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**UNDP Strategic Plan, 2026-2029**

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*Executive summary*

For six decades, UNDP has shaped the progress of human development, working with its partners to lift millions from poverty and increase opportunities for all. Empowered by Member States with a mandate to work across the spectrum of human development, UNDP provides integrated support at scale to improve people's lives worldwide.

The Strategic Plan is grounded in the determination of UNDP to eradicate poverty, the greatest global challenge, indispensable to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. In the next four years, UNDP will continue to support countries' progress towards high human development, while protecting the planet. Four strategic objectives – prosperity for all, effective governance, crisis resilience and healthy planet – define its strategic direction, powered by three accelerators: digital and artificial intelligence (AI) transformation; gender equality; and sustainable finance. Different combinations of objectives and accelerators can be crafted to suit each country's own context, resources and development vision. All are underpinned by a commitment to human rights and to leaving no one behind. This value proposition responds to growing demand for support from UNDP, one quarter of it already funded by partners investing in UNDP programmes in their own countries.

The plan sharpens the focus on what UNDP does best: supporting systemic change, through integrated development solutions driven by national priorities. UNDP will double down on a systems approach that addresses the complex roots of development challenges, co-designing solutions with its partners, in line with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. At country level, under the leadership of the resident coordinators/humanitarian coordinators, UNDP will support country teams to integrate efforts of United Nations agencies, drawing on the distinctive strengths of each for greater complementarity and collective impact. The commitment of UNDP to stay and deliver in crisis will remain an anchor that enables others to sustain their engagement.

This Strategic Plan has been developed during a period of extraordinary turbulence. Pathways to development are hard to plot amid economic volatility, geopolitical tensions and accelerating technological and social change. Human development is at risk. With five years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, severe funding cuts demand a fundamental reimagining of development practice.



The plan recognizes that development funding will remain under pressure. Building on improvements that now see 92 cents of every dollar spent on programming, UNDP will use new opportunities in business process improvements, AI and data analysis for even greater efficiency and effectiveness, while remaining transparent and accountable. Provision of common services by UNDP will continue to deliver significant economies of scale for the whole United Nations system. Yet even at maximum efficiency, a further deterioration of financial constraints may require hard decisions about resource allocation. Here UNDP will engage closely with the Executive Board, especially where such decisions touch on the geographic presence of UNDP and its capacity to offer integrated, multisectoral solutions at scale.

The Strategic Plan is a vision of international cooperation for development, defined by countries' aspirations, adaptable to many different future scenarios. UNDP offers a platform for that cooperation, where countries own their unique development pathways and can pursue the goals they defined in the 2030 Agenda and other multilateral agreements. The success of the plan depends on commitment to these goals and to the resources needed to achieve them: a partnership between Member States and UNDP to bring this ambitious vision to life.

## I. The landscape of development

1. Overlapping waves of change, unfolding at unprecedented speed, are testing the world's resilience and capacity to adapt. Economic, political, environmental, social and technological trends intersect and compound one another. After 30 years of progress, human development is fragile and losing momentum, as shown by the 2025 Human Development Report.<sup>1</sup> Without action, the world could be on the brink of a development crisis.
2. Yet at a moment when collaboration is crucial to address shared challenges, the principles of multilateralism and the value of investment in global goods are being questioned. This creates a highly uncertain, volatile landscape which UNDP must navigate as a multilateral organization grounded in solidarity and dedicated to the public good.
3. Countries face complex choices amid recurrent economic shocks, the after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the arrival of transformative digital technologies. The poorest countries are burdened by debt that destroys their ability to provide public health and education or tackle the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, investments needed for current and future generations to thrive. Increasing crisis and conflict, decline in the rule of law and democratic backsliding feed into social unrest and a lack of confidence in institutions. Deepening inequality, resource scarcity, migration and environmental degradation are growing sources of tension.
4. These development challenges are increasingly interconnected. Analysis of poverty in 134 countries finds that every degree Celsius of increased temperature leads to a 9 per cent increase in extreme poverty.<sup>2</sup> Awareness is growing that without nature, which absorbs 54 per cent of the world's carbon emissions and ensures the stability of food, water and global supply chains, there can be no sustainable development.
5. This interconnectedness offers opportunities, too. Digital skills and capabilities are a top demand from countries which see their potential for development, from prosperity to effective governance to resilient societies, as the Human Development Report 2025 explores. UNDP research shows that integrated policy strategies – promoting human development along low-emissions pathways – could lift 60 million people out of poverty by 2030, and over 175 million by 2050, with the greatest impacts on sub-Saharan Africa.
6. Successfully navigating complex challenges like multidimensional poverty, conflict, ecosystem fragility, pandemics or digital transformation can catalyse transformational change across societies and economies. These systemic transformations can unlock pathways to shared prosperity, strengthened social cohesion and more resilient, equitable futures. To act with systems in mind offers the chance to accelerate progress across all dimensions of human development. The Strategic Plan sets out how UNDP intends to do so.

## II. From evidence to action

7. In designing the Strategic Plan, UNDP consulted more widely than ever, with some 600 partners in 116 countries. The plan also draws on extensive data and lessons learned, including the independent evaluation and midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, an independent review of the UNDP business model and an associated survey of 11,000 development partners in 147 countries.
8. From this empirical evidence, these observations influenced the plan's design:
  - (a) **Trust matters.** UNDP is the only United Nations agency consistently ranked among the top five development partners by leaders receiving its advice or assistance. Recognizing the

<sup>1</sup> UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2025. Human Development Report 2025: A matter of choice: People and possibilities in the age of AI. New York.

<sup>2</sup> Dang, Hai-Anh H.; Trinh, Trong-Anh. 2023. Does Hotter Temperature Increase Poverty and Inequality?: Global Evidence from Subnational Data Analysis. Policy Research Working Papers; 10466. © World Bank.

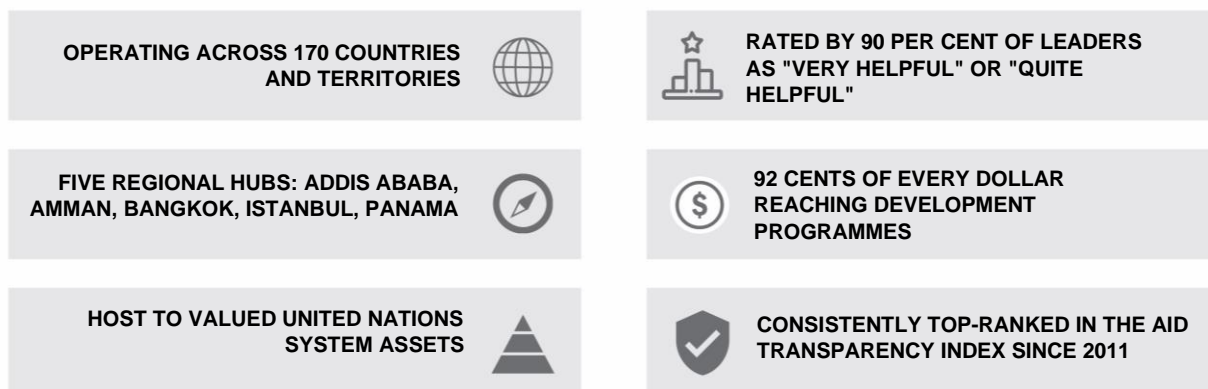
importance of national ownership and leadership, UNDP works alongside partners, evolving in step with their development priorities. Partners value the reach of UNDP at all levels and across myriad government agencies, through longstanding relationships built on mutual trust. Partners expect UNDP to cultivate its relationships at local level and help them connect to counterparts in other countries to broker partnerships around shared goals.

- (b) **Intensify focus on the integrated approach.** Partners want expert support where issues intersect, for example reducing poverty by increasing job opportunities or promoting women's rights. The evaluation said that "UNDP capitalized on the flexibility of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 to drive integrated solutions." This approach works: the midterm review found that UNDP impact increased by 3 per cent for every 10 per cent increase in its cross-sectoral approach.
- (c) **Look at systems, not sectors.** The evaluation recognized the UNDP systems approach as the most significant driver of structural transformation, while noting there is further to go. The UNDP portfolio policy, rallying multiple partners and assets around a common mission, is key to further progress in this direction.
- (d) **High regard for implementation and policy support.** The influence of UNDP grew over the last decade: 98 per cent of private sector leaders surveyed rated UNDP support for implementation as quite or very helpful; 91 per cent of government leaders surveyed said the same. Policy advice was one of the highest areas of future demand among partners consulted.
- (e) **Long-term impact depends on regular (core) resources.** All reviews pointed out that the decline in regular resources makes it hard for UNDP to stay flexible, apply integrated solutions and promote lasting change. Securing sustainable regular resources must remain a strategic priority to enable UNDP to achieve meaningful development impact.
- (f) **Risk-awareness builds resilience.** Incorporating risk awareness across all development settings has significantly helped UNDP to build resilience. UNDP has succeeded in aligning its crisis response with long-term development, helping to foster trust and strengthen the foundations of the social contract. Its ability to stay and deliver in crisis and complex settings helps to sustain development efforts where others might retreat. Its influence among leaders in fragile and extremely fragile situations has grown over the last decade.
- (g) **Future skills to stay ahead.** Over half of UNDP projects now include a digital component. In the United Nations 2.0 System-Wide Assessment, UNDP achieved an exceptional performance rating among 51 United Nations organizations, on digital, data, strategic foresight, innovation and behavioural science. Investments in these areas will therefore continue, building a futures-thinking and learning-oriented culture that enables UNDP to better anticipate emerging challenges, design more responsive programmes and deliver greater value.

### III. Creating value

9. The Strategic Plan leverages investment in UNDP infrastructure built over 60 years (see figure I).

**Figure I. The UNDP proven development infrastructure**



## Overarching goal

10. UNDP works with countries to expand people's choices for a fairer, sustainable future, as envisioned by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a future where no country has to choose between human development and the health of the planet, where prosperity and sustainability advance together, leaving no one behind. This is humanity's next frontier, and with the right support, it is within reach. Through integrated, evidence-driven action aligned with national priorities, UNDP works to accelerate human development while easing the pressures on the planet. Accompanying countries in this direction is the overarching goal of the Strategic Plan.

11. The Strategic Plan is designed around fewer, integrated results<sup>3</sup> to focus more sharply on what the evidence shows UNDP does best: delivering change at a systems level, through integrated solutions driven by national priorities.

12. A framework of four strategic objectives, powered by three accelerators of progress, is designed to capture the impact UNDP makes on people's lives and on human development (see figure II). The framework capitalizes on the organization's strengths; emphasizes the interconnectedness of the objectives and accelerators; and allows scope to craft a variety of development offers, each tailored to a country's own priorities.

13. The plan's four strategic objectives and three accelerators collectively advance human development while reducing planetary pressures, as measured by the Planetary Pressures-adjusted Human Development Index.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure II. Strategic framework**



## Strategic objectives

### Prosperity for all

14. Extreme poverty remains a daily reality for 9 per cent of people worldwide. Since 1990, economic growth, improved governance and targeted development programmes have enabled more than 1 billion people to escape extreme poverty. But a significant proportion is perched precariously just above the poverty line. This group is especially vulnerable to being thrown back into poverty by economic crises, disasters, conflict or health emergencies.

<sup>3</sup> Annex I

<sup>4</sup> Annex II

15. UNDP is evolving its work to focus on creating prosperity for all, while maintaining its strong footprint in poverty eradication and inequality programming and its commitment to leave no one behind. This shift aligns with its partners' changing aspirations, moving beyond the goalpost of a minimum poverty line to build dynamic, resilient economies and societies where everyone can thrive.

16. UNDP helps to reduce poverty and create prosperity by expanding opportunities for people and businesses to access productive assets, decent jobs and livelihoods and to build human capital; and by enhancing protection from shocks, crises and multidimensional vulnerability, through risk reduction measures, access to essential services and social protection. Its work towards a healthy planet, effective governance and resilience in times of crisis creates openings for UNDP to contribute across this spectrum. Prosperity for all must include enhancing women's economic opportunities and overcoming barriers to their full economic participation, including limited access to property rights, financial services and equal pay.

17. Expanding opportunities includes equipping people with skills for the future, and helping countries to cultivate entrepreneurial ecosystems through business incubation and supportive policy frameworks, such as trade policies that connect local producers to regional and global value chains. It also includes expanding access to affordable credit, digital financial services and asset-building opportunities, particularly for women, youth and rural communities. UNDP works to strengthen energy security, by promoting reliable, affordable and resilient access to energy. For climate-vulnerable communities, ecosystem restoration and sustainable natural resource management can help develop alternative livelihoods and resilient infrastructure.

18. Enhancing protection from shocks includes making social protection more equitable, especially for women, and modernizing social protection systems so they can respond to evolving vulnerabilities, including climate impacts and technological disruption. As a key partner of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, UNDP will work with the World Health Organisation, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Gavi Alliance, the Pandemic Fund and national partners to enhance pandemic response and preparedness and strengthen health systems.

19. Rising poverty and structural inequalities threaten sustainable development. These risks require active management through close collaboration with governments, at national and subnational levels. UNDP will continue to strengthen national planning and statistical systems through integrated national development frameworks that align with country-specific priorities. This includes building institutional capabilities to translate plans into implementable programmes and financing strategies, and establishing monitoring mechanisms to track progress.

20. Recognizing that countries follow different development pathways, UNDP adapts its work to country contexts and population groups. Progress towards prosperity will be measured using multidimensional measures that assess both economic opportunities and the expansion of people's capabilities, including the inequality-adjusted and gender-adjusted human development indices.

21. UNDP will strengthen private sector collaboration across three key areas: digital and green transformation; resilient economic development; and expanded access to technology, knowledge and assets, for people and enterprises. Partnerships with international financial institutions (IFIs) will emphasize the intersection between public infrastructure and entrepreneurship ecosystems. UNDP will deepen collaboration with national authorities while strengthening ties with local governments through decentralized cooperation and resource mobilization programmes. UNDP will pursue synergies with other agencies, for example with UNICEF for social protection and youth programmes, the International Labour Organization (ILO) for decent work strategies and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) for financial inclusion.

### **Effective governance**

22. Accountable, inclusive and effective governance is central to human development. UNDP works with institutions to develop accountable, people-centred and rights-based governance systems and arrangements, in line with the agreed intergovernmental principles of effective governance for sustainable development.

23. Decades of experience in nationally owned governance programming, underpinned by impartiality and expertise, make governance a distinctive and highly valued area of demand for UNDP. Its capacity to integrate governance into all its work, as a core dimension of systemic change, gives UNDP a unique advantage in tackling the interconnected challenges of sustainable development.

24. UNDP supports national and local public institutions to enhance public services, expand development opportunities and strengthen resilience. Using systems thinking, innovation and strategic foresight, UNDP helps countries develop more agile, anticipatory governance and policymaking and provide responsive services and economic opportunities. This includes digital public infrastructure and increased access to services through digitalization and artificial intelligence (AI).

25. UNDP will strengthen its offer in economic governance to ensure that public and private finance expands development opportunities and enhances distributional justice, including women's political and economic empowerment. It will promote accountability and transparency in public finance systems and foster public-private partnerships. Increased engagement with IFIs will build on the growing partnership on public sector transformation and anti-corruption between UNDP, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and others.

26. Democratic governance, human rights and the rule of law are fundamental for thriving societies and economies, for sustaining peace and human security.<sup>5</sup> Demand is growing for UNDP support in politically complex processes, such as political dialogues and electoral processes, including in transitional and crisis contexts. Strategic partnerships with governments, local government associations, parliamentary bodies and civil society groups help build an open public sphere where everyone can participate. UNDP will work across the justice and security sectors, with governments, human rights institutions, media, civil society and youth organizations, to support democratic processes, accountability, access to information and participation.

27. In conflict and violence-affected settings, UNDP governance work fosters social cohesion and strengthens peace. Embedding conflict analyses in all its programming helps to address the root causes of violence. UNDP strengthens community security and local peacebuilding through dialogue, insider mediation and area-based approaches, complementing its work on core governance functions and service delivery. A people-centred approach, and ensuring young people's meaningful participation in peacebuilding, are critical for lasting stability.

28. UNDP serves as the platform that leverages the specialist expertise of other United Nations agencies to provide integrated support at country level, for example the FutureGov platform with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the World Bank and Member States that supports public sector transformation, South-South cooperation and innovation. UNDP will anchor initiatives such as the United Nations Global Focal Point for Rule of Law and the tripartite relationship with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

### **Crisis resilience**

29. Rapid change across multiple dimensions is creating a cascade of interconnected risks, whose impacts can overwhelm societies and reverse development gains. Virtually every country is exposed to some combination of these risks, whether natural hazards, political and social polarization, economic vulnerability, pandemic risk or the potential for conflict. UNDP brings risk awareness to all its work, to build resilience and unlock new opportunities to advance development. UNDP will continue to take a developmental approach to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, disaster risk reduction and crisis response.

30. While crises differ widely, their root causes often lie in faltering or disrupted development. The threat they pose to human development and human security is significant and rising. Investment in development is a cost-effective investment in conflict prevention, which is central to safeguarding development gains, reducing vulnerabilities and supporting long-term peace and stability. From day one

<sup>5</sup> As per General Assembly resolution 66/290 of 10 September 2012.

of a crisis, UNDP focuses on protecting development gains and reducing risk, laying the groundwork for recovery and eventual exit from reliance on humanitarian assistance.

31. UNDP designs its stabilization, early recovery and peacebuilding interventions to break the cycle of crises and prevent future conflict and disasters, emphasizing country ownership and capacity, rather than creating parallel systems. It acts as a “bridge builder” between the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding systems, helping United Nations country teams and humanitarian country teams, led by resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators, maintain continuity across response phases and advance long-term development objectives, including during critical transition periods when United Nations missions are withdrawing. UNDP works with the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to assist resident and humanitarian coordinators to rapidly plan and roll out durable solutions to forced displacement, while supporting both displaced populations and host communities.

32. As well as playing a key role in stabilization, UNDP leads on early recovery, including clearance of debris and unexploded ordnance, restarting local economies, restoring civil administration, justice, essential services, rule of law and security, and reinforcing social cohesion. Digital systems can jump start response and early recovery, e.g., by restoring online public services or getting cash to individuals and grants to small enterprises quickly and transparently. Voice and empowerment of women and girls are essential. Expanding women’s economic opportunities and enabling their influence in decision-making strengthen societies against instability and recurring conflict and disasters. In these contexts, UNDP will continue enhancing young people’s participation in democratic governance and amplifying their voices in peace processes.

33. UNDP is innovating to bring fresh ideas to prevention and early recovery. Recognizing that perceptions of high risk deter financing flows to crisis settings where they are most needed, UNDP is developing a portfolio on de-risking financial flows and mobilization of innovative financing. UNDP will deepen partnerships with IFIs and others to carry out joint assessments following crises, collaborate on recovery planning and financing, and connect with their preventive investments in enterprise and job creation, public services and public sector reform. As crises increasingly have cross-border dimensions, UNDP will engage regional organizations and Member States with strong government-to-government relationships in complex crisis settings.

34. The UNDP commitment to “stay and deliver” in the toughest environments enables consistent engagement through all phases of crisis. Strong operational capabilities and a global footprint allow UNDP to deliver services at scale, even in remote and high-risk areas. Longstanding relationships of trust and local networks mean UNDP can operate in conflict-affected environments and politically complex settings where others are unable to stay. Reinforced surge capabilities, special operational measures, off-the-shelf programmatic response packages and more strategic use of funding have improved the organization’s crisis readiness.

### **Healthy planet**

35. A healthy planet is essential for sustainable development and for people to prosper. Yet scientists warn that the world has already crossed six of nine planetary boundaries and global temperatures have risen 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels. UNDP is a leading connector at the nexus of planet and development, delivering integrated solutions to environmental and social challenges of climate change, disasters, biodiversity loss, energy, public health, chemicals and waste, while advancing development priorities on governance, prosperity and resilience. UNDP works with countries to identify the right mix of policies, institutions and financial frameworks to scale up climate and nature action.

36. National commitments under the Paris Agreement, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Montreal Protocol and other international agreements offer an invaluable opportunity to pivot economies within a global framework of cooperation. UNDP aims to translate these global commitments into effective local action, harness new ideas to tackle the financing challenge and support countries to assess their options for achieving just and sustainable transitions. Nearly 150 countries have received UNDP support to prepare and implement their nationally determined contributions and more than 140 countries have been supported to implement their national biodiversity strategies and action plans.



37. UNDP takes a twofold approach: strengthening the policy environment and implementing solutions on the ground. First, UNDP works with countries to improve policy coherence around their national pledges and deliver these commitments in ways that respond to local context. Experience shows that countries that have integrated commitments across ministries and national strategies and systems go the furthest, fastest. This means aligning finance and budgeting systems, shifting policies and practices, and strengthening governance, legal systems and institutions. Integrated national financial frameworks and the taskforce on nature-related financial disclosures offer new ways to connect financial planning for environmental pledges with sustainable finance.

38. Second, UNDP works with governments, civil society, financial institutions and the private sector to co-invest in action that promotes prosperity while protecting the planet. As one of the largest partners of the Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol and other multilateral and bilateral initiatives, UNDP supports the design and implementation of a robust and integrated portfolio, from renewable energy to adaptation to nature-based solutions. UNDP also supports countries to tap into innovative financing sources such as green bonds, performance-based payments, carbon markets and blended finance.

39. Sustainable transitions require systemic change across societies, economies and individual behaviours. UNDP will focus on levers of change that deliver scalable impact across climate, nature, chemicals and sustainable energy sectors. Key interventions include nature-based solutions; mitigation, adaptation and resilience; capacity-building for a just and sustainable energy transition; material circularity and pollution management; managing and protecting forests and land; building sustainable food systems and managing oceans and freshwater ecosystems. UNDP supports countries' efforts to include young people in climate negotiations and policymaking.

40. UNDP will scale up and strengthen partnerships with the private sector, including to align private investment with climate, sustainable energy, circular economy and nature goals. UNDP collaborates with United Nations agencies, drawing on the comparative advantage of each, for example with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on scientific assessments and environmental governance and with UN-Energy to accelerate renewable energy transitions. Through Climate Promise 2025, UNDP has created a platform to engage the United Nations system under the leadership of resident coordinators and through United Nations country teams to support countries' climate goals and strategies.

### **Accelerators**

41. Digital and AI transformation, gender equality and sustainable finance are powerful accelerators that drive progress toward systemic change. Digital advancements expand opportunities, improve public services, enhance civic engagement and speed up response to crisis. Evidence shows that when women are empowered through laws and public policies, societies are more resilient, economies grow faster and poverty and inequality decrease. Better alignment of capital flows with sustainable development priorities can unlock new pathways to prosperity and a healthy planet.

### **Digital and AI transformation**

42. Rapid digital advancements, including the rise of AI, are transforming economies, governance and societies. Yet with opportunity comes risk: threats to cybersecurity, data privacy, algorithmic bias and the growing environmental impact of digital technologies. One in three people worldwide is still offline. This lends urgency to UNDP support to countries working towards meaningful connectivity in an open, free and secure digital future.

43. Its broad expertise and country-driven approach allow UNDP to support holistic digital transformation in an integrated and systemic way. UNDP has worked with more than 120 countries to leverage digital technologies to support their own development pathways. The new Digital, AI and Innovation Hub brings together digital programming expertise, systems thinking, innovation, data and AI analytics capabilities and development intelligence, enabling UNDP to shape even stronger cross-sectoral offers.

44. UNDP helps institutions and individuals develop the capabilities to access and use digital technology and data. UNDP will continue to support countries to implement robust digital public

infrastructure. This includes digital payment systems that make the disbursement of social protection more efficient and transparent, generating valuable data to inform policymaking; and interoperable, secure digital ID systems that enable trusted authentication and expand access to finance, health and education services. For example, UNDP health programmes, leveraging digital platforms, have strengthened public health systems to reach over 1 billion people in 89 countries, with significant cost savings and economic returns.

45. UNDP collaborates with partners to design and implement coherent and robust policies, regulations and development planning that ensure safe, secure and responsible use of digital and emerging technologies. This includes technical guidance on data protection, privacy and data governance frameworks; advice on legislation; and supporting consultations to align digital transformation with national development priorities. UNDP is also scaling up efforts to address the growing threat of digital harms, including online disinformation and algorithm-driven polarization that undermine social trust. UNDP will promote sustainable solutions to power digital infrastructure at lower environmental cost.

46. Realizing these ambitions requires robust alliances. UNDP will collaborate closely with the International Telecommunication Union, other agencies and IFIs to expand financing for digital infrastructure projects and support broader integration of digital and AI transformations in development. UNDP will stay closely engaged with the Group of Seven, Group of Twenty and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to promote such digital transformations, including local AI ecosystems in the Global South. South-South cooperation and knowledge-sharing have become an important part of many countries' digital journeys. Academic, civil society and private sector partnerships are crucial for capacity development and will inform programme design, build evidence of impact and foster local innovation.

### **Gender equality**

47. Realizing women's rights and equal opportunities is integral to sustainable development and can accelerate development results across the board. Complementing the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), UNDP designs its interventions for a deliberate impact on gender equality, seen by partners as one of its most effective areas of work. UNDP leads among United Nations agencies in implementing the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan, meeting or exceeding 94 per cent of its targets.

48. Through its trusted relationships with governments, UNDP is well placed to offer policy guidance that advances women's empowerment across all dimensions of sustainable development. UNDP advocates for women's participation in decision-making through its governance work. Inclusive growth portfolios include improving women's access to finance, land, digital assets and entrepreneurship opportunities. In crisis settings, UNDP leadership in early recovery allows it to reflect the interests and voice of women and girls, connecting them to longer-term development outcomes and building societies' resilience.

49. UNDP supports increasing economic opportunities for women through fiscal policy reforms, ending economic discrimination and investing in care systems, including through the Equanomics initiative. With a network of 450 economists and interdisciplinary experts, UNDP works with governments to enhance women's opportunities through entrepreneurship, job creation, digital skills and capacity-building, and to recognize, reduce and redistribute the unpaid care work largely borne by women.

50. UNDP accelerates the leadership and equal participation of women in public institutions, elected positions, the judiciary and the private sector. Working with UN-Women, UNDP supports women's collective action and protects space for women-led civil society organizations. It works with parliaments, national and local governments to support policies, laws and services that meet the needs of all.

51. Demand is growing for UNDP to help countries to drive systemic change that overturns the economic and social barriers limiting opportunities for women. UNDP will continue to work with national governments, sharing successful approaches across countries and regions, and with local governments, which are closer to citizens and can turn national policies into real benefits for women and men. Partnering with UN-Women and others will leverage their expertise, including UNICEF on

building young women's skills, the United Nations Population Fund on gender-based violence, ILO on jobs and social protection, UNEP on climate and biodiversity and IFIs on fiscal policy reforms. UNDP will work with women's organizations, faith-based organizations, philanthropic actors and media platforms to shift social norms that inhibit women's empowerment.

### **Sustainable finance**

52. The development financing gap is not just a financial shortfall; it reflects the misalignment of capital flows with sustainable development priorities. Correcting this requires a shift from scaling development assistance to transforming development financing systems.

53. The differentiating value of UNDP lies in bridging public and private finance systems and bringing together development and financial actors to align investment with sustainable development at country level. UNDP works at the intersections of finance, governance, climate, nature and development, driving mutually reinforcing reforms that build trust, accelerate development and expand investment opportunities in emerging and developing economies. Its connector role is especially important given the new actors — non-traditional lenders, sovereign wealth funds and digital financial platforms — that are increasingly driving capital allocation.

54. First, UNDP will work with countries to strengthen their regulatory, institutional and policy frameworks. Stronger frameworks will make financial governance more stable and capital allocation more transparent, helping to increase sustainable investments. Integrated national financing frameworks have already supported reforms in 86 countries, mobilizing \$16 billion in new finance and aligning over \$32 billion with sustainable development. Capacity-building to address risks and opportunities from emerging financial technologies, such as blockchain and decentralized finance, will strengthen regulatory institutions.

55. Second, UNDP will help expand public and private financial flows to sustainable development. To mobilize private capital, UNDP will work with development finance institutions and the private sector to scale financing instruments such as blended finance, green bonds, sustainability-linked loans and insurance-backed investments. On the public side, UNDP will help governments mobilise domestic resources through progressive taxation, Sustainable Development Goal-aligned budgeting and results-based fiscal policies. For example, the Tax Inspectors without Borders initiative supports countries to enhance their tax systems, including building audit capacity. UNDP will support the design of incentives — tax credits, subsidies and concessional finance — to reduce investment risks and attract private capital to climate action, social protection and economic transformation.

56. UNDP will redouble efforts to help structure bankable projects, develop investment pipelines and deploy risk-sharing mechanisms that reduce financing costs and attract commercial investment into underserved sectors. By leveraging AI-powered analytics, blockchain-based impact verification and digital platforms, UNDP will enhance financial transparency, impact measurement and efficient deployment of public and private capital.

57. Strategic partnerships across the financial ecosystem are key. Policy certainty and stability help maintain investor confidence and reduce project financing costs. Working with ministries of finance, central banks and regulators, UNDP fosters policy environments that attract sustainable investment. Collaboration with sovereign wealth funds, financial technology firms and non-traditional lenders mobilizes capital. Partnerships with development finance institutions, investors and UNCDF expand bankable project pipelines and deploy de-risking instruments such as guarantees, blended finance and insurance-backed mechanisms that lower the cost of capital. Working with international standard-setting bodies, credit rating agencies and United Nations entities, including UNEP on green finance, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on trade and investment policies and UN-Women on gender-responsive financing, will help make the attribution of development impact more transparent and credible and align financial governance with national development objectives.

## IV. Delivering value

### The systems approach

58. Governments and development partners are looking for new ways to navigate rapid change, going beyond short-term, sector-based approaches to change underlying social, economic and financial systems.

59. A track record in innovation and its ability to integrate policy and programming make UNDP a strong partner for governments working on systems change. Change is rarely linear, and its trajectory varies significantly between country contexts. UNDP collaborates with countries to develop their capabilities to continuously learn, navigate complexity and reshape their development trajectories over time.

60. UNDP is already working alongside governments in 80 countries on structural challenges like societal trust and urban transformation. This learning has been distilled into a portfolio policy and practice that supports system transformation. Portfolios bring diverse partners together in a coordinated set of interventions towards a common goal. Their dynamic approach helps governments rapidly make sense of fast-moving contexts, including crises; generate new policy options through experimentation and feedback; and mobilize broad societal coalitions to tackle complex development challenges. For example, portfolios in the Philippines and Viet Nam are addressing waste management indirectly by rethinking the “produce-consume-dispose” model, creating a healthier environment and revealing options for new livelihoods. The Accelerator Labs support some 80 per cent of portfolios underway.

61. The evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 found encouraging results in longer-running portfolios like those in Tunisia and Serbia. As well as stronger collective results, portfolios promise more efficient collaboration if several partners’ efforts can be combined in a portfolio focused on systemic change. Moreover, those who invest in portfolios can harness that intelligence for their own policy needs, from design of their development cooperation policy, to trade and investment opportunities, to better understanding of migration drivers or demographic challenges.

62. The systems approach will be central to implementing the Strategic Plan. To this end, UNDP will invest in new capabilities, including understanding system dynamics and synthesizing intelligence across sectors, and adapt its business practices where necessary. It will continue working with interested United Nations partners towards using portfolios as a joint programming instrument.

63. Success depends on partners beyond UNDP embracing the approach. Systemic transformations call for longer-term funding from multiple partners. Promising signs of interest include increasing investment in UNDP portfolios, over 800 new partnerships, and more organizations and countries using portfolios, from the OECD and Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose to governments and cities in Brazil, India and South Africa.

### Partnership ecosystem

64. The longstanding relationships UNDP has with its government partners remain fundamental to delivering results. Governments remain critical providers of the resources that enable UNDP to deliver its country programming, coordinated with United Nations country teams, tailored to local context.

65. The private sector is an indispensable partner for achieving systemic transformation across all UNDP strategic goals, including to mobilize sustainable finance, drive inclusive growth, accelerate climate and digital transitions and co-invest in crisis settings. UNDP will partner with the private sector in line with its due diligence policy, and align business innovation, capital and expertise with national development priorities. It will amplify impact by leveraging blended finance, sustainability-linked bonds and other financing instruments, while partnering with IFIs to provide complementary technical assistance and financing.

66. Partners value UNDP as a convener and enabler, as an honest broker building consensus between governments and private sector actors, and as a catalyst for public-private partnerships. The Timbuktoo initiative, for example, brings public and private capital together to support technology-enabled youth startups and boost Africa’s innovation ecosystem. UNDP expands the resources, expertise and

experience available to its partners by fostering South-South and triangular cooperation and helping governments tap into the diverse resources of other United Nations agencies.

67. UNDP will move beyond project-based partnerships to partnerships that focus on systems change, influencing policy and shaping markets. The UNDP Insurance and Risk Finance Facility, for example, brings together insurers, brokers, data and analytics providers and governments to reinforce vulnerable communities' financial resilience to increasing risks.

68. UNDP will continue to diversify its partnerships with philanthropies, the private sector, IFIs, subnational actors and civil society. UNDP has invested in the UNITY partnership management system to identify and broker more varied and productive partnerships.

69. Drawing on insights from its business model review, UNDP will refine its partnership modalities for more efficient cooperation, including new programmatic engagement instruments with the private sector and an updated financing toolkit.

### **The United Nations development system**

70. The 2024 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system highlights the need for coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability across the United Nations system. UNDP leverages its expertise, networks and worldwide presence to contribute to these collective efforts.

71. Under country leadership, UNDP aligns its country programmes with national priorities, deriving its country programme document outcomes from United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. Working with country teams, led by resident coordinators, UNDP delivers integrated, evidence-based programming that addresses complex development issues, drawing on its foresight and systems-thinking expertise. The cooperation frameworks use UNDP "SDG Push" tools to map the highest-impact policy pathways. UNDP remains the largest participant in United Nations pooled funds and joint programmes, with over \$240 million in joint programming. Complementarity is crucial. UNDP cultivates cross-agency synergies in policy design, programme delivery and reporting mechanisms to avoid duplication and fragmentation of efforts.

72. Guided by national development priorities, UNDP tailors its support to country contexts, particularly for countries in special circumstances. In cooperation with other United Nations entities, UNDP will support the Doha Programme of Action for least developed countries; the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for small island developing States, including through its "Rising up for SIDS" initiative; and the new Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries. UNDP will also address specific challenges facing middle-income countries.

73. UNDP engages with system partners on joint advocacy and communications that build trust in the ability of the United Nations to improve people's lives. Through the UNDP open-access SparkBlue platform, the entire United Nations system can now host dialogues with the public and share insights in real time.

74. The impact of the United Nations development system is multiplied by assets hosted by UNDP that provide services and expertise to the whole system: the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV), UNCDF, the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. UNV deployed 14,361 volunteers in 169 countries in 2024. The trust fund office pools financing – over \$1 billion per year — for stronger, collective results at scale. By integrating UNCDF financial capabilities and instruments into its programming, UNDP strengthens countries' financial systems to support sustainable growth, job creation and economic opportunities for all. Evolving South-South cooperation helps achieve high human development through technology development and transfer, financial cooperation, peer learning and capacity-building, particularly in digital and governance innovation.

### Comparative advantages

75. UNDP brings a unique combination of capabilities and experience to its work. Independent evaluations, reviews and consultations reveal that UNDP partners and observers consider these its most distinctive strengths:

- (a) **Global reach, local impact.** Partners value the UNDP combination of global reach and local presence in 170 countries and territories. UNDP is especially valued in small countries and challenging contexts with few agencies on the ground.
- (b) **Partnerships catalyst.** UNDP connects partners across the United Nations system and beyond, integrating efforts<sup>6</sup> across sectors and amplifying results for development, including through public-private partnerships.
- (c) **Deep expertise.** Knowledge and experience built over decades in governance, environment, crisis and poverty are complemented by growing capabilities in newer areas like systems change and integrated digital solutions.
- (d) **Integrated solutions.** The ability of UNDP to “connect the dots” across sectors underpins the design of integrated development solutions and support to governments’ own integrated planning and financing frameworks.
- (e) **Thought leadership.** UNDP knowledge products, such as the Human Development Report and multidimensional development indices, are considered credible, rigorous assets for policymakers.
- (f) **Systems advantage.** Combined with future-focused investments in data, innovation, digital and strategic foresight, the portfolio approach is helping UNDP and its partners make sense of rapid change and generate new options to deal with complexity. Initiatives to co-create portfolios with sister agencies are starting to redefine how the United Nations collectively can work together for systemic change.
- (g) **An anchor in crisis.** UNDP stays and delivers in crisis. It connects actors across the humanitarian/development/peace spectrum to lay the foundations for longer-term development from day one.
- (h) **Policy plus operational.** Combining policy and operational expertise adds up to stronger development results. For example, UNDP expertise in procurement combined with its governance expertise means it can support countries’ elections management seamlessly from policy to planning to implementation. In renewable energy, its mix of policy expertise and procurement skills is driving progress towards clean energy access.
- (i) **Value at scale.** Providing shared services in finance, human resources, information technology and procurement to over 70 United Nations entities, UNDP creates economies of scale for the entire United Nations development system. Its exemplary transparency and accountability are prompting a growing number of agencies to choose UNDP as their provider of cost-effective, reliable shared services.

### Future-smart operations

76. Over the last eight years, UNDP has significantly modernized its operations so that 92 cents of every dollar now reach programmes and services. Highlights of this transformation include the Quantum enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, now shared by 10 United Nations agencies; automation of some 3,000 business processes through a stronger global shared services platform; acting as the operational backbone for more than 70 United Nations entities in 121 countries; and energy improvements putting UNDP on track to reduce its carbon footprint by half by 2030.

77. Alongside this steady investment in business transformation, in 2024 UNDP commissioned an independent business model review to reexamine its value proposition and funding and identify opportunities to strengthen its development impact and enhance operational effectiveness and efficiency.

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<sup>6</sup> A/RES/72/279

Building on the recommendations of the review, further improvements will continue to shape a leaner, faster, more responsive UNDP.

**78. People and culture.** In Phase 3 of the People for 2030 Strategy, UNDP will continue to build an organizational culture founded on engagement, continuous learning and a growth mindset. It will use human resource data and indicators to optimise productivity and performance. Capacity-mapping and a new internal talent market, as well as external recruitment, will better align human capital with organizational goals. UNDP will expand the human resource management services it provides to United Nations partners, including recruitment, personnel administration and talent management advice, for greater economies of scale, while also remaining ready to consider extending these to interested Member States as part of its programmatic offer.

**79. Data, digital and AI.** UNDP is applying AI-driven analytics to transform complex data into actionable insights and support better integrated programming and policies. An integrated digital and data platform, combining lessons learned, risk indicators, financial data and performance metrics, promotes seamless information-sharing and unified processes. Customized tools, such as diagnostics that model the impact of alternative policy choices, reveal opportunities for better integration. The dedicated Digital, AI and Innovation Hub will strengthen collaboration across teams and accelerate innovation, including with other agencies. Intelligent knowledge agents and automation tools will enhance productivity, while advanced AI will help anticipate crises, optimize use of resources and tailor interventions more precisely. A digital and AI upskilling programme aims to improve operational excellence and teams' capacity to analyse and communicate data-driven insights.

**80. Business transformation.** The Quantum ERP system, global shared services and modern human resources management continue to increase efficiency, effectiveness and value for money at UNDP, while upholding accountability and transparency. New fast-track measures will enable greater agility in programme implementation. Risk management protocols and fast-track measures to deploy expertise, financing and localized solutions in crisis will be enhanced. Quantum, smart facilities and the expansion of global shared services to other agencies deliver economies of scale for the whole United Nations system.

**81. Risk management.** UNDP has a well-established enterprise risk management framework, with robust risk policies and processes. UNDP will more proactively embed risk management across all programming and operations to enable earlier identification of risks and better manage them for stronger results. This requires further investment in capacity-building and risk management tools, including AI-powered predictive analytics, dynamic risk assessment frameworks and adaptive management approaches. Robust application of UNDP social and environmental standards will help prevent inadvertent harm to people and the environment. While its financial reserves and contingency plans help maintain the stability of UNDP in uncertain times, risks to implementation of the Strategic Plan will be regularly reviewed and the Executive Board kept informed.

**82. Commitment to results.** UNDP impact measurement frameworks have evolved to include more sophisticated metrics, like the Multidimensional Poverty Index and the Planetary Pressures-adjusted Human Development Index. UNDP continues to refine these measurement mechanisms to better capture how its interventions change people's lives. It plans to embed clearer metrics to measure impact from the outset of all programmes, with AI-powered tools assessing how interconnected activities within a portfolio are contributing to systemic change. Improved tracking of resource allocation will link investments to outcomes, establishing better benchmarks for effectiveness and transparency. A new generation of results-based management practices will help build in complexity and systems thinking, enabling enhanced communication of results and impact.

**83. Transparency and accountability.** Building on its clean audits of \$100 billion in development spending over 20 years and its top-tier ranking in the Aid Transparency Index since 2011, UNDP continues to advance real-time, data-driven accountability. Increased automation and controls through the Quantum ERP system are already enhancing data quality and quality assurance. New initiatives will include next-generation digital platforms for real-time performance monitoring. UNDP commits to publishing not only successes but also lessons from failures, contributing to a culture of continuous improvement.

## V. Financing value

84. UNDP strategy is grounded in ensuring that every dollar delivers maximum development impact and that UNDP remains a reliable partner in an uncertain world. The years-long investment in business transformation described above is strengthening UNDP resilience to that end.

85. In the face of recent heightened funding challenges, since early 2025 UNDP has adopted austerity measures to reduce operational expenditures, optimize the use of resources and enhance resource mobilization. Meanwhile, strategic investments in areas with high potential for return on investment, including programme pipeline development and digital and AI capabilities, continue. These steps aim to maintain the capacity of UNDP to deliver on its mandate, while preserving its financial resilience in the medium term.

86. Regular (core) resources are the financial foundation of UNDP, making it possible to plan long-term, respond rapidly, drive innovation and reach those furthest behind: an investment in multilateralism. Yet contributions to regular resources have declined to just 12 per cent of total resources. Rebuilding these funds is essential to preserve the impartiality, global reach and capacity of UNDP to serve countries based on their needs. UNDP will work with the Executive Board to refine its regular resources allocation methodology, to channel regular resources more effectively towards country priorities.

87. UNDP is expanding its financial toolkit, forging new partnerships with IFIs, private investors and philanthropic partners to attract and combine funds for development. It is enhancing its approach to differentiated cost recovery to align it better with its mandate, business model and economies of scale. Rigorous safeguards will ensure full cost recovery, prevent cross-subsidization of regular resources, and guarantee transparent reporting to the Executive Board.

88. With continued Executive Board support, diversifying its funding mix and modernizing its operations will enable UNDP to build the strong financial foundation and agile structure on which its partners can rely.

## VI. Looking ahead

89. Geopolitical shifts, economic volatility and emerging ideas from the UN80 Initiative mean there are many possible futures ahead for development cooperation. The Strategic Plan aims to provide a solid foundation for the continued impact and reliability of UNDP to its partners in a fast-changing world. It is:

- (a) **Built for complexity.** The plan assumes that disruption will continue. Uncertainty and complexity are built into its design. The systems approach and strategic foresight capabilities equip UNDP to navigate this complexity.
- (b) **Demand-driven.** UNDP works alongside partners on their development journeys. The plan is grounded in their current and future needs, with the flexibility to change as needs evolve.
- (c) **Adaptive.** While setting a clear strategic direction, the plan leaves room for UNDP to adapt to different scenarios and respond pragmatically to future disruptions, including fluctuations in funding. It allows for the strategic expansion or consolidation of programmatic elements as opportunities emerge or constraints materialize, while maintaining the integrity of the UNDP offer. The midterm review is an opportunity to assess progress and refine approaches as necessary.

90. The Strategic Plan is an ambitious yet clear-eyed expression of international cooperation for development. UNDP offers the platform to co-invest in action that advances global prosperity while protecting the planet. The plan represents a joint endeavour, a compact between UNDP and Member States, whose success will depend on shared resolve and collaboration.