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**Statement by Jorge Moreira Da Silva  
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to UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board First Regular Session  
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Mr President, honourable members,

Allow me to extend a warm welcome, in particular to the new President and Bureau members, as well as the new members of the Executive Board.

It is a pleasure to speak with you all.

In today's session, I look forward to sharing with you the progress on our reform journey - how we have turned a page. I will also take this opportunity to share some of our operational highlights over the past year, and how we are taking steps to shape UNOPS as we look to the future.

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We have started 2025 with the positive news of a ceasefire in Gaza - which is now being implemented.

After 15 months of conflict, devastation and unimaginable human suffering, this is a critical first step. A moment of relief. Of hope and optimism.

In the face of the absolute humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, it is imperative that the ceasefire provides the conditions to ensure rapid and unhindered and safe humanitarian access to provide relief for all.

UNOPS remains committed to supporting the humanitarian operations in Gaza - as we have done since the start of this conflict, thanks to our colleagues who have worked relentlessly hard despite the impossible conditions.

UNOPS Gaza response includes many aspects—and I have spoken to these in previous sessions of the Executive Board—but allow me to remind you of three key aspects of this work, and provide some updates.

These are:

- our work on the procurement, delivery, monitoring and lately distribution of fuel;
- our work to manage the operation of the UN2720 Mechanism, which aims to increase and speed up the delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance to Gaza.
- And our work- together with UN Mine Action - to mitigate the dangers of landmines and unexploded ordnance.

On fuel, as you know, my colleagues on the ground have played a unique role in enabling the delivery, and monitoring of fuel. These efforts have intensified since the ceasefire. On the first day alone after the ceasefire, we increased our fuel procurement and deliveries by over tenfold. From 100,000 litres per day to 1.3 million litres.

This work is hugely significant. The scaling up of aid delivery is an important achievement by all parties. In the absence of any other source of energy, fuel remains one of the most critical provisions for humanitarian response in Gaza and UNOPS, along with the entire UN family, is committed to supporting the implementation of this ceasefire and providing relief alongside humanitarian partners.

In parallel, we continue to manage the operations of the UN2720 Mechanism and the Access Support Unit, which facilitates the movement of humanitarian and development personnel and goods.

Through this mechanism - with its database for centralised requests of aid deliveries along with monitors on the ground, as of 20 Jan 2024, close to 50,000 metric tonnes of aid have been delivered to Gaza. The vast majority of this is food [79%], followed by shelter [14%] and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies [4%]. Over half of the approved requests tend to be approved within less than 24 hours, with another quarter taking between 3 and 7 days to approve.

The Mechanism is effective, transparent and speeds up the aid delivery process. Our hope is that the ceasefire creates the conditions to maximize the use of the Mechanism, to scale up the delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as later when we enter the early recovery and reconstruction phases.

The scale of the devastation in Gaza is immense—it will take years if not decades to recover.

By December 2024, UN satellite imagery showed that nearly [69 percent of all structures in Gaza](#) had been destroyed or damaged. More than 95% of schools in Gaza have been partially or completely destroyed. Only 16 of 36 hospitals remain partially operational, which is entirely insufficient for the overwhelming medical needs.

An estimated [50 million tons of debris](#) and rubble generated by the conflict will take years to remove.

Families returning to the remains of their homes are at high risk from unexploded weapons and contaminated rubble.

UNOPS, on behalf of UNMAS, works to mitigate explosive device risks, thus ensuring high-risk humanitarian missions can go ahead. UNOPS Explosive Ordnance Disposal Officers conduct threat and risk assessments across Gaza, enabling critical humanitarian aid convoys and activities.

To date, our team has completed 301 assessments and accompanied 249 high-risk convoys to vulnerable areas potentially contaminated by explosive ordnance. To enhance safety, UNOPS also provides explosive ordnance risk education to civilians, internally displaced persons and aid workers. Over 250,000 civilians and nearly 1,000 humanitarian staff have participated in these sessions, gaining crucial knowledge to stay safe and navigate explosive risks effectively.

Gaza needs a comprehensive recovery and reconstruction plan, which combines humanitarian aid with the conditions that promote recovery. Given the immensity of the task ahead, we all have a responsibility to support these crucial recovery and reconstruction efforts.

UNOPS stands ready to do its part.

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As we look back on 2024, amid raging conflicts and the looming climate crisis, UNOPS commitment to providing practical solutions has remained constant.

In Ukraine, my colleagues have continued their tireless work.

Rebuilding bridges, renovating schools, delivering rail repair equipment, refurbishing homes, and helping to reduce the threat of explosive ordnance.

Working with many partners, they support the joint efforts to respond to needs, and restore hope, so that communities affected by war can flourish again.

One example of this work is through their efforts to rebuild schools.

This is crucial work: the human toll of this conflict extends beyond our horizons - an entire generation of children are being deprived of proper education.

With the support of the European Union, my colleagues work to repair damaged schools in Chernihiv, Kyiv, Sumy and Kharkiv. They also help to put in place shelters, so that children are not exposed to threats.

This work has already led to 34 schools being rehabilitated, which means the conditions are in place for around 14,000 children to go back to face-to-face education.

By restoring facilities to make them safe and welcoming, we hope to help children be children again, learn and play, and feel some sense of normality and structure that is so crucial to their development.

Moving on to Afghanistan, amid intensifying needs and an increasingly constrained operating environment, a community resilience and livelihoods project is providing short-term employment.

This work offers a lifeline for vulnerable households—with the benefits extending to entire communities. Funded by the World Bank and the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund, this project is working directly with more than 9,000 communities.

It benefits 14.6 million Afghans, across 10 cities, 29 provinces and 98 rural districts.

Additionally, managed by UNOPS, [Awaaz Afghanistan](#) is the country's first nationwide humanitarian call centre, established in May 2018 as a joint UN initiative. Since then it has handled over half a million calls, reaching 3.5 million people—20 percent of those from women—reflecting its role in inclusive and accountable humanitarian programming.

In Myanmar, UNOPS is fully committed to supporting people, and adapting how we work to respond to the challenges of conflict, political complexity, and climate change.

Here, we continue to deliver humanitarian support, restore essential services, and help communities build resilience where it's needed most. Since 2009, we've reached around 47 million people, with most of our efforts focused on the country's most fragile areas. We've seen real impact through initiatives like the Livelihoods and Food Security Fund, which has invested nearly \$700 million to improve livelihoods for over 13 million people, and the Access to Health Fund, which has helped more than 6 million people access better healthcare in hard-to-reach areas and conflict zones. Programmes like the Nexus Response Mechanism also provide vital support to displaced communities, focusing on local solutions. And we're not just addressing the immediate needs - we're helping to build long-term resilience by funding local organizations and promoting climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, and green jobs.

In Mozambique, years of conflict in the north have interrupted education, destroyed crops and public infrastructure, impacted livelihoods and forced more than 1 million people to flee their homes. With funding from the World Bank, the government-led Northern Crisis Recovery Project—implemented by UNOPS—is supporting communities displaced by the conflict. Working with local implementing partners, project activities are encouraging social cohesion in communities impacted by the conflict, supporting sustainable livelihoods and economic opportunities, and increasing access to public services for internally displaced people and host communities.

Elsewhere, in Haiti, where political instability, widespread poverty, and recurring natural disasters have left nearly half of the population in need of humanitarian aid, our support extends across a range of sectors, including infrastructure, health, education, energy and the environment. One recent part of this work focuses on improving food security. With funding from the World Bank, UNOPS is working with the government to make agricultural systems more resilient to climate-induced shocks and stresses - by increasing communities' access to markets and food,

including in earthquake-affected areas, and expanding land under irrigation and farming.

In Yemen, years of ongoing conflict have led to a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, with 19.5 million people—[over half of the population](#)—in need of assistance and protection services. Here, we work with our partners to restore public services for 3 million people, providing 3.5 million people with new or improved electricity.

We work to improve waste management and access to clean water. We provide operational support to the UN-led peace process in the country, and crucially, we facilitate the unimpeded free-flow of commercial items through the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen - (known as UNVIM). Since the beginning of its operations, this work has helped to ensure the entry of over 34 million metric tonnes of food, over 17 million metric tonnes of fuel, and over 8 million metric tonnes of other cargo into Yemen.

In another example, with funding from the World Bank's International Development Association, UNOPS is installing solar energy systems in schools, health facilities and water stations across the country. Using robust systems built to withstand Yemen's harsh terrain, remote locations and extreme weather conditions, the renewable energy solutions are providing a more reliable and affordable source of electricity for millions of people—and improving their access to essential services.

In Sudan, where over 11.5 million people are now estimated to be internally displaced, we support humanitarian, recovery and sustainable development projects. In one example of this work, we have recently agreed with the Government of Japan, to help improve water access and health services for communities in Port Sudan and Kassala. This project will benefit more than 2.2 million people in Sudan, including host communities, internally displaced persons and refugees.

And finally, in the face of the unique challenges faced by Small Island Developing States, my colleagues continue to support these countries in their pursuit of a sustainable, resilient and prosperous future.

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### **2025: A turning point**

Honourable members of the Executive Board,

In the face of the global outlook that we see today, the need for practical solutions to the world's many, immense, and multiplying challenges has never been greater.

This is the purpose of UNOPS. To provide practical solutions, responding to needs. Turning needs and ideas into plans and actions, and turning those actions into projects, and making those projects happen.

This has been our purpose for 30 years, which makes the year 2025 a special year for us.

In the words of the UN Secretary-General “For three decades, across development, peace and humanitarian operations, UNOPS has provided practical solutions to help ensure that the work of the United Nations is carried out efficiently, effectively and sustainably”.

We are extremely proud of our legacy.

It has involved a commitment to action. A can-do attitude. And an ability to carve out solutions that match the needs.

Over this time we have played a role in many groundbreaking achievements.

From pursuing a revolutionary approach to post-conflict development in Central America back in the 1990s, to helping close the hole in the ozone layer, by supporting the Montreal Protocol later in that decade.

From reconstruction after the tsunami in Indonesia twenty years ago;  
To helping Nepal become free of landmines following its civil war in 2006.

From supporting recovery and reconstruction after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010;  
To removing chemical weapons materials from Syria in 2014.

From bringing millions of tonnes of building materials into Gaza to rebuild after the 2014 conflict;  
To ensuring the safe passage of millions of tonnes of essential supplies into Yemen.

From raising living standards for millions of people in rural Myanmar, to powering rural Sierra Leone with clean energy, and delivering hundreds of millions of dollars worth of projects responding to the coronavirus pandemic—this organization has no shortage of examples of its dedication to serving those most in need.

I, we, are very proud of this heritage, as we are of our contribution to the United Nations.

### **Journey of reforms**

But 2025 is also special for us—because it marks a turning of the page in our journey of reforms.

We concluded in December 2024 the implementation of the comprehensive list of reforms included in the so-called Comprehensive Response Plan, except one action that is multi-year, the Process Innovation and Digitalization Programme (the PID).

These widespread reforms started in May 2022, following management failures related to the former Sustainable Infrastructure and Innovation Initiative.

The Comprehensive Response Plan, agreed with the Executive Board, guided our reform efforts, which we have since extended; aiming to make us more agile, and a better partner in the service of peace, sustainable development and climate action.

It is impossible to provide detail today on all the 100 actions and 43 recommendations implemented in the last 3 years (the first year with my predecessor Jens Wandel and the last two years under my leadership). But let me at least highlight just a few:

Among many key aspects, it has included a focus on culture - where we developed our very first UNOPS Integrated People Strategy, putting our people at the centre of all we do. It includes a review of our financial regulations and rules, as well as a comprehensive review of our legislative framework at UNOPS.

It has involved key steps to strengthen our risk management framework, embed risk-informed decision-making, and proactively manage risks in our portfolios, which we will address in a closed session with members.

And it included a strong focus on integrity. Allow me to take this opportunity to elaborate on this in more detail.

An early and important step to strengthen integrity in the reforms was ensuring that the Internal Audit and Investigation Group (IAIG) and the Ethics Office had direct and independent relationships with the Executive Board. This independence was then assessed by a third-party contractor, recruited under the guidance of the Board, to review and provide assurance of the independence of those functions. Within one year, by the end of 2022, IAIG implemented all eleven recommendations approved by the Executive Board to strengthen its independence. These include a comprehensive and strong audit charter, unrestricted and regular meetings with the Executive

Boards and bilateral meetings with the Member States. Our approach to strengthening the independence of oversight units for stronger transparency has been commended by the Executive Board.

This January, we are rolling out across the organization the overhaul of our whistleblowing system, which has been a significant undertaking. A new Whistleblowing Mechanism - called the Integrity Portal, replaces the previous platform and is the result of a comprehensive review and reform process initiated by our [Executive Board in 2022](#) as part of the Comprehensive Response Plan. The new mechanism is designed with our personnel, in mind, to create a space where people feel safe to speak up and raise concerns through the right channels.

To accompany this major reform, I have also ensured that we have a Code of Ethics that strengthens our commitment to ethics, integrity, and accountability. It offers practical guidance to help personnel navigate everyday situations and reinforces our commitment to fostering a culture of ethics and trust.

**Over the past three years, we are proud to have completed—to planned scope—all recommendations in the Comprehensive Response Plan, except for the multi-year Process Innovation and Digitalization Programme.** This programme will ensure that our processes and information systems are fit-for-purpose, integrated and digitalized. And our Deputy Executive Director for Management and Policy will go into more detail on this in her intervention today.

Independent assessments of these actions have been commissioned to provide assurance to you of the substantive nature of our response.

In addition, members may recall that in February 2022, the Board urged UNOPS to "undertake all possible measures to recover the overdue repayments from disinvestments in S3i initiative projects". The UN Office of Legal Affairs has been working closely with external counsel with the necessary capacity and expertise, to assess legal avenues aimed at recovering the S3i funds. UNOPS covers the costs

associated with these efforts which are expected to continue in 2025 and beyond. Members have been invited to a closed in-person briefing session in the margins of the Executive Board meeting.

We have carried out our reforms with full commitment, transparency and accountability while continuing to deliver our operations and support those most in need.

We have provided monthly updates to the Executive Board on the implementation of the Comprehensive Response Plan—both in writing and through virtual meetings.

All reform actions have been documented and are publicly available. We have reported and will continue to provide Members with financial reporting on how UNOPS has spent the tranches released so far by the Executive Board of the approved allocation of \$35.4 million to implement the Comprehensive Response Plan. We have been completely transparent on the pace of progress of reforms and on spending by providing Members with access to an online monitoring platform.

As we come to the end of this chapter, I want to give an assurance to the Executive Board and to our partners: we remain deeply committed to our journey of reforms and transformation beyond the closure of the CRP. The CRP is fully implemented (as we expect to be confirmed by the third-party review), but our commitment to reform goes beyond the CRP and we will continue reforming UNOPS, namely through six transformation initiatives.

Before focusing in more detail on the future, allow me to share two key points with you here.

One has to do with continued funds to enable our innovation and digitalization efforts. The Board allocated \$35.4 million to implement the Comprehensive Response Plan, to be disbursed in tranches. So far we have received two tranches of \$11.8 million and on the basis of the expenditure incurred by end of 2024, we are requesting the release of the third and final tranche to allow us to continue

implementation of the multi-year Process Innovation & Digitalization Programme, and to transition and sustain completed reforms.

Another has to do with our efforts to distribute excess reserves. I am happy to confirm that UNOPS has now concluded the exercise to refund excess reserves accumulated as at the end of 2021. We managed to settle 99.3% of 124 million with more than 200 partners, and we now await a final decision by the Board to close the 2021 process.

As we move forward, the UN Board of Auditors has recommended that UNOPS present to the Executive Board a revised methodology for calculating its excess reserves. With this in mind, we are now seeking your endorsement of a revised approach to the calculation of excess reserves based on well-defined annual disclosures presented with the financial statements.

### **Looking to the future**

As we look to the future, we need to continue to be responsive in a world that is facing multiple and compounding challenges: Conflicts rage around the world, the climate crisis is wreaking havoc, and inequalities are growing.

The Sustainable Development Goals are in serious peril. Our multilateral system is not equipped to respond to the challenges of our uncertain times.

The impact on people's lives is real: At least half of the people on the planet are not covered by essential health services. One in four live in conflict-affected countries. Nearly one in ten people live in extreme poverty and less than one in ten lack access to electricity.

In the face of this volume of needs, we need to respond now, collectively, and at scale. Business as usual will not do. Everyone needs to step up urgently. And that includes us at UNOPS.

**This is the context against which UNOPS is envisioning its Strategic Plan 2026-29.**

Our role is implementation—the action and practical solutions that are essential to bridge the implementation gaps that stand between ambitions, and the reality of people's lives around the world.

We know that we need to scale up and to speed up to respond to escalating needs. This is about taking determined action, for people and the planet. Action that is focused on solutions, driven by clear missions and dedicated to creating impact for the people we serve.

With our implementation mandate, we stand ready to support the wider UN family in the journey ahead.

We want to support countries in the task of implementing the Pact for the Future. We want to support the UN development system in the collective effort to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, guided by the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), and benefiting from the Resident Coordinator system and from the strengthening of the UNCT.

And we want to support the reforms that strengthen our collective impact—to help make the UN 2.0 vision a reality.

Too often, mandates tend to be used to define lines of separation rather than complementarity.

For a more holistic response to our interconnected global challenges, we need to better integrate, across all areas of work, whether they are programmatic, finance or implementation.

In short—rather than competing, we are committed to finding alignment, complementary to and collaboration. UNOPS, with our focus on implementation, stands ready to work with all sister agencies and entities with a normative function, to bridge implementation gaps and deliver peace and stability, sustainable development and climate action.

As we implement—in even the most challenging and constraining of contexts—we are committed to human rights for all, and dedicated to gender equality and social inclusion, so that everyone can live a peaceful and dignified life, and communities are on a path to sustainable development.

Additionally, the commitment to climate action runs through all aspects of UNOPS work. Our ambitious climate agenda sets out how we can reduce emissions in our own internal operations, account for our emissions through our suppliers, and importantly—work with partners, governments and communities around the world to promote climate-resilient development.

Our commitments are three-fold:

- The first is to reduce corporate emissions by 45% by 2030 and to reach net zero before 2050. This includes reducing emissions generated from our internal operations around the world, including air travel and electricity consumption.
- The second commitment is to account for emissions in our supply chains and our infrastructure work. This includes expanding our accounting for the emissions we are indirectly responsible for through tracking emissions and supporting suppliers in their efforts to reduce emissions.
- And our third commitment is to drive climate resilience in our projects. This includes working to drive climate-resilient development through our projects, in collaboration with our partners.

## **Conclusion**



As we come to the end of one chapter at UNOPS, we are ready to take our lessons forward and embark on the next, always committed to principles of transparency and accountability. As we step into 2025 and beyond, this will be a chapter dedicated to action and the practical solutions the world needs to address the critical issues it faces.

Allow me to take today's opportunity to thank you—esteemed members of our Executive Boards—present and past, for your unwavering support of UNOPS—for guiding us, and helping us navigate challenging times and to emerge stronger.

Together, with you, our partners and my amazing UNOPS team, we have built a more robust and agile UNOPS, ready to address the challenges of today and tomorrow. Ready to offer practical solutions to help people build a more peaceful, fair and green world.