



**Executive Board of the
United Nations Development
Programme, the United Nations
Population Fund and the United
Nations Office for Project Services**

Distr.: General
26 April 2023

Original: English

Annual session 2023

5 to 9 June 2023, New York

Item 15 of the provisional agenda

UNOPS strategic plan, 2022-2025, restated

The UNOPS strategic plan, 2022-2025, restated

Summary

The restated strategic plan, 2022-2025 anchors UNOPS in General Assembly resolution 65/176 and decisions of the Executive Board.

It builds on the fast-tracked midterm review initiated by the Executive Board to provide situational analysis as a basis for rebuilding internal and external trust in UNOPS implementation role.

It provides direction in a global context with geopolitical division where most of the Sustainable Development Goals are off track and the climate emergency is posing an existential threat.

It confirms direction set by the Goals, and capacity to expand implementation capacity for Our Common Agenda.

It asserts our commitment to help the most vulnerable people and support countries in special and fragile situations.

It highlights the collaborative value of being able to respond and expand the implementation capacity of our partners in the United Nations system and beyond, even in the most challenging operational contexts.

It affirms commitment to enable partners through cost-effective project services, to help people in need through sustainable implementation and to support countries in accelerating achievement of the Goals.

It affirms the ability to support all Goals through expertise in sustainable, resilient and inclusive infrastructure, public procurement and supply chains, and project and programme implementation through sustainable approaches.

It stresses that commitment to sustainable implementation for the Goals does not presume a programmatic role.

It describes the operating model based on full cost-recovery where capacity to respond ultimately is a combination of functional services, substantive knowledge and partnerships.

It presents an ambition to harness capacity based on experience and anticipated demand. It highlights health, and climate change, including renewable energy as areas for substantive focus; and underlines ability to respond in the most fragile situations, and expertise to support countries capacity-development for public procurement and infrastructure.

It sets a results framework with ambitions for impact and goals for contributions and management results that will shape implementation and regular reporting to the Executive Board.

It sets ambitions for strategic improvements in management structures, digital systems, full cost-recovery, and rebuilding trust and an organizational culture founded in United Nations values.

It underlines commitment to collaborate through the United Nations system and ambition to learn and develop knowledge from experience, including through thematic evaluation.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to endorse the restated UNOPS strategic plan, 2022-2025 presented in accordance with decisions 2022/24 and 2023/4.

Contents

Chapter	Page
I. Why we exist: Sustainable Development Goals	3
Introduction.....	3
A. Global context.....	3
Global economy and development financing	4
B. Operational context.....	5
People and countries in special and fragile situations	5
II. What we do: operations	6
A. Capacity and value proposition	6
Operating model	6
Infrastructure.....	7
Procurement.....	8
Project and programme implementation.....	10
Substantive focus on the Goals.....	11
Collaborate through the development system.....	11
Learn and develop knowledge from experience	13
B. Operational focus for 2022-2025.....	13
III. How we do it: management.....	14
A. Structure and cost-recovery	14
Implementing strategic change	14
Management structures and capacity.....	14
Organizational culture and trust.....	15
Digital transformation.....	15
Cost recovery for net zero revenue.....	16
B. Management focus for 2022-2025.....	16

I. Why we exist: Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

1. UNOPS is a United Nations organization established by the General Assembly¹ under the auspices of the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the Executive Board. Our purpose embodies the fundamental values of the Charter of the United Nations: peace, justice, human dignity, tolerance and solidarity.²
2. The year 2023 marks the midpoint of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and progress towards most of the goals is off-track. In a ‘perfect storm’ the world is grappling with geopolitical divisions, putting pressures on finance, energy and food, which are compounded by the lingering effects of COVID-19 and the climate emergency.
3. The present restated strategic plan, 2022-2025, builds on a fast-tracked midterm review³ initiated by the Executive Board to provide situational analysis as a basis for rebuilding internal and external trust.
4. The restated plan refocuses UNOPS activities on its core role and competence – expanding implementation capacity. The aim is to regularize the situation for the organization and its personnel, so that, together with partners, they can help people in need and support countries in accelerating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
5. Our role in expanding implementation capacity remains vital, and our vision and mission hold true:
 - (a) Our *vision* is a world where people can live full lives, supported by sustainable, resilient and inclusive infrastructure and by effective and transparent use of public resources in procurement and project management.
 - (b) Our *mission* is to help people to build better lives and support countries in achieving peace and sustainable development.

A. Global context

6. In 2015, the 2030 Agenda was set: “Transforming our world”⁴ adopted the Sustainable Development Goals; the Paris Agreement⁵ charted the course for combating climate change; and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda⁶ set new ambitions for development financing.

The Goals are off track

7. The defining principle of the 2030 Agenda – to leave no one behind – is a shared promise by every country to secure the rights and well-being of everyone, on a healthy, thriving planet. But halfway to the 2030 deadline, progress towards most of the Goals is off track;⁷ and the financing available for development remains significantly below the needs.⁸

Climate emergency is an existential threat

8. The climate emergency is an existential threat to humanity. Renewable energy, green and resilient infrastructure, and sustainable procurement and supply chains will be essential in combating the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

¹ [A/RES/65/176](#)

² [San Francisco, 1945](#)

³ [DP/OPS/2023/5](#)

⁴ [A/RES/70/1](#)

⁵ [Paris Agreement](#)

⁶ [A/RES/69/313](#)

⁷ [Global Sustainable Development Report, 2023](#)

⁸ [UNCTAD, 2014](#)

9. By 2022, the ambition of reaching the Paris 1.5°C target has become increasingly challenging.⁹ Across the world we see the devastating consequences of rising temperatures and unstable climate, accentuating the urgency for adaptation and response to loss and damage.¹⁰

10. In 2022, the United Nations Biodiversity Conference¹¹ emphasized the need to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and to sharpen focus on sustainable consumption and circular economy.

11. The New Urban Agenda¹² and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction¹³ shaped the vision. In 2013 we committed to integrating the principles of the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience into our practices,¹⁴ including to maintain standards for sustainable, inclusive and resilient infrastructure.¹⁵

Our Common Agenda provides a vision

12. Our Common Agenda responded to the declaration on the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations,¹⁶ by providing a long-term vision for global collaboration. The Sustainable Development Goals Summit, 2023, must seek to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and lay the path to a successful Summit of the Future in 2024.

13. The COVID-19 pandemic accentuated the interconnection between health and human security, leaving economies in crisis. The effects are compounded by climate change and conflict. We recognize that health care, food, water and sanitation, education, decent work and social security are universal human rights, and are committed to doing our part to leave no-one behind.

14. In December 2023, the declaration of Human Rights¹⁷ will be 75 years old, a stark reminder, of our responsibility to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. We at UNOPS are firmly committed to continuing to drive equal rights for women and men in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.¹⁸

15. The global outlook affirms the interlinkages of sustainable development and drivers of conflicts, climate change, disaster risks, humanitarian crises and complex emergencies. Sustainable development – and response to the climate emergency – underpins peace; sustained peace enables development; and societies are more resilient when they uphold human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, rule of law, inclusion, and diversity, as well as nurturing their children and youth.

16. We remain firmly committed to the principles for effective development cooperation: (a) ownership of development priorities by developing countries; (b) focus on results; (c) inclusive development partnerships; and (d) transparency and accountability.¹⁹

Global economy and development financing

17. In 2021, the world gross product reached \$96.1 trillion.²⁰ In emerging markets and developing economies, growth was expected to decline to 3.7 percent in 2022 and remain there in 2023, and conflict continues to put pressure on food and energy prices, amplifying inflation.²¹

The financing gap is widening

18. In 2022, official development assistance reached a record high of \$204.0 billion – an increase driven mainly by in-donor refugee costs.²²

⁹ [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018](#)

¹⁰ [COP27, 2022](#)

¹¹ [COP15, 2022](#)

¹² [A/RES/71/256](#)

¹³ [A/RES/69/283](#)

¹⁴ [DP/OPS/2013/3](#)

¹⁵ [G-20, 2019](#)

¹⁶ [A/RES/75/1](#)

¹⁷ [Paris, 1948](#)

¹⁸ [A/RES/50/203](#)

¹⁹ [Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness](#)

²⁰ [World Bank, 2022](#)

²¹ [IMF 2022](#)

²² [OECD, 2023](#)

19. The gap in financing for the Goals is widening. By 2021, COVID-19 was estimated to cause a gap of \$3.7 trillion,²³ compared to the initial estimate of \$2.5 trillion.²⁴ In 2021, the global public stimulus in response to COVID-19 was estimated at \$17.2 trillion, with \$1.8 trillion dedicated to green stimulus.²⁵

People in poverty and countries in debt distress

20. In 2022, 37 of the world's poorest countries were at risk or already in debt distress, and one in four middle-income countries were at risk of fiscal crisis. The number of additional people falling into extreme poverty is estimated to reach 175 million by 2030, including 89 million women and girls.²⁶

21. Financial pressures are mounting at the time when countries should accelerate progress towards the Goals by investing in renewable energy, universal social protection, decent job creation, health care, quality education, sustainable food systems, urban infrastructure, and digital transformation.

Sustainability is beyond GDP

22. Gross domestic product (GDP) is a main tool for assessing the state of the economy. But we must move beyond GDP; to set development on a green, inclusive, and resilient path we must consider human and natural capital. A balanced focus on all three dimensions of sustainability – economic, social and environmental – permeates the intent of this plan.

B. Operational context

People and countries in special and fragile situations

23. In 2023, the world's population is projected to exceed 8 billion people²⁷ living in more than 200 countries and territories. They face risks that are multifaceted and interlinked. UNOPS has global reach, and we are already present in many of the countries where people are most vulnerable.

Leave no one behind

24. Across many countries the human, economic and social toll of the 'perfect storm' has been devastating. Rising poverty, job losses, eroded safety nets, health-care systems pushed to the brink, and the impacts of a changing climate are pushing the Goals further out of reach.

25. Inequalities are intensifying, strikingly so for women and girls, and other marginalized groups. Tens of millions have fallen into poverty. Hunger and malnutrition are on the rise. Humanitarian needs and displacement are at record levels. Digital divides are crippling global potential. And we are hurtling towards ever-greater climate and environmental catastrophe. The world's poorest countries and most vulnerable people are once again, unjustly, paying the highest price.

Countries in special and fragile situations

26. In UNOPS we have experience from many countries in special and fragile situations, including least developed countries,²⁸ landlocked developing countries,²⁹ small island developing States,³⁰ and countries in fragile, conflict and post-conflict situations; and we are attentive to the needs of the most vulnerable people, including in middle-income countries. For us this includes mainstreaming gender and social inclusion in projects.

²³ [OECD, 2021](#)

²⁴ [UNCTAD, 2014](#)

²⁵ [Green Stimulus Index, 2021](#)

²⁶ [United Nations, 2023](#)

²⁷ [DESA, 2022](#)

²⁸ [A/RES/76/258](#)

²⁹ [A/RES/74/15](#)

³⁰ [A/RES/69/15](#)

27. We continue to expand implementation capacity across the Goals and respond to the needs of people in countries facing different challenges: (a) development; (b) peace and security; (c) humanitarian risks; (d) climate change; and (e) transparency.³¹

Accelerate achievement of the Goals

28. Halfway to the deadline for achieving the 17 universal, mutually reinforcing and interdependent Goals,³² progress is reversing under pressure from the impacts of climate disasters, conflict, economic downturn, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

29. We want our performance-based operating model to be put to work effectively to expand partners' implementation capacity to accelerate countries' achievement of the Goals for the benefit of the most vulnerable people.

II. What we do: operations

A. Capacity and value proposition

Operating model

30. Our implementation role has been set by Member States' resolutions and decisions since 1994.³³ The General Assembly has reaffirmed our role as a central resource for the United Nations system in procurement and contracts management – as well as in civil works and physical infrastructure development – including related capacity-development activities.³⁴

31. The Assembly recognized the potential for value-adding contributions through the provision of efficient, cost-effective services to partners in the areas of project management, human resources, financial management and shared services.³⁵

32. Our value proposition lies in our ability to respond, and to enable partners by expanding their implementation capacity. We provide cost-effective project services through technical expertise in infrastructure, procurement and project management. We create collaborative advantage for partners in the United Nations system and beyond, even in the most challenging operational contexts.

33. Our capacity to create value with effect for the Goals, is a function of three mutually reinforcing elements: the maturity of standards for functional services and substantive knowledge, and the partners with and for whom we expand implementation capacity.

34. It is in the intersection of the three dimensions – partners, services, and substance – that we define our specific offerings, including approaches, applicable standards, reference engagements and personnel benches.

Partnerships in the United Nations and beyond

35. Everything we do, we do in partnership. Some of our many partners are new, while others have worked with us for decades. They have different needs and expectations of us. Partners working to address similar issues often have comparable needs. We build capacity to expand value by transferring knowledge from one partnership or context to another.

36. We work with entities of the United Nations system, governments of programme and donor countries, intergovernmental institutions, international and regional financing institutions, foundations, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations. Some are our clients and others are our knowledge partners.

³¹ DP/OPS/2023/5

³² [A/RES/71/313](#)

³³ General Assembly resolutions [48/162](#) and [65/176](#), and decision [48/501](#); and Executive Board decisions: [94/12](#), [2008/35](#), [2009/25](#), [2010/7](#), [2010/21](#), [2012/5](#), [2013/23](#), [2016/19](#), [2017/26](#), [2019/12](#), [2020/20](#), [2021/20](#), [2022/24](#) and [2023/4](#).

³⁴ [A/RES/65/176](#)

³⁵ [Ibid.](#)

37. We engage in the development, humanitarian and peacekeeping arenas³⁶ through North-South, South-South, triangular, and public-private partnerships.³⁷ We also provide capacity for implementation for vertical funds and various types of multi-partner initiatives.

38. Our operating model is performance-based and based on full cost-recovery. The focus and effect of our activities are ultimately determined by our partners. At the same time, we choose what we will and will not engage in, based on non-negotiable United Nations standards for ethics, safety and security.

Functional services

39. Our project services are flexible and modular, and functionally span infrastructure, procurement, and project management, including human resources and financial management. Engagements typically combine two or more service lines, including when we enable programme implementation and provide secretariat services.

40. We expand partners' implementation capacity in two mutually reinforcing ways: (a) technical expertise for capacity development in areas of mandate; and (b) capacity to support and manage partners' implementation. We have three service models: support services; technical advice; and integrated solutions. The value proposition for each may be summarized as follows:³⁸

- (a) Support services: we solve routine, often simple problems, at low cost;
- (b) Technical advice: we help partners decide on ill-defined issues, based on our track record of dealing with similar problems; and
- (c) Integrated solutions: we implement complex projects with interrelated parts by applying systematic, comprehensive approaches, combining support services with technical advice.

41. Our operating model has been confirmed through external studies³⁹ over the years. It instills the need to flexibly scale and adapt our functions, substantive capacity and country presence. We will continue to optimize our support services and harness capacity for integrated, effective responses rather than merely low cost. Leveraging digitalization, we will become more intentional and systematic in managing the substantive and context-specific knowledge we have or need for the future.

Substantive focus

42. We are a resource for implementation capacity for all the Goals. Our partners indicate significant demand for our capacity to respond to health issues. The global context demands adequate responses to the climate emergency – as a primary focus and a cross-cutting concern. At the same time, the need for additional development finance persists.

43. Our substantive focus, like our in-country presence, is ultimately determined by partner demand. The is the case when services are (a) tailored for a specific operational context; (b) anchored in standards for a particular development sector; and (c) focused on effect for one or more of the Goals. We are committed to strengthening our sustainable implementation approaches, including by mainstreaming social and environmental safeguards.

44. We will use this insight for internal and external communications, including for targeted capacity statements and examples of projects expanding capacity for specific Goals. We will unpack the substantive contributions we make through project services in infrastructure, procurement and project management. By expanding the capacity of others, we will seek to re-establish our posture as a trusted and effective partner for implementation.

Infrastructure

45. We plan, design and construct sustainable, inclusive and resilient infrastructure, and advise governments on making infrastructure more effective for accelerating achievement of the Goals.

³⁶ [Decision 2010/21](#) and [A/RES/65/176](#)

³⁷ [A/RES/64/222](#) and [A/RES/73/291](#)

³⁸ [Harvard Business Review, 2021](#)

³⁹ Including [JIU/REP/2018/3](#) and [MOPAN, 2021](#)

All Goals are underpinned by infrastructure

46. Sustainable, resilient infrastructure is essential for combating the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. Infrastructure systems for water, sanitation, transport, communications, energy and health will become more vulnerable. Our expertise in infrastructure is increasingly recognized, and we know that infrastructure systems underpin the achievement of all sustainable development goals and most targets.⁴⁰

47. Infrastructure is about much more than just construction. It is an enabler of sustainable, resilient and inclusive development. It connects communities, removes barriers for children attending school, supports families in ensuring their livelihoods and adopting healthy ways of living, provides access to essential services, and is the cornerstone of a modern economy. Adequate and inclusive infrastructure can help reduce inequality and drivers of displacement and is critical for sustaining peace.

48. Women and marginalized groups comprise most infrastructure users, making up more than 80 per cent of the population. Their needs, and the ways current infrastructure fails to address them, are as diverse as the people themselves.⁴¹

49. The built environment and construction sector accounts for an estimated 39 per cent of global carbon emissions.⁴² We need to reduce the carbon footprint of infrastructure and support the decarbonization of sectors such as energy, transport and buildings.

50. We are committed to building a path towards a more sustainable construction sector by promoting resource circularity and efficiency, underpinned by sustainable procurement and a focus on climate mitigation and adaptation actions across the built environment. We will seek partnerships with academia, coalitions and other partners to expand the effect and reach of our technical expertise.

Focus on infrastructure priorities

51. Evidence-based decision-making expands the capacity of public partners to plan and manage their infrastructure systems and the impact of investments for an uncertain future marked by population growth, urbanization, and the effects of climate change. It can help establish the basis for governments to explore a broader palette of financing options.

52. Our evidence-based approaches can help inform common country analyses and support the development of cooperation frameworks that capture infrastructure needs aligned with the Goals, nationally determined contributions, and priorities for leaving no one behind.

53. The need for investment in infrastructure is daunting. In 2018, investments required until 2030 were estimated at about \$90 trillion.⁴³ Most infrastructure investments are long-term, locking in countries' development and spending paths for decades. The prioritization of investments must therefore be informed by associated life-cycle costs.

54. Infrastructure must be prioritized across numerous sectors, including energy, water, transport, waste, and information and communications technology and digital infrastructure, as well as public enabling assets for justice and social infrastructure for health, education and housing.

Resilience through United Nations infrastructure quality standards

55. We are attentive to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus at the national level in countries facing humanitarian emergencies, including conflict and post-conflict situations and complex emergencies.

56. Recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction provide opportunities to increase resilience. Disaster risk reduction measures can be integrated into the restoration of infrastructure and societal systems to revitalize livelihoods, economies and the environment. Recognizing the United Nations Climate Change Conference agreement, 2022, we support the Santiago Network to minimize and avert loss and damage of the most vulnerable countries.

⁴⁰ [UNOPS, 2018](#)

⁴¹ [UNOPS, 2022](#)

⁴² [World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2021](#)

⁴³ [Global Commission on Economy and Climate, 2018](#)

57. A clearer division of labour within the United Nations system, based on expertise, could reinforce quality standards for infrastructure and allow more cost-effective approaches, including for investments in infrastructure.⁴⁴ This would focus the critical mass of institutional knowledge needed to harvest the benefits that sustainable, resilient and inclusive infrastructure can bring.

Procurement

58. We help governments and other partners plan and implement transparent, cost-effective public procurement for sustainable, equitable and gender-sensitive impact.

59. As a central United Nations resource for procurement,⁴⁵ responding to Goal 12 we harness efforts for economic, social and environmental effect through sustainable procurement for all the Goals, and through capacity development of local supply chains and public institutions.

All Goals are affected by public procurement

60. Public procurement has transformational potential to drive sustainable, resilient and inclusive development. Institutional capacity development for sustainable, transparent and fair public procurement practices can expand the resources available for countries to accelerate achievement of the Goals and combat climate change.

61. An assessment of public procurement across 180 countries indicates that public procurement expenditure ranges from 12.6 per cent of GDP in high-income countries to 14.4 per cent in low-income countries.⁴⁶ A conservative estimate suggests that global public procurement amounts to some \$10 trillion annually. The value of a mere 2 per cent optimization would exceed annual official development assistance.

62. Public procurement can be an agent of change, promoting social inclusion, fairness and value for money. Supply chain resilience can reinforce inclusion. Public procurement can also have profound negative effects, however, such as locking in unsustainable economic, environmental and social practices; excluding and marginalizing vulnerable groups; and entrenching vulnerabilities and risks.

63. There are two mutually reinforcing paths to optimizing public procurement for impact: (a) free up resources by realizing efficiencies, and avoid loss from lack of transparency, fraud and corruption; and (b) increase effectiveness through sustainable, resilient and inclusive choices. Due to scale alone, even small changes can have big effects through reverberations along the supply chain and across the wider economy and society.

64. Based on more than 25 years, we have considerable procurement experience. It is fundamental to everything we do. Our sustainable procurement methods have been recognized as ‘best practices’ on repeated occasions.⁴⁷

Capacity for public procurement and sustainable supply chains

65. We aspire to develop capacity for countries to reap the potential benefits that public procurement can have for sustainability. We have diagnostic tools to assess national procurement capacity, including to inform common country analyses. We have broad experience in identifying practical solutions to operationalize the findings of assessments undertaken by others.

66. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime suggests that an average of 10 to 25 per cent of the value of a public contract may be lost due to corruption.⁴⁸ Thus, conservatively, at least \$1 trillion may be lost due to fraud, corruption and lack of transparency in public procurement.

67. Digitalization can be a critical enabler of transparent and effective public procurement, whether through (a) management of the supply chain through eProcurement tools, or (b) enabling market transparency and surveillance to optimize value for money.

⁴⁴ [G-20, 2019](#)

⁴⁵ [A/RES/65/176](#)

⁴⁶ [World Bank Group, 2017](#)

⁴⁷ [DP/OPS/2021/4](#)

⁴⁸ [UNODC, 2013](#)

68. We have practical approaches to capacity development interventions, some focused on transparency and anti-corruption. We can complement these with interventions for sustainability. Our tools are based on international best practices. Procurement is not merely a back-office function whose success can be defined by speed and cost; it is about 'value for money'. The choices countries make through public procurement today will have wide-reaching effects tomorrow.

69. We support local capacity development through engagement with suppliers in local supply chains. We can support even the smallest suppliers in the most vulnerable countries to include sustainability elements in their goods and services. This is a central component of our sustainable implementation approaches.

70. We will continue to explore ways to stimulate considerations of circular economy and life-cycle costs, and substantially reduce waste generation through reduction, reuse and recycling. We will promote achievement of the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources. By reducing the greenhouse gas emissions in our supply chain, we can enable our partners to reduce their footprint.

Sustainability in eSourcing for a global United Nations marketplace

71. We develop the annual statistical report on United Nations procurement and host the United Nations Global Marketplace – the preferred vehicle for cross-United Nations collaboration on procurement. We believe in the 'collaborative benefit of mutual recognition' principle. We develop long-term agreements with suppliers and make them available within the Marketplace directly, or through 'UN Web Buy Plus', our global eCommerce solution integrated into the Marketplace.

72. As a sustainable procurement agent for the United Nations system we engage in collaborative partnerships for cost-effective procurement, sourced locally or as location-independent global shared services. We continue to enhance the functionality of our eCommerce solution and expand the range of products available. We will ensure the availability of green and ethical alternatives, expanding our catalogue with options for circular economy and carbon-neutral goods.

Project and programme implementation

73. We apply sustainable approaches in implementing projects, programmes and portfolios.

All Goals are realized through implementation

74. All Goals are realized through implementation. At the halfway point to 2030 the resources remain inadequate. Systematic project management – application of processes, methods, skills, knowledge and experience to achieve specific project objectives – is essential for furthering implementation within the constraints of finite time and resources.

75. Project management is a technical discipline that includes management of activities organized in programmes and portfolios. Just as project and contract management are foundational to the implementation of infrastructure, competence in procurement is foundational to the implementation of projects, programmes and portfolios.

76. Beyond procurement, our capacities behind programme implementation include financial management services, comprising implementation of grants and multi-partner pooled funds, and fiscal oversight for projects, programmes and portfolios. We also offer flexible and tailored human resources solutions for United Nations partners across peace and security, humanitarian and development efforts.

Effect through implementation capacity

77. We create effect through implementation capacity. Cost-effective support services are the foundation, and we will harness our capacity for project and programme management to respond to the increasing demand for integrated solutions.

78. Strategic knowledge management is a prerequisite for cost-effective integrated solutions. We will need to ensure that our systems provide easy access to project information – processes, methods, skills, knowledge, and experience. We can replicate effective theories of change for similar objectives, and our ability to respond effectively rides on getting it right.

79. We must ensure that we can attract and retain the right people, and that their work is underpinned by digital systems that enable and reinforce: (a) implementation in accordance with time, cost and scope; (b) recurrent engagement with partners on implementation status and changes; and (c) availability of information for ex-ante and ex-post assessment and knowledge.

80. We must learn and adapt faster, based on what works and what does not. In 2022, we learned an expensive lesson, and we will not repeat the mistakes made through early-stage project level impact investments. Such investments are distinct from our financial management services, which concern traditional grant management.

81. The resources for financing development remain inadequate for achieving the Goals. We believe we can play a supportive role in addressing the financing gap faced by many programme countries. Any new initiative would be in response to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda,⁴⁹ and our contribution to the ambition of Goal 17, to expand implementation capacity by revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development, including through South-South cooperation. An eventual new strategic initiative would be guided by a clear Executive Board mandate.

82. In the meantime, we will continue to expand partners' implementation capacity for infrastructure, procurement, and project management, based on the financing available to them. This draws on our global reach and country presence and includes secretariat services for hosting and multi-partner initiatives.

Inclusion and sustainable implementation

83. Inclusion and sustainable implementation are essential for the United Nations and its partners. We have procedures and guidance for many aspects of sustainable implementation, and we see the results of our efforts. We know we need to do more to ensure that we consistently apply sustainable approaches in our implementation. We need a more integrated approach to mainstreaming gender equality and social and environmental safeguards in our projects.

84. We need to enable sustainable implementation by putting the right systems in place – systems making it easy to consider options, reduce loss of opportunity, and make the right choices when new engagements are agreed. We need to make the right promises and ensure that we are geared to keep them. We also need to make it easier to say no, if asked to do things that we do not find commensurate with United Nations norms and standards, the imperatives of the Charter or the Declaration of Human Rights.

Substantive focus on the Goals

85. The Goals are the road map for everything we do, and effective solutions are often intersectional. We respond in accordance with national plans and priorities and based on our capacity to provide collaborative advantages for our partners. Collectively, we know what to do and how to do it. It requires an unwavering resolve to work for the global good.

Focus on the goals

86. We are a resource expanding implementation capacity for all the Goals, through infrastructure, procurement and project management. Our focus on the Goals does not mean that we presume a normative policy mandate.⁵⁰ It is merely a reaffirmation of our commitment to deploy our efforts and capacity for purpose – to embrace transformation and act now, in support of the Goals and the promise they hold.

Capacity for the Goals

87. We will further harness capacity for Goals where we already have significant experience and expect future demand. Our analysis confirms that most of our activities have supported Goals 3 and 16. We will better express the breadth and depth of our capacity by matching functional services and substantive needs:

⁴⁹ [A/RES/69/313](#)

⁵⁰ [Decision 2023/4](#)

(a) We will frame our capacity behind Goal 3 based on a strategy for health activities. It will cover the full range of our services and be underpinned by a policy of quality assurance in health procurement.

(b) We will unpack our capacity behind Goal 16: (a) our ability to respond in even the most fragile situations; and (b) our technical expertise in capacity development for fair, transparent public procurement and infrastructure.

88. We anticipate increased demand for contributions to Goal 13, including renewable energy supporting Goal 7. We have experience and will harness our capacity. We will rally efforts across the organization to combat climate change: (a) as a cross-cutting issue permeating everything we do; and (b) to respond through projects focused on addressing mitigation, adaptation, and response to loss and damage.

Effect through expertise and safeguards for the Goals

89. We are increasingly recognized as a partner for Goal 9, 'industry, innovation and infrastructure'. We know that infrastructure can be an effective means of accelerating achievement of most Goals, including Goal 11, 'sustainable cities and communities'. One study⁵¹ has established that infrastructure systems can influence 92 per cent of targets for the 17 Goals.

90. We recognize that development interventions need to consider multiple, often intersectional objectives at the same time. Through sustainable implementation approaches we seek to connect international agendas that are otherwise disjointed, to the detriment of those falling behind.

91. Goals 5, 8, 10, and 13 are central, but not exhaustive, considerations for sustainable implementation. As a central resource for procurement, we embrace mainstreaming of sustainable procurement as an imperative of Goal 12. We are also attentive to Goal 17 and the cross-cutting imperative to expand financing for development.

Collaborate through the development system

92. Through consecutive quadrennial comprehensive policy reviews⁵² and the repositioning of the development system,⁵³ Member States have provided clear guidance to entities of the United Nations development system.

93. Our role in the United Nations is to expand implementation capacity across peace and security, humanitarian and development efforts, by providing collaborative advantages to partners in the United Nations system and beyond.

94. The 75th anniversary of the United Nations affirmed that the pillars of the United Nations system – peace and security, development and human rights – are equally important, interrelated and interdependent.⁵⁴ With Member State guidance, we can support implementation of the long-term vision of Our Common Agenda.⁵⁵

Respond with implementation capacity

95. We embrace the emphasis of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review that improvements in coordination, collaboration, efficiency and coherence at all levels of the development system must be undertaken in a manner that recognizes the mandates and roles of the entities, considers their comparative advantages, and ensures effective utilization of their resources and experience.⁵⁶ We are ready to put our implementation role behind the system.

96. We appreciate the impartial country-level leadership and full implementation of the Management and Accountability Framework for resident and non-resident agencies. We have implemented the dual reporting model for our country directors, and we contribute in full to cost-sharing and enable agency-administered levy payment.

⁵¹ [UNOPS, 2018](#)

⁵² [A/RES/71/243](#), [A/RES/75/233](#)

⁵³ [A/RES/72/279](#), [A/RES/76/4](#)

⁵⁴ [A/RES/75/1](#)

⁵⁵ [A/RES/982](#)

⁵⁶ [A/RES/75/233](#)

97. As a proponent of the mutual recognition principle we are ready to engage in focused collaborative strategic partnerships at the country level in support of cost-effective implementation, including through local procurement and location-independent global shared services. We are demand-driven and do not impose ourselves on others. We do take pride in providing cost-effective services to expand the implementation capacity of the United Nations system and its partners based on full cost-recovery.

Focus response on needs and demand

98. We have global reach and deploy in response to needs and demand. We see strong demand for our support in countries in special and fragile situations, and other contexts where the risks are high and people's needs are gravest. We can serve as a platform creating synergies in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

99. We manage our operations through country and multi-country offices organized in regional structures and engage in a coordinated manner. Our deployment expands and contracts in accordance with the need for our support. Although we can enter into host country agreements, we keep our institutional footprint lean, and in many countries, we are a non-resident agency without physical presence.

100. We wish to engage in collaborative strategic partnerships. In the development system, we collaborate through the resident coordinator system and regional collaborative platforms. At the country level, the fee covers minimum institutional arrangements for management and collaborative engagement in United Nations coordination, planning and reporting. This includes capturing lessons learned for future deployment in support of partners responding to needs in other countries with similar contexts.

Enable capacity for engagement

101. We continue to strengthen institutional capabilities so that our directors of country and multi-country offices can observe and, in a prioritized manner, engage in strategic dialogues on operational collaboration with governments and partners in the United Nations country teams, including in support of the development and implementation of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

102. We can support common country analyses in assessing capacity needs for public procurement and infrastructure. The harnessing of this expertise is our responsibility as a central United Nations resource. It is typically deployed based on a 'fee-for-service', but can be deployed as an institutional contribution of advice in support of United Nations country-level assessment and planning.

103. We deploy and develop our institutional capacity for results-based planning and reporting in accordance with our role and results framework. This does not include country programmes for funding through contributions such as those of agencies, funds and programmes, nor evaluation against such programmes.

Learn and develop knowledge from experience

104. We want to analyse our own experiences and performance to find the best match for our partners across countries, sectors and types of solutions. We want to identify areas for targeted strengthening of our knowledge or capacity at global, regional and country levels to ensure we can provide effective responses to the evolving needs of people and countries.

Ambitions for impact and lessons learned

105. Our ambition for impact is set in our expanded results framework, which focuses on specific Goals; the most vulnerable people; and our impact for the Goals in countries of presence.

106. Our mandate is not programmatic,⁵⁷ and what we do is in response to partners' demand. This makes our deployment of effort flexible but uneven, and realistic ex-ante prediction of global targets

⁵⁷ [Decision 2023/4](#)

for impact impossible. Nevertheless, our impact focus will be subject to targeted ex-post assessment.⁵⁸

107. We will harness capacity to account for direct and indirect contributions, with respect for the partners who have asked us to expand their implementation capacity. For this we will increase transparency by supplementing the real-time publishing of development sector data with information on the Goals to which the projects we implement contribute.

Boundaries that challenge the status quo

108. To raise the level of ambition for what we do and how we do it, we set clear boundaries and challenge the status quo by stating what we will not do. We will *not*:

- (a) support development activities that do not directly or indirectly contribute to countries' achievement of the Goals;
- (b) enable partners' greenhouse gas emissions if there are workable net-zero alternatives; or
- (c) engage in impact investment using seed capital from the UNOPS reserves.

Planning and reporting based on needs

109. We maintain a needs-based approach to planning and reporting. We set regional and country-level targets based on ambitions for impact, contributions and management results, and our knowledge of individual partner and country needs. This provides a strategic yet agile planning regime suited to our implementation role and cost-recovery model.

110. We link the projects we implement to the Goals, and report on the outputs we contribute through our partners. We ascertain the effectiveness of our implementation approaches based on a set of indicators covering the three dimensions of sustainability. In addition to targeted ex-post assessment of ambitions for impact, we seek to leverage system-wide data standards and reporting on countries of presence for organizational analysis.

B. Operational focus for 2022-2025

111. Three contribution goals provide operational focus and reinforce impact ambitions when we expand implementation capacity. They affirm our three-pronged commitment to enable partners, help people in need, and support countries. Each goal is supported by three drivers:

- (a) We enable partners through cost-effective project services.
 - (i) Respond to partner focus;
 - (ii) Focus on partner needs and global Goals; and
 - (iii) Enable sustainable supply.
- (b) We help people in need through sustainable implementation.
 - (i) Respond through sustainable implementation approaches;
 - (ii) Focus on gender mainstreaming and inclusion; and
 - (iii) Enable climate mitigation and adaptation.
- (c) We support countries in accelerating achievement of the sustainable development goals.
 - (i) Respond through technical analysis;
 - (ii) Focus on country priorities;
 - (iii) Enable national capacity.

112. The contribution goals are supplemented by operational targets that reinforce behaviour and enable recurrent adjustment of efforts. In brief, the theory of change is simple: the more we intentionally focus our actions on our ambitions for impact, and design them based on our quality standards, the more likely our contributions are to be effective. Operational indicators and targets are set out in the expanded results framework presented with the biennial budget estimates, 2024-2025.

⁵⁸ Expanded Results Framework

III. How we do it: management

A. Structure and cost-recovery

Implementing strategic change

113. In 2022, the Acting Executive Director, in consultation with the Executive Board, put in place the ‘comprehensive response plan’ as a stopgap measure for close monitoring of UNOPS quick response to the recommendations of the external review conducted in 2022.⁵⁹ This followed the ‘10-point action plan’ which had already resulted in a significant strengthening of internal oversight.⁶⁰

114. By the end of the first quarter of 2023, the Acting Executive Director reported significant implementation progress across six areas identified by the review. Pursuant thereto, this strategic plan sets out to regularize UNOPS reporting to the Executive Board, including on the longer-term strategic changes being implemented to mitigate strategic risks:

- (a) Reinforced management structures and capacity;
- (b) Rebuilt trust and organizational culture;
- (c) Implementation of digital transformation programme; and
- (d) Transparent cost recovery for net zero revenue.

115. Those priorities will in turn be supplemented with reinforced capacity and authority to systematically drive deployment of the strategic plan, including through recurrent review and reporting, against an expanded results framework with indicators and targets for contribution and management goals set in biennial budget estimates.

116. We believe that these measures should enable regularization of UNOPS reporting to the Executive Board and render the monitoring and reporting against the comprehensive response plan obsolete.

Management structures and capacity

External governance and oversight

117. We work under governance arrangements consistent with those of other United Nations organizations. The Executive Director is accountable to the Executive Board and the Secretary-General, and the United Nations Board of Auditors provides external audit.

Internal oversight and advice

118. Our internal oversight functions are aligned with our implementation role. The Internal Audit and Investigation Group was established in 2007 and the Ethics Office in 2009. Both units provide internal oversight and advice to the Executive Director and report annually to the Executive Board. In 2022, the independence of both functions was reconfirmed and their capacity strengthened.

119. The Audit Advisory Committee provides external, independent advice to the Executive Director and reports to the Executive Board. In 2023, its independence and free access to the Board was enhanced. In addition, the Secretary-General established a client board through which the Executive Director annually invites partners’ advice on operational matters.

Functional capacity for management

120. In 2022, the Executive Board approved the creation of a second deputy executive director position.⁶¹ In 2023, the Acting Executive Director presented a new organizational structure with two Assistant Secretaries-General reporting to the Under-Secretary-General.⁶² The new structure has two

⁵⁹ [Decision 2022/24](#)

⁶⁰ [Decision 2022/21](#)

⁶¹ [Decision 2022/24](#)

⁶² [DP/OPS/2023/CRP.4](#)

distinct pillars, one for operational contributions and one for management, enabling segregation of duties and internal checks and balances.

121. We will solidify the new structure by ensuring capacity to respond to commitments. We will strengthen several functions at all levels, including for strategy deployment, monitoring, evaluation, United Nations coordination, and knowledge, quality and risk management. This will include:

- (a) ensure that our strategic plan is deployed through a coherent, integrated process for corporate monitoring and performance review against the expanded results framework, portfolio review, strategic and external thematic evaluation, and country-level reporting, informing annual reporting to the Executive Board.
- (b) engage in prioritized United Nations coordination and reporting at all levels. We must prioritize based on our implementation role, and ensure engagement is backed up with the right technical expertise, including for analysis and planning at country and regional levels.
- (c) strengthen arrangements for quality management, including through project-level monitoring and evaluation, documentation of project knowledge and management of project risks.
- (d) utilize change management as an enabler of strategic changes, as opposed to being merely a bottom-up internal consulting function. Similarly, we need a new and more strategic take on knowledge management.
- (e) get risk management to work for us as an integral part of quality management, our due diligence of partners, and the acceptance of new projects. This is where, over the years, our Audit Advisory Committee has advised that we are most exposed to risks. Our consideration of risk will help us assess whether we have the capacity to deliver on a proposed engagement.

Organizational culture and trust

122. We aspire to foster an inclusive, constructive organizational culture anchored in the values of the United Nations. This should be reflected in our ways of working, policies, and leadership behaviours. Our human resources function has been renamed ‘People and Culture’ to signal our priority of creating a constructive culture, fostering personnel development and growth, and promoting employee engagement. We remain firmly committed to gender parity and have zero tolerance for harassment, discrimination and abuse.

123. Amidst trying times, including two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and natural disasters affecting many colleagues, and the recent S3i crisis, UNOPS personnel have continued to strive for impact. It is because of personnel commitment, skills and resilience that the organization is ready to move to the next chapter. This spirit has been recognized by many members of our Executive Board.

124. Advised by third-party review, we will conduct an organizational culture assessment. Our aim is to regain trust within leadership and among personnel. We want an inclusive, positive workplace culture where people can contribute, grow and develop for the benefit of the people we serve. As we proceed, we remain committed to protecting health and safety, and driving forward our global ‘Goal Zero’ initiative, which focuses on reducing accidents, injuries, and illnesses across our operations.

Digital transformation

125. We face ever more complex and interconnected challenges, requiring new methods and practices to provide more relevant, effective and integrated solutions to our partners and beneficiaries. Driven by the Common Agenda, we aspire to become nimbler and more effective, and to develop and scale new capabilities that promote agility, integration and cohesion throughout the United Nations family.

126. Technology presents opportunities to transform operations and improve user experiences. By ensuring that our people and partners are at the centre of our aspirations for digital transformation, optimized processes and innovative technologies can enable us to realize benefits in terms of capabilities and results. The transformation will be accelerated through the ‘UN 2.0 Quintet of

Change', focused on stronger capabilities in data, innovation, strategic foresight, behavioural science, and results.⁶³

127. We will take a holistic approach to our enterprise architecture to ensure that our processes and information systems are fit for purpose and integrated, and enable us to respond through sustainable, cost-effective support services and integrated solutions. We will build system capabilities for (a) attracting and managing our talent, (b) public procurement, and (c) portfolio, programme, and project management. Capabilities for knowledge management and data will be at the centre of our digitalization initiatives.

128. Once the transformation of our operations is well under way, we focus on expanding our capability to provide transformative digital solutions and tools as part of our services to partners. We aspire to support countries in leveraging technology to expand their capacity for public procurement and infrastructure, and digitalization of public services, in strategic partnership with technology providers.

Cost recovery for net zero revenue

129. Our operating model is demand-driven and based on full cost recovery. Since our operating model based on full cost-recovery is unique in the United Nations system, many stakeholders are unfamiliar with how it is designed in accordance with our role for implementation services and status as an 'other entity'.⁶⁴

130. Unlike programmatic entities, which finance their activities predominantly through core and non-core contributions for non-exchange transactions, we deliver services in exchange for full recovery of associated direct cost, plus a management 'fee-for-service' for recovery of immediate and potential future indirect costs. The indirect cost covers our institutional backbone at country, regional and headquarters levels, including policies, knowledge reporting and reserves.

131. Under the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, revenue and expense are recognized as either principal or agent. The classification is based on the responsibilities and risks associated with the activities. In turn, the inherent risks affect the level of associated indirect costs to be recovered. The risks and indirect costs of agent activities will typically be lower than those for principal activities. This general logic can be applied to our two main service models:

- (a) Support services are predominantly 'agent', typically with indirect contributions to partners' objectives; and
- (b) Integrated solutions are predominantly 'principal', typically with direct contributions to partners' objectives.

132. As part of the restated strategic plan, 2022-2025, we commit to targeting zero net revenue while maintaining a recovery rate ensuring full cost recovery. Achievement of zero net revenue will consider the resourcing needed to maintain adequate and appropriate organizational capacity for the medium and longer term, including maintaining optimal reserves to cushion the organization against any contingencies.

133. We will aim for zero net revenue on a quadrennial basis, aligned with our strategy cycle. This will allow time for the cost-recovery arrangements proposed based on forecasts in biennial budget estimates to take effect and enable us to better manage the impact of shifting demand and volatile financial markets.

B. Management focus for 2022-2025

134. Four management goals provide management focus for the realization of our contribution goals. They span people, partners, process and finance; and embed third-party review responses. Each goal is supported by three drivers:

- (a) *People culture*: We want an inclusive, fair and positive workplace culture where people can contribute, grow and develop.
 - (i) Embrace a culture of United Nations values;
 - (ii) Attract, recognize and develop talent; and

⁶³ [Quintet of Change](#)

⁶⁴ [United Nations system chart](#)

- (iii) Reinforce accountability for leadership and a conducive culture.
- (b) *Partner trust*: We want to build trust and create value with partners.
 - (i) Preserve partner trust;
 - (ii) Collaborate for value; and
 - (iii) Demonstrate transparency for purpose.
- (c) *Process excellence*: We want to enable cost-effective operations through digital processes.
 - (i) Manage processes and energy efficiency;
 - (ii) Respond to oversight recommendations; and
 - (iii) Innovate operations platform and services.
- (d) *Financial stewardship*: We want to balance risks and opportunities through adequate resourcing.
 - (i) Adequately resource organizational capacity;
 - (ii) Ensure transparent and fair financial management for partners; and
 - (iii) Enable accurate financial planning.

135. In our expanded results framework each goal is reinforced by indicators and targets for the three drivers. They draw on statutory and other United Nations reporting requirements, and are presented with our biennial budget estimates, 2024-2025.
