

Statement by
Indran A. Naidoo
Director of the Independent Evaluation Office of the United Nations
Development Programme
Vice-Chair of the United Nations Evaluation Group

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Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am speaking on behalf of the UN Evaluation Group Chair and following consultation with fellow Heads of evaluation at 47 UN entities, the members of our professional network.

Over the last 15 years, the need for credible independent system-wide evaluation has been a frequent topic of discussion in the United Nations family. In 2008, the High-level Panel on System-wide coherence already recommended creating a system-wide evaluation mechanism. The General Assembly itself has underscored the importance of such mechanism. But, this debate has not yet produced concrete results.

According to the External Review of the Independent System-Wide Evaluation¹ earlier pilot initiative, the UN development system “currently lacks the capacity to adequately implement system-wide evaluation”.

In the same manner that the success of the 2030 Agenda itself will depend on the concerted effort of the UN system as a whole, we recognize that the evaluation function can be an entry point to coordination of the multiple entities involved – if given a foundation of a strong mandate and appropriate capacities.

Therefore, I would like to note our appreciation for the proposal of the Secretary-General that *now* is the time to establish an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism as part of a more coherent, transparent, accountable and effective system of support to the 2030 Agenda. By addressing what works and what doesn't, such a function can play a key role to inform policies, the agenda-setting and operational implementation and decision-making – be it at the level of UN entities' various governing bodies or in respect of UN efforts at individual country level.

Certainly, there are a number of risks associated to the creation and entrenchment of a system-wide evaluation capacity in the UN. Among them, the need of additional resources and even the possible lack of political will. But the time has come to finally put in place the institutional framework to advance the

¹ “External Review of the Independent System-Wide Evaluation Initiative”, Daponte, B., Markie, J., and Thomas, V, April 2017.

UNEG Statement – ECOSOC Meeting

evaluation culture in the organization. Delaying a decision will affect the overall capacity to support progress on the SDGs achievement and, ultimately, it will result in a bigger risk: not acting in real time when the targets are at risk of not being met.

The proposal of creating a small, independent unit to carry out an independent system-wide evaluation function offers a unique opportunity to bring evaluative evidence to ECOSOC debates, built upon the evaluations produced by the respective UN entities. Guided by the principles of credibility, independence, utility and subsidiarity, such a unit could coordinate, collaborate as well as lead evaluations on system-wide issues of strategic interest. It could also synthesize timely key evaluation findings on the UN's performance, which will allow Member States to hold the organization as a whole accountable for its joint actions and the support it provides to the countries.

Bringing coherence and coordination to system-wide evaluation will clearly have an initial cost at the centre although over time there may be savings as evaluation offices workplans converge. The Secretary General has estimated an additional budget of approximately 3 million dollars for an initial phase, which represents only 0.01 per cent – one hundredth of one per cent - of the 2016 expenditure on UN operational activities for development. This is a worthwhile if not modest investment in quality assurance for the remaining 99.99 per cent of what Member States put into the UN development system.