



UNV Executive Coordinator Toily Kurbanov.
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Statement of UNV Executive Coordinator on the occasion of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board

Mr Toily Kurbanov, Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, addressed the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board session on 9 June 2022. Below are his remarks as delivered.

Madame President,

Distinguished delegates,

Madame Associate Administrator,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to present the Annual Report of the Administrator on UNV. At the outset, I would like

to introduce to you the people who this Report is actually about: UN Volunteers. Let's bring their voices to this session.

Thank you, Associate Administrator, for putting the Annual Report into context. This is the last annual report for UNV's Strategic Framework 2018-2021. To put into further perspective:

- The Strategic Framework itself was UNV's first after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. As such, it required immediate focus on the SDGs;
- It was also the first Framework since the Executive Board introduced yearly reporting of UNV. Its implementation greatly benefitted from more regular dialogue and guidance of the Board; and
- This Strategic Framework reversed a decade-long decline in the number of UN Volunteers and allowed UNV to reach new heights in 2021.

Today, I want to share with you the key highlights of the year. I will also link the results to lessons and targets for the new Strategic Framework, effective this year.

The report starts with an analysis of the role of volunteers globally and gives specific examples of how volunteers help support sustainable development.

In 2021, 61 per cent of Voluntary National Reviews of SDGs recognized the contributions of volunteers to sustainable development. This number is higher than in previous years and reflects the countries' appreciation of how volunteers enabled social services and community resilience during the pandemic.

However, in many countries data and evidence on national volunteering remain patchy. To close the gap, in 2021 UNV and ILO developed a new guide on volunteer work measurement tailored for the needs of national statistical offices.

Another resource for global volunteering is cross-border knowledge-sharing on volunteerism. In 2021, UNV published the State of the World Volunteerism report which shares global knowledge about volunteering for sustainable development, presents new evidence on volunteer-state partnerships, and, shows how those partnerships promote inclusion in communities.

Next, the report summarizes results achieved by UNV within its core mandate: mobilizing volunteers for all pillars of the UN.

The most significant achievement of the year was the mobilization of 10,000 UN Volunteers: a symbolic and historic milestone for the organization. Most of the UN Volunteers contributed to SDGs 16 (peace), 3 (health), 5 (gender equality), 17 (partnerships) and 10 (reduced inequalities).

UN Volunteers served in 55 UN entities with the top five being UNDP, UN Secretariat, UNICEF, UNHCR and UNFPA. The fastest growth in numbers was seen by UNODC, UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA and UN Women.

At UNV, we believe that UN Volunteers should mirror the diversity of society. After reaching global gender parity in 2019, we focused on gender balance in each region. Last year, the only region where we did not achieve this was Sub-Saharan Africa, where the ratio of women UN Volunteers increased to 46 per cent.

2021 also saw an increasing number of volunteers with disabilities: 157 in 19 UN entities in contrast to eight volunteers in two UN entities at the start of the Strategic Framework. That said, there can be no room for

complacency before the volunteer workforce in the UN does indeed mirror the diversity of our societies.

In the context of travel restrictions and COVID lockdowns, UNV continued to expand flexible talent solutions, engaging 2,546 online volunteers. Online volunteering holds great future potential, however, for now the level of awareness of this service — despite our advocacy — remains uneven across the system. So work is cut out for us to make sure that Online Volunteering becomes part of 'New Normal' in the UN.

The report also looks into UNV's institutional effectiveness, the state of UNV's finances, and our ongoing digital transformation.

In 2021, as result of increased volunteer mobilization, the total financial turnover of UNV reached US \$270 million and increased by 14 per cent. UNV's institutional budget, in contrast, increased by 5 per cent, confirming our empowered efficiency.

The report stresses the role of unearmarked resources. These take the form of two funding streams for UNV:

Regular resources via the institutional budget of UNDP which form the institutional bedrock of UNV. These resources remained steady during the last Strategic Framework at US \$8.7 million per annum.

Secondly, the Special Voluntary Fund which is the only source of funding for innovative volunteer solutions and our emergency response. We thank all nine Member States who provided SVF contributions in 2021, and top four donors who accounted for 90 per cent of SVF resources for the Strategic Framework: France, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland.

We realize that giving your taxpayers' money to an unearmarked facility is never an easy choice, especially in these difficult times. UNV's track record shows, though, that every dollar, euro, pound, yuan, rouble, franc, tenge and krona spent on volunteers is good investment. The 2021 report shares how we used SVF to fund international UNV assignments for Afghan women, for national UNV assignments at the frontlines of COVID response; and to support digital transformation of UNV which, in turn, enables online volunteering services.

The ongoing digital transformation is another crucial element in UNV's institutional effectiveness. In 2021, we replaced stand-alone ICT systems with a new Unified Volunteer Platform. As with any major digital transformation, the process was not without disruptions which we have been working hard to address. The platform is, however, already helping UNV with robotic process automation and use of Artificial Intelligence.

2021 was the 50th anniversary of UNV. While recognizing this historic milestone, the report also reflects on the way forward. Let me take few more minutes to discuss the targets that UNV has set out to achieve in the next four years.

The new Strategic Framework of UNV has seven outcome and 14 output indicators. We have based these indicators on clear definitions, data sources and data disaggregation. Whilst UNV remains people-centered, the new Strategic Framework will also make sure it is more data-driven.

Each of the targets is ambitious and none will be easy to achieve. On one hand, they speak to UNV's increased confidence in delivering results; on the other, to our efforts to meet Member States' expectations during the SDGs Decade of Action. Let me illustrate this by some examples.

In the area of volunteer mobilization, UNV envisages a 50 per cent increase in the number of both onsite and online volunteers. This sends a signal to partners: we are not slowing down. To achieve this growth, UNV will need to stay focused, responsive and aligned with the work of UN Country Teams.

We have also set ourselves ambitious targets for rapid deployment of UN Volunteers. This will be hard to achieve because of many variables beyond our control — such as visas, travel lockdowns and host entities' responsiveness — and will require fast digital platforms. We believe that faster deployment can be achieved; in some countries UNV is already deploying at speeds close to the proposed targets.

And, finally, under Outcome 3, UNV proposes to measure the strength of our contributions through the number of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks that integrate volunteerism. This will mark transition from standalone and short-term UNV engagements to systemwide efforts to build capacity or national volunteer institutions and is the only way to ensure sustainable and nationally-owned development contributions, as called for in the QCPR.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am looking forward to the feedback from the Executive Board and, as always, to your helpful guidance.

UN TV recording of the [UNV segment](#) at the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board second session



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