.

Our central goal of achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights is under threat.

Women and girls’ fundamental right to decide freely and for themselves whether or when to have children, to control their bodies and their lives and contribute fully to our collective success, is under threat.

The progress we have made is together under threat.

Fortunately, in many places, this pushback has also led to renewed commitment and activism.

The *She Decides* initiative is one example, and we hope to see further commitments at the upcoming London Summit on Family Planning on 11 July.

It is estimated that meeting all women's needs for modern contraceptives will cost \$5.3 billion more each year than is currently being spent. Additional financial support is critical, and political commitments have not yet translated into adequate funding.

We need to remain vigilant and vocal. If we don't, there is a real risk of seeing a reversal of many of the hard-won gains we have achieved in recent years.

And large gaps remain. About 830 women still die each day from complications of pregnancy and childbirth. Progress would need to be at least three times faster than the current rate to meet the SDG target for reducing maternal deaths by 2030.

Contraceptive use stands at around 40 per cent in the least developed countries and is particularly low in Africa, at 33 per cent. We need accelerated action to reach the 225 million women who want modern family planning but are not getting it.

One in three women worldwide experiences either physical and/or sexual violence in her lifetime.

To reach the child marriage SDG target by 2030, our collective progress would need to be eight times faster.

We have our work cut out for us. But we also have a roadmap to guide us – our new strategic plan.

As you know, development of the plan has been a truly consultative process.

We have set our sights on three transformative results for humanity:

- to end preventable maternal deaths
- to end the unmet demand for family planning, and
- to end gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls.

These results align with SDG targets and build on momentum generated by UNFPA and its partners in countries around the world.

They are also the clearest expression of our master narrative of delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every child birth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

We believe that unifying UNFPA around these transformative results has the potential to transform our agency, not for ourselves, but for the disadvantaged millions we exist to serve.

We are also firmly committed to delivering as one with our UN system partners in supporting Member States to achieve their development goals.

We have strengthened our focus on results and on strategies with the greatest impact, in line with the recommendations of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR).

We have taken the request for greater coherence as a guiding principle and have been proactive in facilitating the interagency coordination and planning process on joint indicators and results frameworks.

And on behalf of all of us at UNFPA let me say here that we welcome and look forward to working with Achim Steiner in his new role as UNDP Administrator.

UNFPA has also been out front within the UN system in applying a diversified business model. We firmly believe that one size does not fit all. And based on lessons learned, we have maintained and further improved our business model to better respond to the diverse needs of Member States, to ensure that no one is left behind and to reach those furthest behind first.

Even in countries with relatively fewer needs, our small presence can help mobilize resources and political will to ensure that sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights remain a priority, particularly where this agenda is under threat.

Mr. President,

It is clear that if we want to protect gains and advance real change, business as usual will not do.

The time has come to think boldly and innovatively about how we can identify and scale-up solutions in a time of resource constraints and rapid changes – and how we can build alliances across regions and partnerships to multiply impact.

The Strategic Plan 2018-21 is one step in that direction, and we count on your partnership, guidance and support to strengthen our work going forward.

Let me add that we would also like to urge the Board to adopt the new strategic plan and budget at the Second Regular Session in September, as any delays would unnecessarily disrupt our programme planning at country level with government and national counterparts, as well as budgeting and resource mobilization to support SP implementation.

Funding situation

As you can imagine, the decline in UNFPA core contributions makes it especially difficult for UNFPA to deliver more for women and girls globally in line with the 2030 Agenda and our new Strategic Plan.

UNFPA core resources declined to \$352.8 million in 2016. With donor cuts and the declining exchange rate, we currently project core revenue this year at around \$325 million, or \$25 million below our minimum floor.

We appeal to all donors for additional core support in 2017. I believe that raising an additional 25 million in core is achievable, if we work together.

Here, I sincerely wish to thank all those Member States who have announced increased Core support for 2017 and in some cases beyond, and all countries who continue to generously support our work.

The Executive Director recently represented UNFPA at the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing, and we look forward to greater engagement with China in empowering women, girls and young people and advancing UNFPA's mandate along the belt and road.

We were pleased to partner with China on the launch of the South-South Cooperation Centre of Excellence on Population and Development. We hope it will help foster exchanges of knowledge, research, training and good practices among institutions in the Global South.

Mr. President,

In this critical year, we urge all governments to please stand up and be counted. Supporting sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and UNFPA as the custodian of the ICPD, has never been more important.

We are working hard to increase the number of Member States supporting UNFPA.

Our resource mobilization efforts at country level are more focused than ever.

We see great promise from a number of emerging donors and have increased collaboration with selected middle income countries to explore opportunities for additional resources.

And we are reaching out to private corporations, foundations, high-net-worth individuals and other potential sources of income.

We know that communicating results well is key to mobilizing resources and we are stepping up our efforts.

Our new Donor Portal will enable donors to track the results they have contributed to and, together with our Transparency Portal, will integrate and visualize financial, statistical and impact data for all UNFPA programme countries.

UNFPA is also developing a new branding strategy to help us more clearly and consistently articulate and show who we are, what we do, why we matter and why we are a valuable partner in saving and transforming lives. This is critical for mobilizing political and financial support.

Our Strategic Partnerships Branch is working to diversify our portfolio of partners and to attract innovative financing.

In 2016, these efforts led to \$12.8 million in co-financing and in-kind contributions from the private sector – an increase of 24 per cent over the previous year.

And we have not only intensified our partnerships; we have tightened our belts.

We have expanded our austerity measures, and as you know, the Fund's senior management has undertaken a Comprehensive Resource Review.

The goal is to ensure that the strategic plan, resource allocation and organizational structures are optimally aligned to improve programmatic and operational efficiency and effectiveness at all levels of the organization.

Recommendations and decisions for immediate, medium- and long-term adjustments are expected to be made before the end of 2017, and we will update the Board on this at the next session.

Moreover, a number of key levers for transformational organizational change were identified for further in-depth consideration.

Mr. President,

We live in a complex and challenging environment.

And the face of today's crises – whether drought, famine, displacement, acute malnutrition or cholera – is that of a woman with her children.

Of the more than 125 million people that required humanitarian assistance in 2016, over 30 million were women and adolescent girls of childbearing age.

UNFPA is working with its humanitarian partners to protect their rights and respond to their needs, providing urgent life-saving assistance and working to build resilience across the humanitarian-development nexus.

In Syria and neighbouring countries, we are supporting millions of women and girls made vulnerable by violence, providing them with safe spaces and access to life-saving sexual and reproductive health services and information.

In Yemen, last year UNFPA reached more than a million people with services for reproductive health and to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

UNFPA is at the forefront of response efforts in Iraq, delivering life-saving services through mobile and static clinics to populations on the move, in camps and in host communities. This includes providing critical medical and psychosocial treatment and legal aid to Yazidi women and girls rescued from slavery.

In Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin, UNFPA is supporting safe spaces and reproductive health and protection services, including psychosocial counselling to women and girls affected by the Boko Haram insurgency.

UNFPA is the sole provider of care to the recently released Chibok girls, providing access to medical care, including sexual and reproductive health care, psychosocial counselling and rehabilitation support, dignity kits, and skills to ease their re-integration into society.

We are also committed to the safety and security of our own people working in high-risk duty stations. In collaboration with partners, UNFPA provided specialized security training last year to 70 of our own staff and those of sister agencies, and we hope to be able to expand this training in the future.

Today, more people are on the move than ever before, and migrant women and girls face heightened risks of violence.

UNFPA continues to lead on gender-based violence prevention and response, and we are committed to working with our humanitarian partners to ensure that the unique needs of women and girls are taken into account.

In Southeastern Europe, for example, we are supporting refugee and migrant programmes, ensuring availability of SRH and GBV services and working with unaccompanied minors to reduce sexual exploitation.

While our humanitarian work focuses on protecting those in transit, the ultimate goal is to ensure that people are choosing, rather than being forced, to migrate.

Gaps in services, investments and opportunities for young people, in particular, contribute to increased mobility.

We believe that only when every young person is enabled to reach their full potential will we truly make strides towards sustainable development.

By investing in young people's rights, education and health, particularly in their sexual and reproductive health, and building their human capital, countries advance their most important resource for realizing a demographic dividend.

UNFPA is continuing to help countries explore how best to align their development plans with the demographic dividend agenda.

We recently joined the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Development Bank on the generation of the 2017 Gender Scorecard for Africa. This year, it is scoring countries on those aspects of gender equality most crucial to achieving a demographic dividend.

These issues are at the heart of UNFPA's mandate, including the right of women and girls to choose when and whom to marry, when or whether to have children, and to secure quality education and contribute to the modern economy.

Mr. President,

When countries fail to provide the information and services young people need to protect their sexual and reproductive health, those hardest hit are adolescent girls.

Complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death among girls aged 15 to 19. Suicide is next. Clearly, we need to do more to protect their rights and address their needs.

UNFPA is working to ensure that every young person, particularly the most marginalized adolescent girls, has access to comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services, so that they can avoid unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

In 2014-2016, UNFPA and its partners provided 33.4 million adolescents with integrated sexual and reproductive health services.

We are working with our partners, with communities and with young people themselves, to protect girls from child marriage and female genital mutilation.

The goal is to empower every young person to know and exercise their rights, so that they can realize their potential to transform their lives and our world.

Wassila Ali, a 16-year-old participant in UNFPA's adolescent girls' initiative in Niger, sums it up best: "I learned how to fly with my own wings."

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

If we want a more just, stable and sustainable world, we need to invest in the health and rights of women, adolescent girls and young people.

We cannot afford to leave girls like Wassila behind.

We count on your support to build a world that doesn't clip girls' wings, but rather helps them soar.

Together, we can ensure that no one is left behind and build a brighter future — for women and girls, for families, and for the world.

Thank you.