Statement
SECOND REGULAR SESSION 2019
Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS
After address of the Chairperson of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS UNWomen Staff Council
6 September 2019

Dear Mr. President [Ambassador H.E. Mr. Cho Tae-yul van Korea], Chair of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UNWomen Staff Council [Ms. Vesna Markovic Dasovic], members of the Board. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak at this session. I deliver this statement on behalf of Albania, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, The United Kingdom, The United States of America and my own country, The Kingdom of the Netherlands.

- First, we want to extend our thanks to the staff, irrespective of contract type, of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS for their commitment to achieving development results.

- We further commend UNICEF for commissioning and making public the Independent Task Force report on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority. We also acknowledge the efforts of the Chief Executives Board Taskforce on Sexual Harassment.

- However, there is much more still to be done.

- We appreciate the efforts to understand the scale of workplace misconduct and the commitment of UNICEF’s top leadership to take swift action on the basis of the recommendations coming from aforementioned report. We encourage other funds and programmes to follow UNICEF and commission similar reviews.
Including extensive interviews with staff members of all levels and all duty stations.

- Participation of all stakeholders is a key element in fostering culture change. From leaders setting the tone at the top by showing exemplary behavior to individual staff members actually reporting concerns. We thank the management of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS for inviting the Chair of the Staff Council to address this Executive Board. We encourage them to do this regularly in future sessions.

- It is crucial that staff feel safe to speak up and report misconduct or hostile work environments. All staff should have access to confidential and impartial mechanisms for reporting, investigation and mediation. Staff should be ensured that these mechanisms respond adequately, coherently and in a timely manner to all reports of misconduct. When individuals feel safe and have confidence in their systems, it is much harder for abuses to take place unchallenged.

- We as member states know and acknowledge from our own organizations how difficult it is to create a trustful working environment where both victims and bystanders feel safe to speak up. We appreciate this is a process of long breath which requires full commitment and accountability from the top.

- For a workplace culture to be deep-rooted in ethics, integrity and accountability, many elements need to fall into place. These include:

- Firstly, proper organizational policies and procedures on harassment, conflict of interest, abuse of authority are the foundation ["policies"]. UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS have made
progress in developing such policies and procedures, as confirmed by the independent review conducted earlier this year. We look forward to its follow-up, including through the UNDP 2030 People’s Strategy, and an update on progress of implementation. How is UNDP management envisioning a culture shift in the quality of performance management, as referred to in your People’s Strategy?

- **Second**, functioning and sufficiently staffed institutions such as the ethics offices, audit offices and SEAH focal points ["polity"] are key. We appreciate steps taken by all three organizations in 2018 and 2019 to increase the capacity and functioning of the ethics offices. We welcome an update on the scope and impact of these changes and any future actions planned.

- **Third**, it is important to walk the talk ["politics"]. An ethical workplace culture is fragile. It needs to be continuously nourished. Conducting global staff surveys, including on the prevalence of misconduct are a good practice in lending a "voice" to staff members. We call on UNFPA and UNDP to continue this practice, and encourage UNOPS to follow suit.

- **Finally**, we wish to thank UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS management for its continuous commitment to strengthen the ethical culture within your organizations.