

Check against delivery



Statement by
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UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS

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Good morning! As we begin, I invite you to view a [video](#) we've prepared. The video speaks to the depth and breadth of UNFPA's humanitarian work around the world. This work saves lives, and any disruption of funding for these services leads to immediate, life-threatening consequences. UNFPA is tremendously grateful to Member States and our partners for their continued support and for standing with women and girls in dire need.

[Please show video.]

Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,
Dear colleagues, dear friends,

Happy new year! I wish you health, happiness and, above all, peace in 2025.

Congratulations, Ambassador Andrés Montalvo Sosa of Ecuador, on your election as President of the Executive Board. I look forward to working with you and Bureau members Ambassadors Tesfaye Yilma Sabo of Ethiopia, Cornel Feruță [fe-RUH-tza] of Romania, Jonibek [JoAh-NEEH-BeHK] Ismoil Hikmat of Tajikistan, and Karl Lagatie of Belgium.

My deepest thanks to Ambassador Muhammad Muhith and the outgoing Bureau for constructive engagement and guidance over the past year.

Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

As we embark on a new year, we do so in a world marked by challenge and uncertainty.

In vulnerable settings across the globe, UNFPA is on the ground, working with partners, prepositioning supplies and developing anticipatory action plans with governments and civil society so that life-saving resources are at the ready – even before disaster strikes. And UNFPA does this inclusively. We pay attention to anyone most likely to be left behind. We prioritize women and girls and also others, such as people with disabilities, who have special requirements during emergencies.

Thanks to this dogged persistence and hard work, in partnership with the broader reproductive health movement in the 150-plus locations where we serve, mothers around the world are safer, babies are healthier, more women and couples can decide freely whether or when to have children, and more girls can stay in school and out of marriage. Together, we overcame the Covid pandemic and continue our push to end the pandemic of gender-based violence, in all its forms and in all spheres.

In our paper to the Board, we mention the funding risks we face. As you are aware, UNFPA has been on the receiving end of 'stop-work orders' against current funding from a major donor, as have other United Nations agencies, with immediate impact on women and girls who are counting on UNFPA services and support. There has also been immediate impact on our personnel and implementing partners and on the broader aid community.

We are doing our utmost to mitigate this unforeseen situation, including coordinating with our development and humanitarian partners. I call on this Executive Board to fully support UNFPA in this regard.

And there are other risks on the horizon, as rising tensions across the globe are resulting in escalating conflicts and insecurity. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more deadly, driving record levels of displacement, hardship and humanitarian need. Climate change is accelerating ever faster, with 2024 the hottest year on record.

These are risks held in common on our shared planet. Historic floods, relentless droughts and apocalyptic wildfires – even in some of the world's wealthiest communities – show us that no one is immune.

And it is still a world of profound and growing inequalities. This was abundantly clear during my recent missions.

In Nauru, in the Pacific, I spoke with the obstetrician-gynecologist at the island's only hospital. He highlighted the challenges of retaining healthcare workers, as climate change forces more and more people to relocate.

A midwife I met in Vanuatu lamented that cyclones are much more frequent today than when she was growing up.

And when cyclones strike, it is women and girls who are most vulnerable, including being cut off from essential reproductive and maternal health services, safe spaces and livelihood opportunities.

In community after community, all over the world, UNFPA sees stark injustice: those who have done the least to cause conflict or climate change bear the brunt of the devastating effects.

Let's consider a precious 10-year-old girl standing on the threshold of adolescence. What kind of planet will we leave to her? That was the concern underpinning UNFPA engagement at COP29 last year, and it is why we are increasing our work on the climate front.

Speaking with women and girls in communities where UNFPA works, brings home the tremendous needs and challenges they and our teams face.

Therefore, I am pleased that the Board witnessed this work firsthand, during the Joint Field Visit of the Boards to Cambodia, which UNFPA coordinated, and during your visits to Moldova and Ukraine. And I do hope that you were able to appreciate the great extent to which United Nations entities are working together.

Last year, even as the war ground on in Ukraine, UNFPA reached close to 1 million people with sexual and reproductive health services. We gathered demographic data, which is supporting the government as it grapples with demographic uncertainty, including loss of population and the human capital that represents.

In a first, Board members saw up close UNFPA's innovative contribution to building demographic resilience – in both our upstream and project delivery work. We'll hear more about this important work in Eastern Europe and Central Asia from our Regional Director in just a moment.

Indeed, more and more countries are seeking to integrate population dynamics into development policies to respond to demographic changes, including low fertility and population ageing. Given our mandate and human rights-based work, UNFPA is uniquely positioned to support governments to adopt policies based on a broader life cycle approach.

We want every adolescent girl to grow up safe, healthy and empowered, exercising her rights and choices. UNFPA aims to accompany and support her throughout her life course: prenatally when she is in her mother's womb – through childhood, her teenage years, marriage and motherhood, if she so chooses, and onwards to menopause and, hopefully, a healthy longevity.

Amidst stagnation in the reduction of maternal deaths, just this week our Programme Division launched UNFPA's new reproductive, maternal and newborn health and well-being strategy. It's called Start with Her – and with this new strategy we intend to re-ignite a global sense of urgency to end these needless deaths during pregnancy and childbirth.

Whether we are speaking about climate change, demographic shifts or the life cycle of an individual, resilience is the name of the game. For UNFPA, resilience means responsiveness to the realities of the world around us. It means being agile, adept and adaptive.

This is why the development of our next Strategic Plan (2026-2029) is so exciting. The plan is ambitious; it's aspirational. It builds on the momentum generated by previous plans, and I believe it will set the organization on an optimal course towards 2030 and beyond.

Guided by the recent Formative Evaluation of the current UNFPA Strategic Plan, which was conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office, our emerging vision for this new Strategic Plan sees us further rising to the challenge of accelerating progress towards our existing three transformative results – zero unmet need for family planning, zero preventable maternal deaths and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices.

At the same time, the new plan will position UNFPA to more fully reflect the breadth of our mandate and the ICPD agenda. The introduction of a proposed fourth outcome on demographic resilience is a case in point. A measured focus on demographic resilience will enhance and reinforce our vitally important work to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights across the life cycle. It will help us adapt to the range of country contexts in which we work, and to provide the diverse support that governments are requesting from UNFPA.

From the data and evaluative evidence, we already do know a great deal about what works, where and why, and about how our work can support national governments to build demographic resilience while upholding the rights of women and girls.

Our focus over the next strategic planning phase will be on sustaining the gains we have made to date, stepping up progress and making sure that progress is inclusive, equitable and leaves no one behind. Efforts to protect the ICPD agenda will be fully integrated into this accelerated approach.

The new Strategic Plan will be fully aligned with the priorities of the recently adopted Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), translating them into impactful joint programming that leverages UNFPA's comparative advantages.

In the homestretch to 2030, it is increasingly critical for UNFPA to bring our experience and global leadership to bear in addressing the complex interlinkages between demographic trends, health and well-being, and the achievement of the SDGs. This is the leadership and support governments look for from UNFPA, and we will work with countries at all stages of demographic transition to help them plan for changes in their population structure and identify appropriate policies.

UNFPA will also seek to protect, promote, and advance the ICPD Programme of Action and our Strategic Plan in the normative space at the United Nations; leveraging the results of the ICPD30 process as we transition to Beijing+30 this year; and supporting connections that advance ICPD implementation and UNFPA's value proposition. We count on Member States' support and partnership in these endeavours, including during the High-Level Political Forum, and we look forward to a successful and consensual Commission on Population and Development, as it addresses the critical topic of "Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages".

Mr. President,

In order to ensure that we ourselves in UNFPA are resilient, future fit and optimally positioned to deliver on the full breadth of our mandate and the ambition of our Strategic Plan, UNFPA's internal transformation journey continues. As shared with the Board during our recent informal, the HQ Optimization initiative remains on track, with staff relocations to Nairobi commencing in March. We have a comprehensive plan in place to support our colleagues and their families throughout this transition, and we are confident of a smooth and successful move.

The new Programme Division and Division for External Relations, both operational since August 2024, are already showing positive results, including stronger collaboration, streamlined workflows, enhanced knowledge management and a more integrated organizational structure.

The progress achieved thus far fills us with a great sense of accomplishment. We look forward to the full realization of the HQ Optimization in the months ahead, and to delivering even better for the women, girls and communities we serve. We remain committed to transparency and accountability throughout this process and count on your continued support.

In related news, UNFPA recently signed a lease agreement for our new headquarters office in New York. Located at 730 Third Avenue, the new office space will be roughly half the size of our current offices and – very good news – our rent will also be reduced by more than 50% annually compared to our current location.

As discussed earlier this week, we welcome the Board’s guidance on issues of organizational culture, which will help us continue to improve. Over the course of my tenure, UNFPA has invested heavily in building the culture we need to deliver on our commitment to leave no one behind. This includes fostering a culture of trust, respect, and inclusion within the organization and maintaining zero tolerance for wrongdoing, including all forms of discrimination, harassment and abuse.

We have made important investments in our oversight offices and continue to enhance ways to ensure compliance with recommendations from the independent oversight bodies.

We are also making important strides in building a culture of innovation, where staff have the courage to take calculated risks, learn from mistakes and pioneer fresh solutions and approaches.

UNFPA recognizes the critical importance of robust risk management in meeting the expectations of donor countries and all Member States. To this end we have adopted a comprehensive Enterprise Risk Management framework, guided by a clear Risk Appetite Statement and supported by strong governance mechanisms.

By proactively addressing strategic risks such as funding sustainability, reputational integrity and operational resilience, we ensure transparency, accountability and adaptability. These efforts demonstrate our commitment to fostering trust and confidence among stakeholders while effectively delivering our mandate.

We continue to strengthen our speak-up culture of reporting and managing risk wisely as custodians of public resources that deliver lifesaving results for women and girls.

I'm pleased that, once again, UNFPA received an unqualified audit opinion from the United Nations Board of Auditors, which highlighted strong financial health, thanks to the continued support of donors and sound financial management practices.

UNFPA is committed to accelerating action to address BoA audit recommendations in a timely fashion, and we will continue to keep the Board apprised of our progress.

Mr. President, Distinguished Board Members,

In 2024, a year wracked by violence and instability, we saw devastating conflicts intensify in Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine, while violence escalated in Haiti and Lebanon, and protracted crises from Afghanistan to Myanmar to Syria and Yemen left communities increasingly fragile. Climate-driven storms, floods and drought displaced millions, from Cameroon and Nigeria to Bangladesh and the Philippines.

Women and girls were often singled out for suffering, raped and assaulted by armed men as a tactic of terror and war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Sudan and beyond.

Even as the number of sick and wounded rose, healthcare services were targeted for attack. In Gaza, Lebanon, Sudan and elsewhere, hospitals and health facilities were pummeled to rubble, starved of supplies and fuel, besieged and attacked.

It was also the deadliest year for aid workers, with more than 280 humanitarians killed, amidst risking insecurity and disregard for international humanitarian law. This has been a major concern for me and all of UNFPA senior management. The safety, security and wellbeing of UNFPA personnel – particularly our courageous frontline humanitarian colleagues – are a top priority, and I hope that they remain a priority for the Board as well.

As we all know, pregnancy and childbirth do not stop for war. Women and girls continue to need protection from violence. Human rights do not end when disaster strikes. The needs of women and girls do not cease when they seek safety. And UNFPA is there at their side.

Since the ceasefire went into effect last week, 52 UNFPA trucks have entered **Gaza** carrying critical supplies – for safe births and emergency obstetric care, as well as postpartum kits, contraceptives and winter items.

UNFPA calls on all parties to uphold the ceasefire and fully honour their humanitarian commitments so that we can reach all of those in desperate need across Gaza. Yet what the women and girls of Gaza and the region need above all is just and lasting peace.

Turning to **Sudan**, the world's largest humanitarian crisis, where protection needs have soared, last year UNFPA supported 51 safe spaces for women and girls, deployed 90 mobile health teams and provided supplies and equipment to 124 health facilities.

In **Haiti**, UNFPA supplied hospitals with medicines and equipment and deployed mobile health units to Port-au-Prince.

In the **Sahel**, UNFPA-supported midwives are a lifeline for women cut off from access to vital maternity services, due to conflict, disasters and displacement.

In all these situations, UNFPA works with local partners, including women-led organizations, so that those on the front lines — who know their communities best — are empowered to lead in crisis responses.

We also work in close collaboration with our United Nations partners. In humanitarian settings, UNFPA is the global leader on sexual and reproductive health and the largest provider of gender-based violence services, coordinating the humanitarian system's collective prevention and response efforts.

In 2025, we expect more than 11 million pregnant women to require humanitarian aid, and more than 92 million will need gender-based violence support. Unfortunately, UNFPA's crisis response is underfunded by as much as 75 per cent in some countries, and we project this funding gap to widen even further this year.

UNFPA's 2025 Humanitarian Action Overview calls for \$1.4 billion to reach 45 million women, girls and young people in 57 crisis-afflicted countries. This support is essential to save lives, sustain health and protect people from violence. It is also an affirmation of every woman and girl's right to live in peace and dignity.

Mr. President,

While funding from 2024 is still being recorded and reconciled, I am extremely proud to announce that already we can say that it was on track to be another record-breaking year for UNFPA funding overall. With the recent stop-work orders, we are unclear what this means for existing obligations and will continue to update the Board as appropriate once we have more clarity.

Nonetheless, this is a testament to the powerful results UNFPA delivers for women and girls every day. Yet this support is not something we ever take for granted. Indeed, there are strong competing demands for aid funding at a time when that funding is under pressure, and we appreciate deeply the trust and faith placed in us by our partners – and their commitment to women and girls.

Part of the increase is due to a noteworthy rise in non-core funding, in particular growth in humanitarian funding, with Afghanistan, Palestine and Yemen the top recipients. Yet while humanitarian funding continues to grow, so, too, do the tremendous needs, far outpacing available resources.

I must express my concern, at the same time, that UNFPA experienced a flatlining of core funding at \$380 million. We are forecasting a further decline in core in 2025. In 2024, the number of donors to core funding declined slightly to 94 – a number we hope to robustly increase in 2025. This imbalance between core and non-core funding reflects general funding trends in the UN system.

UNFPA's overall core to non-core ratio fell to 23% in 2024 – the lowest ratio on record for us and well below the Funding Compact target. This imbalance has important implications for our way of working and our ability to deliver.

I offer our profound thanks to all our donors, programme countries and all partners for their generous support. Let us celebrate the achievements we have made possible together.

I also urge Member States to remember their Funding Compact commitments to increase core, flexible and pooled funding to UNFPA. This flexibility is more important than ever in adapting to changing needs and environments.

Last week, the Executive Board received a presentation from the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) secretariat on the assessment of UNFPA's organizational and development effectiveness. UNFPA is gratified by the very positive assessment, which found UNFPA to have a strong vision, delivery and commitment to United Nations Development System reform. We hope the findings of this assessment further strengthen your confidence in UNFPA as a partner that delivers strong results, despite a challenging operational context.

UNFPA works every day with hundreds of government agencies around the world representing diverse political, religious and cultural beliefs. We are committed to finding common ground, consistent with national laws, yet we will never compromise on our principles or mandate. We will keep holding the ICPD banner high. We will continue to stand tall for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

To the generous and steadfast partners and friends who have stood with us through thick and thin, UNFPA thanks you. We look forward to continuing to walk shoulder-to-shoulder with you in advancing the ICPD agenda, the SDGs and our three zeros.

However, I am compelled to underscore that the current stop-work orders and the potential loss of significant future funding from one of our key government partners will have a major detrimental impact on UNFPA programming.

That said, UNFPA has planned carefully for various scenarios. We have been very prudent in managing our budgets and are continually hard at work to identify operational savings so that we can continue to deliver results under different funding scenarios. However, our programmes and the communities we serve will pay a big price in the face of the expected major reduction in core resources in the next budget cycle.

The sizeable loss to our humanitarian funding will be even harder to compensate for, and I am loathe to predict that there will be a resulting closure of UNFPA operations in some of the world's most extreme crises, affecting women and adolescent girls who are pregnant or in need of rescue following gender-based violence.

In **Afghanistan**, for example, we estimate that more than 9 million women and girls will lose access to services, and more than 1,700 female service providers will no longer be employed. UNFPA will be forced to shutter nearly 600 facilities, including mobile health units, family health houses, mother and child health centres, and psychosocial counseling centres – all providing irreplaceable, often life-saving services.

Resilience applies to UNFPA as well. We are committed to diversifying and expanding our revenue streams to enhance our financial resilience so that we can continue to deliver strong results for women and girls.

While we saw a small decline in funding from International Financial Institutions last year, we have a strong pipeline of IFI funding for 2025. We are also seeing the results of our first development impact bond in Kenya and exploring other innovative financing opportunities.

We have begun developing a major gifts strategy, exploring endowments and other mechanisms and targeting high-net-worth individuals to establish lasting funding streams for critical programmes. We also raised over \$55 million from foundations and philanthropies, a three-fold increase over 2023.

UNFPA will build on this momentum through a series of strategic engagements, including a catalytic moment in the coming months, co-organized with philanthropic partners to leverage their networks and influence.

We are also expanding the way we engage business. We want to see the private sector advance sexual and reproductive health and rights through their workplaces and supply chains. Because if companies invest in programmes and policies that, for example, provide menopause and menstrual health support, promote prevention of gender-based violence and harassment, and foster family-friendly workplaces, we can reach millions of women in the global workforce.

I am pleased to report that UNFPA just had a huge success at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, where we strategized to place sexual and reproductive health and rights on the agenda, as they historically were not a high priority. Through continued advocacy and the collective action of our partners, UNFPA has changed that.

In Davos this year, UNFPA launched the first group of Champions for the Coalition for Reproductive Justice in Business, led by such companies as Essity, Bayer, Ferring and Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC). These Champions have committed to implementing workplace programmes on women’s health, with the potential to reach over 300,000 employees globally.

Finally, our Equity 2030 Alliance continues to advance women-centric health solutions by galvanizing a broad range of partners to promote gender equity in science, technology and financing.

All of these partnerships demonstrate UNFPA’s unrelenting commitment to exercising its normative role, including with the private sector.

Mr. President,

In keeping with our practice of bringing the realities of the field to the Executive Board here in New York, I now turn the floor over to Florence Bauer, Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, who will provide a brief update on some of UNFPA’s activities in the region.

[Florence speaks for 4 minutes - “...I’m looking forward to presenting our new country programmes to you later this year.”]

Thank you, Florence.

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

At the core of UNFPA's work is a simple, unwavering belief: No woman should die while giving life, no woman or girl should live in fear of violence, and every woman should have autonomy over her own body and the ability to chart her own future.

Time and time again, the evidence shows that when women and girls can access the sexual and reproductive healthcare that is their right, their communities and entire societies benefit, putting us all on the path to a more sustainable future. This understanding was at the heart of the ICPD consensus forged three decades ago by 179 Member States in Cairo, and it remains as relevant today as it was then.

UNFPA is no stranger to challenge and adversity. Yet we pledge to always go the extra mile to seek common ground.

Surely, preserving the life and dignity of women and girls in need is still something we can all agree on.

UNFPA will continue to work diligently with our partners and with the communities we serve to uphold the safety and dignity – and hope – of every woman and girl, no matter what. Because while political winds and funding decisions may change, our vital mission does not.

Reproductive rights are non-negotiable, and you can count on UNFPA to stand with women and girls. And we ask you to stand with women and girls, too.

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Closing remarks:

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

Before we close, I would like to acknowledge Lourdeth Ferguson, who for more than two decades, as a member of UNFPA's Executive Board Branch, has been one of the unsung heroes responsible for the smooth functioning and success of these sessions. Lourdeth, thank you for your tireless support, hard work and professionalism. We wish you all the best in your retirement.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

They say, "To be trusted is a greater compliment than being loved."

Indeed, trust is UNFPA's greatest asset – the trust of partners, communities and individuals. The trust of you, our Executive Board, and of all Member States. We know that when we uphold the principles of integrity, impartiality and independence, we build the trust that makes our work, as international civil servants, possible.

This trust is not something we ever take for granted. It is the foundation for the resilience UNFPA has shown time and time again in the face of significant challenges.

These are unprecedented times – no doubt about it. Yet while circumstances and political winds may change, UNFPA will never forget who it is we serve, who it is we are accountable to – the women, girls and communities who have put their trust in us.

Together with our partners, we will keep holding the ICPD banner high for them and for the rights and choices of everyone, everywhere.