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## **The UNOPS strategic plan, 2018-2021**

### *Summary*

The UNOPS strategic plan, 2018-2021, is focused on implementation for impact. It provides direction to support Member States and the Secretary-General in realizing sustainable development and more peaceful, just and equitable societies.

UNOPS is a United Nations resource for services and solutions across peace and security, humanitarian, and development efforts. Its mission is to help people build better lives and countries achieve peace and sustainable development. While UNOPS can expand capacity towards achievement of all the sustainable development goals, the focus is based on partners' demand and the needs of people and countries.

UNOPS expects demand to remain strong where people's risks are high and their needs paramount, including in the most fragile and challenging contexts.

The strategic plan responds to provisions of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the Secretary-General's vision for the United Nations as a platform for prevention, enabled through management reform. It is rooted in the UNOPS core mandate for infrastructure, procurement, project management, human resources, and financial management services.

Building on its excellence in delivering quality, UNOPS will refine the services and solutions it offers. It will: (a) tailor its management support services to provide more efficient integrated offerings; (b) focus its technical expertise to offer specialized context-specific solutions in response to country needs, including for local and national capacity development; (c) advance innovation and private sector investment for sustainable development; and (d) leverage new technologies to innovate practical solutions with tangible impact for people. In sum, UNOPS services and solutions will be more innovative and sustainable, and it will seek collaborative strategic partnerships to make its value proposition better known.

These objectives are structured around three strategic contributions goals: (a) enable partners through efficient management support services; (b) help people through effective specialized technical expertise; and (c) support countries in expanding the pool and effect of resources.

The UNOPS ambition is to become a known and recognized resource providing collaborative advantages that expand implementation capacity for Governments, the United Nations, and other partners, in support of the Secretary-General and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UNOPS will provide the Executive Board with progress updates, in alignment with the framework of the Global Reporting Initiative; continue to benchmark the excellence of its operations against internationally recognized standards; and deploy best practices across all areas of its work.

*Elements of a decision*

The Executive Board may wish to: endorse the strategic plan, 2018-2021, recognizing its solid foundation in Member State decisions, policy guidance, and international agreements, and the needs of people and countries, including in the most fragile situations; express support for the UNOPS strategic goals and the ambition it has set out to achieve to fulfil its mission, vision and purpose; encourage the UNOPS approach of embedding sustainable implementation practices; support the ambition to focus knowledge management on efforts to harness expertise for integrated service offerings, and specialized solutions, based on realized or anticipated demand towards specific goals and operational contexts; express its appreciation of the UNOPS intent to engage more strategically with governments and other partners; urge entities of the United Nations system to recognize its comparative advantages and technical expertise, and engage in collaborative strategic partnerships for efficiency and effectiveness, including at the country level; and encourage UNOPS in its continued pursuit of organizational excellence and attention to ensuring investment to build organizational capabilities and protect its unique business model for the future.

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## I. Why UNOPS exists: strategic context, purpose, and goals

1. The General Assembly established UNOPS as a United Nations organization under the auspices of the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and the Executive Board. The UNOPS purpose embodies the values of the Charter of the United Nations.

2. UNOPS is mandated<sup>1</sup> to expand implementation capacity across peace and security, humanitarian, and development efforts, including through capacity development activities. Through its project services it supports governments, the United Nations, and other partners in achieving Member States' global goals and local objectives for people and countries. UNOPS is an operational resource for Member States and the Secretary-General, supporting their broad vision for the future we want.

3. In 2017, the Secretary-General laid out his vision for the United Nations as a platform for prevention:<sup>2</sup>

*“By prevention, I mean doing everything we can to help countries to avert the outbreak of crisis that take a high toll on humanity, undermining institutions and capacities to achieve peace and development. I mean rededicating ourselves to the United Nations Charter and the mandate of Agenda 2030 and ensuring that our assistance goes to those who need it the most. Prevention should permeate everything we do. It should cut across all pillars of [our] work, and unite us for more effective delivery.”*

4. This strategic plan reflects the UNOPS response to the global agreements forming the 2030 Agenda<sup>3</sup> and the quadrennial comprehensive policy review<sup>4</sup> and lays out how UNOPS can contribute, across the three pillars of the Charter, to realizing the Secretary-General's vision of an integrated platform for prevention, enabled by management reform.

5. The plan builds on the outcome of the UNOPS midterm review conducted in 2016.<sup>5</sup> It provides strategic context for UNOPS to function as a demand-driven, self-financed entity of the United Nations system, and frames the operational and management ambitions for 2018-2021.

6. At the midpoint of the planning period UNOPS will seek guidance from the Executive Board to ensure its strategic focus remains relevant and aligned with that of Member States, and that it continues to add maximum value in helping people build better lives, and countries achieve peace and sustainable development.

### A. The global context: global agreements and United Nations reform

7. While many people and countries have experienced progress over the past decades, the global challenges and risks of the 21st century are immense, particularly for people left farthest behind. By the beginning of 2016, Member States had reached global agreements on sustainable development, climate change, sustaining peace, disaster risk reduction, and financing for development. The 2030 Agenda provides a broad vision for the future we want.<sup>6</sup>

8. The 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review guides entities of the United Nations development system as to Member States' expectations. The Secretary-General's vision for the United Nations system is a horizontally and vertically integrated prevention platform, with management systems 'fit for purpose' for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

9. The policy review reconfirms the strategic landscape established through the global agreements shaping the 2030 Agenda. It recognizes the inherent link between peace and sustainable development (including transition from relief to development), accentuating the need for new approaches to financing development activities and the paramount importance of strengthening domestic enabling environments and building national capacity.

10. Member States encourage the United Nations development system to be more strategic, accountable, transparent, collaborative, efficient, effective, and results oriented. They emphasize

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<sup>1</sup> Annex I

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> General Assembly resolution 70/1

<sup>4</sup> General Assembly resolution 71/243

<sup>5</sup> DP/OPS/2016/5

<sup>6</sup> Annex I

that operational activities for development should support countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and recognize the expertise, experience and comparative advantages that development system entities derive from their mandates and strategic plans.

11. The Secretary-General has established three key priorities for making the United Nations system more effective and responsive in supporting Member States' objectives of achieving peace and sustainable development:

- (a) Upholding the United Nations commitment to a culture of prevention, strengthening the nexus between its three mutually reinforcing pillars: peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights policies;
- (b) Sustaining peace with a modern peace architecture encompassing the entire continuum: prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and long-term development; and
- (c) Becoming more efficient, productive and field oriented, decentralizing and simplifying processes, becoming less bureaucratic, focusing on delivery and results, and promoting reform and innovation in all areas of its work.

12. To reflect the inherent linkages and mutually reinforcing nature of peace and sustainable development, UNOPS will refer to this as the 'overall value chain' – the set of processes through which global norms, policies and agreements are translated into action through technical expertise and efficient management support services.

13. Expectations are high that entities of the United Nations system will break down silos; recognize mutual comparative advantages, experience and expertise; and collaborate across the pillars of the Charter in support of the 2030 Agenda, including the progress of countries towards achieving the 17 universal, interdependent and mutually reinforcing sustainable development goals.

14. In its midterm review, 2016, UNOPS took stock of the evolving global context and positioned itself to engage with governments, the United Nations and other partners as a resource for expanding their implementation capacity. Building on its experience, expertise, and comparative advantages, UNOPS can provide integrated service offerings and engage strategically with partners, identifying focused, comprehensive solutions to the challenges people face in different countries and contexts.

## **B. The operational context: people and countries**

15. The 21st century world is globalized and interdependent, and people are more connected than ever before, yet billions face significant challenges and risks even as technology and innovation afford new opportunities. UNOPS has experience and expertise, providing direct and indirect contributions towards global goals and local objectives for people and countries in different contexts. Throughout its operations it strives to use technology to save time and money, embedding sustainable approaches to realize tangible impact in its implementation projects.

### *Sustainable implementation approaches*

16. The UNOPS sustainable implementation approaches include measures for local and national capacity development, and comprise three mutually reinforcing dimensions of sustainability:

- (a) *Equitable economic growth*: (i) Ensuring optimum value for money by pursuing effective management practices and investment strategies, upholding the principles of transparency and accountability, and considering appropriate exit strategies; (ii) Supporting livelihoods through expanded market access and use of local workforces and suppliers wherever possible, including opportunities for women- and youth-owned businesses; and (iii) Considering the total cost of ownership (financing, operating, maintaining and replacing assets).
- (b) *Social justice and inclusion*: (i) Exercising due diligence, respect for human rights and rights-based approaches, and advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls throughout implementation projects; (ii) Engaging local communities and beneficiaries and ensuring equitable access to project benefits, with particular emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable; (iii) Facilitating access to food, water, sanitation, energy, health, education, justice and security-related services.
- (c) *Environmental respect*: (i) Mitigating adverse impact on the environment and improving biodiversity and ecological resilience; (ii) Using renewable resources, taking into account the interactions between human development and environmental sustainability; and

(iii) Increasing the resilience of countries and communities to withstand the shocks of natural disasters.

17. In practice, the embedding of sustainable implementation approaches will be based on context and on the nature of the activities performed. The standard management framework identifies internal tools and guidance on recognized practices. Externally, the Global Reporting Initiative framework guides reporting on sustainable practices.

### ***The challenges of people and countries***

#### *Development, conflict, climate and transparency*

18. At present, 7.4 billion people live across more than 200 countries and territories where economic and human development vary considerably. The risks they face are multifaceted and interlinked.

19. In 2015-2016, UNOPS activities totalled \$2.8 billion of delivery: 83 per cent represented in-country activities across 121 countries; the other 17 per cent represented global activities, mainly from Geneva, New York, and Copenhagen.<sup>7</sup>

20. The midterm review highlighted a strong correlation between UNOPS in-country activities and the challenges people face in different countries and contexts.<sup>8</sup> Annex I provides an updated contextual assessment: it considers UNOPS activities in the context of: (a) Development (World Bank income groups, the human development index); (b) Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing States; (c) Conflicts and displacement, and United Nations peacekeeping missions; (d) Climate change, disasters and displacement; (e) Urbanization; and (f) Transparency.

21. The assessment confirms that UNOPS services are in demand for expanding partners' implementation capacity to address challenges and build better lives in many contexts; and that the majority of its activities are concentrated in countries ranking lowest on the sustainable development goals index.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Technology*

22. The assessment includes information technology development, highlighting that many countries are lagging. Nevertheless, the rate of technological change is exponential and new technologies are proliferating. Examples are cell phones, network connectivity and new developments in blockchain, machine-learning and intelligent applications. The disruption caused by the changes is challenging 20th century business and government operating models.

23. Technological advances are creating opportunities for billions of people to leapfrog to development. Across many sectors this will provide opportunities to innovate for sustainability. UNOPS seeks to harness these opportunities for the benefits of people, especially those farthest behind.

### ***People's risks in fragile situations***

24. The Secretary-General's vision of the United Nations as a platform for prevention emphasizes the importance of recognizing fragile situations and prioritizing capacity-building for resilience, to enable people – particularly those left farthest behind – to manage risks and shocks more effectively.

25. All pillars of the Charter are essential to mitigating the risks of fragility: sustainable development underpins peace; sustained peace enables development; and societies are more resilient when they uphold the full breadth of human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, rule of law, inclusion and diversity, as well as nurture their youth and children.

26. In 2013, recognizing the increasing international attention to fragile states<sup>10</sup> and fragility in the broader sense, UNOPS committed to integrating the principles of the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience into its infrastructure practices.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Annex I

<sup>8</sup> Annex I

<sup>9</sup> Annex I

<sup>10</sup> DP/OPS/2013/3, paragraph 10

<sup>11</sup> DP/OPS/2013/3, paragraph 53

27. The UNOPS midterm review assessed its presence against several country risk indices.<sup>12</sup> An updated assessment confirms that UNOPS activities are concentrated in fragile situations where people face high risks, including in some of the most challenging contexts.

28. UNOPS aspires to be better recognized for the value it can add for people across countries in such situations. It is ready to take on greater responsibility for ensuring that solutions proven in one operational context are transferred for the benefit of people facing similar challenges and risks in comparable contexts, including in fragile situations.

29. To be more systematic and focused, UNOPS will explore the utility of using country typologies and risk indicators to inform medium- and longer-term planning. This will include prioritizing investments needed to develop and deploy integrated service offerings, and developing strategic approaches to advancing specialized solutions to achieve global goals and local objectives in contexts with comparable risk profiles that impede realization of country priorities and plans, and people's ability to build better lives.

### *The sustainable development goals*

30. The 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets are universal, mutually reinforcing and interdependent. Countries achieve and report on them, and the United Nations system provides support based on mandates, expertise and comparative advantage.

31. With its implementation mandate UNOPS can make direct and indirect contributions towards achievement of all the goals, yet partners appear to find the UNOPS more attractive in relation to some of the goals than others.<sup>13</sup>

32. Most partners indicate demand for goal 9. While this is commensurate with the UNOPS infrastructure mandate, infrastructure systems and assets are essential enablers for most goals. Support and advice in relation to goal 17 is in high demand, indicating partners' recognition of UNOPS as a convener for partnerships towards the goals. Other goals where past and future demand overlap are goals 3, 11 and 16. Many partners expect future demand in relation to goal 6, and activities related to goal 13 have increased in recent years.

33. Strong correlation of past and anticipated demand for project services related to specific goals confirms the relevance of UNOPS. This does not imply that UNOPS presumes a global normative policy mandate in relation to the goals, merely that partners recognize the value of UNOPS contributions in support of their objectives.

34. As a United Nations entity, and based on its technical expertise, UNOPS embeds the values and principles of the Charter in its operations and contributes to countries' aspirations to achieve the goals, including through sustainable implementation approaches. UNOPS management support services, which are certified against internationally recognized standards, have intrinsic value for its partners regardless of which goals are being pursued.

35. The steady demand for UNOPS to expand implementation capacity in relation to specific goals is indicative of areas where UNOPS has expertise and comparative advantage that can be leveraged by new and existing partners. Consequently, the UNOPS knowledge management strategy will be based on the premise that past and future demand will help focus investments for reuse and innovation of expertise.

36. Over the next four years UNOPS will bring its expertise to bear for people in countries facing similar challenges. It will develop a more integrated suite of service offerings and engage strategically with partners to make its value proposition better known. It will help transfer proven context-specific solutions (and find new ones) responding to people's needs and the goals countries strive to achieve, including through specialized, comprehensive implementation solutions. It will invest and develop institutional capabilities for knowledge management based on its experience and anticipated future demand.<sup>14</sup>

37. To remain flexible and adaptable, UNOPS will ensure that its services offerings are infused with new technologies, knowledge, and approaches of partners, including the United Nations, academia and the private sector. New ways of leveraging opportunities in information and

<sup>12</sup> DP/OPS/2016/5

<sup>13</sup> Annex I

<sup>14</sup> Annex I

communication technology, and new approaches to financing, will be essential to achieving the goals.

### ***Development financing***

38. The achievement of global goals and local objectives will require significant investment. The financial resources under management of the United Nations system represent only a fraction of the need.

39. The UNOPS midterm review examined the contours of the development financing landscape; annex I reiterates those findings. They accentuate the reaffirmation, in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, of the call to explore innovative financing approaches, and confirm that international public financing, including official development assistance, should catalyze additional financing.

40. The United Nations is not the only actor, or even the most important one. Its goal is not to expand its remit, but to make a real difference for people – especially the most vulnerable – through partnerships with the widest array of governments, regional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society, academia, and the private sector, including through South-South and triangular cooperation.

41. The Addis Ababa outcome document estimates the annual infrastructure investment gap in developing countries at \$1-1.5 trillion.<sup>15</sup> New, broader partnerships will be crucial to expanding both the pool and the effect of resources available to realize the 2030 Agenda.

### ***Capacity of domestic enabling environments and the United Nation system***

42. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review reaffirmed the need to strengthen domestic enabling environments and national capacity. National ownership, and mobilization and effective use of domestic resources, will be essential to fulfilling the 2030 Agenda, as will sound social, environmental, and economic approaches, and transparent institutions responsive to people's needs. The policy review emphasized that the development system must collaborate at all levels, recognizing comparative advantages, experience and expertise.

43. Procurement represents significant government expenditure. With its mandate and technical expertise in public procurement, UNOPS is a resource for building public procurement capacity and transparent, accountable institutions. Establishing public procurement frameworks that enable innovative, sustainable choices and realize even small efficiencies can constitute a major impetus towards achieving the goals. UNOPS can support efforts to realize a procurement dividend by expanding resources through efficiency and innovation.

44. This is true throughout the United Nations system. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review requested entities to explore collaborative procurement at global, regional and country levels. Current institutional arrangements, however, appear too fragmented to realize the potential benefits of sustainability standards and combined purchasing power.

45. Achievement of the goals will require infrastructure investment across numerous sectors, including energy, water, transport, waste, and information and communications technology, as well as public enabling assets for social infrastructure in health, education and housing. The policy review reaffirmed the need to 'unlock' blended or pooled financing and risk mitigation for infrastructure. UNOPS has experience in most infrastructure sectors and can support the prioritization and development of resilient, sustainable national infrastructure through evidence-based approaches.

46. A clearer division of labour within the United Nations system, based on mandate and expertise, could reinforce quality standards and allow more cost-effective approaches. It could also ensure the critical mass of institutional knowledge needed for innovation to harvest the benefits that sustainable, resilient infrastructure can bring. The system should align its efforts to enable Member States in preparing for disasters in an informed manner.

47. To attract private capital for social impact investment, projects must be developed, designed and managed to realize financial and non-financial benefits by reducing associated risk. With its technical expertise and track record of implementation – including in the most challenging conditions – UNOPS is a resource for expanding implementation capacity in project management, including when financed on market terms.

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<sup>15</sup> Addis Ababa action agenda, paragraph 14

48. Within the United Nations system, UNOPS remains available to manage implementation on behalf of partners as they focus on global normative policy mandates.

49. UNOPS recognizes the need for a division of labour within the United Nations system based on comparative advantages. UNOPS is ready to take on its share of responsibility, leveraging its presence and expertise in mandated areas, acting as a catalyst for channelling government and private-sector funding, and deploying its specialized technical expertise to support the 2030 Agenda so that results are achieved in a transparent, accountable manner, for the benefit of people, including through capacity development.

### C. The strategic framework: purpose, vision, mission and goals

50. The UNOPS strategic framework establishes its *raison d'être*, and the strategic goals frame its aspirations over the planning period.

#### *Purpose, vision and mission*

51. The values of UNOPS are grounded in the Charter and in legislative mandates of the General Assembly. In its decision 2016/19, the Executive Board welcomed the UNOPS values and *raison d'être* as expressed through its purpose, vision and mission:

#### ***Our purpose***

We help people build better lives and countries achieve peace and sustainable development.

We bring to this task the values and principles of the United Nations and the innovation, boldness, speed and efficiency of a self-financed institution.

We bring the highest international standards to what we do, and respect local contexts. We do this as our contribution to tackling the huge challenges of the 21st century.

We provide practical solutions to assist our partners save lives, protect people and their rights, and to build a better world.

We aspire to be a leader in the efforts to channel private sector investments for social and environmental impact while addressing the immense needs for sustainable development.

What drives us is a passion to fight inequalities and to create opportunities for those most vulnerable. This means we often work in the most challenging contexts, building foundations for communities to function and for people to live with dignity and respect.

We are passionate about quality: in our people and in what we do.

We earn the trust of those we work with by caring about what they value, and by delivering on our promise to always act in the service of people in need.

***Our vision*** is a world where people can live full lives, supported by appropriate, sustainable and resilient infrastructure and by efficient and transparent use of public resources in procurement and project management.

***Our mission*** is to help people build better lives and countries achieve peace and sustainable development.

#### *Strategic goals*

52. The UNOPS strategic goals are not directed towards one or two global goals. Rather, they frame its aspirations to contribute direct and indirect value to expand partners' implementation capacity to address people's needs and countries' achievement of the goals.

53. In 2016, the Executive Board welcomed the intent of the three UNOPS contribution goals<sup>16</sup> which, together with four management goals, express its strategic aspirations for operational and management results.

54. ***Three contribution goals*** express the overall value proposition for UNOPS services and frame how it will provide a focused, differentiated account of the direct and indirect value it adds. UNOPS will:

- (a) *Enable partners* to do more with less through efficient management support services, delivered locally or as global shared services;

<sup>16</sup> Decision 2016/19



- (b) *Help people* achieve individual, local, national and global objectives, through effective specialized technical expertise grounded in international norms and standards; and
- (c) *Support countries* in expanding the pool and effect of resources available to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

55. **Four management goals** express the ambition for organizational excellence, quality and principled performance throughout UNOPS operations. They frame how it will drive its internal management reform and innovation agenda:

- (a) *Partner value* – deliver innovative services and solutions contributing value recognized by partners and in accordance with international standards and recognized best practices;
- (b) *People excellence* – empower people to perform at consistently high standards in a culture conducive to principled performance, making UNOPS an employer of choice, attracting and retaining a talented workforce;
- (c) *Process excellence* – drive measurable improvement of quality, efficiency and reliability of operations through simplification and innovation of processes, based on clear standards and delegated authority enabled through information technology; and
- (d) *Financial stewardship* – safeguard the demand-driven, self-financed business model and ability to invest in innovation for the benefit of governments, the United Nations and other partners, and the people they serve.

#### *Realizing strategic objectives*

56. UNOPS employs systematic management approaches to drive and monitor realization of its strategic objectives.<sup>17</sup> The pivotal factor enabling achievements during next four years, however, will be leadership and principled performance on the part of UNOPS managers and personnel. People across the organization, including senior leaders, must see beyond immediate operational requirements, take charge, and join forces – guided by their passion for their purpose and mission – to make UNOPS a known and recognized resource that enables partners, helps people and supports countries.

57. The strategic goals provide a mutually reinforcing framework to drive realization of the UNOPS mission, vision and purpose. Chapters II and III, below, describe its ambitions for the next four years:

- (a) What UNOPS, guided by its three contributions goals, aims to achieve, including a differentiated account of its direct and indirect contributions to operational results; and
- (b) How UNOPS, guided by its four management goals, will drive management reform and innovation to adapt its institutional fit for purpose, embedding information technology to strengthen its delivery platform.

## **II. What UNOPS aspires to do: expertise, focus, and value**

### **A. The mandate: services, expertise and partners**

#### *Legislative basis for contributions*

58. UNOPS is an operational resource for Member States and the Secretary-General; its legislative basis for contributions is established through resolutions and decisions.<sup>18</sup> Over the years, Member States have provided UNOPS with a mandate to expand implementation capacity across peace and security, humanitarian and development efforts, through:

- (a) Efficient management support services;
- (b) Effective specialized technical expertise, including for capacity development; and
- (c) Support to expand the pool and effect of resources for the 2030 Agenda.

59. As a demand-driven and self-financed United Nations organization, UNOPS partners with governments, the United Nations system and other partners, including intergovernmental

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<sup>17</sup> Annex I

<sup>18</sup> Annex I

institutions, international and regional financing institutions, foundations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

#### *Flexible and modular project services*

60. The UNOPS value proposition is grounded in its flexible, modular project services. Its service lines comprise: infrastructure, procurement, project management, financial management and human resources. UNOPS also provides other management services, including information and communications technology support services, and has developed specialized delivery modalities, such as global shared services, and secretariat services for international initiatives.

#### *Quality through certified functional service lines*

61. Over the past decade UNOPS has optimized the quality of its management system and functional service lines based on certification against international standards.<sup>19</sup> It has adopted best practices and embedded sustainable implementation approaches, based on lessons learned. The Global Reporting Initiative is the framework for UNOPS annual reporting.

62. Organizational excellence, like sustainable development, is not a destination. It is a journey in which knowledge and technology are adapted continuously, and multiple interests, components and efforts must come together to achieve desired outcomes. UNOPS works constantly to optimize its enabling capabilities.

63. Since 2013, UNOPS has implemented a new enterprise resource planning system and strengthened its capability to deliver global shared services. Recently, it established a standards management framework comprising tailored internal technical guidance and tools, including for embedding sustainable implementation approaches.

64. In 2017, the UNOPS management system was recertified against the ISO 9001 standard for quality management, and an external assessment confirmed that its organizational excellence had increased since the first assessment in 2013.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Integration of knowledge and expertise through service types*

65. Across the five service lines, the value proposition spans three types of services, namely, implementation, transactional and advisory. These are a natural progression of the UNOPS implementation mandate and expertise, which have been at the heart of its value proposition since 2012.<sup>21</sup> Annex II provides definitions and details on the nature of the service types, including how they can be bundled for integrated service offerings and specialized technical assistance.

66. UNOPS expertise and services offerings are flexible and modular. They can be deployed as self-standing offerings in response to specific demand or as integrated service offerings. Through early engagement with partners higher up in the decision-making process, UNOPS technical expertise can be applied to identifying solutions for people's context-specific needs and countries' achievement of global goals.

#### *Partners' demand and response to the UNOPS value proposition*

67. Partners recognize the advantage of the flexible, modular project services and the agile business-to-business value proposition, describing UNOPS as "efficient, flexible, and professional".<sup>22</sup>

68. They indicate future demand for all service lines and types. At 40 per cent, the net promoter score – likelihood of recommending UNOPS services to others – is high when compared to industry benchmarks, where 30 per cent and above is considered excellent.<sup>23</sup>

69. Efforts to improve the UNOPS platform for local and global delivery of management support services are increasingly recognized by Member States and United Nations system partners. In 2013, the Executive Board called on entities of the system to seek efficiency gains through greater collaboration with UNOPS.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Annex II

<sup>20</sup> Annex III

<sup>21</sup> DP/OPS/2012/7

<sup>22</sup> UNOPS partner survey, 2016

<sup>23</sup> Annex I

<sup>24</sup> Decision 2013/23

70. In 2015, the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations recognized the value of UNOPS in support services to peacekeeping operations;<sup>25</sup> in 2016, a study by the United Nations Development Group affirmed UNOPS to be the United Nations entity with the competencies to provide management focus, skill-sets and systems for high-quality support services;<sup>26</sup> and in 2017, a study by the Centre on International Cooperation reiterated those conclusions.<sup>27</sup>

71. As with the continued advancement and sophistication of UNOPS expertise, its ambitions for the next four years stem from its commitment to the Charter and its pursuit of excellence. The solid foundation of UNOPS management support services remains the bedrock for delivering on its implementation mandate and its ability to expand partners' implementation capacity.

## **B. Operational ambitions for 2018-2021: a known and recognized resource**

### *Ambitions for contribution of value*

72. The ambition of UNOPS is to continue delivering high-quality services and solutions to partners, thus becoming a more widely known and recognized resource for Member States and the Secretary-General, enabling partners, helping people and supporting countries. Its three contribution goals express its value proposition and commitment; they will focus efforts and frame how UNOPS will differentiate and expand the value it adds.

73. UNOPS is committed to *enabling partners* to do more with less through *efficient management support services*, delivered locally or as global shared services. It will strive to:

- (a) *Be known* by all relevant stakeholders as an excellent, efficient, and service-oriented strategic partner, providing long-term value for money through integrated service offerings and enabling partners to do more, better, with less effort.
- (b) *Be recognized* in the United Nations system and beyond as a reliable partner for shared services, with the speed and flexibility needed for operations in the most challenging conditions; and
- (c) *Be a resource* for the Secretary-General's vision of an efficient, field-focused United Nations.

74. UNOPS is committed to *helping people* achieve individual, local, national and global objectives through *effective specialized technical expertise* grounded in international norms and standards. It will strive to:

- (a) *Be known* for tangible context-specific contributions made towards countries' achievement of a number of the global goals, including combating climate change;
- (b) *Be recognized* as countries' strategic United Nations partner and trusted advisor for effective procurement reforms and development of resilient, sustainable infrastructure; and
- (c) *Be a resource* for infrastructure and other specialized operational solutions connecting peace and security, humanitarian and development efforts, and advancing gender-sensitive approaches.

75. UNOPS is committed to *supporting countries in expanding the pool and effect of resources* available to achieve the 2030 Agenda. It will strive to:

- (a) *Be known* for its aptitude to support effective use of national resources and leverage international public financing, including official development assistance, as a catalyst for other development financing;
- (b) *Be recognized* as a United Nations partner unblocking impediments to bringing private capital into the service of sustainable development; and
- (c) *Be a resource* for innovative funding approaches, including social impact investment, crowdfunding and other new platforms.

76. Over the next four years UNOPS will rally its people behind its ambition to become a known and recognized resource for Member States and the Secretary-General. It will invest in building

<sup>25</sup> A/70/95-S/2015/446, paragraph 224

<sup>26</sup> 'Constraints Analysis for Common UN Business Operations at the Country Level', New York, May 2016.

<sup>27</sup> 'Restructuring the UN Secretariat to strengthen preventative diplomacy and peace operations', New York, Centre on International Cooperation, February 2017, p. 32

organizational capabilities to increase the indirect and direct value it contributes to expanding implementation capacity to address people's needs and countries' achievement of the goals.

### **C. Accountability for operational value: direct and indirect effect**

#### *The UNOPS role in the 'overall value chain'*

77. UNOPS focuses its reporting on results and impact, based on the Global Reporting Initiative. It is committed to systematically demonstrating, learning from, and enhancing how its contributions advance achievement of the goals and the Secretary-General's vision of prevention. UNOPS is committed to providing a transparent, differentiated account of the value it adds, and strengthening its institutional knowledge based on demand, experience and presence, including in fragile and conflict situations.

#### *Accounting for results*

78. UNOPS works continuously to improve its capability to account for results.<sup>28</sup> In line with its three contribution goals, UNOPS will provide a differentiated account, increasing the transparency of the value it contributes to different parts of the 'overall value chain'.<sup>29</sup> In communicating the value it adds, it will more clearly delineate between 'indirect' and 'direct' contributions made to expand partners' implementation capacity – between the 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' it enables – the different ways, in various 'results-chains', in which it advances achievement of objectives.

#### *The impact of efficiency*

79. Efficient use of finite resources will be essential in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda. To improve its operations, UNOPS will adapt its performance indicators for management support services to better demonstrate the impact of the speed and quality of its processes.<sup>30</sup> Investment in 'OneUNOPS', and analytics in areas with functional responsibility, will leverage that effort.

80. Preparedness for rapid response is imperative, particularly in fragile situations. The flexible UNOPS platform enables partners to rapidly scale up and down. UNOPS will harness its capabilities for anticipation and strategic engagement with partners to address their need for rapid response for prevention.

#### *The impact of effectiveness*

81. In 2017, UNOPS presented its first annual report compliant with the framework of the Global Reporting Initiative. UNOPS is the first United Nations organization to adopt the framework for its own reporting, which has helped it demonstrate the effect of sustainable implementation approaches, particularly when supplemented with project examples.

82. Over the next four years UNOPS will build on experience and further develop its systems to provide more systematic accounts of its contributions and their effectiveness. These accounts may relate to the context-specific risks people face, country types, and/or the goals countries are striving to achieve. Such efforts would traditionally be labelled 'monitoring and evaluation', but to ensure that they do not become detached from tacit operational knowledge, UNOPS will approach them in an integrated manner through the lens of knowledge management.

83. To achieve this, UNOPS will enhance its ability to strategically select and categorize the activities for which investment in substantiated accounts of effect will be prioritized. This will be especially important in relation to social impact investment.

#### *Enabling creation of value*

84. UNOPS will build its knowledge and people capabilities to engage more strategically – and earlier on in development processes – with partners higher up in the 'overall value-chain'. It will ensure that its value proposition becomes better known, and its technical expertise better applied to finding context-specific solutions that respond to people's needs and the goals countries strive to achieve, including through specialized, comprehensive implementation solutions.

85. To consolidate its position as a trusted advisor in mandated areas, UNOPS will develop strategic knowledge products for infrastructure, procurement and project management. These may

<sup>28</sup> Annex II

<sup>29</sup> Annex II

<sup>30</sup> DP/OPS/2016/5, paragraphs 57-60

be context-specific, focus on particular goals or targets, or address cross-cutting issues. UNOPS will continue to support introduction of United Nations contract modalities suitable for its operational environment, and will consider the feasibility of investing in strategic knowledge products in the areas of innovative financing; optimization of management support services and process outsourcing; and innovative application of information and communications technology for sustainable development.

86. In its effort to add value, UNOPS is expanding its ability to attract and mobilize alternative funding sources for the 2030 Agenda. To that end, it is piloting a set of new vehicles: (a) the crowd funding platform ‘Engage’; (b) the ‘Catalyst’ initiative, which supports innovation hubs for ‘green-technology’ start-ups; and (c) the initiative for social impact investment for infrastructure, which is testing the proof of concept for large-scale private investment in three initial focus areas: (i) *Affordable housing* – inclusive housing projects that provide adequate quality at affordable cost; (ii) *Renewable energy* – solar, wind, waste to energy, hydroelectric and geothermal projects; and (iii) *Water and sanitation* – urban or small-scale water and sanitation, and irrigation projects.

#### ***UNOPS in countries***

87. Member States and the Secretary-General agree that the United Nations system must be united in its thinking and actions at the country level, putting people at the centre of its work. It must attempt to break institutional incentives for zero-sum collaboration, and bring its parts together for a stronger whole, focused yet flexible and adaptable to the operational context of the 21st century. Coordination is a means, not an end in itself.

88. The quadrennial comprehensive policy review calls for a strengthened, empowered and impartial resident coordinator system to ensure in-country coordination and alignment with country needs, priorities and plans. A United Nations fit for purpose must collaborate based on expertise, recognizing the comparative advantages and organizational competencies of its parts, whether normative, specialized technical, or for management support services.

89. UNOPS has global reach.<sup>31</sup> There is strong demand for UNOPS presence in countries and operational contexts where people face challenges and risks central to the 2030 Agenda. The UNOPS in-country presence expands and contracts based on demand. In response to the call of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review for more transparency on the scope of field presence, UNOPS will establish clear, objective criteria for names of country and multi-country offices.

90. Over the next four years, UNOPS will strengthen institutional capabilities so that country directors can engage confidently in strategic dialogues for collaboration with governments and partners in the United Nations country teams, including through United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks or related instruments. It will focus on longer-term planning based on internal and external business intelligence, including data from the evolving discourse on country risks and fragility, and other sources informing country priorities, including nationally determined contributions.<sup>32</sup>

### **III. How UNOPS will manage: maintain institutional fit for purpose**

91. Focused on excellence, UNOPS continuously delivers better quality and maintains its institutional fit for purpose through simplification and empowerment. It pursues innovative solutions and invests in information and communications technology and other capabilities. It sees organizational fit for purpose as a continuous process of improving structures and processes to meet the expectations of partners and other stakeholders, and adjusting to changes in knowledge and technology, while nurturing an organizational culture that encourages its people to excel through principled performance. In recent years, UNOPS has improved its internal management arrangements while achieving significant management results.

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<sup>31</sup> Annex II

<sup>32</sup> Annex II

## **A. Governance, risk and compliance: simplify and empower**

### *External governance, and United Nations coordination and collaboration*

92. External governance is established through Member States' resolutions and decisions, including accountability to the Secretary-General.

93. Executive Board decision 2013/23 confirmed that UNOPS governance arrangements are consistent with those of other United Nations organizations.<sup>33</sup> In 2015, the Board established the UNOPS Audit Advisory Committee with terms of reference comparable to those of other audit advisory committees within its purview.<sup>34</sup>

94. In early 2016, the UNOPS Executive Director was formally admitted as a full and equal member of the Chief Executives Board. UNOPS is a strong proponent of the common principles that guide United Nations system collaboration in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including its emphasis on country-led, evidence-based and results-focused approaches, the prominence of expertise over exclusivity, and the need to ensure appropriate arrangements for operational support and effective service delivery.

95. UNOPS will continue to engage in functional networks and working groups under the auspices of the High-level Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and the United Nations Development Group. As a self-financed organization, UNOPS will carefully consider how and in which forums its participation can add most value to the system. This will encompass targeted efforts to engage with the United Nations Secretariat in support of the Secretary-General's vision and priorities.

96. UNOPS will continue to engage with its United Nations partners for joint strategic initiatives and realization of collaborative advantages, noting the 'common approach' agreed between UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women.

### *Internal governance, and management coordination and collaboration*

97. Internal governance concerns the totality of rules, processes and practices that direct and control UNOPS, involving the interplay of organizational culture, structure and policy: how decisions are made, performance ensured, risks managed, and compliance assured at all levels of the organization. Annex III provides an overview of UNOPS management coordination and collaboration structures.

98. UNOPS has reviewed its internal governance structure and strengthened its risk management for acceptance and assurance of projects. To simplify and empower its operations, it is adjusting its internal structures and reducing the number and volume of internal policies, while ensuring that its processes are aligned and supported by readily available, up-to-date guidance.

### *Governance, risk and compliance*

99. UNOPS is committed to organizational excellence, accountability and transparency, and its management coordination and collaboration structures provide an intuitive overall framework. Nevertheless, it continuously seeks to improve internal governance and operations. These ambitions are pursued under the auspices of its governance, risk and compliance initiative, the organizational excellence model being the overall strategic reference point.

100. The objective of the initiative is to "simplify the way we work and empower the organization, allowing clarity in roles, responsibilities and tasks, as well as facilitating stronger leadership". Annex II provides further details on how this initiative, which targets the three interrelated aspects of organizational development – culture, structures and policies – will simplify the work and empower the organization.

### *Information and communications technology*

101. The UNOPS investment in a new and agile enterprise resource planning system, together with customized, specialized solutions (collectively referred to as 'OneUNOPS'), is its largest internal innovation project to date. It involves a complete overhaul of UNOPS information and

<sup>33</sup> DP/OPS/2013/3, paragraph 15

<sup>34</sup> Decisions 2015/4 and 2015/12

communication technology infrastructure and systems, and will have a transformational effect on the organization for years to come.

102. ‘OneUNOPS’ is a platform for organization-wide efficiency, control, and business intelligence, offering an integrated solution for core business processes and management information to ensure speed and compliance. It enables a broader offering of global shared services, facilitating the efficient, effective delivery of management support services. Realization of its full potential will require cross-functional collaboration. UNOPS will invest in information and communication technology capabilities to strengthen its delivery platform, leverage innovation at the country level, and differentiate between the solutions it offers.<sup>35</sup>

## **B. Management ambitions for 2018-2021: quality and principled performance**

### ***Drive quality and principled performance through balanced performance management***

103. Four management goals express the ambition for organizational excellence, quality and principled performance. They frame how the performance perspectives of *partners*, *people*, *processes*, and *finance* will drive its management reform and innovation agenda.

104. Past performance against the goals has ensured a strong foundation for strategy execution. Personnel engagement and partners’ net promoter scores have exceeded external benchmarks; demand has continued increase; solid financial performance has been ensured; and the enterprise resource planning solution provides for optimization of processes and the global delivery platform.

105. Each of the four goals is supplemented with three distinct drivers, which are in turn operationalized through several internal initiatives. Annex III lists 56 new or existing initiatives selected for further deployment over the planning period. Some of these are geared to fast-track the achievement of gender balance throughout the organization. High-level performance indicators for each goal are stipulated in the UNOPS budget estimates for the biennium 2018-2019.<sup>36</sup>

106. The drivers of *partner value* are: (a) manage partner value; (b) partner for knowledge and effect; and (c) communicate contribution of value.

107. The drivers of *people excellence* are: (a) embrace a culture founded in United Nations values and principles; (b) attract, recognize and develop talent; and (c) reinforce leadership.

108. The drivers of *process excellence* are: (a) manage efficiency and consistency; (b) benchmark performance; and (c) innovate services and delivery platform.

109. The drivers for *financial stewardship* are: (a) manage growth and delivery; (b) attribute costs to value; and (c) invest in knowledge and innovation.

### ***Balanced corporate performance management***

110. UNOPS will adjust its balanced scorecard and performance dashboards to facilitate transparency, management oversight and accountability at all levels. This will reduce the need for manual reporting requirements; draw on the enhanced systems capabilities for real-time performance information; and include a more balanced set of performance indicators.

111. In 2017, UNOPS launched its internal quarterly business review. This forum will be a central vehicle for senior management to assess collective performance, review and align mutual priorities, and advise executives on measures for course correction, including to mitigate strategic risks and strengthen capabilities in the deployment of initiatives.

## **C. Management reform and innovation: develop, enhance and strengthen**

112. For any organization, ensuring institutional fit for purpose is a process of continuous improvement and innovation, building internal capabilities in response to changes in the external environment, and learning from experience.

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<sup>35</sup> Annex III

<sup>36</sup> DP/OPS/2017/6

### ***Organizational excellence***

113. In 2017, UNOPS commissioned an external excellence assessment to take stock of its performance against the internationally recognized model for organizational excellence it adopted in 2013.<sup>37</sup> The model has been a strategic reference point in the holistic approach to excellence.

114. The assessors engaged and consulted with more than 120 UNOPS personnel representing offices around the world. Their conclusions, summarized in annex III, provided evidence of significant progress since the first assessment in 2013, and highlighted focus areas that could expedite the trajectory towards organizational excellence.

115. In relation to strategic change management and deployment of initiatives, the assessors urged: (a) strong focus on a few vital changes in support of new strategic ambitions, (i) strategic engagement with partners, and (ii) social impact investment; and (b) continued focus on initiatives already launched, to ensure consistent deployment throughout the organization.

### ***Focused improvement and building of institutional capabilities***

116. The UNOPS agenda for management reform and innovation, outlined below, will form the basis for internal business strategies and work plans, complementing and reshaping initiatives already launched to develop, enhance and strengthen its institutional fit for purpose.

117. *To enable partners to do more with less through efficient management support services:*

- (a) *Develop* a cohesive suite of management support services as integrated offerings for partners in the United Nations and beyond, supported by arrangements for knowledge, production and quality management;
- (b) *Enhance* substantiated positioning of service excellence and ability to benchmark service quality, including speed and compliance of processes; and
- (c) *Strengthen* service delivery based on information technology, including the use of secure mobile technology for improved client-management interface.

118. *To help people achieve objectives through effective specialized technical expertise:*

- (a) *Develop* strategic knowledge products and examples of specialized solutions to address context-specific needs and support countries' achievement of global goals, including by leveraging information technology;
- (b) *Enhance* arrangements for systematic, organization-wide knowledge management, including strategic and tactical results reporting on different types of projects; and
- (c) *Strengthen* institutional capacity for: (i) strategic dialogue with governments, the United Nations and other partners, and coordinated engagement at the country level; and (ii) innovation based on technical expertise and capacity for design, transfer and adaptation of specialized context-specific solutions, including advancement of gender-sensitive approaches.

119. *To support countries in expanding the pool and effect of resources:*

- (a) *Develop* and establish solid structures and procedures for governance and management of risks associated with the mobilization of new and innovative funding, including from the private sector;
- (b) *Enhance* institutional capacity and competencies for engaging in innovative funding approaches, including strategic financing, identification of social impact investment projects, the technical expertise and internal enabling structures to support delivery; and
- (c) *Strengthen* and innovate the use of information technology for transparency and real-time stakeholder communication on project progress and traceability.

120. To realize these ambitions, UNOPS will focus strategic investments on core capabilities for leadership, knowledge management, and information and communication technology. It will move forward boldly, based on the solid foundations it has laid. It will pace itself based on its ability to invest and align people and systems in efforts that must permeate and embrace the entire organization.

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<sup>37</sup> DP/OPS/2013/3, paragraph 63