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Statement

by Dereje Wordofa, UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme)

on

UNFPA management response to the Thematic evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention, response to and elimination of gender-based violence and harmful practices, 2012-2017

UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board Second regular session 2019

Item 4: Evaluation

23 January 2019, New York

Dear President,

Distinguished delegates,

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to present the **management response** to the findings and recommendations presented in the report of the Thematic evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention, response to and elimination of gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices, 2012-2017.

UNFPA Management **welcomes** the evaluation as an opportunity to learn and further advance organizational efforts to prevent and respond to GBV and harmful practices and, more broadly, improve the work of UNFPA.

Overall, UNFPA **agrees** with the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations and finds the report substantive, relevant, and timely. It also notes and appreciates in particular the comprehensive approach to the collection of data and evidence underpinning this evaluation.

I am pleased to state that by 2018, under the framework of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021, UNFPA had **already made progress** on most of the issues raised in the findings of the evaluation. In particular:

The Strategic Plan has a **strong gender focus** across all programmatic outcomes and as a separate gender outcome, and provides an integrated focus on advancing prevention, response to GBV and elimination of harmful practices.

UNFPA has already **incorporated many lessons learned and good practices** into UNFPA programmatic support to the prevention, response to and elimination of gender-based violence and harmful practices.

In line with the 2030 Agenda and the UN system wide approach, UNFPA has **adopted the new way of working**, which seeks to deliberately bring humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors together towards achieving collective outcomes that focus on reducing risk and vulnerability along with addressing humanitarian needs and resilience building.

The current Strategic Plan and humanitarian vision and strategy provide guidance on how to leverage and increase effectiveness, efficiency and capacity to **scale up the organization's role as a key global humanitarian actor** and strengthen its leadership and participation in global agenda, including in Gender Based Violence Area of Responsibility, Sexual and reproductive health, and youth and data.

UNFPA is **proud of this progress**, which has also been acknowledged in the evaluation findings:

- **Zero gender-based violence and harmful practices**, including child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting is **one of three transformative goals** of the UNFPA Strategic Vision towards implementation of 2030 Development Agenda;
- GBV has been effectively **kept at the center of the global, regional and national development debate**
- **Multi-stakeholder partnerships are in place**, including stakeholders beyond traditional UN actors. At the same time, Joint UN work, including management of thematic funds, is being employed to eliminate gender-based violence and harmful practices
- UNFPA is providing **leadership to the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the Inter-Agency Taskforce on Violence against Women**. It leads coordination of the GBV Area of Responsibility under the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) global protection cluster and the national Call to Action to prevent and respond to GBV
- The Fund, through human rights-based, gender responsive, and culturally sensitive programming has **designed and rolled out a set of normative frameworks**, learned and shared practical programme

experiences in support of programming prevention of GBV and harmful practices.

Building on this progress, during the period 2019-2021 UNFPA will pursue the following priorities in response to the evaluation recommendations:

To strengthen *organizational capacity and foster learning (recommendations 1,3, 8 and 9)*, the Fund will ensure that Strategic Plan Outcome Three 3 is **adequately funded** within available resources and **equally, as other outcomes, reflected in the organization's resource mobilization drive**. In this regard, a formal organizational benchmark will be created to monitor programming expenditures allocated to advancing gender equality results, GBV programming, capacity, and systems-building.

Furthermore, management will emphasize to country representatives the corporate priority of **maintaining and/or securing senior GBV and gender expertise**, (*recommendation 1*) including in harmful practices, with secured funding from both core- and non-core programme budgets, as required.

Additionally, it will ensure that dedicated senior GBV sub-cluster coordinators are deployed **at Country level** (*recommendation 8*) as part of scale-up approach in rapid onset emergencies, and include support to GBV sub-cluster coordinators in the organogram in countries vulnerable to disasters.

UNFPA will place emphasis on **building the capacity** (*recommendation 9*) of country office GBV & gender personnel facing humanitarian situations; focus on the development of post-surge solutions to prevent overuse of ‘surge mechanism’ as well as include required competencies in humanitarian work in the profile of country representatives for the countries vulnerable to disasters.

For the same reasons, the **performance and the lessons from humanitarian supplies preparedness and prepositioning** initiatives will be evaluated building on the findings of previous evaluations, including Midterm Evaluation of the UNFPA Supplies Programme (2013-2020), and lessons from other humanitarian agencies.

Regarding the **culture of learning** (*recommendation3*), gathering, production and exchange of outcome-level lessons and practices from the UNFPA programmatic implementation will be strengthened by building a

dedicated common knowledge sharing platforms to host knowledge assets in key thematic and operational areas, including prevention and response to GBV and elimination of harmful practices. This has been already spelled out in the organizational knowledge management strategy issued in December 2018.

To strengthen **programmatic focus** (*recommendations 2, 5, 6 and 7*), UNFPA commits to continuing to focus on areas of work with the greatest impact and efficient use of resources with more context-based programming, targeting the most in need populations.

A corporate guidance (*recommendations 2 and 5*) and regular communication will be issued to ensure that all UNFPA staff have a common understanding of UNFPA GBV minimum standards and the organizational work priorities and approaches as per its mandate. The guidance will focus on specific groups (e.g. most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups) and on how to address their needs within the scope of UNFPA programming.

UNFPA recognizes the **importance of prevention** (*recommendation 6*), **including through a multi-sector service approach**. We note, however, that it is a context-based approach, and depends on settings, which should not detract from the prioritization of life-saving services, including

psychosocial response service provision, focused GBV case management for survivors, as well as the need for GBV risk mitigation measures across all sectors of response in humanitarian and development settings.

In this regard, **better planning for and commitment** to required human resources to synthesize existing evidence on what works and further use of this evidence in the development of policies and programmes on prevention will be continued. This evidence will be gained based on the work of the joint programmes on elimination of harmful practices and the Spotlight Initiative Prevention Pillar .

Further **facilitation of an inter-agency effort** to reflect on sub-national disaggregation of data to address intra-country inequality, in coordination with UNDAF processes (*recommendation 7*), will help ensure UNFPA business model and quadrant assignment are responsive to such contexts.

UNFPA will continue working with partners to ensure that **multisectoral GBV response efforts** are aligned with the Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to GBV in Emergencies, as well as IASC Guidelines for gender-based violence prevention and risk mitigation.

With regards to **sustainability in resources** (*recommendation 4*), the overall fragmentation of non-core resources, the declining proportion of core resources compared to non-core resources, and associated funding risks apply to all areas of UNFPA mandate and strategic priorities.

In this connection, UNFPA continues to engage the Member States and donors in the discussion on the **importance of core funding**, the **need for quality non-core funding** through thematic instruments fully aligned to strategic priorities, and adequate levels of predictable funding for the Strategic Plan, as part of the discussions on the integrated budget, and the Structured Financing Funding Dialogues with the Executive Board.

The new **Humanitarian Action Thematic Fund** launched in June 2018 covers key aspects of UNFPA GBV mandate and as such will be a critical instrument for increasing sustainability of resources.

To strengthen **coordination and partnerships** (*recommendations 10 and 11*), further work will be undertaken to evaluate the practices of other UN cluster lead agencies to distill lessons and develop recommendations on how to strengthen UNFPA cluster responsibilities and support staff structures.

UNFPA's strong legacy of working as a supporting partner in regard to its **wider work on elimination of harmful practices and GBV** can help inform a transformational approach to cluster coordination and leadership (*recommendation 10*) though enabling and facilitating the success of other partner agencies.

UNFPA will engage with UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women in a structured **partnership framework** and issue **common guidance** on mandates and modes of engagement in areas of GBV and elimination of harmful practices.

UNFPA will continue efforts to develop capacities on GBV inter-agency coordination and strengthening its cluster-leading capacity. In support of this effort, a desk review of lessons learned across agencies will be conducted in 2019.

UNFPA agrees with (*recommendation 11*) - **establishment of the global continuum fund window** within the existing funding mechanism as a supporting mechanism for partnerships, which will accelerate the continuum approach, and scale-up innovation across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus.

We will continue to advocate for more flexible financing even in humanitarian emergencies and protracted crisis. And while new funding mechanism could be beneficial in the short term, a longer-term strategy is needed.

The newly established **Humanitarian Office, together with the Gender, Human Rights and Culture Branch of Technical Division** will work on tracking and documenting good practices/strategies to address the nexus

within GBV work and within an integrated cross thematic focus. While it is challenging to apply innovation when addressing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus because it is not a general practice yet, UNFPA aims to **integrate innovation across all work streams**.

Subsequently, UNFPA **resource mobilization approaches should be revised** and strengthened in response to this recommendation. UNFPA will advocate with Member States that are supportive of the ‘New Way of Working’ to mobilize the needed support to accelerate and scale up the common approach through flexible financing models and multi-year joint appeals that address the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus and advance the New Way of Working.

[CLOSURE]

Mr. President,

The evaluation informs us about the critical areas that the organization should focus its future efforts on in order to scale up its work in the area of GBV and elimination of harmful practices, especially in humanitarian conditions, which is at the moment one of the priority areas for the Management’s Change Initiative.

Let me conclude my remarks by expressing thanks to the Evaluation Office for the good work done in analyzing UNFPA past work in the area of GBV

and elimination of HPs and assure you of Management commitment to the implementation of evaluation recommendations.

I thank the members of the Executive Board for the continued support and guidance.