

**UNEG at the Crossroads**

**Midterm Review of the United Nations Evaluation Group Strategy 2014-2019**

Final Report

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## Executive Summary

1. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) is a voluntary, professional network that includes 47 members from the United Nations Specialized Agencies, UN Funds and Programmes and UN Secretariat affiliated organizations. The mission of UNEG is to promote the independence, credibility, and usefulness of the evaluation function across the UN system and to advocate for the importance of evaluation for learning, decision-making and accountability. As a professional evaluation network in the UN system, UNEG regularly assesses its achievements, shortcomings and challenges, including an analysis of the adequacy of its structure and functioning.
2. The network's current strategy for 2014-2019 sets out UNEG's 6-year plan of action under four Strategic Objectives (SOs). The Mid-Term Review was undertaken by a team of two consultants over the period November 2017-May 2018. Review questions focused on issues of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, governance and partnerships. The review methodology involved document analysis; quantitative analysis (primary and secondary data); network analysis; interviews with over 70 key informants; surveys of UNEG members, UNEG members who were neither UNEG Heads nor interest/working group members, and the evaluation community outside of the UN; three SWOT workshops in Geneva, New York and Rome, benchmarking of UNEG against 6 networks. The methodology builds and replicates some of the instruments used in the 2013 Independent Assessment.
3. A limitation in the review was the announcement by UNDP shortly before the end of the team's data-collection work that UNDP would be withdrawing funding for the functioning of the UNEG Secretariat; it is not known what effect this might have had on the views of UNEG members had they known it during the period of the Review itself.
4. **Findings:** the higher levels of the Strategy remain relevant, and the strategic objectives are relevant to the vision and mission of UNEG. However, the Strategic Objectives do not sufficiently reflect changes in the external context, particularly Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, and renewed efforts at UN Reform. While the Strategic Objectives generally represent member needs and interests, although not very strongly, some Strategic Objectives are more relevant than others. The work on Norms and Standards remain at the core of UNEG's work.
5. While the Strategy itself provides a basis for measuring effectiveness, and members feel that UNEG is on track to achieve some of the higher objectives of the Strategy, a full assessment is impossible since there are no performance indicators attached to the Strategy. Much work is being undertaken in pursuit of the Strategic Objectives, but there is concern that there are too many activities that are not focused enough. The relationship between network activities and impact tends to remain distant.
6. The Strategy has brought a level of formalisation to the network, but there are concerns that it has become overly formalised. Partnerships have raised UNEG's profile but have been pursued without clear purpose. The resource base of UNEG is currently strong, but UNDP's withdrawal of funding support for the Secretariat means that UNEG will need to find a cost efficient mechanism for provision of Secretariat services. Governance processes for the network have improved since 2014 but are still a challenge, with concerns over communication, cumbersome decision-making and a lack of representativeness in the governance structures.

7. **Conclusions:** UNEG's role as a voluntary professional network remains pertinent and the Norms and Standards are at its core. UNEG has a strong brand and reputation, and perceived relevance in the UN community and beyond. However the network continues to face dilemmas similar to those of 2013 that affect its value and efficacy. This partly reflects the network's instincts to do too much, but also limited contributions by members to UNEG's work. The network's added value is not yet well established. Its value-added tends to be more immediate, but UNEG has the potential to be more influential amongst its member organisations through improved evaluation functions, including through a more concerted approach to enhancing the professionalisation of evaluation. Governance needs to be improved, including through simplification of cumbersome procedures, along with greater clarity in roles to support the functioning of the network as a whole, not simply oversight of Strategic Objective work areas. A governance structure which is more representative of UNEG's constituent members would garner more support from members.

8. UNEG is now at a crossroads: the role that UNEG's members expect of the network is unclear. At the same time, the network needs to respond to changes in the external context – in particular a shift in the centre of gravity towards the global South brought about by Agenda 2030. UNEG will need to find ways in which to engage in this Agenda, both as individual agencies and as a network. The current environment puts evaluation high on the UN political agenda and UNEG should take advantage of this, re-focusing the network, in a balanced manner, more outwardly than is currently the case.

9. The Review concludes that UNEG has three options as it goes forward: firstly to remain as a coalition network of interested members, inwardly focused on normative work; secondly, at the other end of the spectrum to become an agent of change network, providing support to members but with a strong emphasis on influence beyond the network, including to a wider community beyond the UN, through research, interaction and communications; or lastly, a hybrid approach which combines the two, with UNEG promoting evaluation within the UN as part of good governance (and based on the Norms and Standards), alongside efforts to develop evaluation content which is of use to both UNEG members and the broader UN community. The Review concludes that UNEG is currently best placed to pursue this latter hybrid approach.

10. **Recommendations** are divided into two stages. In the short term the network should take actions to build its internal capacity, including identifying the future direction of the network, strengthening governance, and reinforcing its position as a norms and standard setter. In the longer term UNEG should develop its next Strategy with particular attention to the SDGs, evaluation use and professional development. Further consideration should be given to strengthening the evaluation capacity across the UN system, and to redoubling outreach and communication efforts.

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**Note for the Reader**

The authors were encouraged to prepare the short final report below. This should be read in conjunction with the following documents that are provided separately:

- **Mid-Term Review of the UNEG Strategy 2014-2019: Annexes A-I** (this includes Terms of Reference, Theory of Change, Data Tables, Network Mapping, References and Key Informant Interviews)
- **Mid-Term Review of the UNEG Strategy 2014-2019: Annex J** (this is a PowerPoint presentation summarising findings and conclusions)
- **Mid-Term Review of the UNEG Strategy 2014-2019: Annex K** (this is the Inception Report for the Study)

This report identifies the appropriate Annexes containing specific data tables, PowerPoint slides or other information relevant to the findings.

## Scope of the Midterm Review

1. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) is a voluntary, professional network. It brings together the units responsible for evaluation in the United Nations (UN) system to develop and advocate for common evaluation norms and standards. The network includes the UN Specialized Agencies, UN Funds and Programmes and UN Secretariat affiliated organizations. UNEG currently has 47 UN members, 7 observers and 5 institutional partners.
2. The mission of UNEG is to promote the independence, credibility, and usefulness of the evaluation function across the UN system and to advocate for the importance of evaluation for learning, decision-making and accountability. UNEG provides a forum for members to establish common norms and standards for evaluation, develop methodologies that address UN concerns, strengthen the evaluation function through peer reviews and information exchange, and establish partnerships with the wider evaluation community.
3. As a professional evaluation network in the UN system, UNEG regularly assesses its achievements, shortcomings and challenges, including an analysis of the adequacy of its structure and functioning. The last independent assessment of UNEG took place in 2013, covering the period 2004-2012. The results of that assessment contributed to the UNEG Strategy 2014-2019.
4. The network's current strategy sets out UNEG's 6-year plan of action under four Strategic Objectives (SOs). A Vice Chair leads each SO. Each SO is directly linked to anticipated outcomes and impacts. All are expected to contribute to achieving UNEG's vision: evaluation is fully realized in every entity of the UN system through appropriate evaluation policies, resources, skills and activities; and that evidence produced by evaluation informs a more relevant, efficient and effective UN system with greater impacts on the lives of the people it serves. The logic model for the UNEG Strategy is attached as Appendix 1. See also Theory of Change (Mid-Term Review (MTR) Annex C).

## Profile of UNEG members

5. The roots of UNEG date back to 1984 – at that time the Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation launched by UNDP - and later as UNEG (2003). The network has grown from 18 members (1986) to 47 today. Within the context of the Secretary General's reform efforts, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an Evaluation Capacity Survey (September 2017). It noted that 97% of UNEG members' evaluation functions are established in-house, 43% established as standalone functions, and 38% as a dedicated evaluation unit within a multifunctional division (e.g. together with other oversight functions like audit and/or investigation). UNEG Heads encompass a variety of levels - D2 (19%); D1 (19%); P5 (29%) and P4 (26%). The network's current Executive Group includes the Chair, plus the four Vice Chairs (all at D-2 Level with three based in Europe and one in New York), as well as an Executive Coordinator (D1 based in New York).
6. UNEG Heads are appointed by governing bodies (11% of member organisations), organizational head (65%) and others (24%). With respect to gender, 60% of UNEG Heads are male and 40% female. In terms of the evaluation function, 45% of UNEG members are centralized evaluation functions, and 48% encompass both centralized and decentralized evaluation functions. Nearly three-quarters (73%) do not conduct joint evaluations. A similar proportion does not engage in National Evaluation Capacity

Development (NECD). Just under 93% of UNEG members have approved evaluation policies and systems for tracking implementation of evaluation recommendations. No numbers were provided or readily available regarding the annual production of evaluations by the 47 UNEG members.

### **A network analysis of UNEG Connectedness to the Strategic Objectives**

7. An analysis of UNEG’s connectedness to the Strategic Objectives gives an overview of the network (see Appendix 2 of this report, and MTR Annex E for more details). The analysis shows that there are clusters of network members around each of the four SOs, but that a small subset of agencies is responsible for most connections and participation in SO working groups. The busiest participants also tend to contribute the most financially to the network. It should be noted that these network members tend to be the largest evaluation units with the highest budgets and staffing levels, and the most senior UNEG Heads. There is however another group of members whose financial contributions are lower but who do not have connections to any of the SO working groups.

### **Review Objectives**

8. Infinity Consulting and Legal Services was contracted to conduct a Mid-Term Review of the UNEG Strategy for the period 2014-2019, and to present the findings at the May 2018 AGM in Rome. In preparation for the next UNEG strategy commencing in 2020, the MTR seeks to explore whether UNEG is doing the right things, and doing things right, particularly given the agreement of Agenda 2030 / Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. Results of the review are expected to help UNEG identify what adjustments would be needed to the current strategy and inform the design of the next UNEG Strategy 2020-2025.

9. More specifically the objectives of the review are to assess:

- a) The relevance of the current strategic focus areas and approaches in the rapidly changing development context and environment;
- b) UNEG’s progress and achievement towards its goals;
- c) UNEG’s use of financial resources; and
- d) UNEG’s internal governance, management and operational structure.

### **Review Methodology**

For details on Methodology please refer to the Inception Report (MTR Annex K) and MTR Annex D: Data Tables, Tables 1 and 2.

10. The review methodology involved document analysis, quantitative analysis (secondary data from other surveys – 2017 OIOS capacity survey, UNEG financial data), network analysis, interviews with over 70 key informants (of which 40% were identified as stakeholders or evaluation users), a survey of 108 UNEG members (68% response rate, including 75% of UNEG Heads or 35/47), survey of UNEG members who were neither UNEG Heads nor interest/working group members (n=28), survey of evaluation community outside of UN (n=32), SWOT analysis involving 52% of UNEG organizations (24/47), and benchmarking of UNEG against 6 networks (OECD-DAC EvalNet; ALNAP; UNRIAS; ECG; IOCE and EvalPartners). The methodology builds and replicates some of the instruments used in the 2013

Independent Assessment. This afforded a clear sense of what, if anything, has **changed** since 2013, what **consequences** (or results) can be linked to the Strategy 2014-2019, and how UNEG **compares** to other relevant networks. The detailed results associated with the data collection are contained in the various Annexes to the Mid-Term Review.

### Review Limitations

11. A key limitation of the MTR is connected with UNDP's recent announcement on its funding position regarding Secretariat support. This occurred after data collection was completed. A critical assumption of the MTR Team and respondents during the interviews, surveys and SWOTS concerned the continuity of support from UNDP. The possible reactive effects of the announcement are impossible to gauge, but it is assumed that respondents may have responded differently to questions on performance or future priorities if they had been aware of the announcement at the time the data was collected.

12. There was a significant delay in receipt of the 2017-18 UNEG Annual Work Plan, which was only circulated February/March 2018. This had some implications in terms of assessing progress for the year, but also may have contributed to perceptions among UNEG members that little work was being undertaken (although WG chairs gave assurances that this was not the case). Other limitations concerned questions in the UNEG member e-survey, which had a higher than expected non-response (up to 20% for some questions), and low response rates to e-surveys for the evaluation community and evaluation users. SWOT workshops were held in New York, Rome, and Geneva (with some participation from Vienna). Although participation was higher than in 2013, UNEG members outside of these locations were unable to participate in these group sessions. The SWOT workshops for UNEG Heads took place at a time when only 71% of respondents (both UNEG Heads and Staff) had completed the surveys, which may have conditioned responses on the remainder of respondents to some survey questions, particularly the SWOT questions.

### Summary of findings

#### Relevance

For detailed findings and survey results see MTR Annex D: Data Tables 16, 17, 19, 21, 23 and 25; and MTR Annex J Slides 8-14 of the Findings and Conclusions PowerPoint presentation.

13. **UNEG's vision and mission remain relevant.** UNEG Heads and Staff<sup>1</sup> confirmed that the Strategy's vision and mission remain relevant and appropriate for UNEG as a professional network, although given their general nature this was expected.

14. **The Strategic Objectives are relevant to this vision and mission.** By a large majority, UNEG Heads (90%) and Staff (75%) view the SOs as relevant to the vision and mission of UNEG, although among Heads, just over a third feel they are strongly relevant, in comparison to over a half who feel they

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex D – Data Tables for definitions of UNEG Heads and Staff.

are somewhat relevant. Around a quarter of UNEG Staff and those working in large evaluation units responded that they did not know if the SOs are relevant, suggesting limited knowledge of the Strategy.

15. **However there is a view that the SOs do not sufficiently reflect the broader context.** While the SOs are valued in that they encompass the work of evaluation units and give clear direction for UNEG, they do not reflect changes in the evaluation field more broadly, and the contextual changes in the UN which have taken place since the UNEG Strategy was agreed, specifically the adoption of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs and the current Secretary-General's proposals for reform. There is a view among UNEG members that the SOs should be reviewed in this broader context.

16. **There is no clear agreement on the implications of a key contextual factor, the SDGs.** Many UNEG members feel that the Strategic Objectives are somewhat relevant to Agenda 2030/the SDGs, partly as a result of the broad scope of the SDGs, but also the links to review/ evaluation at country level and the need for enhanced national evaluation capacity (despite the low engagement of UNEG members in NECD). However, the SWOT exercise has shown that there are differing views as to whether the SDGs represent an opportunity or a threat. One possible reason for the threat is the need for agencies to evaluate their own contribution to the SDGs, a complex evaluation task which if not managed effectively may risk undermining the evaluation function. While some UNEG members feel that the SDGs are not relevant to them, given the overarching nature of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, this is, in terms of content, relevant to a large number of UNEG members.

17. **Nor is there clarity on UNEG's role in the context of UN Reform.** Although UNEG members feel that the SOs are relevant to UN reform, this is not considered a strong relationship. There is agreement that SO3 is relevant to the UN Reform agenda, but disagreement regarding the relationship of the other SOs to UN reform. The SG's proposals themselves are still to be agreed by member states, leaving some uncertainty as to the full implications. However for the recent statement by UNEG at the ECOSOC (1 March 2018), while it was supportive of the SG's proposals, there were few specifics about UNEG's potential role, suggesting that UNEG members are still not clear as to how to respond to the issue. As with the SDGs, there are differing views as to whether the reforms pose a threat or provide an opportunity. UNEG members in New York are much more likely to view this as an opportunity. Interviews with UNEG members suggest that it will be important for UNEG to have a designated interlocutor based in New York, whether this be the Chair, a Vice-Chair or other designated person.

18. **The Strategic Objectives represent member needs and interests, although not very strongly.** The SOs are seen to be broad, and a result of negotiation and compromise necessary to be relevant to the diverse membership of UNEG. Overall, less than a quarter of UNEG members feel they are strongly relevant, and while almost three quarters of UNEG Heads feel they are relevant, less than a half of UNEG Staff do. Despite the view that they are, in general, relevant and representative, the perception of limited participation in Working/ Interest Groups (of which no data is readily available) suggests that they are not. While this may be a result of smaller agencies having limited capacity to engage, the network analysis suggests that this is not a forgone conclusion (See network analysis in Appendix 2 of this report and MTR Annex E).

19. **Some Strategic Objectives are more relevant than others.** Although the Strategy applies a logical framework model with equal weight attached to each of the SOs, UNEG members recognize that



some are more important than others in relation to UNEG's vision and mission. Members rank the SOs in the order given, with more than half of members agreeing that SO1 is the most important and that SO4 is the least important. SO1 represents the core of UNEG's work (See MTR Annex C: Theory of Change).

20. **This stratification also extends to broader roles of UNEG.** The UNEG Norms and Standards are by far the most relevant and useful aspect of UNEG's work to its members, similar to the picture in the 2013 Assessment. Promoting innovation, facilitating capacity development and partnerships beyond the UN, promoting joint initiatives and supporting NECD are seen as least important (as echoed in the OIOS 2017 Capacity Survey), although UNEG Staff are more likely than UNEG Heads to see the latter two roles as important. UNEG Heads may view joint initiatives and NECD as more of a challenge in terms of resources, management etc.

21. **Members have high expectations for UNEG's role in the future.** UNEG members expect that all roles will be more strongly relevant in the future, but with more emphasis on strengthening staff competence and less emphasis on the independence of evaluation as a practice in UN organisations. Changes in the expected emphasis may represent broader changes in thinking in the evaluation community.

22. **A key question remains as to UNEG's role and purpose in the future.** UNEG is at a crossroads - there are questions about the focus/ emphasis for UNEG in the future, in particular whether it should be a loose coalition network of evaluation professionals or a community with higher ambitions. Associated with this discussion is the question of the capacity of UNEG to meet a higher level of ambition.

### Effectiveness

For detailed findings and survey results see MTR Annex D: Data Tables, in particular Tables 33, 36, 37, 39, 41, 45; and MTR Annex J Slides 16-30 of the Findings and Conclusions PowerPoint presentation.
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23. **The Strategy provides a basis for making an assessment of effectiveness.** In comparison to 2013, when the network had no specified objectives against which to make any assessment, the Strategy 2014-2019 does provide a clear set of objectives, achievable outcomes and expected impacts (See Appendix 1 Logic Model).

24. **In general, network members feel that UNEG is on track to achieve some of the higher level objectives of the Strategy.** Although UNEG Staff are less convinced, around half UNEG Heads feel that outcomes and impact are being achieved, especially in relation to SO1 and SO4. This is in juxtaposition to the network analysis (Appendix 2), which shows that SO1 and SO3 had more organizational connections than SO2 and SO4, reflecting where major interests are concentrated. Just over 70% of UNEG Heads and more than half of UNEG Staff feel that UNEG activities are contributing to the achievement of UNEG's vision and mission.

25. **This is despite the remote relationship between activities and impact.** The outcome and impact level are extremely remote from the activities in the Strategic Plan. While the Plan presents a

logical framework of the expected relationships, it does not provide a clear theory of change (See Appendix 1 and MTR Annex C).

26. **A full assessment of effectiveness is impossible since there are no performance indicators attached to the Strategy.** It is possible to assess whether agreed work plan activities have been undertaken, but the lack of any performance indicators by which to gauge effectiveness in its broadest sense, and particularly in relation to achieving the higher order objectives of the Strategy. Given the lack of KPIs and monitoring, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions.

27. **In terms of activities, much is being undertaken and is assumed to contribute to higher level results.** During the Strategy period to date, UNEG has continued to focus on evaluation practice and realised many accomplishments. There was significant effort to promote evaluation more broadly through the 2014 UNGA resolution on evaluation and through the 2015 International Year of Evaluation. UNEG has also supported the evaluation function within its member organisations, conducting 8 peer reviews (2013-2017). And despite some reiteration, UNEG continues to be an important source of evaluation information, learning, practical guidance and tools for its members e.g. Joint Programme evaluation guidance (2014), Principles of Working Together (2015), updated Norms and Standards (2015), updated competencies framework (2016), enhancing humanitarian assistance, webinars, evaluation learning weeks, system wide evaluation and UNSWAP. Working groups in some areas are very active in developing and sharing new guidance and tools for the network (e.g. the group on Professionalisation). To some degree, effectiveness is being gauged in terms of activities. Given the nature of the Strategy, the expectation is that if activities are being delivered, there will be a clear link to achievement of higher level objectives.

28. **However at SO and working group levels, there is concern that activities are not focused enough.** Members are concerned that the Strategic Objectives and associated Working/Interest Groups have lost direction and focus, particularly in SOs 3 and 4. The lack of indicators in the Plan may have contributed to this view. The programme modalities have not been as effective as expected in supporting the delivery of results. The network continues to face challenges similar to those of 2013, with too many working groups, with limited communication or interaction between groups and across SOs. Members are concerned that there may be redundancy or duplication in the working groups.

29. **The Strategy has brought a level of formalisation to the network, but perhaps has gone too far in trying to make UNEG behave like an institution.** A number of UNEG Heads expressed concerns that the Strategic Plan, while an important step to bring focus to UNEG, has pushed the network too far towards a formal and bureaucratic institution with the need to deliver products or results; this leaves less time for the information exchange or informal engagement which they want from the network. Within interest groups (particularly the Humanitarian Evaluation and Decentralised Evaluation Interest Groups) there has been pressure to deliver products, which may be counterproductive to the group's functioning, especially in the case of the Humanitarian Evaluation Interest Group. The Decentralised Evaluation Interest Group was described by a UNEG Head as intended to provide a 'safe space' for members to discuss challenges they faced in this area and ideas and solutions. The group produced a report on the issue, which required the energy and time of members to manage a consultancy and, in the view of some members, detracted from the original purpose of the group.

30. **UNEG has had mixed influence on member organisations' practice.** Most influence is said to be on fostering learning and increasing accountability. Users note that evaluation policy revision has usually occurred following peer review activities. At the same time, such reviews appear to have had limited influence on increasing resources for evaluation. The Peer Review WG has undertaken work to look at alternatives to formal peer reviews because of concerns about the capacity of UNEG and OECD DAC to conduct full peer reviews. Evaluation users among UNEG member organisations were very positive in their views of the value of evaluation, and they could not foresee their organizations without an evaluation function, but it was generally not possible for them to draw a clear line between this view and specific uses of evaluation within their organization that resulted in identifiable changes in organizational policy, strategy or program improvement.

31. **Momentum has dwindled in recent years.** UNEG's momentum is perceived by both members and other networks to have slowed within the last 18 months. From an external perspective this may be due to the reduced emphasis on external partnerships particularly in the last year. Within UNEG it is more difficult to pin down a single factor, but it is perceived that there is no clear 'rallying point' for members. This may have led to reduced interest, which has combined with the lack of time and resources to lead to such a slowdown. As well as less contribution to working groups, another example of this reduced commitment to the network is the limited contributions by members of evaluations and evaluation plans to the UNEG document repository which could help the network to develop knowledge products which would be of benefit to network members and others beyond it (see Appendix 4 of this report). The reduced momentum is not entirely due to a lack of energy among UNEG members, several of whom are active in other associations (e.g. EvalPartners). ALNAP has seven (7) UNEG members who are full members, contributing USD 50,000 annually, and holding two positions on the ALNAP Steering Committee. UNEG members are also active in supporting initiatives outside the Strategy (e.g. IT-based tools that link up to SDG evaluation, Executive Leadership Programme in Evaluation and the Sustainable Development Goals, delivered jointly by UNITAR, The Rockefeller Foundation and Claremont Graduate University); significant work on professional development e.g. ILO training; and there is significant mutual support between members. UNEG's performance is deemed to have dropped. During interviews, when asked to rate UNEG's performance on a scale of 1 (weak) to 10 (strong), UNEG members (Heads and Staff) felt that at the best of times – particularly 2014-15 – UNEG was rated between 6-8. In 2017-2018, it is judged more in the range of 3-5. This performance rating is mirrored by user stakeholder-clients (who are aware of UNEG), who value the evaluation function but see that more work is required on the evaluation front within their respective organisations.

### Partnerships

For detailed findings and survey results see MTR ANNEX D: Data Tables, in particular Tables 68-71 and MTR Annex J Slides 33-35 of the Findings and Conclusions PowerPoint presentation.

32. **Partnerships have helped to raise UNEG's profile, particularly in the broader evaluation community.** Especially in 2015, there were strong efforts to make links to the evaluation community beyond the UN system, and to bring observer members into the network. These efforts, spearhead by the then Chair, have received less attention in the last year to 18 months. During this period the emphasis has been on developing a more structured approach to partnerships. Some UNEG members

note the value of these partnerships – UNEG has reputational legitimacy and visibility because of its support to the evaluation community.

33. **There has been somewhat less emphasis on building partnerships within the UN.** The 2013 review of UNEG recommended pursuing stronger partnerships with UN interagency groups as a part of engaging in UN reform, but this has not happened in a sustained manner. Outreach to non-evaluation partners – users and client-stakeholders – has not been sufficient. There appears to be a general hesitance to open doors to oversight bodies as management wants to be able to have open discussions, and the trend is for less inclusiveness, not more. This may have had an impact on the views noted above regarding UNEG’s role in relation to UN Reform. More recently, UNEG has engaged in these reforms through the development of white papers outlining UNEG’s position. Efforts in 2017 to be included in the UN Development Group were unsuccessful.

34. **Agenda 2030/ the SDGs will require a strong emphasis on partnerships.** UNEG is a network, but also a partnership among its members. There has been little adjustment in partnership approaches following agreement on Agenda 2030/ SDGs. Responding to the SDGs is likely to require more joint work between UNEG members, a stronger emphasis on system-wide initiatives, and on national evaluation capacity development. There is a divergence of views on UNEG’s role in relation to national evaluation capacity development: whilst it is considered important, there are concerns among some members (especially UNEG Heads) that the network is not able to undertake this task, one which individual agencies also have difficulty in addressing.

35. **Partnerships have been pursued without clear purpose.** The review of UNEG’s partnerships Strategic Objective is still underway, but our findings show that UNEG members feel that there is no clear purpose in particular to the external partnerships, despite the fact that partnerships beyond the UN system are considered to be relevant to UNEG’s work. There is also a difference of opinion on the likely benefits of partnerships – particularly in the context of observer membership of UNEG, with UNEG Heads being much less supportive of expanding observer membership and UNEG Staff being more supportive and viewing such partnerships as an opportunity to promote cross-fertilization of ideas, to create learning opportunities, raise professional standards and to enhance UNEG’s relevance. The Partnerships Working Group under SO4 undertook a review of UNEG’s Partnership Strategy, reporting at the end of April 2018. The proposed new Strategy does not suggest changes in thinking on the purpose of partnerships, but does propose a rigorous approach to identifying partners and establishing formal relationships with them.

#### Efficiency

For detailed findings and survey results see MTR ANNEX D: Data Tables in particular Tables 58-61 and MTR Annex J Slides 38-40 of the Findings and Conclusions PowerPoint presentation.

36. **UNEG's resource base is strong.** In recent years (since 2014) UNEG has received more fund contributions than it has spent and currently has a significant reserve<sup>2</sup> which would allow functioning within the current prevailing resource environment (i.e. UNDP's contributions as well as those from members) for a number of years (see Appendix 5). It is not clear whether there has been a deliberate strategy to build up such a reserve fund, which started in 2010 – if so it is not stated as a specific objective. The divergence between income and expenditure in cycles over the last 12 years would suggest that this may be the result of poor management attention.

37. **The membership fee pilot has contributed to the strong resource base.** Since the introduction of the pilot the number of members contributing financially to the network has increased, despite the voluntary nature of contributions. The tiered approach to membership fees is considered fair, and almost half of UNEG Heads feel that it meets the needs of members. There is little differentiation in the strength of support for the pilot between different sized agencies – while there may be concerns about ability to pay by smaller agencies they are no more or less likely to support membership fees in principle. The risk going forward is whether the voluntary contribution model can be depended upon to ensure stability, continuity and sustainability of the network. Given the high proportion of UNEG members who have made the voluntary contribution in recent years, it would appear that it is feasible to make the membership contribution mandatory.

38. **Decisions about spending are not sufficiently transparent.** A number of network members noted that there is not enough information regarding how spending decisions are made and reporting on expenditure to the broader group. Concerns were expressed about the lack of clarity in the annual reports on expenditure, with a desire to see simpler and more understandable reporting format.

39. **UNDP has over the decades made a singular in-kind contribution but this will be wound down.** Since its founding, UNDP has supported the network through its in-kind contributions of staff time and resource management including hosting the network's web platform. These contributions have been significant, constituting more than half of UNEG's annual operating budget. UNDP has now indicated that it will be gradually withdrawing this in-kind support, leaving the network with a number of decisions as to how to address this very different resource scenario.

40. **There is strong support for seeking finances from donors or other institutions.** This was the case before UNDP announced its withdrawal. The expansion of observer membership, whilst not seen as primarily being driven by the need for more resources, is considered to be one way to increase the financial resource base for the network. It is not clear what the basis for specific finance requests would be – it is unlikely that donors would come forward simply to support the functioning of a professional community, and as such, financing would need to be predicated on the value added of a network such as developing and sharing content (e.g. meta-evaluations) which is of value to network members and beyond. While this may not be realistic in the short-term, it could be considered in the next strategy (2020-2025).

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<sup>2</sup> On 14 March 2018 the balance was reported as \$666,301. The Executive Coordinator's Report 2017-2018 gives a figure of \$438,943 including expected expenditure to end May 2018. However revenue at the end of March 2018 was only \$30,246, in comparison with total revenue of \$407,670 in 2017.

41. **The Secretariat as currently functioning is a relatively high cost approach to supporting the network.** The Secretariat is performing an administrative role, but the network (or more specifically UNDP) is funding the costs of professional staff, making this a relatively high cost approach. Current estimates total USD \$312,000 annually in Secretariat staff costs, not counting costs for office space and operating expenses or taking into account the 8% management cost deducted by UNDP's finance department). The role of the Executive Coordinator (20% of a D1 position) is unclear (only the full-time P3 Specialist has an explicit job description), and beyond overseeing Secretariat administration and finance, there are differing expectations among network members regarding the level of support which the Secretariat is expected to provide to Working/ Interest groups, with some noting that the Secretariat should be more proactive in its support.

42. **The model of a pooled fund has some benefits, but also brings high transaction costs.** Part of the Secretariat role is to manage the funds of the network and this is done through a pooled fund arrangement. This arrangement relieves members of the need for any fund management themselves. However there are direct costs in the form of UNDP's cost recovery (8%), and there are transaction costs particularly in the contracting of consultants for Working/ Interest group tasks. The need to follow UNDP procedures for such contracts has caused some frustration among Working/ Interest group members who feel that these are onerous. The most recent Executive Coordinator's Report (2017-2018) shows that it is feasible for agencies to contract consultants directly with such costs either offset against UNEG member contributions or subsequently reimbursed (e.g. UNESCO and others have advanced funds and later were reimbursed).

43. **Other similar networks show the range of possibilities for Secretariat support.** The comparator organisations included in the review have a range of secretariat approaches, including linking such support to the role of Chair (UNRIAS model), a relatively light secretariat managed through a direct contract (ECG model), and an institutional secretariat which fulfils a substantive content and knowledge management role over and above facilitating network functioning and communication (ALNAP model). The UNRIAS model may be too limited to meet UNEG's needs going forward; the very different but more robust business model in which ALNAP oversees all activity and product preparation, may be too big. So going forward, UNEG may wish to position itself more in the mid-range of the spectrum between the Evaluation Coordination Group (ECG) and ALNAP. See MTR Annex F for comparative benchmarking.

#### Governance

For detailed findings and survey results see MTR ANNEX D:Data Tables in particular Tables 48, 53, 54, 55 and MTR ANNEX J Slides 42-44 of the Findings and Conclusions PowerPoint presentation.
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44. **There have been improvements in governance since 2013.** Comparing 2013 to 2018, with the exception of increased concerns over the role and voice of smaller organizations, some improvements have occurred over the past years in all governance indicators.

45. **However governance is still a challenge.** The Principles of Working Together (PoWT) set out governance arrangements, but they are not clear to network members. The PoWT outlines the role of key governance actors, although it does not specify the role of the Executive Coordinator. Different

incumbents have taken different views of the role, with some feeling that the Coordinator should take steps to ensure that the network maintains momentum, therefore focusing on follow up and ensuring commitments have been met, and others taking the view that it is a more strategic role and not involved in the detail of the network's functioning. The PoWT give only limited attention to the role of the Chair. Network members are unclear of the role of the Executive Group and the Executive Coordinator in particular and feel that these roles should be revised.

46. **The value of the Vice Chairs in the governance mechanism is unclear.** Although the Vice Chair mechanism was intended to ensure coordination between working groups and between SOs, this has not happened as expected. The Vice Chairs are not seen to be providing clear leadership of individual SOs.

47. **Decision making is cumbersome and has not always been transparent.** The three-tier (Executive Group, Vice-Chair, Working Group) arrangement has made decisions, particularly spending decisions by Working Groups, very slow and inefficient – the WG needs the approval of the Vice-Chair and the Executive Group before spending can go ahead. Members are not aware of decisions made by the Executive Group (EG), although it was recently agreed to make the EG minutes public in an attempt to address this. Similarly, the AGM, which previously included a closed meeting of UNEG Heads on the last day, will now be a fully open meeting.

48. **Communication could be more effective.** Members (particularly UNEG Staff) noted that communication is poor, not only in terms of transmitting decisions, but also in handover of roles and responsibilities related to Working Groups. Communications between working groups has been uneven. Some noted that they had been appointed as convenors or co-convenors of existing WGs with no handover from the previous incumbents. The Secretariat role in supporting such handovers is unclear, as is the Vice-Chair role.

49. **There is a view that the network should be more inclusive and less hierarchical.** At present the Executive Group consists of senior staff, at the D1 and D2 level, despite the fact that this is generally unrepresentative of the membership of the network. A more constituency based steering group would be more representative. Such an approach is used by other networks (e.g. ALNAP).

### **UNEG's Strengths/Weakness in the Face of Emerging Opportunities/Challenges**

50. The most comprehensive snapshot of UNEG's current context emerges in the SWOT profile (see Appendix 3). Based on the inputs received from UNEG Heads and Staff, the network appears to be 'struggling'. There are some agreed upon strengths and opportunities, however weaknesses and threats predominate, suggesting a substantial degree of risk. Nearly two-thirds of UNEG Heads and Staff concentrate on three key strengths or assets: UNEG as a professional evaluation network; the evaluation norms, standards and guidelines; and sharing evaluation knowledge, learning and practice. At the same time, two-thirds of UNEG Heads and Staff acknowledge a much longer list of network weaknesses or challenges, suggesting that operational problems may be more in play than strategic issues. This pattern is also mirrored in the reflections concerning the network's future. Again, two-thirds of UNEG Heads and Staff zero in on three key opportunities – capacity building/professionalization; UN Reform including independent system wide evaluation; and SDGs – Agenda 2030. In a similar vein, echoing the pattern of

perceived weaknesses, two thirds of UNEG Heads and Staff acknowledged on a long list of possible future threats.

## Conclusions

### Relevance

51. **As a voluntary, professional network, UNEG's role continues to remain pertinent.** There is some cohesiveness and commitment to its vision and mission. There remains a sense of member ownership, although some signs indicate that this may have slightly faded over the past two years. Within the UN and beyond, UNEG has achieved a performance track record and well-thought-of level of maturity. Its normative work remains a cornerstone: all UN organizations make reference to the Norms and Standards in their evaluation policies; UNEG contributes to professional development and strengthening of the evaluation function within the UN system based on the Norms and Standards (e.g. through peer review). Guidance, tools, and the evaluation practice exchange remain avenues for sharing experiences and enhancing learning. While many topics of interest/work activities are re-takes from previous periods, UNEG is now faced with the challenge whether more is expected.

52. **UNEG's brand is important and should be safeguarded.** In many UN organizations, UNEG is treated with great respect. A clear example is the UNEG peer review process, which is considered to have achieved significant legitimacy, as well as the evaluation policies that embody the UNEG Norm and Standards. UNEG, more than ever before, is on the radar of UN Member States, Boards and Donors. The invitation to speak at ECOSOC (1 March 2018) is an indication of UNEG's reputation and perceived relevance. This situation has been enabled by the UN Secretary General's proposed reforms. It is the first time that a Secretary General has advocated on behalf of evaluation as an important contributor to gap filling and moving the UN system forward.

### Effectiveness and Efficiency

53. **UNEG continues to face several dilemmas that affect both its value and efficacy.** Members perceive that UNEG has become too formal, bureaucratic and exclusive, which may have contributed to the loss of momentum in recent years. There is reduced impetus behind the Strategic Objectives but such cycles are not unusual for all networks. It may be argued that the current low ebb in UNEG is the result of many factors related to resources, individual interests, time, and the hierarchical nature of governance. But outside of finances, member contributions (both time and knowledge contributions such as evaluation plans and evaluations) have become lower. Despite their pledges, as revealed in the network analysis (Appendix 2), many members currently contribute little to no time to the network's working groups. While members represent the face of UNEG within their respective organizations, there may be a need to remind members of their "obligations" to UNEG (e.g. regular updating of member profiles, especially evaluation capacity (human resources and finances); indicating annual evaluation productivity in terms of the number of completed evaluation reports and associated management response data; depositing completed evaluation plans and reports in the UNEG archives), both as a professional network and a community. But this is not new. In 2013, much the same was found. Then, as now, there was agreement that UNEG was doing too many things.



54. **UNEG's 'value for money' proposition is not well established.** There is insufficient data to make an assessment of the efficiency of use of resources by SO working groups; this is not data in the abstract, but a lack of measures established by which to make such a judgement. Like 2013, a higher level issue which continues to bedevil UNEG is the limited available information on how UNEG's value added or return on investment in any specific SO helps its members improve the performance of their evaluation function within their respective organizations. Building on the competency framework, more can be done to support professional development with respect to some form of accreditation and certification process. Performance information to monitor and evaluate UNEG's contribution to the evaluation function of its respective members is limited. Overall UNEG's performance rating has dropped, not only among UNEG members but also among user stakeholder-clients.

#### Governance

55. **The network will need to make some adjustments in its governance arrangements.** While the Strategy should remain until its completion (2019), internal adjustments are needed in terms of UNEG's working and governance arrangements, preparing the way to developing a new strategy (2020-2025). The Strategy established an overly formalized network but did not create an empowered leadership structure. Expectations were high for the Vice Chair role, but these have not materialised and the management model is too unwieldy and rigid. Conveners should be enabled to make decisions about budget execution rather than having to refer up. The role of the Executive Group, including Chair and Vice Chair roles, should be re-visited. One leadership model that may be appropriate is that of ALNAP's steering committee. It might address the concerns about perceived lack of representativeness, given the various constituent groups that make up UNEG. With UNDP's announcement, it may be time to decentralize the governance structure.

56. **In reviewing governance, form should mirror function – which entails greater clarity on the network's function.** In the short term, UNEG needs to sort out its internal housekeeping first, but at the same time not lose sight of the external UN context that is bringing new challenges. It is imperative to keep this big picture in mind. Greater clarity on function also has implications on what kind of secretariat should be funded by the members and its role. There has been some criticism of the Secretariat engagement and whether it is fully delivering on its important responsibility in supporting network transparency and communications. This includes both support for the Executive Group and Chair but also more active sharing of information and knowledge management across UNEG and beyond.

#### The future

57. **UNEG is now at a crossroads.** A key question remains "what type of UNEG do network members want?" The context is changing and UNEG needs to recognize the many shifts in the external environment. The SDGs are bringing a change in the centre of gravity, especially towards the national level. One of the key challenges will be for UNEG to have influence at the country level, in support of national governments and NECD.

58. **The Norms and Standards have achieved much, and at the same time, perhaps not enough.**

They need to remain at the core of UNEG's work, in particular their broader application beyond corporate evaluation offices and throughout a more decentralized evaluation function.

59. **Concerns regarding sustainability may be misplaced.** Changes in the funding model given UNDP's withdrawal of support for the Secretariat have raised concerns about the sustainability of UNEG. However, given the financial reserve available, and the level of support for the membership fee pilot that generates a significant operating budget, this may be less of an issue. It may represent an opportune moment to reconsider the role of the Secretariat, and provide an opportunity to create a network that is more fully owned by all its members.

60. **A changing external context will require UNEG to consider change within.** At the same time, funding status within the UN is fluctuating and UN reform will continue to swing evaluation fundamentals to the global south. Shifts are starting in the boards, especially with the push back against donor driven agendas. The call for NECD in the QCPR as well as national leadership on evaluation (Agenda 2030) will also affect how UNEG members engage at the country level. With respect to SDGs, one apprehension is the perception by non-evaluation stakeholders that UNEG will have the answers and capacity to deliver on system-wide evaluation needs regarding the SDGs. To add greater value, UNEG needs to engage in concrete activities that generate knowledge and experience about the SDGs that is beneficial not only to UNEG members but other user stakeholder-clients in the UN system (e.g. thematic meta-evaluations). UNEG has the potential to be a much greater source of content to support a stronger culture of evaluation in the UN. UNEG is instrumental to UN reform and will need to engage more actively in, if not actively contribute to, that reform.

61. **The SWOT exercise gives an indication of what such changes should be.** The comparative advantages possessed by UNEG are not unlike those identified by other networks. However, given the predominance of weakness and possible external threats, it suggests that the timing may not be right for UNEG to launch into an overly ambitious, growth oriented agenda. Rather the focus in the short-term, for the remainder of Strategy 2014-2019, should be to concentrate on internal matters and adopt strategies that support building internal capability and capacity. As Cornelius Chang and Robin Groeneveld note in recent McKinsey and Company Leadership and Organization Blog (23 March 2018) the challenge may be "Slowing down to speed up". There are a number of areas within UNEG that could benefit from greater attention, including: more focus (reduced number of working groups and priorities); better knowledge sharing (e.g. contribution of evaluation reports and plans to UNEG archives); more representative governance and greater transparency; and a more active communications and outreach plan. Such an emphasis, especially over the next 24 months, will prepare the network to better meet the external opportunities and challenges that await in the longer-term.

62. **UNEG should take advantage of the current environment that has put evaluation, among other topics, high on the UN political agenda.** In the longer term, UNEG should focus on expanding the asset base which gives it a comparative advantage, including: recognized professional capabilities (i.e. highly credible members who possess readily recognized credentials and qualification acquired through training, certification and/or accreditation); stable resources (not just financial, but experienced human and informational resources – knowledge and data) and a finely tuned communications strategy. Such efforts should return UNEG to a place where it is perceived as a highly innovative network, not just in

terms of tool and guidance development but also with respect to content analysis. While UNEG's brand is highly regarded, efforts need to be redoubled to reduce any confusion among non-evaluation stakeholder clients and users about the network's value added. It suggests a rebalancing of the currently perceived inward focus, inflexibility and a "business as usual" mind-set with a slightly more outward emphasis.

#### The next generation for UNEG

63. Simply defined, a "network" is a set of relationships, interactions and connections among members who have reason to associate (See MTR Annex C Theory of Change). It is a set of nodes and links that advantages learning, enables information flows, knowledge creation, affords helpful linkages, and joint problem solving. A "community" brings something more. It speaks to a shared identity around a topic or set of challenges. It represents collective intention, however tacit and diffused. It concentrates on stewarding a domain of knowledge, and sustaining learning about it. UNEG is a combination of both. However, the risk, given the rapidly changing context, is that UNEG may become a captive of its history, the established ways of doing things and an unchanging identification with the group. When this happens, networks can become closed, inward focused, with stiff boundaries that are impermeable. Past success should not be a blinder to new possibilities.

64. In answering the key question "what type of network do network UNEG members want?" the starting point is UNEG's core mandate. Should UNEG remain a loose **Coalition Network** of interested members, inwardly focused on normative work, investing in products for UNEG members, convening meetings among its members, and network building through member-centred learning. This is currently the arrangement. UNEG is largely a support network. Members are, the 'agents of change' within their respective organizations. Influence is realized indirectly through member empowerment. Resources (financial and in-kind) flow from members to the centre. These are invested in informational products for members (i.e. foundation and guidance documents). Members are expected to draw upon those resources to influence strategic, program, learning and policy activities within their own organizations. Demand, in this sense, is local. Network governance is decentralized, independent of the centre. The rallying cry of the network tends to be narrow and specific, but still relevant to participating members. Any research capacity is a function of these interests and commitments. Costs are lower. The secretariat coordination function is restricted. No specialist role is required at the centre. Members assume the expert role. If contract management is required, it could also be assumed by individual members. The model here is similar to ECG, UN-RIAS and EvalNet. Given its inward focus, this is not considered an appropriate model for UNEG going forward, especially within a context of gap filling and expanded demand from the very top of the UN system – the Office of the Secretary General.

65. At the opposite end of the spectrum are networks that are more outward looking. They can be described as **Agents of Change networks**. More akin to a 'community', they aim at more than support to members. They have a strong secretariat and governance with a mandate to influence change directly from the centre. Demand is sourced from more than local needs. It is global. Resources provided by members to the centre are used to influence inter-agency strategies and policies directly on behalf of members. Authority is more centralized, representative of the network membership, and based on trust. The brand is given heightened visibility, with a stronger emphasis on research capacity, interacting and communications. While members still act as implementers at the local level, their role is

secondary. The centre is given the freedom to develop and implement on behalf of the network membership a more outward focus. Here the rallying cry becomes something more than methodology or procedures. It takes on a more substantive face in terms of content (e.g. SDGs – Agenda 2030). This type of model is somewhat similar to ALNAP. At the moment, UNEG does not have the capacity to be such a network.

66. Given the rapidly changing context, with demand emerging both internally from members and externally from across the UN system, a hybrid or **Dynamic Community Network** may be more appropriate for UNEG. Here, the mandate is “the promotion of evaluation in the UN as part of good governance” and content provider. It builds on UNEG’s reputation as a leader in evaluation by bringing quality support to the UN evaluation system. UNEG is seen as responding to the needs of a wider UN community. It is more than a loose coalition. UNEG is a professional network that supports professional development, increases knowledge utilization and sharing with a wider set of user stake-holder clients. Internal capacity is enlarged to allow content analysis and diffusion. It assumes a stronger secretariat and some financial independence. Governance reflects the network’s diversity and heterogeneity. It produces user-focused evidence and content that is considered useful to decision-makers. This model balances resource flows in both directions, aligning both an inward and outward emphasis. The centre uses resources to influence policies on behalf of the members, taking into account broader demands for content and services. The network develops a communications strategy. Legitimacy is based on both network representativeness and political positioning, linked to membership credentials and credibility. The network continues to filter information (evaluation reports and plans), invest and provides guidance, convenes the gathering of members and enables community building. But it combines this with an outward focus that includes investing in more content-centred products, amplifying content to a wider audience and convening more contact with UN inter-agency bodies outside of the usual UNEG members. It is more inclusive. UNEG’s new resource environment will force UNEG to revisit its mandate. This may imply a refocusing on the core mandate (Norms and Standards and adherence, competency development) in the short term, adding additional layers of work subject to time and resources available as the network moves into its next Strategy.

## Recommendations

67. As was the case in 2013, UNEG should keep in mind and build on its key strengths, which are valued by its members. They have clearly indicated during this assessment that UNEG should preserve its voluntary, inclusive and collaborative ethos. It should maintain cohesion of purpose among its diverse membership and avoid becoming too formal or bureaucratic. It should continue to offer a learning and networking forum for evaluators to help each other and learn from other networks, possibly continue to provide a forum for developing joint evaluations and certainly continue to provide leadership on promoting high professional standards in UN evaluation and evaluation skills among its members.

68. Going forward, UNEG needs to sharpen its vision. Areas for immediate improvement include: greater focus and prioritization; platform improvement to support knowledge exchange, learning and professional development; strengthening governance and the Secretariat; and improving the vision and communications on evaluation use. UNEG should continue to work towards being agile, adaptive and innovative, moving away from a strict adherence to objectives and hierarchies. To do this, it should focus in the short term on rebuilding internal capacity, before seizing long-term opportunities. There is

considerable professional talent within the network. These assets need to be re-energized. The production of guidance has been a big success in the past. Now is the time to build on these accomplishments, with more emphasis on content, use and sharing lessons. In the short term, until the next AGM in 2019, UNEG needs to undertake some immediate “housekeeping” actions (Recommendations 1-4). These are complemented by a long-term focus that connects to the next Strategy 2020-2025 (Recommendations 5-8). In terms of priorities, it is essential that UNEG adjust internal capacity first, and later focus on the longer term opportunities, should they remain relevant.

#### Short-term Immediate Housekeeping – Strengthening Internal Capacity

**Recommendation 1: UNEG to consider three (3) future thrusts that provide a lens for going forward, both in the short-term (2019) and long-term (2020-2025):**

- a) **SO1 remains UNEG’s foundation – Norms and standards** remain the base along with other activities such as peer review;
- b) **SDGs and Agenda 2030** open up the discussion about use, coalitions, and joint evaluations. More attention needs to be paid to UN political or policy fora such as the High Level Policy Forum, which meets in July in New York, with reference to its thematic work; and
- c) **UN Reform** – Seek to influence system-wide reform while recognizing that Agenda 2030 has shifted the focus of action to the country level. The emphasis is to create momentum through the Secretary General’s proposal for an Independent System Wide Evaluation (ISWE). As well, UNEG norms and standards have relevance. This is especially true in a country context. But UNEG cannot be everywhere. It needs to be more strategic in its objectives, and seek to find ways to reach country-level actors (e.g. UNCTs, governments, national evaluation associations/evaluators etc.), even if they cannot be reached directly.

**Recommendation 2 - Recognizing that the proposed changes need time and discussion, UNEG consider forming task forces during an interim transition period until AGM 2019) focusing on strengthening the governance and working modalities of UNEG:**

- a) **Streamline the network’s working groups** to reflect a more prioritized, strategic and trimmer work plan (under the leadership of the Vice Chairs);
- b) **Review the Principles of Working Together** to address governance concerns, membership status and member obligations.

**Recommendation 3: With a focus on improving governance, the interim task forces should consider changes to Executive Group, Roles of Chair and Vice Chairs and Secretariat.**

- a) **Consider the creation of an expanded Executive Steering Committee (ESC).** The ESC is would be expanded to eight members representing the four key constituencies (two members from each constituency) and interim task forces (plus the Chair), with the authority to oversee the work of UNEG between AGMs. It has the power to make decisions matters arising between annual meetings. Its membership should be representative of UNEG diverse constituency in terms of organizational type (e.g. Funds and Program, Secretariat, etc.), organization location, size and better reflect the current position levels (P4 to D2) within UNEG.

- b) **Consider expanding the role of Chair and redefining the role and responsibilities of the Vice Chairs** to cover key areas such a finance, communications and outreach, membership and partnership. The outgoing Chair would be expected to remain on the Steering Committee in an ex-officio capacity in support of the Chair.
- c) **Consider strengthening the Secretariat** as it will play a key role in supporting the revised ESC. Given the reduction in secretariat funding, the business model for the secretariat needs to be reviewed and consideration given to the role that will be expected from the secretariat by the membership. As part of this, consider making the membership fee a compulsory contribution, but maintain the tiered approach and the current level for the tiers. The next year will necessarily be a transition year for the secretariat and a number of administrative and HR issues must be addressed in order to ensure a smooth transition to the future secretariat function and location. UNEG could explore alternative means of achieving this in the absence of financial resources. It may include staff secondments, internships, joint work with larger UNEG members, or linkages with partners within and outside the UN could be considered.
- d) **Consider how the Annual General Meetings can be made more effective** through new working arrangements that takes a more hands-off approach in terms of management, more open, and a source of information sharing around the production and dissemination of a more focused set of expected results.

**Recommendation 4: With the aim of exerting greater influence, and reinforcing its position as a norms and standard setter in the international arena, that the interim task force consider paying special attention to membership criteria.**

- a) **Consideration be given to a number of Inter-governmental organizations (IOs)** that have expressed a keen interest to be part of UNEG, and recognize that some of the current membership do not meet the membership criteria but were grandfathered into UNEG.
- b) **As part of review of the PoWT, membership criteria could be reviewed;** if IO entities wish to adopt the UNEG Norms and Standards; have an evaluation policy; and are willing to pay a membership levy then perhaps they should be welcomed into the network. In line with other networks, other membership categories such as associate members may be considered.

#### Long-term Future Strategy – Seizing Opportunities

**Recommendation 5: UNEG to consider establishing a working group/task force aimed at developing a 2020-2025 strategy for adoption at the 2019 AGM with particular attention to issues pertaining to SDGs and Agenda 2030, evaluation use and professional development.**

Based on this assessment, the team suggests that the following points could be considered as important elements in reviewing UNEG's mission statement and strategy, with an eye enabling UNEG to become more proactive and forward looking.

- a) **Consideration be given to sharpening the understanding of what is “evaluation”**, and its relationship to audit. The perception was that current concepts were stuck in “1990s thinking.” It is important to rethink and focus upon the parameters of evaluation in 2020-2025.
- b) **Consideration be given to UNEG developing meta-evaluations and other evaluation products** to be shared at fora related to Agenda 2030 (e.g. the HLPF) and UN Reform. This could be funded by

UNEG or through resource mobilisation from interested donors and UNEG member agencies and led by the lead agencies for a specific SDG.

- c) **Consideration be given to UNEG’s focus and direction on how it works through partnership and providing an appropriate enabling environment.** Partnerships should have a clear strategic focus for the network and should be cross-cutting and not a separate SO.
- d) **Consideration be given to the many emerging evaluation topics that are coming to the table –** UNEG might put greater emphasis in terms of its ‘normative strategy’ on some of these (e.g. middle income countries, evaluating public policy). The use of Communities of Practice and online discussions regarding key emerging issues should be pursued.
- e) **Consideration to issues that cut across countries such as human rights and gender.** Given UNEG’s core values, the implication is how can UNEG promote this.
- f) **Consideration to joint evaluation.** Work to date has tended to lead to not doing evaluations together. The UNEG mechanism should allow for revisiting scenarios and the possibility of UNEG providing a platform for its members to engage/lead/promote joint evaluation activities. These should also be “branded” as UNEG joint evaluations. UNEG may wish to set a goal of undertaking at least one joint UNEG evaluation per year. UNEG should take steps to have other joint initiatives such as IAHE are also considered to be UNEG joint evaluations.
- g) **Consideration of what more can be done to improve communications and knowledge management (KM).** Members should commit to sharing evaluations and evaluation plans to support the network’s KM objectives. The role of the secretariat is also critical and needs to be strengthened.

**Recommendation 6: UNEG to consider the professional capacity of individuals (competency development, credentials / certification) as a key aspect of the current and future strategy.**

- a) **Consider building on a similar logic of peer review of UN organizations,** this same reasoning be applied to UN professional evaluators. Building on the work done on the competencies, and on initiatives by ILO and UNITAR, this may be something which UNEG itself undertakes, or in partnership with other likeminded groups (e.g. the Canadian Evaluation Society, Claremont, UN Staff College). Building on the work already done on competencies and EPE will be important in terms of credentials / certification.

**Recommendation 7: Within the context of UN reform and UNEG’s position within it, to consider further strengthening of the evaluation capacity across the UN system.**

- a) **Developing the next generation of products** with an eye to exploring new themes such as accountability to programme countries and to beneficiaries and governments;
- b) **Further development of knowledge management,** including on-line workshops and seminars that reach out to user-client stakeholders;
- c) **Permitting the creation of UNEG groups** to discuss joint needs and developing products and tools for mutual learning and benefit;
- d) **Developing Monitoring and Performance Measurement tools** to better allow UNEG members to assess their own performance in relation to the Norms and Standards (e.g. a maturity rating/online assessment for members such as the GAIN survey), and to measure how members engage with UNEG, setting clear membership engagement parameters.

- e) **Participate in the co-ordination effort linked to Independent System-Wide Evaluations (ISWE).**

**Recommendation 8: As was the case in 2013, consider redoubling efforts in terms outreach**

Options to achieve this could include:

- a) **Developing a communication strategy**, including the use of social media for both UNEG members and those who take an interest in UNEG.
- b) **Developing fund-raising efforts** around specific "projects" for which a convergence of interests exists.
- c) **Advocating and promoting the objectives and values of UNEG** with Member States, UN management and Boards.
- d) **Strengthening partnerships** within the UN to develop concrete joint programmes and tools. .



Appendix 1: Logic Model for UNEG Strategy 2014-2019

## Logic Model – United Nations Evaluation Group Strategy 2014 -2019



## Appendix 2: A network analysis of UNEG

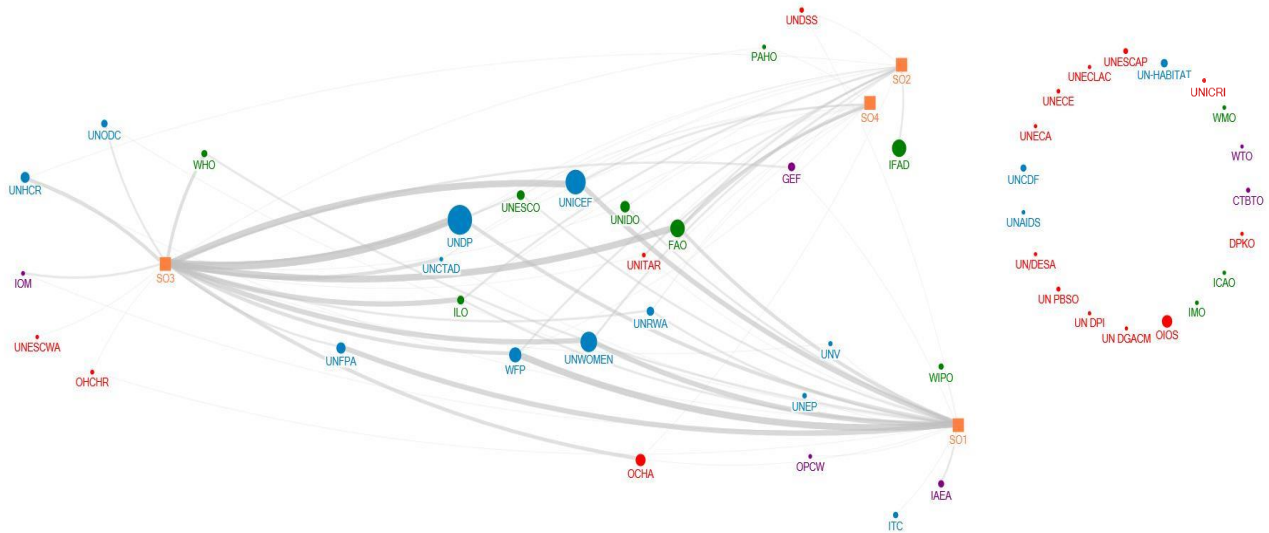
1. This network analysis portrays the connections of UNEG members to UNEG's four Strategic Objectives (SOs) (shown in Map 1), and the interconnectedness of UNEG members (shown in Map 2).
2. Map 1 shows 51 "nodes" - 47 organizations and four SOs - and the links between them. Connections are defined by an organization's participation in working and interest groups operating under each of the four SOs. An individual link is defined as participation by a network member in one of the working/interest groups under a given SO. In many cases, a network member will be a participant in more than one working/interest group under an SO, and the higher the level of participation, the stronger the connection (represented as grey lines – as connections get stronger, the line becomes wider). In some cases, multiple representatives from an organization are members of a given working group, further adding to the importance of that connection. The pattern of association reveals the pattern of primary and secondary interests of members in each of the SOs. The nodes in Map 1 are sized to reflect the voluntary financial contributions they have made to UNEG. The types of member organization are represented in the colours of the nodes, denoting for example UN Funds and Programmes, Specialized Agencies, etc.
3. Map 1 suggests that UNEG members can be divided into groups, or "clusters". One quite large group comprises 19 organizations with no affiliations to SOs and their working groups. There are three clusters involving organizations connected to one particular SO, and final cluster of organisations connected to multiple SOs. Members of a given cluster are more interconnected with each other than to the rest of the network, even if they are connected to other SOs outside that cluster. As a useful metaphor, think of nodes as having gravity, with a link to an SO resulting in a pull toward that SO. Usually, the existence of a cluster is an indication of some kind of common interest among members of the cluster. The network analysis reveals that:
  - a small number of network members are responsible for most connections to the SOs
  - SO1 and SO3 have more organizational connections than SO2 and SO4. The higher-weight connections tend to reflect where the major interests lie.
  - The most busy network members tend to contribute most financially to the network. Other factors may also contribute to the level of financial contribution: evaluation budgets, staffing and seniority of the UNEG head.
  - Members of the cluster connected to more than one SO are all UN Programs and Funds or Specialized Agencies. This cluster also accounts for most, but not all, voluntary financial contributions. The bulk of large voluntary financial contributors are located in New York and Rome.
  - Many UNEG members are not connected to the SOs. Participation is low among UN Secretariat Departments.
4. Map 2 shows connections between UNEG members based on their common interests in various working groups. Here there are two clusters. Members of each cluster tend to be more connected between themselves than with the members of the other cluster. Additionally we can say:
  - There are many cross-cluster connections, a reflection of commonalities that members of the clusters have, driven by the same similarities in orientation to the SOs and their working groups

that we saw in Map 1.

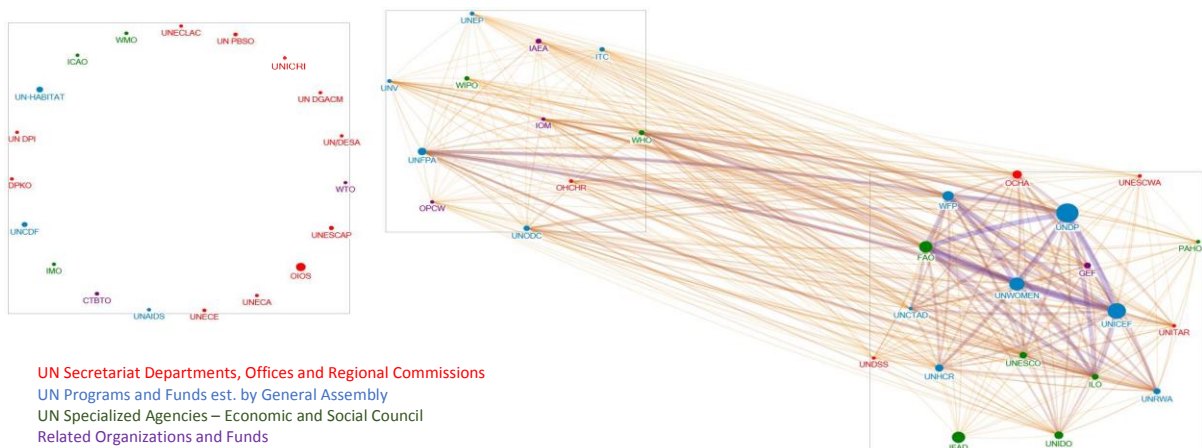
- There is a core of highly interconnected players (thicker, purple lines), mostly within one cluster, which includes the members of the highly connected cluster in Map 1. So there is a subset of members that effectively comprise the “skeleton” of the network, with the most interconnections based on working groups, and, we can reasonably infer, between individuals, and with high potential for information exchange.
- Some of the central organizations (e.g. UNDP) are very connected to the rest of the network. Such organizations are vital to network functioning, providing links between all other members, thus promoting communication, information flow and interaction.

### Map 1: Participation in SOs and Voluntary Financial Contributions to UNEG

UN Secretariat Departments, Offices and Regional Commissions  
 UN Programs and Funds est. by General Assembly  
 UN Specialized Agencies – Economic and Social Council  
 Related Organizations and Funds



### Map 2: Derived connections between organizations



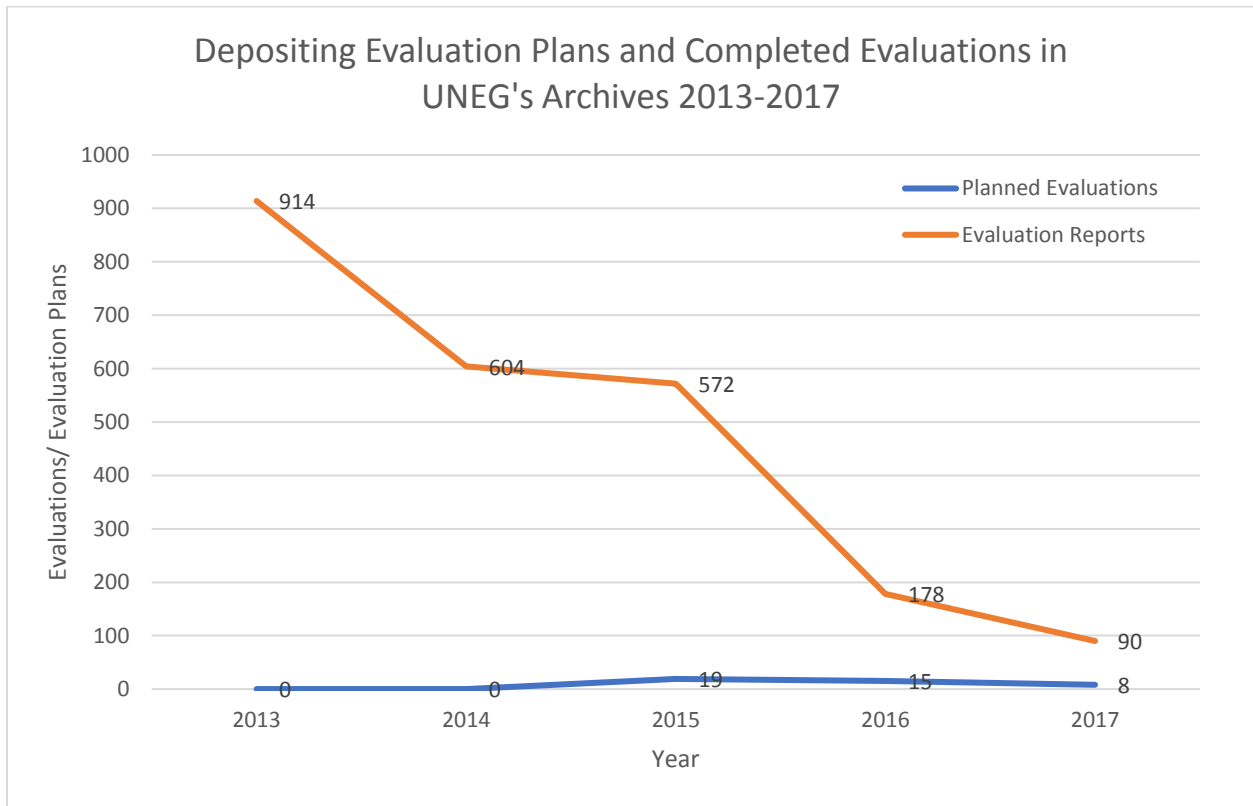
UN Secretariat Departments, Offices and Regional Commissions  
 UN Programs and Funds est. by General Assembly  
 UN Specialized Agencies – Economic and Social Council  
 Related Organizations and Funds

## Appendix 3: SWOT exercise

<b>STRENGTHS</b>		UNEG Heads %	UNEG Staff %	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>		UNEG Heads %	UNEG Staff %
1.	Professional Evaluation Network	37.2	42.1	1.	Governance and decision-making	20.7	25.6
2.	Evaluation Norms, Standards & Guidelines	25.0	17.1	2.	Diversity – large versus small members	11.6	2.4
3.	Sharing Evaluation Knowledge Learning & Practice	16.3	12.1	3.	Unfocused/over-ambitious (too many working groups/priorities)	11.6	4.8
•	Advocacy, communications & promoting use	7.1	6.4	4.	Uneven voluntary participation	10.3	5.6
•	Reputation	7.1	8.6	5.	Limited resources (time & financial)	10.3	9.6
•	Other	7.1	4.2	6.	Agency versus network interests	7.7	2.4
•	Don't Know		9.4	7.	Unclear vision and mandate - relevance	6.4	12.8
				•	Communications	3.8	4.8
				•	Not inclusive network	3.8	3.2
				•	Insufficient interface - outside partners	3.8	4.8
				•	Innovation & adaptation	2.5	4.0
				•	Professionalization	2.5	2.4
				•	Delivery & Execution	2.5	4.0
				•	SDG – Agenda 2030	-	3.2
				•	Other	-	2.4
				•	Don't Know	2.5	8.0
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>				<b>THREATS</b>			
1.	Capacity Building - Professionalization	27.2	26.2	1.	UNEG resources (time & funding)	17.6	9.8
2.	UN Reform – Indep. System Wide Evaluation	21.0	23.1	2.	UNEG bureaucracy	13.5	11.4
3.	SDGs – Agenda 2030	18.5	20.0	3.	Weak execution & non-delivery	10.8	4.9
•	Networking & Learning	13.6	3.1	4.	Low innovation & adaptation	9.5	9.8
•	UNDAF & National Capacity Building	6.2	4.6	5.	Secretary General's reforms	6.8	5.7
•	Policy Contribution & Use	4.9	1.5	6.	Large versus small members	5.4	1.6
•	External Partnerships	2.5	3.8	7.	Low utilization, use & influence	5.4	-
•	Other	6.2	3.8	8.	Loss of reputation	5.4	8.1
•	Don't Know	-	13.8	9.	Competition from other networks	4.1	3.3
				10.	Pressure to grow	4.1	1.6
				•	Low participation (fatigue, apathy, disengaged)	2.7	9.8
				•	Self-interest versus network interests	2.7	4.9
				•	Decline in professionalization	2.7	.8
				•	Unfocused & unresponsiveness	2.7	4.9
				•	Voluntary participation	1.3	.8
				•	SDGs – Agenda 2030	1.3	1.6
				•	Low consensus on priorities	1.3	.8
				•	Secretariat	1.3	-
				•	Policy consensus	1.3	-
				•	Challenges to independence	-	1.6
				•	Don't Know	-	18.7

**Appendix 4: UNEG Document Repository**

1. Since 2013 the number of evaluations deposited in UNEG’s Archives has decreased 900%.
2. Although UNEG’s membership is 47 organizations, 42 evaluation plans have been deposited in UNEG’s Archives since 2015. Assuming that plans are multi-year, with different periodicities and routinely updated annually, the number appears lower than might be expected.



**Appendix 5: UNEG’s Income and Expenditure**

1. UNEG voluntary contributions for the period 2014-2017 totalled \$1,463,477. This represents contributions that were one and half times more than the previous four years (2010-2013 - \$593,032), and over four times more than the four years prior to that (2006-2009 – \$289,650).
2. Apart from exception years (2013 and 2016), expenditures have been less than contributions over the last 8 years. For the period 2014-2017, expenditures totalled \$1,124,510, higher by a factor of 128% when compared to the previous four years (2010-2013 - \$494,253) and 256% higher when compared to the four year period before that (2006-2009 \$315,698).
3. Comparing expenditures to voluntary contributions, the surplus generated for the period 2014-2017 was approximately 30%, similar to the surplus generated in the previous four years (2010-2013). Overall, the past 8 years represent a marked departure from the preceding period (2006-2009), where expenditures totaled only \$315,698 for the period, generating an overall deficit of -8.3%.
4. The surplus accumulated by UNEG today is the result of significantly lower expenditure relative to income over the past eight (8) years.

