



**United Nations**

# **Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization**

**General Assembly**  
**Official Records**  
**Seventy-fifth Session**  
**Supplement No. 1**





# **Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization**



United Nations • New York, 2020

*Note*

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

## Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction . . . . .	4
II. The United Nations response to COVID-19 . . . . .	8
III. The work of the Organization . . . . .	10
A. Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development . . . . .	10
B. Maintenance of international peace and security . . . . .	14
C. Development in Africa . . . . .	18
D. Promotion and protection of human rights . . . . .	19
E. Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance . . . . .	21
F. Promotion of international justice and law . . . . .	23
G. Disarmament . . . . .	24
H. Drug control, crime prevention and combating terrorism . . . . .	26
IV. Effective functioning of the Organization . . . . .	28

## Chapter I

### Introduction

1. In 1945, world leaders gathered in San Francisco to sign the Charter of the United Nations, which gave birth to an organization that represented new hope for a world emerging from the horrors of the Second World War. Our founders were in no doubt about the kind of world that they wished to banish to the past.

2. In 2020, as the United Nations celebrates 75 years since the Charter's signing, we have an opportunity to reflect on our shared progress, as well as our common future. Our vision and values – based on equality, mutual respect and international cooperation – helped us to avoid a Third World War, which would have had catastrophic consequences for life on our planet. For 75 years, we have forged productive cooperative relationships for global problem-solving and the common good. We have put in place vital norms and agreements that codify and protect human rights, set ambitious goals for sustainable development and charted a path towards a more balanced relationship with the climate and the natural world. Billions of people have emerged from the yoke of colonialism. Millions have been lifted out of poverty.

3. Today, day in and day out, around the clock, around the world, the United Nations is helping to save millions of lives every year. Women and men of the United Nations are assisting 80 million refugees and displaced people and enabling more than 2 million women and girls to overcome complications from pregnancy and childbirth. Over 40 political missions and peacekeeping operations comprising 95,000 troops, police and civilian personnel strive to bring and keep the peace and to protect civilians. Our electoral assistance now extends to 60 countries each year, and our help for victims of torture reaches 40,000 people. Some 7,500 monitoring missions every year seek to protect human rights, make violations known and hold perpetrators accountable.

4. Yet these efforts have not been enough to hold back the tides of fear, hatred, inequality, poverty and injustice. Moreover, early in 2020, we were brought to our knees by a microscopic virus: the virus responsible for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has taken a horrific toll on individuals, communities and societies, with the most vulnerable disproportionately affected.

5. The pandemic has demonstrated the fragility of our world. It has laid bare risks ignored for decades: inadequate health systems; gaps in social protection; structural inequalities; environmental degradation; the climate crisis.

6. The United Nations family mobilized quickly and comprehensively, leading on the global health response, continuing and expanding the provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance, establishing instruments for rapid responses to the socioeconomic impact and laying out a broad policy agenda in support of the most vulnerable communities and regions.<sup>1</sup> But the setback to the fundamental Charter goals of peace, justice, human rights and development has been deep and may be long-lasting.

#### **Building a more sustainable future**

7. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by the target date of 2030. Now, we face the deepest global recession since the Second World War and the broadest collapse in incomes

---

<sup>1</sup> In June 2020, the Secretary-General launched the United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19: Saving Lives, Protecting Societies, Recovering Better.

since 1870. Approximately 100 million more people could be pushed into extreme poverty. Already in its fifth year of implementation, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains humanity's blueprint for a better future. In January 2020, the United Nations launched a decade of action to accelerate implementation; the COVID-19 pandemic has made the decade of action both more challenging and more urgent.

8. With the onset of the pandemic, the United Nations called for massive global support for the most vulnerable people and countries – a rescue package amounting to at least 10 per cent of the global economy. Developed countries have stepped up support for their own people, but we are promoting mechanisms of solidarity to ensure that the developing world will also benefit, including through a debt standstill, debt restructuring and greater support through the international financial institutions. This rescue package has yet to fully materialize.

9. This failure of solidarity compounds a much-longer-standing struggle to secure the financing necessary for the success of the 2030 Agenda, complicated by slow growth and high debt. We must act now to maintain progress made on sustainable development. We share a common fate. Only with true solidarity and unity will we achieve our shared goals and uphold our values.

10. COVID-19 also brought home the drastic need to rebalance the human relationship with the natural world. We were already approaching the point of no return on climate change. Recovery from COVID-19 must go hand in hand with climate action. With global emissions reaching record levels, I hosted the Climate Action Summit and the Youth Climate Summit in 2019. Seventy countries committed themselves to more ambitious national climate plans to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Beyond climate change, and after more than 15 years of intense efforts, the 2020 intergovernmental conference on marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction must now be the starting point for greater harmony with nature as a whole.

#### **A call to action on human rights**

11. The COVID-19 pandemic hit at a time of widespread disregard for human rights. In February, we launched a call to action on human rights by which we committed ourselves to making human dignity the core of the Organization's work, with a special focus on such areas as rights at the centre of sustainable development; rights in times of crisis; gender equality and equal rights for women; public participation and civic space; rights of future generations, especially climate justice; rights at the heart of collective action; and new frontiers of human rights. The pandemic immediately put these commitments to the test. Human rights formed a cornerstone of the United Nations response.

#### **Raising our voices for peace**

12. The pandemic is having profound social, economic and political consequences, and we must do everything possible to find the peace and unity that our world needs. There can be only one fight in our world today: our shared battle against COVID-19. That is why, on 23 March 2020, I issued an appeal for a global ceasefire, which has been widely endorsed by the Security Council, nearly 180 countries, more than 20 armed groups and 800 civil society groups. My special envoys and I are working together to establish effective ceasefires and overcome the legacy of long-lasting conflicts.

13. Violence is not confined to the battlefield; it affects many women in their homes, where they may now be confined in lockdown or quarantine with their abusers. In April, I called for an end to violence against women everywhere. Some 146 Member States committed themselves to including violence prevention and response in their COVID-19 response plans.

### **Renewing multilateralism**

14. As we emerge from this pandemic, we cannot go back to a world that was delivering only for the few. We need a new social contract within States and a new global deal between States. We need new global governance, rebalanced financial and trade systems, effective delivery of critical global public goods and decision-making guided by standards of sustainability. Our recovery from COVID-19 and our renewal of multilateralism must be based on fair globalization, on the rights and dignity of every human being, on living in balance with nature, on taking account of the rights of future generations and on success measured in human rather than economic terms.

15. These are not only the lessons of COVID-19. They are also the clear wish expressed in the worldwide consultation process for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. People want a global governance system that delivers for them and is based on full, inclusive and equal participation in global institutions. I look forward to working with Member States and civil society to chart a way forward that allows us to jointly live up to these expectations.

16. As we build multilateral approaches, we also need stronger digital cooperation. Technology can turbocharge recovery from COVID-19 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. My Road Map for Digital Cooperation promotes a vision of an inclusive, sustainable digital future for all.

### **Strengthening our Organization**

17. As part of our efforts to revitalize multilateralism, we continued the implementation of an ambitious reform agenda to improve the effectiveness and accountability of the United Nations. New structures across the development, peace and security and management architectures of the Secretariat were established in 2019 to allow the Organization to respond more nimbly to emerging requirements and better cooperate across the pillars of its work. The new approaches introduced as part of these reforms have been validated through a trial by fire, as they allowed the United Nations to continue its critical work uninterrupted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

18. Only an Organization that is inclusive and equitable will sustain us for the future. We have maintained gender parity among senior management, and we now have the highest number of women serving as heads and deputy heads of mission in our history. We are also working to build a more geographically diverse workforce. In March 2020, I launched the Geographical Diversity Strategy to improve the representation status of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States within the Secretariat. In 2019, I launched the first ever United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy to raise the Organization's standards and performance and enhance coordinated efforts to mainstream disability inclusion across the United Nations system.

19. To improve our fitness for the challenges of the twenty-first century, 50 United Nations entities jointly designed a data strategy as a comprehensive playbook for data-driven change. Data permeate all aspects of our work, and their power – harnessed responsibly – is critical to the global agendas that we serve.

20. The work and reforms of the Organization remain at risk of financial disruption. In 2019 the Organization faced its worst regular budget cash shortage in a decade, and the situation in 2020 may worsen further. Cash constraints are forcing us to prioritize our work on the basis of availability of funds, rather than programmatic priorities.

### **Looking ahead**

21. As we grapple with the effects of COVID-19, we have an opportunity to build a more equal world. This means creating a new social contract – integrating education,

employment, sustainable development and social protection – based on equal rights and opportunities for all. Social protection systems for the future must include universal health coverage and promote women’s employment and gender equality, investment in public services and economies that work for people and the planet.

22. We also need a global new deal in which global governance and financial and trade systems are rebalanced and decisions are guided by standards of sustainability, giving light to the aspirations in the 2030 Agenda. COVID-19 is a human tragedy, but it has also created a generational opportunity. Let us make the commitment to build back better, upholding the vision and resolve reflected in the Charter signed 75 years ago, which continues to guide our way forward together.

## Chapter II

### The United Nations response to COVID-19

23. The COVID-19 pandemic has swiftly taken hundreds of thousands of lives, infected millions of people, upended economies and disrupted every aspect of modern life. It is more than a health crisis: it is an economic crisis, a humanitarian crisis, a security crisis and a human rights crisis. The global response requires reimagining the structures of societies and how we cooperate for the common good.

#### Three-pillar response

24. We are pursuing a three-pillar response: first, a large-scale health response, including accelerating work towards a vaccine, diagnostics and treatment for everyone, everywhere; second, an effort to address the devastating socioeconomic, humanitarian and human rights effects of the pandemic; and third, a recovery that builds back better – towards more equal, inclusive, resilient and sustainable societies, as well as an international system that can protect and deliver on critical global public goods.

#### Attention to the hardest-hit countries and populations

25. Since the outset, I have advocated for special attention to be given to those hardest hit by the pandemic. This includes 63 countries already facing humanitarian or refugee crises, and vulnerable groups, including women, children, older persons, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals, those with disabilities, those with mental health considerations and those who are on the move, among others.

26. We cannot afford to leave anyone behind in our response and recovery. To support global leaders, I have issued policy briefs to guide the response to those most in need. No one is safe until everyone is safe.

#### Response of the broader United Nations family

27. The entire United Nations system has mobilized behind the World Health Organization-led health response to distribute medical supplies, train health workers, support testing and tracing, prevent the spread of the virus, disseminate information and support national plans.

28. As Secretary-General, I convened world leaders to cooperate on a vaccine that is universally available and affordable, as well as on financing and debt relief. On 23 March, I appealed for a global ceasefire, which has been endorsed by close to 180 Member States, over 20 armed movements and 800 civil society organizations.

29. Our humanitarian agencies already support more than 100 million people around the world and are placing a high priority on continuing to provide life-saving help while also supporting the response of the wider United Nations system to the pandemic through the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

30. Through the United Nations development system, we are assisting in five areas: essential health services; social protection and basic services; protecting jobs and providing support to small and medium-sized enterprises and informal sector workers; financing; and social cohesion and resilience.

31. The United Nations country teams have mobilized to support a coherent response to the pandemic, collaborating with Governments, international financial institutions and others in socioeconomic impact assessments and expeditious solutions in a “development emergency” mode.

32. The specialized agencies are supporting Governments and partners with guidance on public health measures, aviation, shipping, tourism, technology, food supply and security, agriculture and other areas on which the pandemic had an impact.

33. The peacekeeping missions have put in place mitigation measures to continue protecting vulnerable communities while promoting the safety and health of our personnel and maintaining continuity of operations.

#### **Recovering better**

34. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored fragilities, which extend far beyond global health. Recovery will be an opportunity to address inequality, exclusion, gaps in social protection systems, the climate crisis and many other injustices that have been exposed. Instead of going back to unsustainable approaches, we need to transition to renewable energy, sustainable food systems, greater gender equality, stronger social safety nets, universal health coverage and an international system that can deliver.

#### **Continuing our work**

35. The United Nations has been able to continue delivering with minimal interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of strong business continuity measures in place, including investments over the past few years on information and communications technology platforms that have enabled uninterrupted productivity and collaboration for the Organization's workforce, of which significant numbers of staff members were required to shift abruptly to remote working arrangements.

36. Reforms implemented since January 2019 have also allowed us to effectively meet the challenge of operating during a pandemic. The changes brought about by reform include a new, empowered and independent system to coordinate sustainable development efforts, enhanced delegation of authority to senior managers to better respond to issues specific to their respective mandates and locations, the shift to a more nimble supply chain management approach that facilitated faster sourcing and delivery of necessary goods and services, clearer divisions of responsibility in the area of human resources that enabled the rapid revision of policy and the uninterrupted delivery of operational support, and the consolidation of disparate medical and health-care capacities at Headquarters into a unified structure that was better able to coordinate medical support and evacuation arrangements for United Nations personnel. COVID-19 therefore served as an important validation of the principles of the reforms.

## Chapter III

### The work of the Organization

#### A. Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development

##### 1. Context

37. Now in its fifth year of implementation, work on the 2030 Agenda is accelerating, guided by the pledge of leaving no one behind.

38. In 2019, Member States reaffirmed their shared commitment to the 2030 Agenda, with leaders calling for a decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of accelerating progress in eradicating fundamental deprivations, reducing inequalities and reversing course on climate change and biodiversity loss, all central aspirations in the Agenda.

##### 2. Key objectives

39. The Organization provides solutions to foster international cooperation and partnerships in the follow-up to transformative global agendas, including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2011–2020. Regional support is spearheaded by the regional commissions and regional offices of entities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Western Asia. On the ground across 162 countries and territories, the resident coordinators help to join up the expertise of all resident and non-resident entities in the United Nations development system in support of national efforts.

##### 3. Key outcomes

###### *Stocktaking and acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals*

40. Five years after their creation, the Sustainable Development Goals represent the collective desire to build a better world for people and the planet. The United Nations plays a key role in supporting Member State implementation. Since 2016, 168 countries have developed plans for the Goals and presented voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, demonstrating their commitment to adopting policies and institutions.

###### **Highlight: Data for Now**

Accelerated action for the 2030 Agenda depends on high-quality, disaggregated data and statistics. The Data for Now initiative is aimed at accelerating the sustainable use of geospatial information, big data and other non-traditional sources. Through the Global Land Indicators Initiative, for example, over 200 experts have been trained on data collection and reporting.

41. While there is progress on some of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including for indicators on poverty, hunger, youth employment, biodiversity, climate change and access to justice, the world is not on track to achieve them by 2030. Consequently, global leaders gathered in September 2019 for the first United Nations summit on the 2030 Agenda since its adoption. As a result, Member States adopted a commitment to accelerate implementation through a decade of action. Since then, I have called for greater mobilization, ambition, financing and solutions, particularly on poverty, climate and gender equality.

*Leaving no one behind*

42. Eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities is at the very core of the 2030 Agenda. Today, 1.3 billion people remain at risk of being excluded from realizing the Sustainable Development Goals as a result of multidimensional poverty. The United Nations therefore supports initiatives for vulnerable countries and populations, based on the principle of “leaving no one behind”. For example, we jointly organized the Global Conference on Scaling Up Energy Access and Finance in Least

Developed Countries in 2019, as access to sustainable energy is a key enabler of the Goals’ implementation. In addition, we helped to launch the Coalition for Sustainable Energy Access at the 2019 Climate Action Summit to accelerate universal access in rural and vulnerable areas. The midterm review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway also witnessed Member States advancing their commitment to the needs of small island developing States.

43. As part of United Nations support for sustainable urbanization, I released my guidance note on land and conflict, the United Nations System-Wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements and the Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles and Framework for Action to Advance Integrated Territorial Development, improving tenure security and the resolution of land disputes, focused on 1.2 million vulnerable people in 13 countries.

44. In the area of trade, we supported policies that allow women to benefit from opportunities in international exchange, for example through the Borderline initiative in six border districts of Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, which trains women informal traders on how to formalize their businesses.

**Highlight: disabilities**

The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy is a key component of leaving no one behind, representing the first ever United Nations system-wide strategy for 1 billion individuals with disabilities. Launched in 2019, the Strategy is aimed at mainstreaming disability inclusion across the United Nations system.

*Climate action*

45. With global emissions reaching record levels, I called leaders to the Climate Action Summit in September 2019, which resulted in 70 countries committing to more ambitious national plans. Business leaders also responded, with some of the world’s largest asset managers – responsible for directing more than \$2 trillion in investments – committing to moving to carbon-neutral portfolios by 2050. In 2020, we also wrap up the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, during which 63 Governments made commitments under the Clean Seas campaign.

**Highlight: youth**

The *World Youth Report* highlighted the essential role that young people play in advancing the 2030 Agenda. To mobilize youth for climate action, the 2019 Youth Climate Summit provided a platform for young leaders from 140 countries and territories.

46. The scientific community has repeatedly sounded the alarm on the climate emergency, including biodiversity breakdown, marking 2020 as a “super year” for action. While several events scheduled for 2020 were postponed owing to the pandemic, climate change remains the biggest threat facing humanity in the long term. We therefore need to increase ambition and action on climate change, as the virus only heightens our vulnerability to global threats.

*Gender equality*

47. The year 2020 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In the lead-up to the 2020 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Member States conducted national reviews of progress and challenges related to the Platform of Action. To date, more than 160 States have completed their reviews, which served as the basis for the political declaration adopted during the session of the Commission. While progress has been made, major gaps remain, including the fact that, 25 years on, no country has fully achieved gender equality, which is now a priority during the decade of action.

**Highlight: gender**

The Spotlight Initiative is a multi-year programme, supported by the European Union, to end violence against women and girls. Through rights-based programming, it strengthens United Nations collaboration and partnership with civil society to support government efforts on the Sustainable Development Goals.

While progress has been made, major gaps remain, including the fact that, 25 years on, no country has fully achieved gender equality, which is now a priority during the decade of action.

*Scaling up financing for development*

48. To achieve the 2030 Agenda, developing countries face a financing gap of at least \$2.5 trillion per year – not considering the impact of COVID-19. In September 2019, the General Assembly convened the first High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development since the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which resulted in over 20 new initiatives and commitments by Governments and stakeholders to help to fill the gap.

49. In October 2019, I also launched the Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance with leaders of 30 financial institutions and corporations. Collectively, the Alliance manages some \$16 trillion dollars of assets and serves 700 million clients in over 160 countries. Over the next two years, the group will reshape investment solutions to unlock more finance for sustainable development, especially for countries most in need, and align its business practices with the 2030 Agenda.

*Regional support*

50. More than ever, our greatest challenges transcend borders. The regional commissions therefore help Governments to formulate and implement policies for sustainable development across the five regions. For example, the Economic Commission for Africa developed a regional strategy for the decade of action and launched the Sustainable Development Goal 7 initiative for Africa to steer private sector finance into African sustainable energy projects.

51. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, together with the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, helped to organize high-level political regional forums on the 2030 Agenda and issued policy advice on how to accelerate regional progress, within the framework of empowerment and inclusion.

52. The debt for climate adaptation swap initiative advocated by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean gained momentum and now incorporates a stronger Caribbean Resilience Fund. It addresses the two most urgent development needs facing the Caribbean: debt and vulnerability to climate change.

53. Collectively, the regional commissions for Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Western Asia pioneered regional “SDG Gateways”, which are a window to data across regions, subregions and countries. For the first time, the Gateways help Member States to assess where we are on track for the Sustainable Development Goals and what new investments are needed. In addition, they offer best practices, lessons and tools for policy.

*Country support and United Nations development system repositioning*

54. The year 2019 was a defining year for the entities in the United Nations development system as it repositioned its support for the 2030 Agenda with programmes and projects of about \$36 billion annually. The reform of the United Nations development system has resulted in a better-coordinated use of our global and regional capacities and refocused our on-the-ground support for countries at the start of the decade of action.

55. At the heart of the reform is the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, in which resident coordinators have greater authority, capacities and tools. The resident coordinators are leading 131 United Nations country teams in 162 countries and territories. With their support, country teams undertake more integrated planning and tailor responses to country priorities and needs in their pathway towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, centred on the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. The Development Coordination Office was also set up to support the resident coordinator system, and a funding compact was agreed with Member States to transform how the system is financed and managed.

56. The shift to better coordination is demonstrating results: 95 per cent of all United Nations country teams report that the joined-up approach has strengthened relationships with Governments, two thirds of partner Governments already indicate that resident coordinators deliver increased capacity on national development priorities, and almost 80 per cent of host Governments identified the newly reformed United Nations development system as more relevant to their country's development needs. We are on the right track and will continue to rigorously monitor the implementation of these reforms. While consolidating the new development coordination system that we have built together, I am determined to forge ahead on the remaining mandates of the repositioning process, notably for multi-country offices, the regional review and system-wide evaluation.

## **B. Maintenance of international peace and security**

### **1. Context**

57. As the United Nations marks 75 years of work for the maintenance of international peace and security, our efforts encounter complex and multifaceted challenges, many of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of 2019, for example, 79.5 million people had been displaced by conflict, the highest number on record. In the face of these challenges, we are focused on strengthening our support for preventing and mitigating conflict.

58. As part of my reform agenda, the peace and security architecture at Headquarters was restructured to increase coherence through a shift to a whole-of-pillar approach. Two new departments were established in 2019: the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, including a strengthened Peacebuilding Support Office, and the Department of Peace Operations, supported by a joint political-operational regional structure and shared capacities. Benefits from the reform are already evident through the prioritization of prevention, more tailored peacekeeping efforts, integrated approaches to transitions, the development of regional strategies, closer alignment with the United Nations development system, a strengthened partnership with the World Bank and greater impact of the Peacebuilding Fund.

### **2. Key objectives**

59. Grounded in the principles of the Charter and the mandates of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the United Nations supports Member States through a wide range of activities in the area of international peace and security. Through its political, peacebuilding and peacekeeping engagements, the Organization assists in the prevention, mitigation, management and peaceful resolution of conflicts. The Organization also provides dedicated capacities to tackle violence against children, sexual violence in conflict, children and armed conflict, the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and the prevention of genocide.

### **3. Key outcomes**

#### *Prevention, management and resolution of conflicts*

60. At the heart of our work remains diplomacy for peace. To this end, my special envoys and representatives have been deeply engaged over the past year to secure sustainable peace in 54 contexts, including Libya, Mali, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Supporting the transition in the Sudan has been a key priority, as have the peaceful referendum in Papua New Guinea, diffusing post-election tensions in Malawi and the response to the unfolding crisis in Burkina Faso. Our good offices in the Gambia were instrumental in encouraging consensus-building, while in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, my Personal Envoy helped to calm tensions and violence in the aftermath of the 2019 elections. In Colombia, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia continues to support the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

61. The world's most complex issues are borderless. Addressing them requires cross-border approaches, for example through the Group of Five for the Sahel, as well as the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. In the current Peacebuilding Fund strategy, cross-border and regional support has been made a priority, with the aim of allocating 20 per cent of the Fund's portfolio to such efforts.

62. The United Nations maintains more than 40 special political missions and peacekeeping operations to support conflict prevention and peacebuilding mandates on the ground. Combined, these missions comprise more than 95,000 civilian and uniformed personnel. The number of deployed women in uniform has increased fivefold in the past three decades, and we are working towards full gender parity based on our uniformed gender parity strategy.

63. Peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, South Sudan and Darfur are implementing complex mandates, including protecting civilians and supporting political processes. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic supported the implementation of the peace agreement, as well as election preparation, while in Mali, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali contributed to discussions on the redeployment of the reconstituted Malian Defence and Security Forces through accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

64. Our work in peacekeeping continues to be guided by the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. Endorsed by 153 Member States, the initiative provides a road map for strengthening peacekeeping in eight priority areas through commitments for collective action by all stakeholders. In 2019, we implemented a first ever partnership survey, which indicated progress, in particular on conduct, safety and security, and women and peace and security.

65. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment System, which contributes to the initiative's commitment to performance and accountability, will have operated across 13 peacekeeping missions by the end of 2020. The System helps to assess our impact and generates analysis for better mandate delivery.

66. As part of our reform agenda, we are devoting particular attention to nationally led transitions, for example in the Sudan, where we are simultaneously drawing down the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and preparing for the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan, which will support the political transition, sustain stability gains in Darfur and assist in peacebuilding. Transition also occurred in Haiti with the establishment of the United

**Highlight: women and peace and security**

As the international community marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, we put the protection and participation of women at the centre of all peacemaking, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. In the Central African Republic, for example, in 2019 women were formally involved in peace negotiations for the first time. In Lebanon, our support contributed to a first national action plan on women and peace and security, endorsed by the Government in 2019.

**Highlight: climate security**

Our climate security mechanism advances a systematic approach to analysing and addressing climate-related security risks across the Organization and improves inter-agency cooperation and knowledge exchange. In 2019 and 2020, it supported risk analysis for West Africa and the Sahel, the Middle East and the Pacific islands.

Nations Integrated Office in Haiti and is under way in Guinea-Bissau with a strengthened role for the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

#### *Protection of civilians*

67. The year 2019 marked 20 years since the protection of civilians was added to the agenda of the Security Council and was first mandated in a United Nations peacekeeping operation, in Sierra Leone. Today, 95 per cent of all peacekeeping personnel serve in missions with protection mandates. In Mali and South Sudan, for example, our missions help to identify “hotspots” in communities at risk. In other contexts, such as the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Mali, the missions are using community violence reduction approaches and surge teams.

#### *Peacebuilding support*

68. The third review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture commenced in 2019 as we strengthen our support for the Peacebuilding Commission, scale up the Peacebuilding Fund and foster cross-pillar collaboration and our partnerships with international financial institutions. As the Organization’s instrument of first resort for conflict prevention, the Fund supported the system-wide response in Burkina Faso, along with the Peacebuilding Commission. It also supported countries in transition, such as the Sudan. In 2019, the Fund provided \$191 million in investments across 34 countries, an increase from \$183 million in 2018, the previous record. For every \$1 allocated, donors and Governments typically mobilize an additional \$10 dollars of investment, illustrating the Fund’s catalytic impact for peace.

#### **Highlight: youth**

In June 2019, we helped to organize the first regional dialogue on youth and peace and security in Ulaanbaatar to advance youth-led discussions and policies. In addition, the gender and youth promotion effort of the Peacebuilding Fund invested \$20 million in young people’s leadership, making it the largest funding initiative in support of the youth and peace and security agenda.

#### *Electoral assistance*

69. In 2019, we provided electoral assistance to 60 Member States and undertook 70 electoral missions involving 90 experts and staff, including in Côte d’Ivoire, Honduras, Liberia and Uzbekistan. The Organization provided direct assistance to 19 elections, which were assessed as peaceful and orderly by national and international observers. Our assistance also contributed to an increase in women’s participation and representation, one of our key guiding principles. Over the past five years, the average number of women in parliament in countries receiving United Nations electoral assistance rose by more than 7 per cent.

#### *Rule of law and security institutions*

70. United Nations support contributes to the strengthening of the rule of law as a core pillar of stability. In the Central African Republic, Mali, South Sudan and the Sudan, for example, we helped to increase the availability of justice and corrections services in conflict-affected areas, enhanced accountability for serious crimes and strengthened the capacity of national oversight bodies for accountability.

71. In the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we helped to train and support national police services, while in the Central African Republic and Mali, security sector reform was mainstreamed into the peace processes.

The Organization also supported a nationally owned security sector reform in the Gambia and conducted a threat analysis of armed non-State actors in Burkina Faso.

72. In support of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, we launched revised global standards that now guide our programmes in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Mali, Somalia and the Sudan.

*Security Council affairs*

73. In 2019, the United Nations Secretariat continued to support the Security Council in preparing 258 meetings, five missions to the field, 52 resolutions and 15 presidential statements. Support was also provided to the Council's subsidiary bodies, including sanctions committees and working groups.

*Violence against children, children and armed groups, sexual violence in conflict and victims' rights*

74. As part of our efforts to address human rights violations associated with conflict, we provided input to the Central African Republic peace talks, which led to the release of over 600 children. Globally, the United Nations supported the development of at least 14 action plans resulting in the release of 13,600 children from armed forces and groups.

## **C. Development in Africa**

### **1. Context**

75. Support for African priorities constitutes a significant portion of our work. Collectively, the United Nations system, including the Secretariat, assists 54 countries on the continent. Over 40 per cent of spending is delivered in Africa, and two out of every five staff work in the continent.

76. Over the past several years, Africa has made encouraging progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. However, progress has remained uneven. The pandemic will further exacerbate vulnerabilities and have an impact on economic growth, which is now expected to contract by 2.6 per cent, pushing nearly 29 million people into extreme poverty and resulting in 19 million jobs lost.

### **2. Key objectives**

77. The United Nations promotes sustainable development and peace in Africa, addressing the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development and the interlinkages among peace, security, human rights and development. We also help to foster intraregional integration and international cooperation on the continent.

### **3. Key outcomes**

78. On 6 May 2019, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and I convened the third United Nations-African Union annual conference, deepening our collaboration through the Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this context, we also co-organized a special session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa for more than 400 policymakers and practitioners.

79. In May, we also co-hosted the 2020 Africa Dialogue Series, on the theme “COVID-19 and silencing the guns in Africa: challenges and opportunities”. The goal was to enhance global advocacy for the African Union Master Road Map of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 and Security Council resolution [2457 \(2019\)](#), as well as my appeal for a global ceasefire.

80. The Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area entered into force in May 2019, creating one of the world’s largest trading blocs with over 50 countries. The Agreement, which creates a single market for goods and services covering about 1.2 billion consumers, has the potential to boost intra-African trade by half. The United Nations held awareness-raising events in 34 Member States to promote its ratification and provided assistance for national strategies, including for the inclusion of women, who represent 70 per cent of informal cross-border traders.

81. As part of our work to strengthen the use of data and statistics, the United Nations supported Member States in adopting digitized approaches to census taking. In Kenya, the 2019 census was taken digitally, saving an estimated 506 days of work, as well as strengthening data quality. Other countries are learning from the experience of Kenya, and 27 Member States have undertaken assessments of civil registration and statistics systems.

## D. Promotion and protection of human rights

### 1. Context

82. Fostering peaceful societies and sustainable development goes hand in hand with human rights. Bringing States, civil society, private sector actors and other stakeholders together behind the universal commitment to rights facilitates the building of just and inclusive societies.

### 2. Key objectives

83. Our work to advance the protection and promotion of human rights spans the following thematic pillars: support for international human rights mechanisms; mainstreaming human rights within development and peace and security efforts; and advancement of the core human rights principles of non-discrimination, participation and accountability. In the context of the current pandemic, the United Nations is working to ensure that human rights are central to the response, including through 14 policy recommendations in a dedicated Secretary-General's brief.

### 3. Key outcomes

#### *Support for international human rights mechanisms*

84. Our support for treaty-based and intergovernmental bodies continued during the past year. For example, the special procedures and other mechanisms of the Human Rights Council undertook 84 visits to 57 States and territories in 2019. The treaty body capacity-building programme helped to strengthen national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Kenya and Sierra Leone, among others.

#### **Highlight: call to action**

The Secretary-General launched his call to action on human rights at the forty-third session of the Human Rights Council, in February 2020, to advance the effective enjoyment of all human rights by all everywhere, based on the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With the full strength of the Secretary-General's office and the United Nations family, the call proposes core guiding principles across seven domains to realize the "highest aspiration of humankind".

#### *Human rights within development efforts*

85. In 2019, a draft legally binding instrument on the right to development was prepared, as was a prototype tool to design, monitor and assess human rights-based development policies. We also prioritized the integration of human rights in environment and climate policies. In September 2019, the Peoples' Summit on Climate, Rights and Human Survival was held, resulting in a declaration signed by more than 400 organizations.

#### *Peace and security*

86. The integration of human rights in peace operations is a key element of my Action for Peacekeeping initiative. In 2019, we trained more than 500 mission leaders, police and military officers and developed new policy and guidance on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence, in addition to the work of human rights personnel who conduct investigations and report in conflict settings.

*Non-discrimination*

87. In our work to enhance equality and counter discrimination, we provided support to the adoption of 15 new national laws to combat discrimination in all its forms. The roll-out of the standards of conduct for tackling discrimination against LGBTI persons continued, including disseminating them at global corporate events such as the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and receiving the support of 270 of the largest companies in the world.

**Highlight: thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The year 2019 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in which it is recognized that children are entitled to non-negotiable rights. The Convention protects the rights of all children, everywhere, to be free from discrimination, violence and neglect.

*Participation*

88. We continued our support for the International Decade for People of African Descent, notably through a fellowship programme. Since 2011, 83 fellows from 32 countries have been empowered through the programme and subsequently played instrumental roles in promoting the Decade in their countries.

*Accountability*

89. We continued to support States and other stakeholders in the design and implementation of context-specific, victim-centred and human rights-based accountability and transitional justice processes. We worked with security forces to ensure respect for human rights in the context of counter-terrorism and continued to chair the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Working Group on Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and the Rule of Law while Countering Terrorism and Supporting Victims of Terrorism.

## **E. Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance**

### **1. Context**

90. The past year has been one of tremendous challenges. The combined impact of protracted and intensifying conflicts, climatic shocks and the COVID-19 pandemic pushed humanitarian needs to unprecedented levels, resulting in more than 166 million people requiring assistance. The number of people displaced again rose to record levels, with 79.5 million displaced by conflict, violence and persecution. The world's eight worst food crises were all linked to conflict and climate shocks. For millions of people, exposure to these multiple risks eroded their resilience and increased the likelihood of humanitarian crisis.

### **2. Key objectives**

91. The United Nations works to ensure coherent, coordinated, effective and timely humanitarian responses to save lives and alleviate human suffering in natural disasters and complex emergencies. We advocate humanitarian principles, promote knowledge-sharing in crises, help to expedite assistance and develop policies for greater coherence. Working with a range of stakeholders, we mobilize resources to prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises. Facilitating early and rapid action, including through anticipatory approaches and humanitarian and development collaboration, remains crucial to effective coordination.

### **3. Key outcomes**

92. In 2019, we worked with partners to mobilize over \$18 billion in contributions for life-saving aid for more than 117 million people, compared with \$15.8 billion in 2018, the previous record. Jointly, we help to coordinate more than 570 partners for humanitarian action. Their collective impact was illustrated in Yemen, the world's most severe crisis and where humanitarian organizations reach more than 13 million people every month. In 2020, global needs further increased owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, which required a Global Humanitarian Response Plan for 63 of the world's most vulnerable countries.

93. United Nations humanitarian pooled funds were at the forefront of channelling funding to areas where needs were greatest. Country-based pooled funds allocated \$1.02 billion to humanitarian organizations on the ground for more than 1,600 humanitarian projects targeting 27.5 million people in 18 countries. Some 25 per cent of allocations went directly to national non-governmental organizations.

94. In Southern Africa, for example, we predeployed emergency coordination experts, as well as resources from the Central Emergency Response Fund, to enable a quick life-saving assistance response to cyclones Idai and Kenneth. When Hurricane Dorian hit the Bahamas, the United Nations supported national actions to reduce suffering and save lives.

95. In total, the Central Emergency Response Fund disbursed \$538.7 million to responses in 49 countries and territories, where people's suffering was often out of sight of the world's media. For example, following consecutive harvest failures, the Fund provided \$45 million to scale up support for 1.8 million drought-affected people across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. In response to the Ebola virus disease outbreak, the Fund allocated \$9.8 million to the in-country response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as \$10.5 million to support preparedness and mitigation in Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda.

**Highlight: anticipatory financing**

Financing action before a disaster strikes can save lives and reduce suffering. In 2019, we continued to support anticipatory action, for example by supporting the Global Cholera Risk Model, which can provide up to four weeks' advance warning of potential outbreak, and by developing the first anticipatory action framework for drought in Somalia.

96. We also continue to engage policymakers in critical humanitarian issues. In May 2019, a high-level conference on ending sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises generated \$363 million in pledges and critical political commitments. In October, I announced a High-level Panel on Internal Displacement for durable solutions and better support for the more than 50 million people and host communities affected. In November, we launched guidelines on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.

**Highlight: the impact of data**

The Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is an open platform for sharing data across organizations. In 2019, use of the platform increased significantly, with 700,000 users accessing over 17,000 data sets from 250 organizations.

97. We also continued to provide support to countries in developing disaster risk reduction strategies based on the Sendai Framework. The Sendai Framework monitor is now used by 131 Member States to report progress towards the seven targets and disaster-related Sustainable Development Goals.

## F. Promotion of international justice and law

### 1. Context

98. In the Charter of the United Nations, the world committed “to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained”. This pledge continues to serve as the foundation for Member State interactions in achieving their common goals and is integral to all aspects of our work.

### 2. Key outcomes

99. Progress was made on a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. The next session, in 2021, will consider a revised draft text of an agreement.

100. I took further measures to establish the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of the most serious international crimes and violations of international law with respect to Myanmar since 2011. The Mechanism issued its first report to the Human Rights Council in 2019 and has since taken steps to become fully operational.

101. In March 2019, the Appeals Chamber of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals sentenced Radovan Karadžić to life imprisonment for genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war committed in the former Yugoslavia. In Paris, French authorities arrested Félicien Kabuga, who had been sought by the Mechanism for genocide and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Rwanda in 1994.

102. In June 2020, the International Criminal Court detained Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman, who had been sought for crimes against humanity and war crimes allegedly committed in Darfur between 2003 and 2004. The United Nations, in particular the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, assisted the Central African authorities and the Court in ensuring a successful arrest and transfer of Mr. Abd-Al-Rahman to the Court.

103. The International Court of Justice continued to consider many high-profile cases in 2019 and the first half of 2020. In January 2020, the Court unanimously decided to order four provisional measures binding on Myanmar in the case concerning *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar)*.

#### Highlight: mediation

In August 2019, a signing ceremony was held for the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation (Singapore Convention on Mediation), which will facilitate international trade and commerce by enabling disputing parties to easily enforce and invoke settlement agreements across borders. Expected to enter into force in 2020, the Convention was signed by 46 countries on the day it opened for signature, the highest number of State signatories for any United Nations trade-related convention upon its opening.

## G. Disarmament

### 1. Context

104. Given rising military expenditures, a deteriorating security environment and weakening arms control, disarmament remains particularly relevant. In 2019, military expenditure rose to \$1.9 trillion, the highest level since the end of the cold war.

### 2. Key objectives

105. The United Nations supports multilateral negotiations and efforts aimed at the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, upholding the prohibition of other weapons of mass destruction and regulating conventional weapons and promoting regional disarmament efforts and public awareness.

### 3. Key outcomes

106. In 2019, the Organization implemented key elements of my Agenda for Disarmament, which proposes and tracks 50 concrete actions to advance disarmament across five domains. Already, the Agenda has contributed to a rethinking of disarmament in the context of new and emerging technologies, threats and actors. Within the Agenda, special emphasis has been placed on explosive weapons in populated areas and supporting Member States in efforts to develop a political declaration.

#### Highlight: disarmament

The first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction was held in 2019. The Conference adopted a political declaration, confirming the commitment of participating States to pursuing the establishment of such a zone in an open and inclusive manner.

107. In pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons, we supported the preparations for the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We have also continued to support disarmament work on lethal autonomous weapon systems, including the adoption of guiding principles and efforts to develop recommendations on the normative and operational framework.

108. Under the auspices of the United Nations, progress was made on new technologies in the context of international security through two intergovernmental groups on this issue, which held consultations with regional organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia. On issues of outer space security, we facilitated discussions that led to agreement on the new Guidelines for the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities.

109. To uphold norms against the use of other weapons of mass destruction, we enhanced the operational readiness of my Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, in accordance with its established mandates, including through the training of experts.

110. In contributing to the regulation and limitation of conventional arms, a group of governmental experts recommended in 2019 to expand the

#### Highlight: youth for disarmament

On International Youth Day, we launched the Youth for Disarmament (#Youth4Disarmament) initiative to empower young people with knowledge and skills for change. As part of the initiative, 75 young people spent a day during the session of the First Committee with United Nations officials, diplomats and civil society representatives.

Register of Conventional Arms by encouraging States to report international transfers of small arms and light weapons. In 2020, a new group of governmental experts began consideration of concrete means of addressing ammunition safety and security challenges, such as unplanned explosions and diversion to the illicit market.

## **H. Drug control, crime prevention and combating terrorism**

### **1. Context**

111. In 2019, transnational organized crime, corruption and terrorism continued to pose major threats around the world. Cybercrime, trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling and environmental crimes are increasingly linked to State fragility, undermining the rule of law, and illicit drugs remain a risk to millions of people.

112. Terrorists continue to wreak havoc in communities around the world, with rising concerns over the threat from new violent extremist groups that resort to terrorist tactics, especially against minority groups. The anxiety generated by the COVID-19 crisis has been used to spread hate, conspiracy theories and anti-government sentiments to incite attacks.

### **2. Key objectives**

113. The United Nations supports Member States in addressing the areas of drugs, crime and terrorism to contribute to peace and security for all. This involves advancing international law and implementing principles and standards in such instruments as the United Nations Conventions against Corruption and against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto, conventions and protocols against terrorism, the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, Security Council resolutions and United Nations standards and norms on crime prevention and criminal justice.

### **3. Key outcomes**

#### *Crime prevention and countering transnational organized crime*

114. The United Nations continues to support regional networks to prevent illicit financial flows from drugs and crime, as well as to facilitate cooperation against money-laundering and on the counter-financing of terrorism. For instance, the Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network of Southern Africa has seized over \$1 billion cumulatively from 2016 to 2019 and has assisted Member States in opening investigations and issuing forfeiture orders.

115. In 2020, we released a major upgrade of our anti-money-laundering software, goAML – the largest software project of its kind at the United Nations. Currently installed in the financial intelligence units of 53 countries and serving 100,000 users, the software has contributed to the reporting of more than half a billion suspicious transactions.

116. In Central Asia, we supported the development and adoption of 20 legal documents, including the implementation of local crime prevention action plans. For example, in Bishkek, 10 women’s committees were established and equipped to work on the prevention of crime and gender-based violence.

#### *Countering the world drug problem*

117. In 2019, we helped to improve treatment, care and rehabilitation services in 22 countries, reaching an estimated 39,000 people with drug use disorders. In Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, for example, improved services were provided for an estimated 12,000 children exposed to drugs. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the “Strong families” programme improved the health and safe development of children in challenging family settings.

118. With regard to the global response to the opioid crisis, the Organization provided 2,698 reference standards of controlled drugs and their precursors to 115

laboratories in 51 countries and supported a network of 289 forensic drug testing and toxicology laboratories in 90 countries. Support was provided to law enforcement through the provision of over 1,400 field drug and precursor testing kits, along with specialized training on the identification and analysis of drugs and precursors.

*Terrorism prevention*

119. Enhancing international counter-terrorism cooperation and promoting whole-of-society partnerships remain a priority for the United Nations. In 2019, we supported seven regional high-level conferences on counter-terrorism issues and convened a “virtual counter-terrorism week” during the COVID-19 crisis. The newly developed United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Platform facilitates information exchange and collaboration between the 193 Member States.

**Highlight: counter-terrorism**

The United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme, launched in 2019, helps Member States to develop capacity to use passenger information to detect and counter terrorist travel in line with Security Council resolution [2396 \(2017\)](#). As at July 2020, 36 Member States participated in the Programme.

120. We also enhanced our technical assistance to Member States through the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, bringing together 43 entities in joint planning, resource mobilization and delivery efforts. This included several flagship initiatives to counter the radicalization, travel and financing of terrorists and their access to weapons; to assist victims of terrorism; and to address the precarious situation of women and children associated with United Nations-listed terrorist groups, including through repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration.

## Chapter IV

### Effective functioning of the Organization

#### 1. Key workstreams

121. With more than 36,000 staff in 461 duty stations, the work of the United Nations Secretariat is underpinned by the management of finance, human resources, information and communications technology, supply chains, facilities, conference services and security and safety operations, as well as communicating the work of the Organization to global audiences.

#### 2. Key outcomes

122. The shift to a more decentralized Secretariat, the centrepiece of my management reform, has been anchored by a new system of delegation of authority that came into effect in January 2019. The new approach enhances our effectiveness by delegating more responsibility to the point of mandate delivery. A stronger organizational architecture, led by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Operational Support, was established to support the new paradigm.

123. A newly designed delegation of authority management system has allowed me to directly empower heads of entities and align their responsibility for mandate implementation with the authority to manage resources. Delegation has been simplified and is now managed through an electronic portal.

124. A new tiered support structure is in place, helping managers in exercising their decision-making authority. The Department of Operational Support provides dedicated advisory support to managers, while the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance focuses on regulatory frameworks and policies to ensure that they fit the needs of the Organization. The new Management Client Board provides a critical feedback mechanism on performance.

#### **Highlight: environmental performance**

Implementation of the environment strategy for peace operations remains a key priority. It is aimed at achieving maximum efficiency in the use of natural resources, minimizing risk to people and ecosystems and leaving a positive legacy.

125. Analytics capabilities have been reinforced to foster accountability and transparency. Corporate data from enterprise systems such as Umoja now come together so that verified operational data are available in one place. Based on the data, a standardized performance framework helps to oversee global operations and identify issues. We are also implementing a new risk management approach and a self-evaluation framework to provide more performance information in the new annual budget.

126. The new annual programme budget, which is in its second year of implementation, is a major step towards more realistic budgeting and a greater focus on results. It improves the accuracy of the Secretariat's resource estimates, enabling it to adapt more quickly to changes in mandates and allowing it to adjust planning on the basis of actual programme performance, thereby improving accountability for results. Given the annual cycle, the Secretariat was able to capture programmatic changes resulting from the pandemic in the budget for 2021.

127. The reform has also started a continuous process to simplify policies and processes. In human resources, for example, we streamlined the recruitment process

and are working to improve onboarding. A wider human resources policy review process has begun, and obsolete policies were abolished in 2019.

128. Gender parity and geographical diversity among staff are among my key priorities. Having already achieved gender parity among senior management, I have set a goal for system-wide gender parity by 2028. The Geographical Diversity Strategy, launched in March 2020, aims to ensure a diverse and inclusive workforce.

129. The toolkit entitled “United to respect” was issued to provide guidance on applying my bulletin entitled “Addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority” (ST/SGB/2019/8). The toolkit includes information on maintaining a work environment in which colleagues are treated with respect and dignity, as well as guidance for those affected by prohibited conduct. We are preparing a plan of action for a one-year campaign aimed at promoting knowledge, awareness and action on racism within the Organization.

130. In 2019, the United Nations produced information in 106 languages, as well as Braille, to strengthen communication on the Organization’s work. This included coverage of key events, such as the 2019 Climate Action Summit and the Sustainable Development Goals Summit. Through our conference services, we provided support to more than 36,000 multilateral meetings and conferences in 2019. Our security officers enabled the safe access of more than 36,000 staff and delegates and more than 1,000 Heads of State and Government, as well as more than 3 million visitors.

131. While progress was made in improving our effectiveness, unfortunately the trend of ongoing – and deepening – cash shortfalls continued to affect our work in 2019. The programme budget saw a record deficit of \$520 million, surpassing the record high set just a year earlier despite several cash conservation measures. Without these measures, the General Assembly meetings held in September 2019 would have been disrupted. Furthermore, the year ended with \$711 million in outstanding contributions, the highest in nearly a decade. The aggravation of the liquidity pressure does not bode well for mandate delivery in 2020. In peacekeeping, outstanding assessed contributions totalled \$1.7 billion by the end of the financial period. Troop- and police-contributing countries bore the burden of the cash shortfall as outstanding reimbursements to them reached a record high of \$631 million.

132. These persisting liquidity challenges undermine the Organization’s ability to implement its mandates and carry out its approved programme of work. I continue to reiterate my request to Governments to meet their financial obligations to the United Nations and to approve my proposals for structural changes to place the Organization on a sound and sustainable financial footing.

