

24 May 2019

Dear Ms. Kalkku, Dear Mr. Fridh,

On behalf of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), I wish to express my appreciation for the 2017-2018 MOPAN assessment of UN Women. We very much appreciate the consultative and collaborative process for this assessment. I commend the work done by the MOPAN assessment team in partnership with the MOPAN Secretariat. I am also grateful for the engagement and leadership of Finland and Sweden as institutional leads.

UN Women welcomes this second MOPAN assessment report. I am pleased that the assessment very clearly shows a strong success trajectory and acknowledges the progress the Entity has made since the last assessment in 2014 on areas such as delivery, financial management, results-based management and accountability.

The assessment found that UN Women has a clear strategic vision and strong prioritization aligned with global agendas and national priorities. MOPAN also highlights that, in line with our normative mandate, UN Women has made notable contributions to shaping the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 5. UN Women is found to be overall contributing to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women through our normative support, UN system coordination and technical assistance work and to have a reputation for high-quality and valued inputs to policy dialogue and advice at the country, regional and global levels.

Ms. Elina Kalkku  
Under-Secretary of State for Development  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland  
Helsinki

Mr. Per Olsson Fridh  
Secretary of State for Development  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden  
Stockholm

CC MOPAN Secretariat

I am pleased that the report highlights the new systems UN Women has introduced for managing results, projects and resources. They help us manage our performance and resources more effectively and report our results in a more transparent manner. The indicators on accountability also received high ratings: we were found to have strong Results Based Management and financial control mechanisms, a strong anti-fraud policy and a well-developed evaluation function with reports publicly available, relevant findings and follow-up.

Since the last assessment, UN Women has made many changes to increase its organizational effectiveness. Greater decentralization, including through greater delegation of authority to our country and regional directors, is an example that was recognized in the MOPAN report. In line with the UN Development System repositioning and through our ongoing change management process, we are adjusting further to a changing UN system, a high level of demand from Member States and a complex global context to deliver for women and girls around the world.

The report also points to important areas for improvement. We welcome this analysis and were pleased to note that all these areas had already been identified by UN Women's management as requiring attention. Several initiatives are already underway to address any weaknesses and enhance our performance. Let me highlight a few:

1. The report highlights UN Women's uneven capacity at country level and the lack of a consistent rationale for country presence.
  - Over the past years UN Women has expanded its footprint based on requests for support by Member States. This includes programme presences, where UN Women delivers projects without full presence, including through a dedicated Representative. Too often, such programme presences were also called to deliver on UN Women's full mandate beyond the specific projects it was capacitated to support, represent the Entity in the UN Country Team and in normative support activities for the Government. These demands have overstretched the capacity of several of these presences. In other cases, due to the availability of dedicated resources mobilized at country level, programme presences have fully matured and could be upgraded to full-fledged Country Offices.
  - Through the change management process, UN-Women is reviewing its field architecture, not only with regard to financial stability and viability, but from a needs perspective based on the country context, mandate of the organization and our comparative advantage. We expect to consolidate our presences to have fewer, better-resourced Country Offices with adequate core resources to deliver our full mandate consistently and mobilize additional resources. Regional Offices

will also be enhanced to backstop Country Offices, as well as UN Country Teams, where UN Women is not present. We are developing specific criteria for country presence based on the mandate of UN Women to ensure that such decisions are evidence-based and systematically applied across regions. These decisions will be impacted by and aligned with the UN Reform process.

- At the same time, UN Women continues to face a gap in its resources, which impacts capacity at all levels. In 2018, while the Entity achieved record funding levels, UN Women has experienced a gap of \$50 million in regular resources, or 25% of the target of the Integrated Budget, approved by the Executive Board. UN Women is implementing a resource mobilization strategy to close these gaps and is working with its partners towards that goal, in alignment as well with the commitments of the Funding Compact.
2. MOPAN finds that weaknesses in the organizational and thematic theories of change make it difficult to demonstrate performance.
- As MOPAN noted, the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 for the first time includes an overarching theory of change for development results, which not only clarifies UN Women’s comparative advantages, but also clearly outlines how UN Women intends to achieve results in each thematic area. In addition, UN Women has developed dedicated theories of change for each Strategic Plan output, based on our Flagship Programming Initiatives, corresponding to the outputs of the Strategic Plan. This provides a significant level of detail as to interventions and expected results. At the heart of these initiatives, and the theories of change underlying them, is the principle that UN Women achieves results through partnerships and by leveraging key partners, especially the UN system, in order to address gender equality and women’s empowerment comprehensively. A recent example is the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, which is built around UN Women’s theory of change for Ending Violence Against Women, and brings together partners in the UN system to achieve scale and impact.
  - At the same time, UN Women acknowledges that additional efforts are needed to better define and identify concrete results that can be directly attributable to UN Women, thereby better quantifying our impact. The attribution issue is complex for an entity like UN Women, which prioritizes normative work and UN coordination, but we are committed to developing models that further clarify results chains and attributable results. For example, UN Women is looking at the development of ‘signature indicators’ to capture key results directly deriving from UN Women’s interventions. The midterm review of the Strategic Plan in 2020

will be a key opportunity to take stock and further refine this articulation.

3. MOPAN calls on UN Women's co-ordination mandate at country level to be more clearly defined and communicated.
  - UN Women has undertaken efforts to more clearly define UN coordination results at the country level. As follow up to the corporate evaluation of the UN coordination mandate from 2016, a theory of change was developed to clarify UN Women's coordination mandate including at the country level. UN Women then led the overall co-development of United Nations Country Team System-wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNCT-SWAP), a system-wide accountability framework for gender mainstreaming as well as a tool for enhancing coordination at the country level. This country level coordination tool is currently implemented by 24 UNCTs and is expected to be rolled out by another twenty-five or more in 2019. UN Women continues to provide support to its roll-out and implementation.
  - Also, UN Women has leveraged its coordination mandate by working with other UN agencies at the country level to advocate for a stand-alone outcome in the UNDAF (now UNSDCF) as well as mainstreaming gender perspectives in other outcomes. Aligned with the reform efforts of the Secretary-General, UN Women will also strengthen UN coordination efforts at the country level by developing relevant guidance, capacity building of staff, and by the more systematic capturing and reporting of UN coordination results in the Results Management System. This will be informed by research that UN Women has initiated on results of UN Women's coordination mandate at country and regional level from 2015 to 2018. In addition, the strengthening of regional coordination capacity is an anticipated element of the ongoing change management process.
4. Finally, MOPAN finds that UN Women does not have clear criteria for allocating resources either to strategic priorities, or to countries.
  - UN Women's methodology for estimation of resources allocated per priority area was presented to the Executive Board in 2017 and is outlined in the annexes to the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (including in the Integrated Results and Resources Framework). This allocation to strategic priorities is further expanded in the biennium Integrated Budget and as part of the annual work planning process. Allocations of programmable core resources to the regions follow a formula determined by the former UNIFEM Consultative Committee, adopted by UN Women in line with its founding resolution.

- At present, each Regional Director has delegated authority to determine the level of resources allocated to countries within their regions, which allows for flexibility, including to redeploy resources within a region based on gaps, delivery and other factors. Regional Directors determination of the adequacy of resources for each country will be further strengthened through guidance on allocation criteria presently being finalized as part of the country office typology discussion.
- Nevertheless, UN Women agrees that a clearer and more systematic approach to allocation of resources can be found and is currently reviewing options to improve the link between planning, resources and results, including as part of the ongoing change management initiative.

For UN Women, the MOPAN assessment provides an important look at what areas need to be strengthened in order to take UN Women into its second decade and build an organization that is fit for purpose and fully resourced to support Member States deliver on their commitments with regards to the 2030 Agenda.

In order to make progress on several of these recommendations, UN Women requires its Executive Board membership to commonly agree on proposed approaches. For example, in the course of developing the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, UN Women presented some options of approaches for country typology in informal briefings. This led to an agreement on key principles included in paragraph 122 of the Strategic Plan.

Since UN Women's establishment, the pace of change at UN Women has been fast. While the MOPAN assessment reflects this reality, we consider that it could have been better taken into account. For example, some of the evidence used to judge some Key Performance Indicators (KPI) was outdated due to the fast pace of change. For some critical KPIs, such as KPI 11 *Results delivered efficiently*, only one source of evidence was used to draw conclusions. Evaluation findings are critical and used to inform planning and decision-making in UN Women. However, for such a critical area such as KP 11, it would be important to consider other sources, such as annual reports, audit reports, and fulfillment of annual work plans.

In addition, UN Women would like to note that the report includes factual inaccuracies and some sections insufficiently consider the evidence provided. These include:


- Under KPI 2 and KPI 9 on Humanitarian action: the MOPAN assessment has not considered many of the tools developed by UN Women and progress made in recent years. UN Women is currently undergoing an evaluation on its humanitarian action work, which will provide a comprehensive overview of progress and challenges in this area.

- Under KPI 6 on transparency: UN Women was rated 6th amongst 22 UN agencies by IATI in 2018, while the MOPAN report refers to UN Women having a low rating, as it used outdated evidence.
- Under KPI 11 on results delivery: Overall, the organization is making continuous progress with strong annual delivery trends, where field-based programme expenses increased by 42 % in the last Strategic Plan cycle, from 2014 to 2017.

Annex I outlines in greater detail how UN Women plans to use the MOPAN assessment findings to further improve organizational effectiveness and accelerate programmatic change.

On behalf of UN Women, I wish once more to thank the Governments of Finland and Sweden, and the full MOPAN membership as well as its Secretariat and IOD PARC, for the very positive and collaborative process. We look forward to continuing to work together as we strengthen the Entity and build an organization fit for the next decade and beyond to deliver for women and girls.

Your sincerely,



Åsa Regnér  
Assistant Secretary-General and  
Deputy Executive Director