United Nations system

Chief Executives Board
for Coordination

Report of the High-level Committee on Programmes
at its forty-second session

(virtual meeting, 5 and 6 October 2021)

I. Introduction

1. The High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) held its forty-second session in a virtual format on 5 and 6 October 2021. The agenda of the session and the list of participants are contained in annexes I and II, respectively, to the present report.

2. In opening the session, the Chair of the Committee, Director-General of the International Labour Organization, Guy Ryder, welcomed HLCP members and guests. The Chair presented the agenda for approval. The first day of the session would focus on considering a proposal on the Committee's strategic direction and high-level priorities building on a discussion held at the forty-first session of HLCP in March 2021. On the second day, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) would provide an update on the work plan of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI), as well as highlight potential future activities in the context of the soon-to-be adopted UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI and the Committee's future areas of the work. The Committee would also consider the achievements and possible renewal of the mandate of the HLCP Inequalities Task Team, led jointly by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Furthermore, members would be updated on progress achieved in and future plans for the pilot cross-pillar predictive analytics project in the Sahel, initiated and led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Committee would additionally approve its updated terms of reference and operating modalities, and Phase II of the Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System (2020-2030), as well as take note of progress on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

II. HLCP future areas of work

3. In introducing the item on future areas of work of HLCP, the Chair indicated that the recently released report by the Secretary-General entitled "Our Common Agenda" provided important context for the Committee's deliberations. He referenced a quote by the Secretary-General that "Our Common Agenda" was "above all an agenda of action, designed to strengthen and accelerate multilateral cooperation – particularly around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development – and make a tangible difference to people's lives",[1] emphasizing that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and "Our Common Agenda" were complementary and mutually reinforcing. The Chair noted that throughout the Secretary-General's proposal to the General Assembly the United Nations system was repeatedly called upon to act: to deepen solidarity, to deliver on gender equality, to better engage youth, to "think for the longer term", and to better anticipate and respond to risks and global crises. The Chair observed that all HLCP member organizations could rally behind the Secretary-General's priorities and contribute to their realization, individually in line with their mandates, but also through integrated, collective, coherent effort across the United Nations system.

4. The Chair recalled the initial discussion on the Committee's strategic purpose at the forty-first session of HLCP in March 2021. At the time, members had looked at a range of possible themes and entry points where HLCP could contribute in support of the Decade of Action for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in anticipation of the articulation of the Secretary-General's vision for "Our Common Agenda". The Committee had pinpointed some critical conceptual issues and identified an overarching architecture to frame its future work in a way that was ambitious and supportive to the broader needs of the system. At the conclusion of the discussion, members agreed to further examine and unpack those issues at the Committee's forty-second session and looked to the Chair to present a vision for the strategic purpose and priorities of HLCP, oriented within the outcome of Member States' deliberations on "Our Common Agenda".

5. Responding to that decision, the Chair's paper on HLCP future areas of work, presented for members' consideration at this session, put forward a strategic narrative with three thematic pillars that drew on suggestions from the March 2021 HLCP discussion, the objectives of the Decade of Action and the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda" report. It identified a number of entry points to which HLCP could meaningfully contribute, with the aim that it would help organize the Committee's work over the next two to three years, utilizing the core strengths and functions of HLCP, and supporting the Secretary-General and CEB. The Chair stressed that, as a mechanism for policy coordination and coherence which – uniquely – reached virtually all corners of the United Nations system, HLCP members had a shared responsibility to support the realization of key elements of "Our Common Agenda" and to bring much-needed impetus to the Decade of Action.

6. The HLCP Secretary, Maaike Jansen, provided more detail on the context and process to develop the Chair's paper, which was the basis for this session's discussion of the Committee's strategic direction. She recalled the survey and interviews on the Committee's operating modalities and future areas of work that had been conducted in the lead-up to the forty-first session, and cited the break-out discussions organized around four clusters: the response to rapid technological change; structural transformation to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; cross-pillar issues; and the future of multilateralism. Several possible areas of engagement had emerged from the Committee's deliberations, but HLCP decided to wait to take a final decision until after the release of the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda" report to ensure that the Committee's work would be responsive to his vision.

7. Turning to the Chair's paper subsequently developed for the forty-second session of HLCP with the support of the United Nations University (UNU) Centre for Policy Research, the Secretary recognized the critical contribution of the UNU team in applying a Common Agenda "lens" to the March 2021 HLCP discussion and emphasizing points of connection for the

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[1] Secretary-General's remarks to the General Assembly presenting "Our Common Agenda" (https://www.un.org/sg/en/node/258971)

Committee's consideration at the current meeting. The Secretary recognized the constructive online feedback on the Chair's paper from UNCTAD and UN-Women and invited reactions from the assembled members on the overarching narrative and related initiatives with a view to identifying activities that fit strategically and were most appropriate for the Committee to take forward.[2]

8. The Chair added his appreciation to UNU Rector David M. Malone for making the New York policy research team available to help deliver the strategic thought-piece to aid in shaping and provoking discussion during the Committee's deliberations on its future strategic directions. Observing that it was a high-quality paper that he fully supported, the Chair invited David Passarelli, Executive Director, UNU Centre for Policy Research, to introduce it.

9. Mr. Passarelli observed that the paper aimed to bring into conversation the ideas generated from within HLCP with those found in "Our Common Agenda", noting that while the headings in the Chair's paper evoked themes in the Secretary-General's report, many of the foundational ideas were drawn from the Committee's March 2021 deliberations and the consultative process that preceded that forty-first session. These included the sentiment that the COVID-19 recovery was as an opportunity to address and push forward urgently needed structural transformations and the widely shared view that the concept of "a new social contract" could help generate new momentum for the structural transformations previously discussed by the Committee. Additionally, he recalled that the Committee had been of the view that (a) bold ideas were needed to adapt and adjust multilateralism as conceived of and practiced today; and (b) the United Nations badly needed to reach individuals and communities far removed from the traditional centres of power, policy and debate, notably traditionally excluded and marginalized groups – the Committee had defined this priority as "bringing the United Nations from the inside to the outside".

10. Mr. Passarelli observed that "Our Common Agenda" diagnosed many of the same ailments and some of the same remedies that HLCP had in March. Both shared a concern over growing nationalism, perceptions of weakening solidarity, and rapid climate and environmental change that put at risk current and future generations. Both looked to renewed investments in social protection, trust, networks, and extending the focus of the leave-no-one-behind agenda to future generations as solutions. He stressed that broad investments in solidarity, trust, networks, and global public goods could only support the realization of the SDGs in this pivotal Decade of Action.

11. The Chair's paper sought to frame HLCP as an enabling force for the transformative ideas in "Our Common Agenda". By contributing analytical capacity, networks, and subject matter expertise, the HLCP could help turn ideas into actions. The three-pillar framing – duties to the future, new global public goods, and networked and inclusive governance – would signal the Committee's investment in areas of immediate relevance and would help communicate the work of HLCP to key stakeholders. Under that framing, a number of possible activities were proposed that aligned with HLCP's current workstreams. Concluding, Mr. Passarelli observed that the value of HLCP could be judged at least in part on its ability to inject expert advice and link up to efforts in other parts of the United Nations system, improving overall coherence.

12. Thanking Mr. Passarelli, the Chair invited the Committee to consider the overarching narrative and proposed thematic pillars in terms of strategic fit and encouraged members to discuss the

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[2] Items best suited to be addressed by HLCP are: relevant across the United Nations system; not duplicative of other processes; forward-looking; demand-driven; and responsive to feedback from the United Nations system, including the field.

potential value to the United Nations system of the individual initiatives proposed in the paper or suggest any additional initiatives that could be pursued within the overarching narrative.

13. In the subsequent discussion, the Committee welcomed the Chair's paper and expressed support for the integrated narrative and its three pillars, which were seen as an effective organizing principle for the future work of HLCP. Members felt the framework was broad enough to build upon existing HLCP efforts in support of CEB, and flexible enough to allow HLCP to respond to new and emerging challenges. The three themes were recognized to be qualitatively different, though interconnected, and to require cross-fertilization. Some saw global public goods and inclusive networked governance supporting an overarching strategic pillar on duties to the future.

14. Members felt the framing reflected well ideas expressed during the forty-first session of HLCP and was aligned with and supportive of "Our Common Agenda". Yet it was stressed that the Committee's work needed to be guided by the priorities of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the COVID-19 recovery. The proposal provided opportunities for organizations across the United Nations system to collaborate, as well as to build on and complement the work of other inter-agency groups. Throughout the discussion, members signalled their interest to contribute to particular pillars and engage in specific initiatives proposed in the Chair's paper, and offered expertise, experience and substantive input.

15. Many members felt that global challenges including climate change, growing inequalities, pandemic preparedness, and cyber and digitalization gaps (including the gender digital divide) and threats should feature prominently across the three pillars, as should the role of science and technology in addressing such challenges. In this respect, existing gaps in understanding of and investment in research and data on the lasting, cumulative, compounding impacts of these global challenges on the multiple vulnerabilities and needs of affected communities should be recognized. It was also stressed that partnerships were key to improving the status quo. It was observed that a more prospective effort to incorporate risk-sensitive approaches to development – from the angle of prevention or preparedness – would provide a good understanding of the conditions that increased the vulnerability of human beings to different types of hazard, rather than to continue the accumulation of risk, making future disasters even more complex.

16. Members saw a variety of entry points across the strategic narrative for each of the three current HLCP mechanisms – the Foresight Network, Inter-agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence, and the Inequalities Task Team. The need to consider how to operationalize the established priorities in all three pillars was stressed. As a first step, ideas presented in the Chair's paper should be elaborated and broken down into more concrete and focused work processes.

Pillar 1: Duties to the future

17. The thematic pillar on duties to the future attracted considerable interest and support among members. Several stressed that explicit attention needed to be paid to human rights in this context. The concept of solidarity should also be integrated in this work. Strategic foresight, scenario planning and predictive analytics could be utilized to contribute to reflections on future generations, and a role for the HLCP Foresight Network was foreseen in this context. It was also observed that the Inequalities Task Team would be well-placed to contribute to the work on intergenerational equity, if its mandate were to be renewed by HLCP.

18. It was stressed that the language was important, and that HLCP had to be careful not to oversimplify the concept of intergenerational equity to only be about youth (a single

constituency among many others), or to present "duties to the future" as a dichotomy between generations. Rather, it needed to encompass the various constituencies currently alive, including older persons, as well as generations yet to come, and to balance the rights and aspirations of current and future generations, including young people. Additionally, it was stressed that concern for future generations must not detract from efforts to solve problems of discrimination due to race, gender and class now or in the future, as addressing discrimination in the present was a necessary precondition for improving equality in the future. Disaggregated measures needed to be used across time to better cater to the needs of groups in the present and groups in the future. It was noted that forcibly displaced and stateless people should be included among the vulnerable groups in this analysis.

19. Ultimately, the term "intergenerational equity" was felt to provide the proper framing for this work, and the Committee agreed on the importance of unpacking it as a concept and discussing what constituted the key elements of future well-being that needed to be attended today. Members identified a range of duties, including reducing inequalities, combating climate change, preserving the environment, safeguarding biodiversity, protecting the oceans, and investing in a healthy planet and in the rights of non-human species and nature. The Stockholm +50 Conference (June 2022) would provide important context and direction for work under this pillar. Economic transformation and debt were also identified as vital components of the intergenerational equity discussion.

20. With respect to the new social contract, attention needed to be paid to addressing inequalities, economic insecurity, trust and promoting social cohesion. The possibility for HLCP to contribute to future policy conceptualization to reduce inequalities and support the new social contract was highlighted. More specifically, it was suggested that the Committee could look at different aspects of social protection and different levels of intervention, with a view to translating the vision put forward in "Our Common Agenda" into a more detailed programmatic framework. Structural transformation was critical given the changes that needed to be made to fulfil the duties to the future. It was emphasized that the economic perspective, including with respect to issues of production limitations, productivity and trade, would have to be fleshed out in order to determine the economic underpinning of the social contract, as it was not a question of redistribution and taxation alone. It was about thinking through what political economy considerations could facilitate a massive new investment in social protection and how to make these investments sustainable over time. In particular, it was suggested that emphasis should be placed on innovative green investment. The Secretary-General's Policy Brief on Investing in Jobs and Social Protection for Poverty Eradication and a Sustainable Recovery [3] and the United Nations Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection, led by ILO, were highlighted as very relevant for this pillar, pointing again to the need for HLCP to properly connect with ongoing initiatives.

21. In terms of proposed actions set out for discussion in the Chair's paper, hope was expressed that initiatives pursued under this theme could go beyond the analysis and distillation of best practices. UNFPA offered to co-lead, together with interested members, the development of an analytical paper on age-specific inequalities and the intergenerational benefits of universal social protection, using disaggregated data, with illustrative examples. Some members supported pursuing the proposal to conduct an analytical study on the intergenerational benefits of universal social protection. An initiative to co-create a multi-sectoral framework to guide cross-temporal programming was also put forward.

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[3] https://unsdg.un.org/resources/secretary-generals-policy-brief-investing-jobs-and-social-protection-poverty-eradication

<u>Pillar 2: New global public goods</u>

22. The pillar on new global public goods was welcomed and recognized as central to "Our Common Agenda" and also very relevant and appropriate for engagement by HLCP. It was seen as important to understand how the attributes of global public goods as defined in the paper would evolve over time. Members variously identified culture, health, and science as possible topics to explore from a global public goods perspective. Some felt that the peace and security or prevention angle could be enhanced. It was further observed that emphasizing resilience in this pillar could help to move the work in a direction that would meaningfully serve the objectives of "Our Common Agenda".

23. Under this pillar of work, it was suggested that HLCP could play a role in supporting the existing legal framework on global public goods, for example around areas of climate and biodiversity. Relatedly, the point was made that, due to privatization, health, education, housing, and water and sanitation – which are supposed to be human rights – had become commodities rather than "public goods" and that the United Nations needed to push back against this trend because it was inconsistent with its norms and standards.

24. In particular, framing data as a global public good was widely supported. Data was seen to have economic value, but also social value, for example in such areas as health and climate. UNCTAD's recent Digital Economy Report on cross-border data flows and development[4] was brought to the Committee's attention. The report stated that the gains from data were highly unequal as a consequence of the digital divide and that, unless there was appropriate data governance and data-sharing, it would be difficult to create social value. In this vein, it was proposed that HLCP examine the need for a new global governance approach to data flows supported by the United Nations to ensure that data worked for people – especially in developing countries – and the planet and supported sustainable development. It was pointed out that the 2021 World Development Report on data for better lives[5] by the World Bank highlighted similar concerns. This report called for a new social contract for data that enabled the use and reuse of data to create economic and social value and promote equitable opportunities to benefit from data.

25. In deliberating on the proposal for a new global governance approach for data, members observed there were many ongoing processes considering regulation of the collection and use of data, as well as examining the social, economic and environmental impacts, and implications for human rights, including those related to privacy. The potential value of HLCP conducting a scanning of international data governance processes as a contribution to the system's understanding and organizing of ongoing efforts was highlighted. The effort could include identifying present data governance bodies both within and outside the United Nations, looking at gaps that exist, and pinpointing capacities that would be needed in the United Nations system to carry forward any data governance recommendations, with the intent to feed the findings into the Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Board on global public goods, the proposed Global Digital Compact and other follow-up mechanisms of "Our Common Agenda", as well as to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was agreed that any work HLCP was to undertake in this area should be compatible with and add value to ongoing efforts across the system, without duplication and in support of greater coherence and advancing the common purposes of the 2030 Agenda and "Our Common Agenda", and therefore close consultation with relevant actors would be imperative. Over the course of the discussion, several entities were identified as having an important role in this effort, including the Committee of Chief

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[4] See https://unctad.org/webflyer/digital-economy-report-2021
[5] See https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2021

Statisticians of the United Nations System, UNCTAD, DESA, the World Bank, EOSG, and the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology.

Pillar 3: Networked and inclusive governance

26. Although there was less discussion on this pillar as compared with the first two pillars, networked and inclusive governance was understood to be an inherent and important part of HLCP's strategic narrative. While recognizing that the United Nations was a Member States-centered system, members felt the inclusion of a range of stakeholders in intergovernmental bodies was important, as laid out in the "Our Common Agenda" report. More broadly, networked and inclusive governance was a means to advance global development objectives by utilizing the comparative advantage of allied actors in an effort to meet the SDGs. It was observed that inclusive governance should be about reaching out and reaching down to those who do not have power.

27. Ongoing work across the United Nations system on engaging local and regional governments in intergovernmental and national planning processes could be drawn upon within this thematic pillar. At the same time, it was noted that there were population groups that were not represented through governments, such as indigenous people or stateless people, which should be considered in efforts to help advance networked governance.

28. It was suggested that both the United Nations Global Compact and the United Nations Office for Partnerships could be better leveraged to engage companies in United Nations processes. On the other hand, the need to acknowledge power imbalances between private sector and other stakeholders was stressed. Different levels and types of accountabilities of the different partners should be recognized.

29. Members, including ITU, DESA, EOSG and UN Habitat, saw value in moving forward to work on harnessing stakeholder engagement and participatory approaches as foreseen under this pillar. A proposal was made to conduct a system-wide analysis and assessment of good practices for effective engagement of stakeholders in intergovernmental bodies to better understand the landscape and options, including formal and informal non-governmental, civil society and community engagement. Also suggested as a possible activity was a mapping and analysis of United Nations-hosted or -coordinated multi-stakeholder initiatives, capturing, e.g., governance and accountability models, success factors, challenges, best practices, tools, etc., in a "playbook" with a view to enhance their effectiveness, scale and impact. Moreover, a role for HLCP was seen in supporting the establishment of civil society focal points within United Nations system organizations, as envisioned by "Our Common Agenda", and leveraging them to open space and deepen civil society's engagement across the system.

30. Reflecting on the rich discussion, Mr. Passarelli thanked members for their constructive engagement and for welcoming the three-pillar framing proposed in the Chair's paper. He recognized the appetite of the Committee to support "Our Common Agenda" in a way that was helpful and which complemented other United Nations system efforts. Recalling that one goal of the Chair's paper was to inspire leadership and collaboration across HLCP, he celebrated the enthusiastic discussion and the many offers to engage in and take forward initiatives proposed in the paper, as well as suggestions for additional activities that supported the framework.

31. In concluding the session, the Chair expressed appreciation to members for their high-quality substantive debate on the strategic direction of HLCP and their readiness to think and work together. He observed that there was strong consensus on the framing set out in the Chair's paper, including the three interlocking thematic pillars: duties to the future, new global public

goods, and networked and inclusive governance. The Committee had agreed that the framework represented an effective organizing principle for its future work that would allow HLCP to remain agile and responsive to challenges that emerged and lessons learned along the way. The Chair noted that the overall direction was relevant to all member entities, was important for the system's collective work, and built on the Committee's previous initiatives. Members had clearly appreciated the proposal's compatibility with the 2030 Agenda, the Decade of Action, and the Secretary-General's vision as laid out in "Our Common Agenda". There was also a strong recognition that the work of HLCP should support and advance other areas of activity across the United Nations system and be carefully orchestrated to avoid duplication and focused on where it could best add value.

32. In order to reach agreement on some initial concrete activities to pursue, the Chair laid out three specific actions that had gained support during the discussion, one under each pillar. With respect to the pillar on duties to the future, the conversation had led to the conclusion that "intergenerational equity" as a concept was worthy of deeper exploration from various angles, with a view to informing future analytical products, such as those proposed in the Chair's paper. Under the theme of new global public goods, he recalled that the issue of international data governance commanded significant attention among members, and, therefore, a good starting point would be for HLCP to scan relevant processes, to contribute to understanding this crowded and fragmented area of work and to promoting coherence across the tracks, in close consultation with relevant entities and mechanisms. On networked and inclusive governance, the Chair recalled that members felt there was merit in analyzing and learning from the variety of stakeholder engagement and participatory approaches used in different United Nations system entities. Recognizing that these were "broad brush" concepts, the Chair encouraged interested HLCP members to collaborate to develop more precise plans, with the support of the HLCP Secretariat.

33. The Committee supported the Chair's proposal. Accordingly, the Chair requested the Secretary to follow up with interested entities to move ahead in each area of work. The Chair underscored that the HLCP workstreams on artificial intelligence and inequalities would be important to draw upon under the just-agreed organizing framework for the Committee's work, promoting cross-fertilization. He also reiterated that the HLCP Foresight Network was well-placed to contribute under all three pillars, but foremost on intergenerational equity, and looked forward to the Network updating the Committee. The Chair intended to bring the conclusions of this discussion to the attention of the Secretary-General and CEB, to convey where the membership felt the Committee could most productively bring the weight and capacity of the full United Nations system together to help realize the Secretary-General's vision, also taking into consideration Member States' forthcoming reactions to the proposals in "Our Common Agenda".

Conclusion

34. **The Committee welcomed the Chair's paper on HLCP future areas of work as the basis for the Committee's strategic direction and agreed that the three thematic pillars represented an effective organizing principle for its work in the near to medium term. Members agreed to initially pursue one activity under each of the three pillars, namely: (i) exploring and unpacking the concept of "intergenerational equity" as a first step towards developing future analytical products, including a paper on age-specific inequalities and the intergenerational benefits of universal social protection, (ii) undertaking a scanning of processes related to international data governance as a contribution to the United Nations system's understanding of and promotion of coherence among ongoing efforts in this space, and (iii) analyzing and learning from the variety of**

community stakeholder engagement and participatory approaches used in different United Nations system entities.

III. Artificial intelligence

35. The Chair opened the item on artificial intelligence (AI) by noting that it could be a transformative technology with potential positive and negative impacts on people and planet, and that the growth and dependence on AI had only accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic had highlighted digital inequalities due to a lack of access to technologies as well as inequalities that were the result of technological change without guardrails, further emphasizing the importance of HLCP's work in this area. He also noted the links between AI and all three pillars of HLCP's future areas of work that the Committee had agreed to earlier in the session, as well as the "Our Common Agenda" report released by the Secretary-General.

36. The Chair recalled that the Committee had worked on AI since 2017, covering issues related to capacity development, such as the ITU-led development of a United Nations system-wide strategic approach and road map for supporting capacity development on artificial intelligence, as well as addressing the important normative questions of ethics, human rights and necessary guardrails, including through the system-wide input to the UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence Recommendation, tabled for adoption at UNESCO's General Conference in November 2021. As these issues were not separate but interrelated and required a cohesive approach, the Chair recalled the establishment of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence (IAWG-AI) to follow up on the Committee's work in an integrated manner, which was reflected in the IAWG-AI's terms of reference adopted intersessionally in March 2021. He expressed appreciation for the co-leads of the IAWG-AI, ITU and UNESCO, and thanked the 36 United Nations system entities that were members of the working group for their active contributions. He drew attention to the background paper prepared by the co-leads providing an update on the work of the IAWG-AI and its next steps.

37. HLCP members benefited from a presentation from the co-leads of the IAWG-AI, Mr. Preetam Maloor of ITU and Ms. Clare Stark of UNESCO. The co-leads outlined recent work of the Working Group, its growing membership, and its main objectives, as outlined in its terms of reference. They highlighted that, leveraging the findings of a gap analysis provided to the Committee, the IAWG-AI had identified an initial set of priority areas, establishing various workstreams with several United Nations system entities engaged in each. The current workstreams of the IAWG-AI included: strategic foresight on AI; AI research and analysis; AI readiness framework; AI ethics impact assessment; AI ethics observatory; AI ethics policy guidance for the United Nations system; AI guidelines and toolkit for small and medium enterprises (SMEs); AI procurement and deployment guidelines; AI and justice; and AI and education. The co-leads invited entities to participate in any of the workstreams and welcomed entities to propose additional workstreams if there was sufficient interest. In addition, the co-leads described how the various workstreams could contribute to the three pillars of HLCP's strategic narrative. The linkage in the Chair's paper on the impact of rapid technological change on inequality and groups that are left behind was also acknowledged by the co-leads.

38. Collaboration and co-creation with members of the Working Group was emphasized as key for the development and implementation of the workstreams. The co-leads additionally shared with the Committee the engagement of the Working Group with the HLCP Foresight Network, and both the Procurement Network and the Digital and Technology Network of the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM), the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, other inter-agency and multistakeholder mechanisms, and relevant external stakeholders. The Working Group was viewed as both a network of experts on AI issues within

the United Nations system, as well as a platform for system-wide engagement on AI and related technologies in the context of HLCP future areas of work in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and proposals in the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda" report. The co-leads also underscored the importance of coordinating and developing the workstreams in a cohesive manner addressing both the capacity development aspects of enabling the application of AI and facilitating the responsible development of AI through coherent normative guardrails, underpinned by human rights and ethics.

39. In the ensuing discussion, members welcomed the work of the IAWG-AI and its co-leads in the development of its workstreams to advance responsible development and use of AI within the United Nations system, which promoted the need to innovate and build capacity to use AI while ensuring necessary guardrails grounded in human rights and ethics. There was wide agreement that due diligence, human rights safeguards, and ethical frameworks were important given the risks associated with AI in the future, as well as harms that were happening in the present. There were concerns that technological transformation was outpacing norms, regulation and controls necessary to ensure that human rights were protected and that technology was used ethically. There were also significant concerns that AI was used to influence elections, suppress democratic processes, and amplify inequalities. There was broad agreement that technological transformation should benefit all people and support the realization of the SDGs, and that the normative dimension was an area of comparative advantage for the United Nations system and should remain a priority in the work on AI and related technologies.

40. Members reflected on the importance of the forthcoming UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, which provided a universal framework of values, principles and actions to guide Member States in the formulation of their legislation, policies or other instruments regarding AI, consistent with international law and which would not only protect but also promote human rights and human dignity. It was felt that the Recommendation, along with recent guidance offered by the Human Rights Council on technology and human rights, could form a basis for the United Nations system to ensure the development and use of AI that was ethical and in accordance with human rights principles, and to guide the United Nations system's own use and development of AI in a manner that was ethical, respected human rights and was reflective of United Nations values. Members welcomed the workstreams related to ethics and human rights and looked forward to opportunities for further implementation as these workstreams developed.

41. In addition to the normative dimension, members also emphasized the importance of harnessing AI within the United Nations system in an ethical manner. There was significant support for enhancing capacity development and innovation within the United Nations system to leverage AI across organizations, including the development of tools, frameworks, and methods to scale capacity development to strengthen United Nations system-wide capacity on AI, and tools that could support capacity development for Member States. The issue of data was also raised by members, given the dependence of AI on data, which was linked to efforts underway by the United Nations system to implement the System-wide Roadmap for Innovating United Nations Data and Statistics. There was additional interest expressed by members to join the Working Group to share information and to join specific workstreams on the application and use of AI in different settings. Members also encouraged the measurement of progress, including through key indicators, and additional workstreams. Additional information regarding each workstream was available through the co-leads and the online platform of the IAWG-AI.

42. Members appreciated the efforts of HLCP and the IAWG-AI to enable the collective inputs of the United Nations system to be synthesized as an input to the development of the Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, led by UNESCO, referring to it as a good example of concrete and effective joint contribution to intergovernmental processes. Members also noted the importance of continuing to leverage HLCP for collective inputs to intergovernmental initiatives related to AI, including for the follow up and the implementation of proposals contained in the "Our Common Agenda" report.

43. In wrapping up the discussion, the co-leads of IAWG-AI acknowledged the importance of normative processes and development and the need to institutionalize bringing the system together on these important developments. The co-leads also appreciated numerous entities expressing their desire to join the Working Group and specific workstreams and thanked members that had contributed to the Working Group and its workstreams. The Chair thanked Mr. Maloor and Ms. Stark for their leadership of the IAWG-AI and the efforts made to facilitate participatory and inclusive processes within the Working Group.

Conclusion

44. **The Committee took note of the Background Paper and requested the IAWG-AI to take into consideration the suggestions and comments made by the Committee as its work progressed.**

IV. Strengthening the United Nations system's impact and visibility on reducing inequalities and SDG10, in support of the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030

45. In his opening remarks, the Chair stressed that inequalities remained pervasive and had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, and it was central for the United Nations system to promote a more coordinated and integrated approach to combat this challenge. He noted that the 18-month workplan of the HLCP Inequalities Task Team[6] had come to an end, but addressing gender, racial, economic, and other inequalities remained fundamental to building trust and ensuring social protection, as called for in the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda". The Chair highlighted that the Task Team was prepared to continue to be a system-wide platform for engagement and coordination to integrate inequalities in the work of the Committee. He recognized the representatives of UN-Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for their leadership of this work over a number of years, thanked the 21 HLCP entities for their contributions to the Task Team, and invited the co-leads to present their report.

46. In her role as co-lead of the Inequalities Task Team, Aparna Mehrotra, the representative of UN-Women, underscored that inequalities was among the defining issues of our time, observing that the theme was very prominent in "Our Common Agenda". She made a case for the Committee's continued engagement in this area, noting that the COVID-19 pandemic had deepened inequalities and led to highly unequal policy responses. She highlighted the disparate impacts of the crisis, which should be of deep concern to each entity of the United Nations system. Providing evidence of inequalities, markers of disadvantages, and marginalization of women in employment, she cited statistics demonstrating the serious effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the inadequate attention to gender equality in social protection and labour market policies implemented globally to respond to the crisis. She informed that UN-Women had recently launched "Beyond COVID-19: A feminist plan for sustainability and social

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[6] See https://unsceb.org/inequalities-task-team

justice"[7] to promote a gender-responsive recovery, which complemented the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda" report. She stated that the Inequalities Task Team had been working over the past 18 months to give visibility to efforts to achieve SDG 10 and SDG 5, and there would be a need to continue operating in some form as inequalities were at the centre of the United Nations' efforts to support countries to get through the crisis, to recover, and to prevent future crises.

47. In his role as co-lead of the Inequalities Task Team, Craig Mokhiber, the representative of OHCHR, echoed the sentiment that inequalities represented one of the defining challenges of our time, breaching United Nations norms and standards, and undercutting peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights. The United Nations System Shared Framework for Action on Equality and Non-discrimination[8] was the system's answer, setting forth a system-wide approach to battling inequalities, with United Nations norms and standards as its basis, challenging destructive orthodoxies, and promoting social protection, labour rights, economic and social rights, anti-discrimination laws, fair and progressive taxation and fiscal policies, and gender equality. He recalled that HLCP had mandated the Inequalities Task Team to work for 18 months to act on this agenda, create a dedicated space for the United Nations work on inequalities, and make sure that SDG 10 on inequalities did not remain an orphan goal in the system. Mr. Mokhiber stated that the enthusiasm for the work had been strong, and more than 20 entities participated in the group.

48. The Task Team first convened in February 2020, held a virtual workshop a few weeks later, and then pursued a set of activities designed to strengthen United Nations leadership on inequalities, enhance the visibility of the issue and of the Shared Framework, and promote coordination within the system. Specifically, the Inequalities Task Team worked with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to disseminate the shared framework, along with a package of related materials, to all heads of entities and departments, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams; contributed to the Secretary-General's landmark 2020 Mandela Day speech "Tackling the Inequality Pandemic" and channelled these ideas into the Secretary-General's Common Agenda report drafting process; issued a policy brief on "COVID-19, inequalities, and building back better" and another on "Tackling inequalities in public service coverage for the rural poor"; engaged in the ECOSOC High-Level Political Forum preparatory process and convened a high-level panel event on "Building Back Fairer: Equality in a Post-Covid World"; and worked through meetings, workshops, and webinars to ensure a strong focus on inequalities in the United Nations initiative to promote transformative economies and its related United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) guidance materials. Work had been done to strengthen links to UNSDG, and an online space had been set up as a platform for the Inequalities Task Team to facilitate joint thinking and sharing of tools and methodologies.

49. The co-leads were convinced that this work had made a difference: pooling United Nations system expertise, raising the visibility of United Nations leadership on the equality agenda, and creating more space for work on inequalities within individual agencies. Moreover, the members of the Inequalities Task Team believed that it was essential that HLCP continue its focus on this critical issue in some form.

50. In the following discussion, the members of the Committee expressed appreciation for the Task Team's achievements in promoting greater system-wide coordination on inequalities and thanked UN-Women and OHCHR for their leadership. Several highlighted that the Task Team's

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[7] See https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/09/feminist-plan-for-sustainability-and-social-justice#view.
[8] https://unsceb.org/un-system-framework-action-equality

work was an important contribution to a critical, wide-ranging issue and contributed to supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It was foreseen that the Task Team could have a role to support some of the proposals in "Our Common Agenda", which identified inequalities as an overarching issue. Reflecting also on the rich discussion and positive feedback received on the Chair's paper on HLCP's future areas of work, the Committee also saw the potential for the Task Team to identify specific contributions to support HLCP's future areas of work, as inequalities was relevant to all three thematic pillars.

51. In this context, as well as considering the disruptive effects of COVID-19 and the pandemic's impact on reinforcing inequalities, members expressed support for extending the mandate of the Inequalities Task Team. Absent a single institutional home focused on addressing inequalities, the importance of continuing to bring the system together in a coordinated, coherent, collaborative and complementary manner to increase visibility and to make an impact in the fight against inequalities was recognized.

52. With respect to the HLCP priorities, members saw a natural fit between the competence of the Task Team and the first pillar on duties to the future. There was a suggestion to focus on the aspect of intergenerational equity, in particular linkages with social protection, as part of efforts to operationalize the new social contract. The Task Team could contribute to an analytical study on the intergenerational benefits to all population groups of social protection, as suggested in the Chair's paper, which would also support the proposals in "Our Common Agenda". Increased investments in, and financing and economic development for, a new social contract was another area that the Task Team could pursue. The potential for the Inequalities Task Team to contribute to the second pillar on global public goods, with regard to equal access to vaccines and to preventing future health crises, was also highlighted. Further, the Task Team could provide support to enhance networked and inclusive governance, the third pillar of HLCP's future area of work, based on its expertise. Beyond the HLCP narrative, it was observed that the Inequalities Task Team could also more broadly contribute to coordinating concrete actions that would fill specific gaps in the United Nations system's work on inequalities.

53. It would be important that the Inequalities Task Team work with UNSDG to review the operationalization of the shared framework on equality at the country level, with a focus on accelerating roll-out through Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams. Closing the digital divide and responding to rapid technological inequalities to achieve digital inclusion would be areas that would benefit from a system-wide perspective. There was broad agreement on the importance of addressing the effects of global climate change and disasters on inequalities; therefore, the Task Team should aim to support just transitions to environmental sustainability and provide support for those impacted by climate change and environmental degradation.

54. The Chair concluded the discussion by thanking the members for their valuable comments. He expressed his appreciation for the strong understanding and common perspective of the realities, the dangers, and the implications of inequalities as they existed and future trajectories unless something was done. Societies around the world were facing deeply entrenched, structural social injustice and current policy settings were making inequalities worse. Addressing inequalities was a fundamental contribution of the United Nations system towards realizing the 2030 Agenda and the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda". Given that reality, the Chair acknowledged the resounding agreement among members that work to combat inequalities had to continue. The Inequalities Task Team could serve as the specific point where the United Nations system would come together to redouble efforts to increase its effectiveness and impact.

55. With this in mind, he proposed that the Task Team, under the continued leadership of OHCHR and UN-Women, prepare a foundational and far-reaching reflection paper, which would serve as a background document to a resumed discussion at the forty-third session of HLCP on the United Nations system's efforts to combat inequalities. The intent would be to consider the state of inequalities in the world and determine what efforts needed to be stepped-up, refocused or redirected. Given the changes in recent years, the Chair noted that among the fundamental questions to be answered was to what extent did the Shared Framework on Equality remain fit for purpose in the current context, what needed to be done to improve or strengthen it, and what other steps should be taken to increase the United Nations impact, including in relation to the newly agreed HLCP priorities. The paper should also address practical questions and constraints such as resourcing.

56. In their closing remarks, the representatives of UN-Women and OHCHR appreciated the Committee's support to extend the mandate of this network of specialists on inequalities and endorsed the way forward as outlined by the Chair. The situation demanded the escalation of effort by the United Nations system to support normative coherence, as well as coherent action at country level. Time was right for a review of the Shared Framework. Looking ahead, the co-leads stressed the need to ensure that the Inequalities Task Team would be resourced properly to deliver effectively for HLCP and the broader system. Depending on the way forward, this could include securing even greater engagement from member entities in future activities and having their entity focal points work for the Inequalities Task Team integrated into their personal workplans.

Conclusion

57. **The Committee decided to take a fresh look at the topic of inequalities at its forty-third session in order to examine the United Nations system's work in the current global context, with a view to elevating engagement and ambition in supporting SDG 10 and SDG 5, as well as relevant aspects of HLCP's priority areas of work. HLCP requested the Inequalities Task Team, under the leadership of UN-Women and OHCHR, to prepare a foundational reflection paper to inform that discussion.**

V. Promoting innovation to enhance evidence-based support for sustainable development and the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030: Predictive analytics pilot

58. In his opening remarks, the Chair recalled the important objective of understanding the interconnectedness of displacement, climate risks, food insecurity, increased violence and threats to livelihoods in the Sahel region so that the United Nations system could tackle these challenges through evidence-based data and analysis. He further recalled that the Committee supported initiating a pilot predictive analytics exercise at its thirty-eighth session in 2019, led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) within the discussion on promoting innovation to enhance evidence-based support for sustainable development. The concept for the pilot exercise was subsequently presented to CEB in 2019, and the Committee received a progress update at its fortieth session in 2020. The predictive analytics pilot had made significant progress in analyzing these complex linkages and had transitioned to the region for further implementation under the United Nations Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel and aligned with the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), which was encouraged by the Committee at its fortieth session. UNHCR had committed to continue to support the pilot's implementation. The Chair noted that predictive analytics touched upon the data and "anticipating the future" elements of the Secretary-General's "Our Common Agenda" report, and this pilot contributed to the growing expertise

and application of data analytics within the system and provided methodologies that could be scaled or used by other entities and inter-agency mechanisms.

59. The Committee received a presentation and final report from Mr. Andrew Harper, UNHCR's Special Advisor on Climate Action and lead of the predictive analytics pilot, who confirmed that the transition of the pilot exercise to the region was advancing under the United Nations Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel and in support of the UNISS. The importance of understanding forthcoming challenges across the humanitarian, peace and development nexus to enable better identification of opportunities for anticipatory and transformative action and to strengthen preparedness for growing and interconnected risks in the Sahel was emphasized. Mr. Harper noted in the context of the Sahel that incremental approaches were not sufficient in light of population growth as well as challenges associated with climate change and, therefore, more anticipatory policy action was needed.

60. Mr. Harper shared with the Committee the consultation processes the pilot conducted with United Nations system entities as well as outreach to external research and academic institutions, noting that an expert consortium on predictive analytics for the Sahel was formed with leading universities including Uppsala University and Columbia University, as well as some United Nations system entities such as the United Nations University. However, there remained challenges regarding the coordination and accessibility of data, including the limited collection of data at the sub-national level and time-series data, the gaps in data standardization, the dispersion of data within and across organizations and the limited culture of responsible data sharing between United Nations system entities. He also underscored the importance of regional capacity-building and supporting national statistical offices and national research institutions to collect and standardize sub-national-level data to enable modelling that was more accurate.

61. Preliminary findings from the predictive analytics exercise linking issues such as climate change, water scarcity, conflict, food security, displacement and socioeconomic factors were presented to the Committee, with Mr. Harper noting that they could be useful in future decision-making and to enhance the level of transformation through policy and programmatic interventions that addressed underlying drivers and linkages. It was also suggested that the model could be replicated in other contexts or regions to support decision-making within the United Nations system.

62. In the ensuing discussion, the Committee reinforced the call for better data sharing and analysis towards common objectives and outcomes. Taking into consideration the lessons learned, many members expressed similar challenges in receiving data from other United Nations system entities and emphasized the need to address the issue of data sharing across entities. There was also support to further address in detail data gaps, data collection, data coordination, and funding for data. The need for disaggregation of data around ethnicity, religion, language and gender was also raised. Members suggested that data standardization and making more granular data available was important for predictive modelling, and that a central repository for the United Nations system would be beneficial. The need for enhanced data collection, standardization and sharing were also areas addressed in the System-wide Road Map for Innovating United Nations Data and Statistics. It was also suggested that code, algorithms and model details could also be made more accessible and sharable among entities.

63. Members also supported the cross-pillar approach of the predictive analytics pilot, looking at the possible combinations and linkages between different risks, which was also aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Members acknowledged that risk was systemic and could not be treated in a siloed way or addressed separately, and supported addressing the nexus of peace, humanitarian, and development. Members viewed coordination

and working more closely together across the United Nations system as key given the importance of cross-pillar approaches. It was also suggested that human rights was an important pillar to include in predicting risks and that human rights violations were potent warning signals. Members suggested that the anticipatory nature of the pilot was important for the system as it was looking at possible impacts, shocks and hazards that might be faced in the future by the United Nations system.

64. The pilot's engagement with stakeholders was also seen as a positive example of working across institutions. Members supported the approach of bringing together universities and local research centers, as it aided in data integration and the interpretation of data based on local contexts. It was suggested that data could also be shared with communities at the forefront of the crisis as a tool to empower them to act. The Economic Commission for Africa was also suggested as an entity that could contribute data and analysis to this effort in the Sahel. Beyond the Sahel, members also supported the examination of opportunities to apply similar methodologies to other regions.

65. Reflecting on the feedback from the Committee, Mr. Harper stressed on the importance of United Nations entities sharing data and increasing their capacity to share data through data collection and standardization across all pillars. He also underscored that the next priority for the pilot was on capacity development at the local level within the region, including through partnerships between international universities and local or regional research institutes to improve both the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Mr. Harper welcomed Committee's support for the idea of examining the potential to apply the model to other regions and to bring United Nations entities and other stakeholders together around a more ambitious vision aligned with the "Our Common Agenda" report.

66. The Chair concluded the discussions by noting the Committee's appreciation for the achievements of the pilot and the valuable lessons learned, noting in particular the need for the system to work in a way that was networked, inclusive and effective, including on the sharing of data. The Chair also acknowledged the utility of predictive analytics and encouraged different partners to work together on the replication of this methodology in other settings to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in the follow up of the "Our Common Agenda" report.

Conclusions

67. **The Committee welcomed the final report and took note of the continuation of the project beyond the HLCP/CEB-supported pilot through the on-going transition to the United Nations Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel/UNISS.**

68. **The Committee encouraged UNHCR to lead an effort to explore opportunities to replicate and scale up the project in other vulnerable regions in the world, building on the partnerships developed with world centres of excellence in predictive analytics, including developing frameworks for data gathering.**

69. **The Committee encouraged UNHCR, and other HLCP member entities, to explore opportunities to leverage and support ongoing activities to implement the System-wide Road Map for Innovating United Nations Data and Statistics to reinforce national statistical agencies and research institutes in order to foster greater ownership of the project and to ensure that the data gathered (particularly at the sub-national level) meets the needs of key stakeholders.**

70. **The Committee encouraged UNHCR, and other HLCP member entities, to take the lessons learned from the pilot exercise to support the work of other relevant inter-agency mechanisms and initiatives in order to advance evidence-based support for sustainable development, including looking for ways to support the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in "Our Common Agenda".**

VI.   HLCP operating modalities

71. Turning to the item on operating modalities, the Chair recalled that HLCP had held a discussion at its forty-first session to reflect on its operating modalities with a view to enhancing its functions, practices and impact. He noted that, at the time, members had been largely satisfied with the functioning of the Committee but had agreed that some areas could be strengthened. Consequently, the HLCP Secretariat was requested to update the 2008 terms of reference and develop an annex on the Committee's operating modalities for approval at the Committee's forty-second session.

72. In introducing the draft for approval, the HLCP Secretary recalled that she had circulated an initial version of the updated terms of reference to the Committee for comment in August 2021. She stressed that the Secretariat had taken care to reflect the common understanding of the functions and operating modalities of HLCP, as expressed in the Committee's discussion at its prior session. The updated version (see Annex III) codified practices that had evolved over time, and also incorporated some elements that the Committee had felt needed to be strengthened. She thanked members of the Committee who expressed their support for the draft, which was adjusted based on feedback received, and was before the Committee for approval at this session.

73. The Chair invited any final comments on the updated terms of reference and operating modalities. None were forthcoming, and he confirmed the adoption of the revised terms of reference and its annex on the Committee's operating modalities. He concluded that the approved terms of reference would be transmitted to CEB for endorsement as an annex to the HLCP report of its forty-second session.

Conclusion

74. **The Committee adopted the updated terms of reference of HLCP, with an annex on the Committee's operating modalities.**

VII.   Summary of information items

75. Further to their electronic review and endorsement in advance of the session, the Committee took note of the progress report on the ongoing effort to mainstream the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 into the work programmes of organizations of the United Nations system, submitted by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

76. HLCP also took note of the progress reports on the work carried out by UN-Water and UN-Energy, submitted by UN-DESA serving as their secretariat, and UN-Oceans, submitted by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea in the Office of the Legal Affairs.

Conclusion

77. **HLCP took note of the progress report on the ongoing effort to mainstream the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, as well as the progress reports on UN-Water, UN-Energy and UN-Oceans.**

VIII. Other matters

A. Strategy for sustainability management in the United Nations system, 2020-2030

78. In 2019, CEB had endorsed the "Strategy for sustainability management in the United Nations system, 2020–2030 Phase I: Environmental sustainability in the area of management" (CEB/2019/1/Add.1). Upon endorsement of the Sustainability Strategy I, the Board requested that it be incorporated into a comprehensive sustainability strategy for the United Nations system, encompassing a broader and fuller picture of environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system policies, programming and support functions.

79. The "Strategy for sustainability management in the United Nations system, 2020-2030 – Phase II: Towards leadership in environmental and social sustainability" responded to that mandate, sharing the same comprehensive vision for environmental and social sustainability as Sustainability Strategy I, while translating this vision by means of a theory of change into a framework for environmental and social sustainability for all functions of the United Nations. Developed by a United Nations Environment Management Group (EMG) Task Team, comprising over 40 entities, the Sustainability Strategy II, includes: (i) a comprehensive set of environmental and social sustainability principles that need to be mainstreamed across all functions; (ii) a theory of change to mainstream the principles in different system-level and entity-level processes; and iii) a draft scorecard to measure progress, which will evolve as the strategy matures.

80. The Sustainability Strategy II, which was shared with HLCP members in August 2021 for comments, and recirculated to the Committee on 1 October 2021 following the review of the EMG Technical Segment, was due to be endorsed by the EMG Senior Official Meeting on 7 October 2021.

81. Ms. Ligia Noronha, Assistant Secretary-General, Head, New York Office, UNEP, and Secretary of the EMG Secretariat, thanked entities for their contributions to the strategy's development and encouraged them to support its implementation.

Conclusion

82. **The Committee approved the Strategy for sustainability management in the United Nations system, 2020-2030, for onward transmission to CEB for endorsement.**

B. Disability inclusion

83. In line with the decision taken at the CEB first regular session of 2019 requesting HLCP along with HLCM and UNSDG, in the context of their respective mandates, to review the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the Committee took note of a progress report on the status of implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, circulated electronically for information.

Conclusion

84. **HLCP took note of the report on the implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.**

C. Any other business

85. Ms. Angela Me, on behalf of the Committee of Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System (CCS-UNS), informed the Committee that implementation of the CEB-endorsed System-wide Road Map for Innovating United Nations Data and Statistics was progressing well, and that CCS-UNS would be reporting back to HLCP accordingly. One element that was taking more time was a UN data portal, for which there was high demand in the United Nations system. A proposal was currently being developed for the Secretary-General by the United Nations Statistics Division.

IX. Dates and location of the forty-third session of the Committee

86. The Chair proposed the dates of 31 March and 1 April 2022 for the forty-third session of the Committee. The decision to hold a physical or a virtual meeting would be taken in the coming months on the basis of the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, with utmost consideration for the health and well-being of Committee members.

Conclusion

87. **The Committee approved the dates of its forty-third session, 31 March to 1 April 2022, with the format, location and host to be determined.**

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Agenda

I. HLCP future areas of work

II. Artificial intelligence

III. Strengthening the UN system's impact and visibility on reducing inequalities and SDG10, in support of the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030

IV. Promoting innovation to enhance evidence-based support for sustainable development and the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030: Predictive analytics pilot

V. HLCP operating modalities

VI. Summary of information items

A) Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries

B) Progress reports: UN-Water, UN-Energy, UN-Oceans

VII. Other matters

A) Strategy for Sustainability Management in the United Nations System, 2020-2030

B) United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy

C) Any other business

VIII. Dates and location of the forty-third session of HLCP

Annex II

List of Participants

Chair**: Mr. Guy Ryder** (ILO)
Secretary**: Ms. Maaike Jansen**

<u>Organizations</u>	<u>Name</u>
EOSG-SDU	
	Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough
	Ms. Julie Morizet
EOSG-SPMU	Ms. Ayaka Suzuki
	Mr. Kersten Jauer
DCO	Ms. Helena Fraser
	Mr. Christopher Stokes
DESA	Ms. Leslie Wade
	Ms. Xenia von Lilien
DPPA	Ms. Teresa Whitfield
	Mr. Renato Mariani
PBSO	Mr. Henk-Jan Brinkman
OCHA	Mr. Hansjoerg Strohmeyer
	Mr. Murad Jeridi
OHCHR	Mr. Craig Mokhiber
OOSA	Ms. Simonetta Di Pippo
REGIONAL COMMISSIONS	Ms. Rosa Malango
UNDRR	Mr. Ricardo Mena Speck

ILO	Ms. Sukti Dasgupta
	Ms. Margaret Mottaz-Shilliday
FAO	Ms. Beth Crawford
	Mr. Lucas Tavares
UNESCO	Mr. Jean-Yves Le Saux
	Ms. Mariagrazia Squicciarini
	Ms. Clare Stark
	Mr. Riel Miller (lead, HLCP Foresight Network)
ICAO	Ms. Thilly De Bodt
	Ms. Chrystelle Damar
WHO	Mr. Werner H Obermeyer
	Mr. Igor Pokanevych
World Bank Group	Ms. Laura Jaitman
	Mr. Farhad Peikar
IMF	Mr. Robert Powell
UPU	Mr. Abdellatif Meskine
ITU	Ms. Ursula Wynhoven
	Mr. Preetam Maloor
IMO	Ms. Azara Al-Hassan Prempeh
WIPO	Ms. Ola Zahran, Head
IFAD	Ms. Joanna Veltri
UNIDO	Ms. Ayumi Fujino
	Ms. Tsung-Ping Chung
UNWTO	Ms. Zoritsa Urosevic

	Ms. Claudia Lisboa
IAEA	Mr. Nuno Luzio
	Ms. Camilla Scott-Todd
WTO	Mr. Said El Hachimi
IOM	Ms. Ugochi Daniels
	Mr. Kieran Gorman-Best
UNCTAD	Mr. Paul Akiwumi
	Ms. Shamika Sirimanne
UNDP	Mr. Haoliang Xu
	Mr. Umberto Labate
UNEP	Ms. Ligia Noronha
	Ms. Mara Murillo
UNHCR	Ms. Annika Sandlund
	Mr. Andrew Harper (presenter)
UNRWA	Mr. Sam Rose
UNICEF	Mr. Sanjay Wijesekera
	Mr. David Matern
UNFPA	Ms. Diene Keita
	Ms. Nkeiruka Didigu
WFP	Ms. Valerie Guarnieri
	Mr. David Kaatrud
UNODC	Mr. Bo Mathiasen
	Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu
UN-Habitat	Mr. Christopher Williams

UN-Women	Ms. Aparna Mehrotra
	Ms. Sharon Taylor
UNU	Mr. David Passarelli
UNAIDS	Ms. Shannon Hader
	Ms. Nertila Tavanxhi
UNFCCC	Mr. Daniele Violetti
ITC	Ms. Riefqah Jappie

<u>Guests</u>

CSS-UNS	Ms. Angela Me
Global Pulse	Mr. Robert Kirkpatrick
	Mr. Chris Earney
Office of the SG's Tech Envoy	Ms. Yu Ping Chan
	Mr. Jason Munyan
Office of the SG's Youth Envoy	Ms. Marija Vasileva-Blazev

<u>CEB Secretariat</u>

	Ms. Simona Petrova
	Mr. Remo Lalli
	Ms. Cheryl Stafford
	Mr. Li Zhou
	Ms. Marije Van Den Berg
	Mr. Simon Vandenbroucke
	Ms. Marta Lorenzo Fernandez
	Ms. Christine Weinmann

Updated terms of reference of the High-level Committee on Programmes[9]

In 2021, against the backdrop of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the preparation of the Secretary-General's report on "Our Common Agenda" mandated by the General Assembly in that context (A/RES/75/1, para. 20), the twentieth year of work of the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) (in 2020), the Decade of Action to Deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, and the United Nations system policy responses for recovering better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, HLCP reflected on its operating modalities and future work at its forty-first session.

With respect to its operating modalities, members considered HLCP's overall character, policy coherence and think tank functions, and working methods; the processes of developing HLCP products and their implementation, impact, and related accountability provisions; and HLCP's role in the United Nations system's inter-agency space, including with respect to coordination with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG),[10] following the 2020 review of the working arrangements of the Group.

The following terms of reference and operating modalities have been updated in light of the HLCP discussion and its conclusions (CEB/2021/4). They can be reviewed by the Committee or CEB at any time, as required, and adjusted as determined by HLCP itself or by CEB.

1. HLCP is responsible to CEB for fostering coherence, cooperation and coordination on policy and programme dimensions of strategic issues for the United Nations system.

2. The HLCP Chair will be appointed by the Chair of CEB to serve a two-year term, which can be renewed. If deemed necessary by the HLCP Chair, the Chair of CEB can also appoint an HLCP Vice-Chair to support the execution of his/her responsibilities.

3. HLCP is composed of senior staff of CEB member organizations[11] responsible for policy, programme planning and development, authorized by their executive heads to take decisions on their behalf. HLCP will meet twice a year in regular session and will hold other meetings, including through virtual means, on an as-needed basis.

4. HLCP will serve two key functions, namely:

   a) Fostering system-wide policy coherence and coordination in response to intergovernmental mandates, with a view to:

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[9] The terms of reference (CEB/2008/6, Annex III) and operating modalities of HLCP (session document CEB/2008/HLCP-XV/CRP.1/Rev.1, paras 11 - 31) were last updated in 2008 in light of a 2007 review by CEB of its role and functioning that led to the establishment of three pillars to support its work – HLCP, the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM), and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) – with an overall aim of achieving an integrated approach to the challenges facing the United Nations system. The previous version of the HLCP terms of reference (from 2002 – see CEB/2002/4, Appendix to Annex IV) was also referenced by the HLCP Secretariat in the course of this 2021 review.

[10] In 2017, CEB decided to de-link UNDG from the CEB machinery (see CEB/2017/2, para 25), reversing the above-noted 2007 decision by the Board to add it as a third pillar. Subsequently, UNDG evolved into the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG).

[11] Including United Nations entities represented at CEB sessions as part of the Secretary-General's delegation.

i.   Support coherent and coordinated programme development and implementation, and maximize the impact of the United Nations system in support of the implementation and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcomes of other United Nations conferences and summits, as well as other intergovernmental mandates; and

ii. Support the integrated and coordinated preparation of major United Nations conferences and summits.

b) Scanning for and identifying emerging programme issues requiring a system-wide response, with a view to:

i.   Develop common strategies, policy approaches, methodologies, and tools to respond to demands for strengthened system-wide policy coherence and coordination, in line with intergovernmental mandates;

ii. Advise CEB on matters that require its priority attention in the timely elaboration of strategies and policies in response to emerging issues and challenges facing the United Nations system; and

iii. Serve as a forum for collective strategic thinking, inter-agency dialogue, consultations, coordination and knowledge-sharing on policy development and programming on matters of system-wide concern to enhance transparency, develop consensus and learn and apply proven practices and policies.

5. In pursuing the above and as elaborated in the annexed operating modalities, HLCP will:

a) Seek to achieve a balance between directed think tank discussions in support of CEB and creating tangible products that respond to demands for strengthened system-wide policy coherence and coordination;

b) Address cross-cutting, cross-pillar and multisectoral issues, giving special attention to policy areas not already addressed in other contexts / forums;

c) Utilize efficient and effective working arrangements to address policy themes under a lead entity approach;

d) Collaborate with and leverage the expertise that resides in thematic, operational, and other inter-agency bodies while maintaining due regard for the respective roles and mandates of each mechanism; and

e) Engage with external stakeholders, as appropriate.

6. In the exercise of these functions, HLCP will operate within the framework of the constituent instruments of member organizations and the relationship agreements between the United Nations and the specialized agencies and Bretton Woods institutions.

Annex: Operating modalities of the High-level Committee on Programmes

I.   Membership

1. As noted in its terms of reference, the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) is composed of senior staff of United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) member organizations[12] responsible for policy, programme planning, and development authorized by their executive heads to take decisions on their behalf. Such individuals will be called "members". In addition, the HLCP Chair may wish to confer "participant" status to representatives of other United Nations system entities. Normally, there should be one representative from each member/participant organization; representatives may be accompanied by an organizational expert on an as-needed basis for substantive presentation and discussion. The HLCP Chair may also choose to invite "guests" to engage on a specific agenda item or items at a given meeting.

2. Representatives will maintain a strong system-wide perspective when engaging in HLCP, brief their senior leadership and contribute to the preparation of their entity's principal for the subsequent CEB session, facilitate the engagement of technical experts from their organizations in HLCP workstreams, and promote the visibility and uptake of HLCP products within their entities.

II.   Agenda-setting

3. HLCP will be strategic in addressing issues for which it is the appropriate inter-agency coordination mechanism. In consideration of this, HLCP should focus on the results it is best placed to achieve, given its mandate. Policy issues most appropriate for HLCP's agenda are those that are relevant across the United Nations system, demand-driven, forward-looking, not duplicative of existing initiatives and responsive to feedback from the United Nations system, including the country-level.

4. Prior to each Committee meeting and bearing in mind the need to maintain agility to absorb new and emerging issues, the HLCP Secretariat, under the guidance of the HLCP Chair (and Vice-Chair), and in consultation with the Committee, will prepare a provisional agenda taking into account the following:

    a) CEB and HLCP conclusions and decisions, including on specific items referred to the Committee, bearing in mind HLCP's role in preparing for and following up on CEB discussions and decisions on programme and policy matters;

    b) issues emerging as a result of intergovernmental mandates directed to CEB and its mechanisms;

    c) priorities established by the Chair of CEB;

    d) proposals from HLCP members and participants;

    e) referral of policy dimensions of issues under consideration by other inter-agency coordination bodies (including the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG)); and

    f) identification of issues to be addressed in tandem with the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM).

5. The HLCP Secretariat will ensure alignment and coordination of work priorities and processes with HLCM to ensure proper sequencing of issues and maximize complementarities and synergy between the CEB structures in support of greater system-wide coherence in realizing intergovernmental

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[12] Including United Nations entities represented at CEB sessions as part of the Secretary-General's delegation.

mandates. In order to ensure that HLCP-developed products aid country-level operations, as appropriate, the HLCP Secretariat will also support coordination between HLCP and UNSDG, in line with their respective mandates, including through collaboration with the Development Coordination Office (DCO). Further, to bring broader policy perspectives, the HLCP Secretariat will identify opportunities to table policy dimensions of issues under consideration by thematic, operational, and other inter-agency bodies in a mutually beneficial manner, while maintaining due regard for the respective roles and mandates of each mechanism.

III. Workstream management

6. Most agenda items will typically be addressed through a dedicated workstream. As indicated in the terms of reference, HLCP will utilize efficient and effective working arrangements such as task forces, working groups and other ad hoc mechanisms that engage HLCP members as well as technical experts from across the system to address policy themes. These mechanisms will be inclusive, timebound and output-oriented. Moreover, HLCP may identify opportunities to incubate less-structured thematic communities of practice among United Nations system practitioners.

7. Virtual communications methods (e.g., videoconferencing, online collaboration platforms, e-mail, etc.) will generally be used to advance individual workstreams between sessions.

8. Lead entities will be identified to manage each workstream. Their responsibility vis-à-vis individual workstreams includes, but is not restricted to: mapping of activities undertaken by organizations of the system; holding consultations under their aegis to develop system-wide approaches and recommendations; and preparing documentation for meetings of HLCP and, as required, for CEB. The lead entities are expected to support the workstream for which they are responsible throughout its life cycle, including by guiding and shepherding implementation by the United Nations system after the conclusion of the HLCP process, where applicable, and marshalling – individually and collectively – adequate support, including capacity and resources, to ensure its success.

9. Lead entities and members contributing to HLCP workstreams are expected to conduct inclusive and effective preparatory processes, integrating features that increase the likelihood of implementation and the impact of the final products, including by delineating responsibilities among entities when feasible. The HLCP Secretariat will help to guide each individual process, as appropriate, in accordance with the product's unique purpose and nature.

10. HLCP may engage external (non-United Nations system) actors and outside experts, including representatives of government, civil society, academia, youth, and the private sector, as well as traditionally marginalized and vulnerable groups, as appropriate, on an ad hoc basis when members deem it useful to advance particular workstreams.

11. HLCP may receive periodic updates on and review the status of implementation of products produced by workstreams under its auspices, focusing primarily on solutions to unblock bottlenecks. Such updates may, but are not required to, be associated with a regular session. The HLCP Secretariat will facilitate light follow-up processes upon request of the lead entities. For purely informational updates, lead entities are encouraged to utilize the Committee's online collaboration platform.

IV. Organization of meetings

12. HLCP will hold two regular sessions per year with dates agreed at the conclusion of the prior session. Dates should be established in tandem with the setting of dates for CEB sessions, with HLCP meeting no less than four weeks prior to CEB sessions.

13. If and when needed, HLCP may hold ad hoc meetings between sessions to address specific, time-sensitive issues. Virtual meeting modalities (e.g., video/teleconference or online meeting platforms) may be

utilized. Where a face-to-face intersessional meeting is required, it should be organized around other meetings (such as ECOSOC or General Assembly meetings) where a large number of members will be on site.

14. HLCP meetings will proceed according to the annotated agenda (see meeting documentation below). The Chair (or Vice-Chair) will normally moderate the discussion for each item, with support from the HLCP Secretary, but arrangements may be made for guest moderators.

15. For each item, the lead entities will present the related documentation, in an intervention limited to five minutes. It is customary to hold an open discussion among members before concluding an item. Speakers taking the floor during the discussion should address topics from a system-wide perspective and avoid extensive accounts of their organization's activities.

16. In concluding each item, the Chair (or Vice-Chair) should summarize the discussion, making clear which decisions have been taken and which are being referred to CEB, as well as the process for taking forward and implementing the decisions.

17. The Committee should exercise strict discipline in keeping to a minimum information items and "other matters" that could be addressed through other means, including email and online collaboration platforms.

18. After each regular session, the HLCP Secretariat will prepare a concise report capturing a summary of the discussion and conclusions for each agenda item for review by the Committee and onward transmission to CEB for endorsement.

V.   Meeting documentation

19. In consultation with the lead entities concerned, the HLCP Secretariat will prepare a concise and precise annotated agenda for each meeting. Actions proposed for HLCP's consideration will be highlighted under each agenda item.

20. Documentation supporting the agenda items is generally prepared under the lead entity arrangement. All documents should be succinct and tailored for United Nations system senior managers. Documents should contain an executive summary (of up to three paragraphs), clearly identify the issues for discussion, and present specific recommendations for the consideration of HLCP. Charts, infographics, and other visualizations may be used in the document body to convey detailed or complex information. Lead entities must ensure that draft documents are prepared in full consultation with all relevant organizations prior to their finalization.

21. Documentation prepared for meetings of HLCP should adhere to length guidelines. Documents for decision/action (e.g., a concept note, background paper, progress report, etc.) should be no more than five pages in length (not counting any annexes). Products for endorsement by CEB should be as succinct as possible, but are not subject to specific restrictions.

22. The HLCP Secretariat will circulate all documentation to HLCP members and participants no later than two weeks before the meeting. To facilitate their timely dissemination, drafts of meeting documents should be submitted to the HLCP Secretariat ideally four weeks before the meeting for processing and to inform the finalization of the annotated agenda. If required, reference information may also be submitted for circulation.