

Thank you very much Mike for the presentation on the findings of the recently concluded independent evaluation of UNEP's Policy and Strategy on Gender Equality and the Environment. Indeed, UNEP has, since 2014, embarked on a journey to "Get Gender right" which has resulted in several remarkable achievements as well as challenges which we continue to address.

We welcome the comprehensive recommendations made by the evaluation team and wish to provide the following management response:

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE

Appoint a High-level Task Force & convene an independent, external Gender Expert Advisory Group

- The ED will appoint the recommended Task Force. It will be composed of staff drawn from the Senior Management Team and the Secretariats of the Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs). The work of the HLTF is expected to begin in early 2023 and to be completed by end of the second quarter 2023.

The Task Force will pay attention to gender mainstreaming in both programme and institutional domains. To achieve this, it is expected to undertake the following:

1. Provide oversight on the ongoing development of the 2nd UNEP Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment
2. Provide oversight on the development of an internal staff Capacity Building Strategy and Implementation plan. This work will be guided by the results of an internal Gender Capacity Assessment already undertaken.
3. Formulate specific guidance to strengthen UNEP's strategic and programmatic approaches to "getting gender right", in full alignment with the narrative of the MTS and results framework of the PoW.

In parallel, the Task Force will also consider the evaluation recommendation to appoint an *external* Gender Expert Advisory Group to provide the SMT and the Task Force with additional and independent guidance on key areas relating to the nexus between gender and the environment.

EFFECTIVENESS

UN-SWAP

- Few words of background to this, in addition to what Mike already said. Since 2012 UNEP has applied the UN System Wide Action plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender equality and Women's empowerment (UN-SWAP 1.0 and 2.0) as a means for accountability and management. Further, the Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality (2014-2017) was fully aligned with the UNSWAP 1.0 and used it as the monitoring framework for implementation of the Policy.

- With the new MTS and PoW development, UNEP strived to make even better use of UN-SWAP as an accountability and management instrument. As you know, the PoW 2022-2025 incorporated high-level targets for gender, based on the UN-SWAP targets and indicators.
- From 2020, in conjunction with the development of the new MTS and PoW, the UN-SWAP data and report cards have been consistently presented and discussed by UNEP's SMT for collective review, action and monitoring. This practice has further centralized the attention to gender matters within senior leadership in the organization.
- As a result of this, in 2021, the UNEP SMT set out its priorities for gender mainstreaming and aligned them with the recommendations for improvement towards meeting the UN-SWAP performance indicators. This corporate push has resulted in tremendous improvement, illustrated by the rise from 47% UN-SWAP performance rate in 2020 to 82% UN-SWAP performance rate in 2021.
- The 2021 performance rates have already surpassed the targets set in the MTS 2022-2025 which was set at 82% by 2025. But that does not mean that we are resting on our laurels. We are continuing to strive for even higher results!

Gender marker

- UNEP remains committed to ensuring the full integration of gender equality perspectives across the full programme life cycle - a commitment that has been reiterated in the MTS 2022-25. To meet this commitment UNEP has strived to optimize the application of the Gender Marker as a tool for ensuring the full integration of gender equality perspectives across project life cycle.
- Starting with senior leadership commitment, in 2021, the Executive Director in her capacity as an International Gender Champion, committed that at least 70% of projects developed in 2021 would achieve a gender marker 2.0 rating (meaning gender is fully mainstreamed). By December 2021, this target was exceeded with 71.4% of projects receiving a code 2.
- This significant improvement has continued into 2022 and, between January – September 2022 70% of the projects reviewed had already achieved code 2.
- At the staff level, the UNEP Project Manager training certification course (currently under development) will further enhance their skills and understanding of developing gender responsive projects with the aim of achieving the desired gender results, in line with the PoW objectives.

Communication strategy on gender parity

- UNEP's Programme Performance Reviews and Quarterly Reports provide regular communication to the Member States and staff alike on our gender parity achievements on a quarterly basis.
- We recognize that further efforts can be undertaken to upscale the communication and through the work of the High-level Task Force and Gender Expert Advisory Group, we will look into how we can do this further.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- Establishing a financial benchmark has been one of the requirements of the UN-SWAP 2.0 and UN Women has initiated agency-wide discussions on updating the existing Gender Marker to one that integrates a finance tracking mechanism.
- At the same time, we need key linkages in our financial accounting system – Umoja and the new IPMR system - to allow for adequate tracking of expenditures. UNEP has been working closely with secretariat colleagues in New York to make improvements in Umoja, and more recently in the IPMR roll-out, to enable appropriate tracking and the generation of dashboards for management oversight.
- UNEP will work to further devise options for benchmarking linked to the gender marker, including through consultations with other UN agencies who have done so. Options will be presented to the high-level internal task force and recommendations presented to the SMT for action.

EFFICIENCY

Strengthen the UNEP Gender Architecture including, greater engagement of Gender Focal Points

- UNEP recognizes that a strengthened Gender architecture is key to UNEP's ability to meet its gender commitments stated in the MTS 2022-25 and also in meeting the UN-SWAP 2.0 Performance indicators.
- UNEP has noted the recommendations and will weigh the options for a revitalized architecture, including by considering the recommendations from a UN system-wide survey on strengthening agency level gender architecture carried out in 2020-2021 by UN Women. The available options will be proposed for discussion by the High Level Task Force that I mentioned previously.
- The additional recommendation to recruit full-time gender advisors to the sub-programme coordinators will need further consideration given the cost implications. Instead, the High-Level Task Force may consider options for the provision of advisors within the overall context of the existing, revamped UNEP Gender Architecture.
- The new Gender Architecture, including a revitalized gender focal point system, will be incorporated into the revised Gender Policy and Strategy for implementation.

MONITORING, REPORTING AND EVALUATION

Robustly monitor progress towards gender results.

- UNEP is finalizing the development of the Safeguards and Gender Online system (SAGE) a cloud-based data hub capturing information on environmental and social risk management and gender responsiveness over the project management cycle. The aim of SAGE is to facilitate UNEP staff members' effective planning, management, reporting and oversight of projects on gender and safeguards measures from concept development till the project closure phases.
- UN Women has (in collaboration with UN Secretariat agencies – including UNEP) also supported the inclusion of the Gender Marker in the IPMR as one of the parameters for assessing integration of gender equality perspectives in project development. Accordingly, gender tagging that can be done at different levels of the log-frame. A log-frame element can have between 1-4 gender tags. UNEP continues to be engaged in the IPMR roll-out.

Assessment of MTS/POW result- reporting on Outcome 4 of the Executive Management in POW 2022- 2023

- This will be implemented alongside previous recommendations. The POW indicators are, as defined, "indicators" of our work and progress, but do not tell the full story. This can only be done through more in-depth analysis and evaluation, such as that provided by the evaluation team. The narrative accounts of gender implementation in the Programme Performance Reports will also assist us in doing so.

Finally on SUSTAINABILITY:

The recommendation here is to increase visibility of gender-related knowledge and revise knowledge sharing strategy

- Increasing the visibility of the gender-related knowledge generated from UNEP's actions is crucial given the leading global role that UNEP plays in environmental management.
- From 2016, UNEP benefits from the dedicated service of one staff member who reviews all publications and provides advice on where gender equality perspectives are missing. As a result, over the years we have noted an increase in the uptake of gender-related elements and advice.
- We recognize however the ongoing need to increase efforts to more systematically generate gender/environment knowledge and to share it more widely via knowledge platforms and channels. We will take forward this recommendation in collaboration with the Communications Division as well in the context of the new UNEP Publications Policy and process with the goal of devising a more strategic approach to gender-related knowledge sharing.

Revisit the use of gender goals in the ePAS

- The current ePAS criteria for gender mainstreaming for all staff will be reviewed by the High Level Task Force mentioned previously and thereafter shared with SMT before being rolled out. Managers will then continue to be accountable to track implementation during their annual or biannual performance discussions.

Overall, the recommendations are very well-received and we intend to fully implement. Indeed, we have delayed the development of our revised Gender Policy and Strategy awaiting the outcomes of this evaluation such that we can fully incorporate these recommendations into its development.

Thank you, Mr. Chair and distinguished representatives for allowing us to respond to this important evaluation.