



**UNEG**  
United Nations Evaluation Group



**PROFESSIONAL PEER REVIEW  
OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION**

**UNITED NATIONS  
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME**

# Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function

## UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME



# FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the report on the Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of UNEP. It was carried out at the request of UNEP Evaluation Office. Although a key component of UN agency accountability, I would like to stress the voluntary nature of the exercise and the buy-in of UNEP management.

The review was conducted by a panel of three members of UN and bilateral evaluation units supported by a senior expert and assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the UNEP evaluation function.

In agreement with UNEP, the panel explicitly chose a light version of the peer review modality, which did not include field visits.

The panel based its work on the UNEG-DAC Framework for Peer Reviews and on the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System. Systematic references are made in the report to the UNEG Norms and to what extent they were adhered to by UNEP.

The report concludes that the UNEP evaluation function is, generally, following the UNEG Norms and Standards. The evaluation function is independent, well established and evaluation has been growing in importance through the reform process initiated in 2006 and with the increased focus on managing for results. The panel also conveys a number of recommendations aiming at strengthening the independence of the evaluation function and the use of its reports.

However, a peer review is not only about findings and recommendations. An important aspect

is the peer exchange, within the panel and between the panel and the staff of the function reviewed. For this particular peer review this exchange benefited from a parallel peer review of the UN-Habitat evaluation function and from discussions where all three parties participated. It should be noted that, not the least, did the peer review team itself benefit from the insights gained, the sharing of good practices and the rich exchanges on fundamental evaluation issues and related standards.

Segbedzi Norgbey, Head of the UNEP Evaluation Office, and his team provided the panel with useful inputs and insights throughout the process. This helped us understand the UNEP context and guide us towards our conclusions. We also noticed a readiness to learn from others.

The panel is most grateful for the accessibility of and frank dialogues with UNEP staff, including senior management, and with representatives of member states. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who invested their time in facilitating the review and in responding to our demands for information and data.

We do hope that the peer review will be a useful tool for UNEP and contribute to knowledge about, confidence in and use of evaluations.

Vienna, March 2012

Margareta de Goj̄s  
Chair of the Peer Review Panel  
Director of UNIDO Evaluation Group

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of this Professional Peer Review is to provide an independent assessment of the functioning and quality of the UNEP evaluation function. It is primarily intended for use by UNEP in its quest for excellence and by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Evaluation Network and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). More specifically, the peer review serves to enhance knowledge about, confidence in and use of evaluations by governing bodies and senior management of UNEP, improve evaluation policy and practice, build internal capacities and confidence of the evaluation function and support the office in its efforts to ensure greater acceptance and use of evaluation findings in the performance management system of the organization.

The peer review was conducted in line with the UNEG Framework for Professional Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN Organizations, which was approved as a UNEG reference document at the UNEG Annual General Meeting in 2011. In line with the framework, the peer review has applied three core criteria that need to be satisfied for evaluation functions and products to be considered of high quality, i.e., independence, credibility and utility.

The peer review panel consisted of: Margareta de Goys, Director, Evaluation Group, UNIDO, (Chair); Dominique de Crombrughe, Special Evaluator for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium; and Oscar A. Garcia, Senior Evaluation Adviser, United Nations Development Programme, Evaluation

Office. The panel was assisted by an adviser, expert in evaluation and familiar with multilateral organizations, Roland Rodts.

The peer panel has greatly appreciated UNEP's collaboration and full support throughout the review process. The Evaluation Office has engaged with the panel in an open and constructive dialogue, sharing information, thoughts and ideas. Senior management, divisional, regional office staff and evaluation staff at UNEP have all facilitated the collection of data and discussion of issues and findings.

The peer review's main limitation is that it could not undertake an independent assessment of the technical credibility of evaluations conducted by UNEP. It was also not possible to conduct interviews with key external stakeholders, in particular government and NGO cooperating partners based in partner countries. Although not all aspects were covered, the panel is confident that the report can serve as a credible input and stimulus for UNEP as it moves forward to improve and embed the evaluation function.

## OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Generally, UNEP follows the UNEG Norms and Standards in evaluation. The evaluation function is independent, well established and evaluation has been growing in importance through the reform process initiated in 2006 and with the increased focus on managing for results.

The Evaluation Office is a professionally managed function and, although human resources seem insufficient to deal with the high demand for its services and to carry out mandatory project as well as strategic evaluations, the peer

review panel recognizes the efforts made in the last few years to strengthen the office. The fact that the Executive Director is using evaluation compliance statistics in performance assessment of division directors is a good indicator of the perceived independence, credibility and of actual usage.

## **INDEPENDENCE**

There is adequate separation between the planning, monitoring and evaluation functions and a system is in place to ensure the absence of conflict of interest and adherence to evaluation standards and ethics. Evaluations are conducted in an independent manner and the Evaluation Office reports on evaluation findings without interference. Independence could, however, be strengthened through more regular and systematic reporting to governing bodies, as envisaged in the Evaluation Policy.

A large part of the workload is taken up by mandatory project evaluations and many of these belong to an (expanding) Global Environment Facility (GEF) portfolio. The recently initiated subprogramme evaluations also demand considerable resources. There is, however, limited scope to undertake more strategic or thematic evaluations, due to limited staff resources but also due to the absence of non-earmarked financial resources at the disposal of the Evaluation Office. This limits the ability of the Evaluation Office to independently decide on its work programme.

The fact that the Evaluation Office does not control project evaluation budgets also affects the independence of the process and reduces the scope for rationalizing the work of the office through clustering evaluations.

## **CREDIBILITY**

The Evaluation Office enjoys a high level of credibility, mainly due to the professionalism of its staff, the rigour of the evaluation process and the quality of its evaluations. Independent,

external evaluators conduct most evaluations. Evaluation consultants are generally perceived as being independent and impartial. No case of conflict of interest was found.

Evaluations were generally found to be of high quality and a quality assurance system is in place both for evaluators and evaluation reports. However, the relatively small budgets available for project evaluations, a limited involvement of partner governments and a restricted call on national consultants, cause concern as regards the robustness of some evaluations. This said, evaluations rated by the peer review team and, over the years by GEF, consistently received good ratings.

Methodologies used for planning as well as conducting evaluations are solid and often innovative. The methodological development is not only benefiting UNEP but also the larger UN community. Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToRs) are exhaustive and provide detailed guidance to evaluators.

## **UTILITY**

Evaluations are considered as useful by UNEP managers and staff and are used for accountability, performance appraisal and learning purposes. Findings often feed into the formulation of new phases or projects/programmes but less so to policy making or overall strategy formulation. Evaluations mainly assess technical issues and achievements of outcomes but there is very little attention to cross-cutting issues such as gender.

The bulk of evaluations undertaken are terminal project evaluation and there is less scope for higher level strategic evaluations or evaluations of the linkage between UNEP's normative work and its link to technical cooperation. There has, however, been a move 'upstream' with the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) evaluations and the presently conducted evaluations of subprogrammes. The peer review panel endorses the focus on terminal evaluations but recognizes that this limits the possibility to identify and address

weaknesses during project implementation.

The present capacity constraints limit the usefulness of the Evaluation Office and this constraint is expected to increase with a growing UNEP, including GEF, project portfolio. The panel finds that the workload, the budget and the human resource base are not balanced. The panel, moreover, identified a need to strengthen the linkage between evaluation and UNEP's Normative Work. The Biennial Evaluation Synthesis report is of good quality but the content not generally known within the organization.

A system for following up on recommendations is in place and functioning although there is limited ownership on behalf of the entity responsible for the evaluated programme/project/policy.

UNEP has developed cutting-edge methodologies for analysing, categorizing and disseminating lessons learned but, unfortunately, activities in this area have not been conducted during the last few years. Senior management in UNEP could make a better use of the Evaluation Office's professional capacity by more focus on policy-level evaluation. The Evaluation Office contributes to enhancing the practice of evaluation in the UN system.

The utility to Member States is not fully optimized as there are limited opportunities for the Evaluation Office to exchange with governing bodies.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The panel considers the current reporting lines between the Evaluation Office and the Executive Director as appropriate. However, further consideration should be given to a direct reporting line to the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) or a designated subgroup and in creating space for evaluation reporting, on a biannual basis, on the agenda of the Governing Council.

The panel advises the ED and senior management

to continue to promote conditions in which independent and high-quality evaluation is regarded as a basic instrument for learning and to strengthen accountability to the general public and partners. More specifically, the panel recommends more higher-level or strategic evaluations, to feed into policy-making and strategic planning.

The panel recommends that the number and levels of Evaluation Office staff should be further enhanced over time to cover increasing demand for evaluations and provide additional support to learning and knowledge management. In order to strengthen the authority of the Evaluation Office and to enable its head to more regularly interact with senior management, the post of the head of the Evaluation Office should be upgraded to the level of director.

The UNEP management should ensure that the evaluation function has adequate regular resources to operate in an independent and credible manner. Increased focus should be placed on strategic evaluations in line with the organization's strategic and programmatic priorities and in order to feed into higher-level decision- and policy-making. A specific budget line for evaluation, under the control of the Evaluation Office, should be established in the Programme of Work (PoW). The budgetary threshold for projects for which an independent evaluation is mandatory should be raised to USD 1 million. Evaluation of smaller projects should be delegated to the technical branches. More attention should be paid to ensuring a better balance between the use of international and national experts.

The ToR should pay attention to and balance the level of ambition and scope of work with the resources available. Particularly, the scope and intensity of the fieldwork should more closely match the need for structured collection of primary and other data. For larger evaluations, the panel recommends the establishment of external evaluation reference groups to enhance the quality and credibility of the evaluations. The Evaluation Office should also promote gender mainstreaming in evaluations, develop related



guidance and incorporate gender issues in ToRs.

UNEP should, both in principle and in practice, establish a clear division of responsibility between the evaluation function and the organization's line management regarding the management response system. Efforts to document and track management response to evaluations should if possible be decentralized to technical branches with the Evaluation Office being responsible for an overall annual report on compliance, including implementation of recommendations. The MRS sheets should be continuously accessible on the Intranet to all UNEP staff members.

The Evaluation Office should go back to systematically harvest lessons from existing evaluations. A knowledge management system that articulates the project level experience with the normative work done by the organization in the follow-up of international conventions would foster greater organizational effectiveness.

UNEP should give high priority to addressing the disconnect between its various results-focused data collection, reporting and analysis tools. A thorough review of existing monitoring and reporting systems and their application is vital to ensure that evaluations as well as the corporate

monitoring system have access to more reliable, relevant and comparable results-oriented data.

Based on the findings and resulting recommendations outlined above, there is need to review the evaluation policy for subsequent approval/endorsement by the Governing Council to better define:

- A) division of responsibility between the evaluation function and the organization's line management regarding the management response system;
- B) reporting line to the CPR or a designated subgroup and in creating space for evaluation reporting, on a biannual basis, on the agenda of the Governing Council/CPR;
- C) The modality of funding for the evaluation function so that it has adequate regular resources to operate in an independent and credible manner.
- D) The budgetary threshold for projects for which an independent evaluation is mandatory. This peer review recommends that the threshold be raised to USD 1 million. Evaluation of smaller projects should be delegated to the technical branches.

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Two key factors led to the introduction of Professional Peer Reviews of evaluation functions in multilateral agencies in 2004: a strong demand for multi-donor evaluations of UN organizations on the one hand and the recognition of the need to harmonize evaluation practice due to the considerable variation across the UN System on the other. In view of this, the Evaluation Network of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), jointly with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), introduced the peer review mechanism. The rationale behind the peer review of a UN organizations' evaluation function is to establish the credibility of its evaluation function and potentially decreasing the need for external donor evaluations of the agency or its evaluation office. Over the years, peer reviews have assessed the evaluation function at UNDP, UNIDO, IFAD, UNICEF and WFP.

The Nairobi-based UN agencies, UNEP and UN-Habitat, requested a peer review at the same time, which led to the decision to undertake the two reviews in parallel. This approach has the advantage of one peer panel working with both evaluation offices – sharing a common approach, using resources efficiently by saving travel cost, etc. – and organizing joint peer exchanges during the review. The latter are an important part of the peer review process and resulted in a larger interaction among peers. At the same time, separate reports for each agency were produced.

This report contains the peer assessment of the UNEP evaluation function. It includes the detailed plan and approach of the DAC/UNEG review of UNEP's evaluation function,

background information on the organization and its Evaluation Office, a matrix for assessing the quality of evaluation reports, a list of documents consulted and persons met and detailed assessment questions based on the three main criteria of the review-independence, credibility and utility- and the four review matrix questions (what is evaluated, how are evaluations conducted, how are findings communicated, whether there is a system in place to follow-up on evaluation recommendations). The peer review was carried out between September 2011 and January 2012, with a visit to the UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, in October 2011.

### 1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the peer review is to provide an independent assessment of the evaluation function in UNEP. Additionally, the peer review should serve to:

- Enhance knowledge about, confidence in and use of evaluations by governing bodies and senior management of UNEP and lead to informed decisions about increasing the independence of the Evaluation Office;
- Improve evaluation policy and practice, including stronger planning and resourcing of evaluation by sharing good practice and building internal capacities and confidence in the Evaluation Office; and
- Support the Evaluation Office's efforts to ensure greater acceptance and integration of evaluation findings in the performance management system of the organization.

An abbreviated version of the peer review ToR is attached in Annex 1.

### 1.3 CORE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The peer review is conducted in line with the UNEG Framework for Professional Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN Organizations, which was approved as a UNEG reference document at the UNEG Annual General Meeting in 2011. The framework builds on the Framework for Professional Peer Reviews developed by the DAC/UNEG Joint Task Force on Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations (January 2007). This framework recognizes that the model may be adapted in some cases, for example, to very small or highly specialized organizations and/or those with limited existing evaluation capacities. Subsequently, the DAC/UNEG task team developed a framework for 'lighter' peer reviews to be conducted in small(er) organizations such as UNEP and which has been used in this peer review. The 'reduced' framework addresses the core assessment question: "Are the agencies' evaluation function and its products independent; credible; and useful for learning and accountability purposes?"

The approach and methodology thus hinges on the UNEG Framework and clusters the main issues under three core criteria that need to be satisfied for high quality evaluation functions:

**Independence of evaluations and evaluation systems:** The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy making, delivery, and management of assistance. A requisite measure of independence of the evaluation function is a recognized precondition for credibility, validity and usefulness. At the same time, each review should bear in mind in that the appropriate guarantees of the necessary independence in a particular organization will differ according to the nature of its work, its governance and decision-making structures, and other factors. Moreover, most organizations aim to encourage the active application and use of evaluations at all levels of management, meaning that systemic measures for ensuring the necessary objectivity and impartiality of its work should receive due attention. Indicators of independence

are broadly covered by UNEG Norms 2.1-2.4, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1-6.5, listed in Annex 2.

**Credibility of evaluations:** The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators, the degree of transparency of the evaluation process and the quality of evaluation outputs. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluations in order to promote credibility and commitment. Indicators of credibility are mainly treated in UNEG Norms 2.5, 3.1, 4.2, 5.2, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1-9.3, 10.1, 10.2 and 11.1-11.5, as listed in Annex 2.

**Utility of evaluations:** To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of different stakeholders. Importantly, each review should bear in mind that ensuring the utility of evaluations is only partly under the control of the evaluation function. It is also a responsibility of decision-makers and managers, within the organization and in partner countries and of representatives of member countries through their participation in governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving and using evaluations. Indicators of utility are mainly treated in UNEG Norms 1.3, 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.2, 10.1, 10.2, 12.1-12.3 and 13.1, 13.2 listed in Annex 2.

The UNEP Evaluation Office agreed that all three criteria were relevant to the exercise and inter-related. It emphasized the great importance of independence and requested that related criteria (such as impartiality, transparency and effectiveness of evaluation) are thoroughly reviewed.

The core criteria are elaborated and adapted for this peer review in the Normative Framework, which relates these criteria to questions about (a) what is evaluated; (b) how are evaluations conducted; and (c) how are evaluation findings communicated, with the ultimate aim to determine whether the Evaluation Office is aligned

to UNEG Norms and Standards. A copy of the Normative Framework is attached in Annex 3.

### 1.4 THE PEER REVIEW PANEL

A number of considerations were taken into account when composing the membership of the panel: (i) relevant professional experience; (ii) independence – to avoid any potential or perceived conflict of interest or partiality, the panel members do not have any working relationship to UNEP that might influence the panel’s position and deliberations; and (iii) the level of seniority of panel members. The combination of these criteria together with the voluntary nature of service on the panel and the wish to have members from bilateral as well as multilateral evaluation functions resulted in the following composition:

- Margareta de Goys, Director, Evaluation Group, UNIDO, (Chair)
- Dominique de Crombrugghe, Special Evaluator for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium
- Oscar A. Garcia, Senior Evaluator, United Nations Development Programme, Evaluation Office

The panel was assisted by an adviser, expert in evaluation and familiar with multilateral organizations, Roland Rodts. The adviser was responsible for preparatory work (data collection and information gathering) and a preliminary assessment of the collected information. The adviser also participated in the interviews of stakeholders and in the drafting of the peer review report.

### 1.5 APPROACH

The methodology and methods applied are consistent with other peer reviews, using similar templates and methods and is aligned to the UNEG Framework. However, this review has been conducted according to “Peer reviews for ‘small’ evaluation functions” and has, therefore, not included field visits, but a survey of regional office staff was conducted. Interviews

were held with various staff members at the UNEG Headquarters in Nairobi, and, over the phone, with staff based in other locations and with external evaluation consultants.

The Normative Framework, used for the peer review can be summarized as follow:

	What is evaluated?	How are evaluations conducted?	How are evaluations communicated and used?
Independence			
Credibility			
Utility			

In carrying out the review the panel engaged with:

- Stakeholders in governing bodies and senior management to gain an understanding of their concerns and share with them insights into good evaluation practice to address the expressed intention to enhance their knowledge and confidence in evaluation;
- Peers in the evaluation office to learn about the evaluation function’s practices and discuss additional or alternative ways to address, often, common evaluation challenges. These peer discussions were also held together with colleagues from the UN-HABITAT evaluation function to broaden the exchange and foster additional learning;
- Operational and senior UNEP managers to gain an understanding of their concerns and discuss issues related to planning and conducting evaluations and learning from evaluations.

### 1.6 THE REVIEW PROCESS

The following major steps and activities were undertaken during the review.

#### PREPARATION OF THE APPROACH FOR THE REVIEW

The preparatory activities were conducted

collaboratively by the peer panel members and the UNEP Evaluation Office. The Peer Review Approach Paper and Work Plan was finalized in the course of September 2011. The document describes the key elements of the peer review: background, purpose, scope, general approach and methods, composition of the peer panel and the proposed time schedule. Not the least, it contained the Peer Review Normative Framework and review matrix.

Subsequent to the preparation of the Approach Paper, a self-assessment template was prepared, for gathering information from the UNEP Evaluation Office, including views on its institutional positioning in UNEP and an opinion on how the function performs in relation to the core criteria. The findings of the self-assessment were used to triangulate information collected during the visit to Nairobi and also allowed the Evaluation Office staff to prepare for the visit of the panel.

## **REVIEW OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTATION**

Subsequently, the peer review team reviewed key documents and the adviser conducted a desk study. The reviewed documents covered general information on UNEP, its organizational structure and the institutional setting of the Evaluation Office within UNEP and evaluation-specific documents. The study also served to gain insight into the processes governing the programming, conduct, reporting and feedback of evaluations commissioned by the Evaluation Office. The preparatory work resulted in a factual report, drafted by the adviser. This report presented a preliminary analysis of findings and pointed out a number of issues and questions which required follow-up during the visit of the peer panel to UNEP's headquarters.

## **ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF EVALUATIONS OF THE UNEP EVALUATION OFFICE**

An in-depth assessment of eight selected independent evaluations was conducted. The

quality of the reports was analysed based on the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports, approved at the UNEG AGM 2010. Based on the UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation, this checklist includes critical indicators for a high-quality evaluation report.

## **INTERVIEWS WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

From 16-29 October 2011, the panel and the adviser visited UNEP headquarters in Nairobi and conducted semi-structured interviews with UNEP management and staff from both substantive and policy functions and including Evaluation Office staff members. The basic purpose of the interviews was to collect information on the structural aspects of the functioning of the Evaluation Office and in relation to the three main quality assessment criteria. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed new questions to be introduced during the interview in response to the interviewee's answers.

During the mission a meeting was also organized with representatives of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). At the end of each day of interviews the panel members and the adviser shared their findings, and identified gaps in knowledge. This facilitated the development of a common understanding. To conclude the field visit, the panel discussed its initial findings with the Evaluation Office and UNEP management during a presentation of preliminary findings and feedback meeting. Subsequent to the mission to Nairobi, a number of telephone interviews were held with external consultants involved in UNEP evaluations and external stakeholders, such as the head of the GEF evaluation function. The list of interviewees and persons met is appended in Annex 4.

Following the field visit, an e-mail survey was conducted to gauge the views and opinions of the UNEP's Regional Office staff on the independence, credibility and utility of the Evaluation Office evaluations. Given the very low rate of response, the panel decided not to make use of the survey results.

## **VERIFICATION OF FINDINGS AND PREPARATION OF THE DRAFT FINAL REPORT**

A preliminary assessment by the peer panel was made based on all the evidence gathered through the different methods. This draft report reflects a team effort where all team members have been involved in the collection of data, conducting interviews and in analysing and validating the collected information.

### **1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE PEER REVIEW**

It should be noted that the peer review is not a formal evaluation. It is a less comprehensive and in-depth assessment but adheres to a rigorous methodology applying the key principles of evaluation while taking full advantage of the particular benefits of a peer mechanism.

The peer review's strongest limitation is that it could not undertake an independent assessment of the technical credibility of evaluations conducted by UNEP; to do so, would have required technical experts with relevant expertise, which would have been difficult to get on board and go beyond a peer review of the evaluation function. Instead, the panel has assessed whether the evaluation process of UNEP includes adequate measures to ensure the best possible technical credibility of evaluations.

It was also not possible to conduct interviews with key external stakeholders, in particular government and NGO cooperating partners

based in partner countries. A key challenge for UNEP's accountability emerged during this process, in that institutional accountability tends to be regarded as primarily 'upwards' towards the Management, Governing Bodies and major donors. Although not all aspects were covered by this peer review, the panel is confident that the report can serve as a credible input and stimulus for UNEP as it moves forward to improve and embed the evaluation function as a critical component in its ongoing search for excellence in fulfilling its mandate.

### **1.8 REPORT STRUCTURE**

After the introductory chapter on background and approach and a chapter briefly describing the evaluation function in UNEP, the report discusses, in turn, each of the criteria and analytical dimensions in three separate chapters. Different facets, pertinent to the dimensions of independence, credibility and utility, are described under separate headings and examined in relation to their importance. Each of the three main chapters ends with a brief, overall conclusion. The report ends with a chapter on overall conclusions and recommendations, organized along the main issues the panel identified during the analysis. When appropriate, the recommendations are directed to the organization as a whole.

## CHAPTER 2

# UNEP – GENERAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 MANDATE

UNEP has the principal responsibility for addressing environmental issues within the United Nations system. The mandate of UNEP derives from General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, which established the Governing Council of UNEP, the Environment Secretariat and the Environmental Fund.

UNEP's mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and people to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. A primary function of UNEP's work is to review global environmental trends, signal emerging issues, and use its convening power to catalyse and promote international cooperation and action. UNEP is also tasked with advancing the development and implementation of environmental norms and policies, and with improving coordination, cooperation and coherence across the United Nations system, as well as in relation to multilateral environmental agreements.

### 2.2 GOVERNANCE

The Governing Council (GC) is UNEP's highest Governing Body. The council is composed of 58 members elected by the UN General Assembly for four-year terms.<sup>1</sup> It establishes UNEP's programme priorities, and approves the biennial budget and Programme of Work (PoW). It meets every two years in Nairobi, Kenya, and every other year in a special session, usually in another country.

<sup>1</sup> Sixteen members are from Africa, 13 from Asia, 6 from Eastern Europe, 10 from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 13 from the Western countries.

The Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) serves as the inter-sessional subsidiary body of the GC. It ensures that UNEP policies and activities take full account of the directions given by the Governing Council and the General Assembly. In executing its responsibilities, the CPR works through Working Groups and informal Contact Groups which are set up from time to time, as the need arises, to facilitate the discussions.

The Secretariat is headed by the Executive Director (ED), presently Achim Steiner. He took office in June 2006. The Executive Office further consists of the Deputy Executive Director and the Chief of the Executive Office. Core management and policy functions are being consolidated under the Office of Operations. A Senior Management Team is responsible for the leadership, strategy and priorities of the organization, for the delivery of the Business Plan and Budget and for the overall day-to-day running of UNEP. This team is led by the Executive Director and includes the Deputy Director, the six division directors, the chief, Executive Office and the chief, Office for Operations.

The UNEP organizational structure consists of six divisions which are involved in the implementation and accomplishment of objectives in six cross-cutting thematic priority areas, mentioned below.

The *Division of Environmental Policy Implementation* (DEPI) is responsible for the implementation of environmental policy in order to foster sustainable development at global, regional and national levels. The Division is accountable for three of UNEP's six subprogrammes (Climate Change, Disasters and Conflicts and Ecosystem Management) and is

UNEP's focal Division for capacity building. The *Division of Technology, Industry and Economics* (DTIE) addresses environmental issues at global and regional levels, provides leadership and encourages partnerships in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and people to improve their quality of life. It is accountable for two of UNEP's six subprogrammes (Harmful Substances and Hazardous Waste and Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Consumption and Production).<sup>2</sup>

The *Division of Environmental Law and Conventions* (DELIC) promotes the progressive development and implementation of environmental law to respond to environmental challenges. It also supports the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). It is the Division accountable for the Environmental Governance subprogramme.

The *Division of Early Warning and Assessment* (DEWA) provides policy-relevant environmental analyses, data and information for decision-making and action planning for sustainable development. It monitors, analyses and reports on the state of the global environment, assesses global and regional environmental trends and provides early warnings of emerging environmental threats.

The *Division of Regional Cooperation* (DRC) is mainly responsible for implementing and complementing relevant parts of UNEP's global programmes through initiating, coordinating, and catalysing regional and subregional cooperation and action in response to environmental problems and emergencies.

The *Division of Communications and Public Information* (DCPI) communicates UNEP's core messages to all stakeholders and partners. It also maintains the UNEP library and documentation centre, website and responds to public enquiries, raising environmental awareness and enhancing the profile of UNEP worldwide.

<sup>2</sup> DTIE is based in Paris

UNEP hosts eight environmental Convention Secretariats including the Ozone Secretariat (which is the Secretariat for the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Biological Diversity and a growing family of chemicals-related agreements, including the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

The UNEP organization chart further includes six Regional Offices, eight Liaison Offices, six Out-Posted Offices and five Scientific Advisory Groups.

### **2.3 MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY AND PROGRAMME OF WORK**

The Medium Term Strategy (MTS) for 2010-2013 constitutes the highest-level programmatic results framework of UNEP and provides the vision and direction for all UNEP activities over the period. The four-year Strategy entails six cross-cutting thematic priorities: (1) Climate Change; (2) Disasters and Conflicts; (3) Ecosystem Management; (4) Environmental Governance; (5) Harmful Substances and Hazardous Waste; and (6) Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Consumption and Production. Each priority includes an 'objective' and 'expected accomplishments', in accordance with the definitions for those terms contained in the relevant United Nations Instructions. The Strategy also sets out the means of implementation and institutional mechanisms necessary to achieve its objectives.

The strategic vision finds its programmatic expression in two-year PoW which is implemented through the agency's six divisions. The launch of the new PoW (in January 2010) was accompanied by a major organizational reform process and the introduction of a matrix management structure. The new structure should enable the organization to better allocate resources, notably people, to specific projects yet still maintain their expertise in a functional setting.



Through the MTS there is a clear commitment of UNEP's top management and governing bodies to reform the organization. Breaking with the past 'silo-structure' is another objective and promoted through establishing the six cross-cutting thematic priorities, also being a key element in the new organizational structure. The shift from a division-based PoW to a subprogramme and results-based PoW work leads to a shift in accountability. The agency is still in the process of fully aligning its institutional structure and especially the working processes and accountability framework.

Six-Monthly Programme Performance Reports assess progress made towards meeting the results in the PoW and against UNEP's six subprogrammes. The report shows a colour-coded assessment of performance against the Expected Accomplishments (EAs) and Outputs of the PoW. The ratings (green/yellow/red) point to areas where future management emphasis should be placed to ensure that project managers have the tools and funding to achieve the planned results. Management actions are being taken for all areas where a red colour coding appears.

## **2.4 ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK**

UNEP is governed by accountability policies and mechanisms that are in line with the UN Secretariat's accountability architecture. UNEP's own accountability framework, approved by the ED, in April 2010, complements the broader framework and clarifies accountabilities and delegated responsibilities for the implementation of the MTS and related PoWs. It is based on the principles of (a) specifying responsibility and delegating defined authority; (b) providing management information; (c) monitoring and assessing the achievement of results; and (d) management action in respect of performance and compliance. Among others, accountabilities related to performance management and acting on evaluation recommendations include (a) the Programme Approval Group, which is responsible for, among others, managing programme delivery and performance, including proposing

management actions; (b) the Project Review Committee with the responsibility, among others, to assess project performance; (c) the Quality Assurance Section (QAS) with responsibility for, among others, results-based programming, quality at entry of project/programme documents and budgeting and programme performance assessment. To this should be added the Evaluation Office with overall responsibility for independent evaluation.

## **2.5 ACTIVITIES**

There are basically two avenues for delivering activities approved in the UNEP PoW: costed work plans and projects. Depending on the funding sources and implementation modalities, activities can be either developed as projects or pooled under a costed work plan.

The approach adopted by UNEP for implementation of the PoW 2010-2011 sees an increased emphasis in the use of projects as the delivery modality to ensure better management and control of activities and resources. To better support the functional needs of the entire UNEP PoW cycle, projects are uploaded in the newly developed Programme Information Management System (PIMS). Projects under implementation from 2009 or earlier are in the process of being retrofitted into a two-page format showing planned project outcomes and outputs (both with indicators and targets) relating to the PoW and milestones against which regular monitoring can be carried out by the project team. As of October 2011, some 200 activities/projects are reported to have been entered in the PIMS.

## **2.6 FUNDING**

Apart from a small contribution from the United Nations Regular Budget, UNEP depends on voluntary support. Key figures on expenditure by source of revenue for the past biennia 2006-2007 and 2008-2009 are listed in Table 1.

The contribution from the United Nations Regular Budget amounts to less than 4 percent

Table 1. UNEP Income by Source of Funding (in USD million)		
Source of revenue	2006/07	2008/09
Environment Fund	136	177
General and Technical Cooperation Trust Funds	371	437
Earmarked Contributions	68	116
Other	4	3
Total	579	733

Source: Financial Report and Audited Financial Statements and Report of the Board of Auditors for the Biennium ended 31 December 2007 and 2009

of UNEP's total budget and for the rest UNEP depends on voluntary support. The Environment Fund, established in 1972, is the principal source of non-earmarked funding for the implementation of the UNEP PoW. Including the Regular Budget allocation, 2008-2009 Fund income represented roughly 25 percent of total income. The remaining 75 percent was covered by General and Technical Cooperation Trust Funds and Earmarked Contributions.

All Member States of the United Nations, taking into account their economic and social circumstances, contribute to the Environment Fund. The Fund provides the resources for core executive management, administration and operational functions of UNEP, statutory requirements and core programmatic expertise and implementation of the activities of the six subprogrammes.

Payments to General and Technical Cooperation trust funds are made by Governments, United Nations agencies, other organizations, non-state actors and individuals, for specific programme activities, services and facilities for individual projects. The total number of active trust funds increased from 74 in 2003 to 84 in 2010. Since 1998, UNEP separates the financial reporting on the trust funds supporting UNEP's PoW from other trust funds like conventions that are managed by independent governing bodies.

**General Trust Funds** provide financial resources for activities supporting the PoW of UNEP

as well as conventions and regional seas programmes and the activities of their secretariats. Of the 50 funds mentioned in the 2008/2009 financial report, the General Trust Fund for the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Trust Fund for Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution are the most important.

**Technical Co-operation Trust Funds (TCTF)** are used to facilitate technical assistance to developing countries and also for financing personnel and the secondment of staff from donor countries. Of the 34 active funds, the GEF Technical Cooperation Trust Fund is financially the most important. As a GEF Implementation Agency, UNEP is eligible to request and receive GEF resources directly for the design, implementation, and execution of GEF projects. In the 2008-2009 biennium, GEF funding represented roughly 50 percent of total TCTF revenues and expenditures. Other important TCTFs are the Implementation Trust Fund of the Framework Agreement between UNEP and Norway and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol.

**Earmarked funds** are received through Partnership Agreements between UNEP and major donor countries. The agreements focus on UNEP programme priorities and aim at making additional support more strategic and predictable. Major donor countries are Norway, Belgium, Spain and Portugal.

## CHAPTER 3

# THE EVALUATION FUNCTION IN UNEP

### 3.1 MANDATE

The mandate for conducting, coordinating and overseeing evaluation in UNEP is vested with the Evaluation Office. This covers all programmes and projects of the Environment Fund, related trust funds, earmarked contributions and projects implemented by UNEP under the Global Environment Facility. To give it independence from substantive PoW divisions and operational sub-programmes, the Evaluation Office is located in the Executive Office and reports to the ED and, through the ED, to the Governing Bodies (CPR and GC).

### 3.2 EVALUATION POLICY

UNEP has an Evaluation Policy, guiding the work of the Evaluation Office. It has been in use since 2005 and was formally approved by the Executive Director in 2009.

The Evaluation Policy provides information on the roles and responsibilities for evaluation as follows:

- (a) the ED is responsible for establishing the evaluation function, providing adequate resources, approving the evaluation plan, and ensuring that the policy is implemented;
- (b) the Deputy ED is responsible for overseeing that evaluation findings are fed back into future programming, budget planning and management;
- (c) the Governing Council and CPR review the biennial evaluation report, and the evaluation plan (as part of UNEP's PoW), and are briefed by the Head of Evaluation Office in a dedicated segment of the Council's agenda;
- (d) the Evaluation Office is responsible for

implementing and quality assuring the evaluation work plan, providing analysis and findings to management, preparing and presenting the Biennial Evaluation Report to the Council, disseminating findings, and tracking compliance in the implementation of evaluation recommendations;

- (e) the Senior Management Team (SMT) recommends areas for evaluation as an input to the evaluation plan, reviews and discusses evaluations and ensures that findings and lessons are integrated in programmes and projects; and
- (f) Subprogramme Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that project evaluations are budgeted for, coordinating the review of evaluation reports and preparing management responses in consultation with the Coordinating Division.

The Evaluation Policy further states that evaluation serves learning and accountability objectives:

- (i) enabling management to improve programme planning, implementation of results, monitoring and reporting, and
- (ii) providing accountability to UNEP's Governing Council, donors and general public.

In section V, the Evaluation Policy document further details three principles – learning, accountability and independence – while stating that others such as efficiency, effectiveness, credibility, legitimacy, relevance, transparency, etc., are equally important to guide evaluation at UNEP.

The panel finds the Evaluation Policy to be well designed and appropriate in that it clearly defines the mandate of the Evaluation Office. The

policy is strong in terms of achieving learning and accountability purposes through evaluation and firm on independence and ethics. It deals with the evaluation function within UNEP as a whole and shows how evaluations should feed into project management and strategic decision-making and provide insight into the overall performance of UNEP. The policy sets as a rule that projects and (sub)programmes should have part of their budget reserved for evaluation. As of now, approval of the evaluation policy falls under the ED. In relation to this point, the panel finds that the approval of the Evaluation Policy should rather fall under the competence of the Governing Council.

### 3.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

In carrying out its tasks, the Evaluation Office is responsible for:

- (a) Preparing a biennial evaluation work plan that forms a part of UNEP's biennial PoW and Budget.
- (b) Assessing the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, quality, usefulness and impact of the UNEP Medium Term Strategy and biennial programmes;
- (c) Liaising with Divisions and Subprogramme Coordinators in the evaluation of subprogrammes and related Expected Accomplishments;
- (d) Liaising with the Quality Assurance Section (QAS) to ensure that data collection methods and coverage for the programme performance review are adequate to meet evaluation needs;
- (e) Sharing lessons learned from the implementation of programmes and projects; and
- (f) Tracking compliance with implementation of evaluation recommendations.

### 3.4 KEY ACTIVITIES

The Evaluation Office conducts various types of evaluations and management studies,

in accordance with the requirements of the United Nations General Assembly, the UNEP Governing Council and the Norms and Standards for Evaluation of the United Nations system. The office's key areas of intervention, as stated in the Evaluation Policy, comprise:

- *Project-level evaluations* that seek to examine relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of a particular project. They can be mid-term or terminal but are mainly terminal.
- Evaluations of the *Expected Accomplishments (EA)* within a subprogramme: these are conducted immediately prior to, and provide essential input into, the subsequent evaluation of that subprogramme.
- *Quality assurance* of project supervision reviews.
- Evaluations of UNEP's Strategic Framework, including Subprogramme evaluations: providing an in-depth assessment and conducted every four or five years for each subprogramme.
- *Management studies*: examining issues of particular relevance to the entire organization. These focus on processes and improvements in management practices, tools and internal dynamics.
- *Meta-evaluations*, synthesis and special studies.

A list of evaluations conducted during the period 2008-2011 is attached in Annex 5. Up to now, the Evaluation Office has carried out between 15 and 20 project evaluations per year, mostly terminal ones but also mid-term evaluations when a project is assessed as being 'at risk' (i.e., likely to fail), has a 'high profile' or is jointly implemented by two or more UN agencies. The terminal evaluations provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of completed projects by assessing the project design, process of implementation, achievements vis-à-vis project objectives, including any agreed changes in the objectives during project implementation.

Subprogramme evaluations have not been carried out since the early 1980s. Only as of 2009 were more substantial financial resources allocated to undertake higher-level evaluations. The most prominent have been the Subprogramme Evaluation of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) and the Formative Evaluation of the UNEP PoW 2010-2011. In the course of 2010, resources were allocated, as a part of the PoW budget, to undertake the first two in a series of six subprogramme evaluations; these two are currently under implementation. The aim of the evaluation of the Environmental Governance Subprogramme is to assess the relevance and overall performance of UNEP work related to Environmental Governance in the last three biennia. That of the Disasters and Conflict Subprogramme is to assess the relevance and overall performance of UNEP's work related to the environmental dimensions of disasters and conflicts in the last three biennia (from PoW 2006/2007 onwards). The two evaluations are expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2012 and provide essential input into the mid-term evaluation of the Medium Term Strategy. The remaining four subprogramme evaluations are scheduled for the 2012-2013 biennium, subject to the allocation of sufficient resources.

Prior to 2008, the Evaluation Office prepared annual evaluation reports providing analyses of evaluations carried out by UNEP in the past year and identifying lessons and recommendations for programme improvement. From 2008 onwards, the Evaluation Office prepares biennial Evaluation Synthesis Reports. The first report covering 2008-2009 assessed the performance of the organization through trends and patterns observed during the biennium and from completed evaluations at all levels. The patterns and trends were used to identify recommendations and lessons to be brought to the attention of, and discussed with UNEP senior management. The report constitutes a document for the GC, and is also disseminated to CPR members, national governments and UNEP staff.

The Evaluation Office maintains a database of lessons derived from evaluations. In order to enhance the quality of lessons learned, further their utilization, and to improve their dissemination and communication to both internal and external audiences, the Evaluation Office has developed a Framework of Lessons from Evaluation. Approximately 260 lessons from evaluation studies produced between 1999 and 2006 have been reviewed against a number of criteria. In 2010 the Evaluation Office rated the performance of 26 projects through in-depth evaluations. The great majority of projects proved to be relevant to both UNEP strategic priorities and country needs.

Apart from carrying out various types of evaluations, the Evaluation Office provides technical backstopping to project and programme managers in undertaking project reviews when requested. Guidelines and practical approaches for conducting evaluations are elaborated in the UNEP Evaluation Manual.

Last but not least, it was noticed that considerable Evaluation Office staff time and effort is absorbed by internal management reporting requirements. The Integrated Monitoring and Document Information System (IMDIS) is the online reporting system developed and managed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), the independent external oversight body of the United Nations system, also requires regular reporting on the implementation of its recommendations. The Evaluation Office is in charge of gathering the requested data from UNEP divisions and of reporting to both IMDIS and the JIU. It furthermore merits to be mentioned that the JIU also conducts evaluations covering UNEP interventions.

### **3.5 FINANCIAL & HUMAN RESOURCES**

A major challenge faced by the Evaluation Office is its limited financial and human resources. Table 2 provides a summary of available financial resources for the last seven-year period.

<b>Table 2. UNEP Evaluation Office Budget (2005-2011) in USD Thousands</b>							
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Evaluation Office core budget	400	400	240	240	596	240	586
Project/Programme evaluation budget	244	311	351	394	240	741	1,236
Total	644	711	591	634	836	981	1,822

Source: Self-Assessment, Evaluation Office, September 2011

The Governing Council approves the budget of the Evaluation Office as part of UNEP's overall budget. The budget consists of a core budget and a project/programme evaluation budget.

The core budget basically covers Evaluation Office staff, administration and travel costs. The Professional Staff (PS) presently consists of one Chief (P5), one Senior Evaluation Officer (P4), one Evaluation Officer (P3), one JPO (P2) and one UNV. GEF funds support the equivalent of the full time P3 position. The PS is assisted by administrative staff including two programme assistants (G7 and G6) and one administrative assistant (G5). Training opportunities exist for Evaluation Office staff, including formal seminars and workshops, coaching and peer group learning (through UNEG and through collaboration in the office) and, to a certain extent, self-study. A staff rotation policy is being piloted in UNEP but none of the evaluation staff have participated in such rotation yet. The (limited) remaining resources of the core budget are used to prepare the Annual and Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Reports and occasional management studies and travel.

The bulk of the Evaluation Office's operational budget resources stem from project budgets which are under the control of the project managers and task officers concerned. A substantial part of the total (estimated at some 75 percent) is derived from GEF projects and used to evaluate these. The Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, division directors, subprogramme coordinators and other senior staff contribute to the implementation of the evaluation programme by ensuring that evaluations are provided for in the budgets of all projects/programmes. Non-project operational budgets, mentioned earlier, are allocated on an ad-hoc basis. Operational

budgets basically cover the cost of independent consultants conducting the evaluations.

### **3.6 WORK PROGRAMME AND PLANNING**

The Evaluation Office prepares a rolling biennial evaluation work plan that forms part of UNEP's biennial PoW and Budget. The work plan is reviewed annually and ultimately endorsed by the SMT and the Executive Director. In practice, it is not possible to monitor and evaluate all UNEP interventions and projects as mandated. Evaluations are, therefore, planned and prioritized during the preparation of the biennial evaluation plan. In principle, the evaluation work programme covers all terminal evaluations of regular and medium sized projects terminating in the PoW period. Apart from all GEF project evaluations, the current 2010-2011 Evaluation Office workplan includes a number of non-GEF project evaluations and two subprogramme evaluations. Facing manpower constraints, the Evaluation Office developed a method for analysing and prioritizing non-GEF project evaluations to improve the selection of a portfolio of activities that give the greatest payoff to the organization. Under the circumstances, the project evaluation coverage is close to 100 percent, be it that a number of non-GEF project evaluations are not finalized within the (mandatory) six-month period. Current financial and manpower constraints prevent the Evaluation Office from engaging in more substantial thematic or strategic evaluations.

### **3.7 EVALUATION PROCESS**

The UNEP Evaluation Manual (March 2008) provides the basic concepts used for conducting evaluations. It is the responsibility of

the Evaluation Office, in consultation with the project/programme/task manager and partners involved, to draft the ToRs for the evaluation. The ToRs lay down the expectations from and the requirements for the evaluation and establish the basis for the contract with the evaluators.

When the ToR and the budget have been agreed upon, three or more consultants deemed competent for carrying out the evaluation are identified. It is a general practice of the Evaluation Office to ask the project/programme or task manager and other UNEP colleagues and institutions to make suggestions regarding qualified evaluators. The Evaluation Office screens the proposed candidates and makes the final decision on the selection of evaluators. Once the evaluation team is formed, a final evaluation cost estimate is prepared. In collaboration with the project/programme or task manager and the executing organization, when applicable, the Evaluation Office facilitates the organization of the appropriate logistics and evaluation plan.

The evaluators report primarily to the Evaluation Office for an initial reading of the draft report and discussion of the findings and conclusions. For quality assurance purposes, reports are read by two Evaluation Officers. The Evaluation Office forwards all comments on the draft report from staff and stakeholders, together with its own guidance, to the evaluator(s) for integration. Once the evaluation is finalized, the Evaluation Office completes the evaluation report quality assessment and determines project ratings based on evidence from the final evaluation report.

Following the completion of a formal project or programme evaluation, and after perusal of the recommendations, senior management prepares a management response and an implementation plan for accepted recommendations. The plan specifies for each recommendation: whether it is accepted and will be implemented; who is responsible for its implementation; the expected completion date; and what actions have already been taken (if any). Where a recommendation is rejected, an explanation is provided as to why

the recommendation could not be accepted and implemented, and where appropriate an alternative course of action is specified. A compliance procedure is used to track the progress of implementation of recommendations. Project managers are required to report the status of recommendation implementation to the Evaluation Office at six-month intervals (September and March). The Evaluation Office makes regular compliance status reports to the Executive Director and these are routinely discussed with division directors. When a recommendation reaches the third assessment point (i.e., after approximately 18 months) it is automatically 'closed', and the recommendation implementation status ('compliant', 'partially compliant' or 'not compliant') is permanently recorded with no further changes to the status allowed.

All evaluations are shared with relevant stakeholders and published on the Evaluation Office external website.

### **3.8 SELF-ASSESSMENTS OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION**

The Evaluation Office conducts annual self-assessments of the evaluation function following the templates developed by the UNEG Quality Stamp Task Force in 2005. The self-assessment tool provides a structured framework for evaluation offices to assess whether it meets the norms and standards, while the fact sheet provides information on resources and reporting lines. In general, the Evaluation Office reports that it meets many of the UNEG Norms and Standards. It identifies inadequacies of resources as the main shortcoming that affects the extent to which UNEP's programmes and projects can be evaluated. The self-assessment further indicates that the evaluation policy addresses ethical concerns related to culture, beliefs, human rights, discrimination and gender issues and respect of confidentiality, and that the evaluation review and quality assurance process ensures that compliance with the provisions of the evaluation policy is checked.

## CHAPTER 4

# INDEPENDENCE

The peer review panel assessed the independence of UNEP's evaluations and evaluation systems against the following UNEG Norms:

- 2.1 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations in the UN system are responsible for fostering an enabling environment for evaluation and ensuring that the role and function of evaluation are clearly stated, reflecting the principles of the UNEG Norms for Evaluation, taking into account the specificities of each organization's requirements.
- 2.2 The governance structures of evaluation vary. In some cases, it rests with the Governing Bodies in others with the Head of the organization. Responsibility for evaluation should be specified in an evaluation policy.
- 2.3 The Governing Bodies and/or the Heads of organizations are also responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to enable the evaluation function to operate effectively and with due independence.
- 2.4 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that evaluations are conducted in an impartial and independent fashion. They are also responsible for ensuring that evaluators have the freedom to conduct their work without repercussions for career development.
- 5.1 Impartiality is the absence of bias in due process, methodological rigour, consideration and presentation of achievements and challenges. It also implies that the views of all stakeholders are taken into account. In the event that interested parties have different views, these are to be reflected in the evaluation analysis and reporting.
- 5.3 The requirement for impartiality exists at all stages of the evaluation process, including the planning of evaluation, the formulation of mandate and scope, the selection of evaluation teams, the conduct of the evaluation and the formulation of findings and recommendations.
- 6.1 The evaluation function has to be located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured. It needs to have full discretion in submitting directly its reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision-making pertaining to the subject of evaluation.
- 6.2 The Head of evaluation must have the independence to supervise and report on evaluations as well as to track follow-up of management's response resulting from evaluation.
- 6.3 To avoid conflict of interest and undue pressure, evaluators need to be independent, implying that members of an evaluation team must not have been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design, or overall management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be in the near future.
- 6.4 Evaluators must have no vested interest and have the full freedom to conduct impartially their evaluative work, without potential negative effects on their career development. They must be able to express their opinion in a free manner.
- 6.5 The independence of the evaluation function should not impinge the access that evaluators have to information on the subject of evaluation.



The findings of the peer review panel are summarized below.

#### **4.1 GENERAL**

UNEP management endorses the evaluation function and the growing attention to managing for results increases its role and importance. Furthermore, the UNEP higher management fosters an evaluation culture by making references to its importance and regularly making time on its agenda to consider evaluation issues. It has been proactive in developing and approving the Evaluation Policy and in, generally, fostering more accountability for results. The fact that the Executive Director uses evaluations and the implementation of recommendations when conducting performance discussions with UNEP directors is an indication of this high-level commitment. The Executive Director has also been instrumental in fostering an enabling environment for evaluation and in stressing its importance.

There was general agreement among those interviewed that the visibility and importance of the Evaluation Office has increased over the years. The demand for the Evaluation Office to manage evaluations and the number of projects for which an independent evaluation is mandatory are, however, growing beyond the capacity of the office to respond. The new emphasis on subprogramme evaluations demonstrates the willingness of management to use evaluations for more strategic decision-making purposes but, in addition, puts new demands on the Evaluation Office. All of these changes are generally indicative of a growing enabling environment for evaluation.

#### **4.2 INDEPENDENCE AND IMPARTIALITY OF THE EVALUATION OFFICE, EVALUATION MANAGERS AND EVALUATORS**

The independence of UNEP's evaluation function is formalized in the Evaluation Policy and the Evaluation Manual, documents approved

by the Executive Director, disseminated and implemented throughout the organization and posted on the Internet. The Evaluation Policy was presented to the CPR, however, it was neither formally submitted, for approval nor endorsement, to the Governing Council. The two documents subscribe to the concept of both organizational and behavioural independence for the evaluation function. In section V(c) of the Evaluation Policy, the evaluation function is described as being "independent of operational subprogrammes to ensure freedom from undue influence and to facilitate objective assessments of programme and project activities without interference". The Evaluation Policy clearly defines roles and responsibilities for the conduct of evaluation within the organization. The document is a clear and comprehensive policy document that addresses all of the main issues identified in the UNEG Norms and Standards.

The UNEP Evaluation Office is located as a separate office in the Executive Office, independent from the other management functions and seems free from undue influence. In fact, it was frequently pointed out to the peer review panel that the ED gives space and recognition to the Evaluation Office. It is clearly separated from planning, approval and monitoring functions. The fact that the Head of the Evaluation Office is not part of the Senior Management Team strengthens the independence of the Evaluation Office. The incumbent is, however, an ex officio member of the Programme Approval Committee. In this function, he does not have any decision-making power but is in a position to feed back findings from past evaluations. The head of the Evaluation Office has a direct reporting line to the Executive Director. The Executive Director guarantees the functional independence of evaluation.

While the Evaluation Office can be assessed as being functionally independent in terms of the existing degree of independence to plan and conduct evaluations, the panel believes that the level of financial independence of the Evaluation Office is a major point of concern. In principle,

the Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to enable the evaluation function to operate effectively and with due independence but this is not fully the case. Funding for evaluation of projects and subprogrammes are in principle available but there is no budget allocated for strategic or thematic evaluations. Moreover, the absence of an annual evaluation budget under the control of the Evaluation Office impedes its ability to independently choose evaluation subjects at strategic or thematic levels or where there are distinct learning or accountability needs. Another concern is that budgets for project evaluations are not always available and not controlled by the Evaluation Office. Under the circumstances, the current funding mechanism for evaluations forms a constraint not only for the independence of the evaluation function but also in relation to the coverage and scope of evaluations.

As far as human resources are concerned, the Evaluation Office is staffed with qualified evaluation professionals and the Evaluation Policy clearly describe their roles and functions. The professional staff has been recruited following open and transparent processes. UNEP applies the UNEG Code of Conduct for Professional Evaluators and is thus following international standards. The code is signed by staff and consultants who undertake evaluations for the organization. Also the standard contract provisions in the UN Secretariat are designed to safeguard integrity and confidentiality. The Evaluation Office adheres to the general rule of conduct in that its staff may not evaluate a project or programme if they have been responsible for its design, implementation or supervision.

The panel found no evidence of staff acting as task managers or being assigned to manage or conduct evaluations of activities or policies in which they had previously been involved or that Evaluation Office staff had been involved in the management of any entity being evaluated. Nor did the panel find any case of evaluation staff or evaluators having had a vested interest in any evaluation subject. Moreover, the impression is

that evaluators are able to express their opinions in a free manner. Evaluation Office staff (and consultants) reported receiving good support from UNEP and Evaluation Office management in safeguarding their independence.

With regard to the independence and impartiality of the external evaluators, the ToRs have standard provisions to prevent conflict of interest. Consultants are selected on a competitive basis using at least three comparators, consistent with UN Secretariat Rules and Guidelines for recruiting individual consultants. Project staff can propose consultants but the final selection is made by the Evaluation Office, based on competencies detailed in the ToRs for the evaluation. All consultants are interviewed and required to report any previous or current association or relationship with the stakeholders involved in the evaluation entity. Consultants have mainly been chosen from the Evaluation Office consultant roster. Standard ToRs, which form part of the contractual agreements with consultants, contain a paragraph to confirm absence of conflict of interest. Evaluation consultants are, however, not required to sign any statement to confirm absence of conflicts of interest, which is sometimes a practice within the UN. No cases of conflict of interest were, however, found by the panel. Moreover, all consultants (and Evaluation Office staff) sign the UNEG-developed Code of Conduct for Professional Evaluators. No situation of partiality was revealed for consultants or staff.

The panel reviewed the ways in which the tender and recruitment procedures have been implemented and notes that the Evaluation Office gives due attention to the issue of impartiality. Consultants are selected based on competencies detailed in the ToRs for the evaluation. A well-developed database of evaluation consultants exists. CVs are screened before inclusion in the database. The office continues to pay attention to the issue of independence and impartiality while the evaluation is in progress, by exercising quality control of the consultants' work and their outputs.

### **4.3 INDEPENDENCE IN PROGRAMMING, CONDUCTING AND REPORTING OF EVALUATIONS**

#### **PROGRAMMING EVALUATIONS**

The programming of the evaluations is a complex process. In principle, the Evaluation Office has the authority and autonomy to propose its own work plan, but in practice several aspects affect this. The most important constraint is the above-mentioned level and lack of fungibility of the available resources. Three other factors, in addition, limit the independence of the Evaluation Office to choose the evaluation subjects: UNEP/GEF Evaluation Policies which mandate the Evaluation Office to evaluate all UNEP/GEF projects and programmes; the constrained human resources of the Evaluation Office; and the absence of a budget for more strategic or thematic evaluations, decided on by the Evaluation Office. The combination of these three factors leads to a very high proportion of project evaluations being conducted with virtually no room for the Evaluation Office to independently select evaluation subjects, including higher-level strategic evaluations. The Evaluation Office has tried to solicit an annual budget for conducting independently selected strategic evaluations and impact evaluations but efforts have not borne fruit.

The move towards MTS-related subprogramme evaluations entails, however, an increased focus on higher level evaluations and USD 300,000 were made available for the 2010-2011 period. However, the Evaluation Office is not in a position to independently decide on how the annual allocations should be disposed and to plan its work in an optimum manner.

Going back to the first issue, certainly the Evaluation Office does not evaluate all projects but rather a practice has evolved of all projects with a budget above USD 500,000 being subject to an independent evaluation. In comparison to other UN agencies, this still means that the Office is occupied with a large number of project evaluations. Many UN agencies, such as UNESCO and UNDP, have delegated the

management of project evaluations to technical branches and UNIDO has a policy of having Euros 1 million as a cut-off rate for project evaluation for which an evaluation managed by the independent evaluation function is mandatory.

It is obvious that the present volume of mandatory project evaluations puts heavy demands on the Evaluation Office resources, affecting its independence to do other types of evaluations, the timeliness of project evaluations conducted. There are, as well, instances when project managers are not in a position to wait for an external evaluation and go ahead with a self-evaluation in order to close a project. The peer review panel is highlighting this issue since the present volume of project evaluation leaves little room for the Evaluation Office to propose evaluation of areas of strategic importance, which the Evaluation Office certainly seems to have the technical capacity to do. It seems, in view of the high level of professionalism of the staff, that the Evaluation Office is not used to its full potential.

All independent evaluations are managed by the Evaluation Office but most of the project evaluations are conducted by independent consultants. A major share of the evaluations conducted presently consists of GEF project evaluations. The fact that one Evaluation Office post is covered by GEF agency fees is a proof of the importance UNEP management gives to evaluation. Subprogramme evaluations are conducted by Evaluation Office staff in collaboration with external consultants.

The peer review panel would also like to refer to Recommendation 17 of the OIOS Peer Review, which recommended strengthening the larger Secretariat Programmes, such as UNEP so that OIOS would be less involved in evaluations related to these. This is equally an issue of resource efficiency as the peer review panel was informed that the OIOS is initiating an evaluation which is similar to the MTS evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office.

Another budgetary issue affecting independence

is the fact that budgets are not always available at the end of the project when the terminal evaluation is to be initiated despite the fact that budgets have been allocated during the design phase and been verified by the Quality Assurance Unit. This means that the Evaluation Office cannot fully 'control' what is being evaluated or how it is being evaluated as there is no control over project evaluation budgets and related amounts. This is a common situation for many development cooperation agencies but can be avoided with budgets for evaluation being allocated at the design stage and, moreover, attributed to budget lines that are under the control of the evaluation function.

The evaluation programming involves a sufficient level of stakeholder consultation which, in turn, is conducive to the stakeholders' 'buy-in' or acceptance of evaluations. Divisional directors are asked, before the beginning of each year, to provide a list of projects coming to a close and, therefore, subject to a terminal evaluation. Evaluation programming is then undertaken using a priority setting methodology developed by the Evaluation Office and which is regarded as a UN benchmark. No cases were reported of stakeholders blocking an evaluation or refusing to cooperate. Moreover, there was no case reported of difficulty in accessing information needed for the planning or conduct of evaluations.

## **CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS**

The implementation of an evaluation is aligned to the ToRs developed for the evaluation. The ToRs reviewed by the panel were clear and detailed regarding the evaluation criteria and questions, the overall evaluation approach and issues were presented in an unbiased manner. Draft ToRs are shared with internal stakeholders, prior to the initiation of all evaluations. Comments are reviewed and, where necessary, changes are made to the ToRs. It is a deliberate policy of the Evaluation Office to have ToRs come close to evaluation guidance. The panel endorses this policy as it streamlines the work

of the Evaluation Office and provides clarity to consultants.

In the case an inception report is prepared it includes a discussion on issues identified in the ToR. Inception reports are shared with key evaluation stakeholders for comments.

For the most part, interviews revealed that evaluations were perceived as conducted transparently, without bias or interference of management and the process assessed as independent. The evaluation reports reviewed by the panel provided evidence of methodological rigour and the absence of bias.

Two of the interviewed consultants reported some undue pressure and interference from project managers in the reporting process but such interferences seem to belong to the past and, it should be pointed out, did not stem from the Evaluation Office or higher management. Also, the Evaluation Office awards the final ratings for a project in the 'evaluation commentary' which counteracts any undue influence by project managers advocating for positive ratings. No case of higher-level management interfering with the evaluation process was detected. The overall picture is one of general satisfaction with the way the Evaluation Office guides and carries the evaluation process forward. In general, the evaluation consultants confirmed that they were able to carry out their assignment without interference from the Evaluation Office staff or UNEP management and have been able to freely discuss and present their findings and recommendations.

## **REPORTING ON EVALUATIONS**

The panel found that evaluators have the freedom to report independently on findings and able to freely formulate conclusions and recommendations. Draft evaluation reports are circulated to internal and external stakeholders for comments and factual and technical validation. Where there is disagreement on issues that cannot be resolved, the comments or dissenting views are

published with the report. From interviews, it appears that comments of stakeholders are taken into consideration when considered to be valid but without compromising the independent and impartial nature of the evaluation process.

The fact that projects are not always rated highly satisfactory but often moderately satisfactory can be seen as an indication of independence in the reporting of evaluation findings. Furthermore, the positive rating of the GEF Secretariat on report quality backs up the finding of independent reporting.

The Evaluation Office has full discretion in submitting directly its reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision-making, i.e., the Executive Director and/or the SMT. Provision 30 of the Evaluation Policy, regarding the creation of a segment on the Governing Council/CPR agenda for the head of the Evaluation Office to report on evaluation findings, has, however, not been implemented so far. Presently, reporting on evaluation to the Governing Council goes through the Executive Director in the form of submitting the Biennial Synthesis Report. The synthesis report is developed by the Evaluation Office and incorporates a foreword by the Executive Director. Although the panel did not come across any issue in relation to this and clearance seemed to be more procedural, the fact that the synthesis report is cleared by the ED reduces the possibility of the Evaluation Office to report independently to the Governing Council. On the other hand, briefings, by the Evaluation Office, to a sub committee of the CPR on findings of specific evaluations have taken place but there are no regular briefings to the CPR. A direct reporting line of the Evaluation Office to the CPR has been discussed.

The fact that the Executive Director signs and submits the evaluation synthesis report to governments makes the independence of the evaluation reporting somewhat dependent on the 'enlightenedness' of the incumbent of the ED's Office.

As mentioned earlier, all evaluation reports are

fully disclosed and made publicly available on the UNEP website. The decision on what is uploaded and the content thereof is taken by the Evaluation Office and one Evaluation Office staff member has been trained by the Communications Department to do the uploading.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSIONS ON INDEPENDENCE**

Regarding the independence and impartiality of the Evaluation Office, evaluation managers and evaluators, and the evaluation process, the panel concludes that:

- The structural independence of the evaluation function has been achieved to the extent that it is located independently from other management functions. UNEP has a good enabling environment for evaluation and a corporate culture that recognized the need of an independent evaluation function. The visibility and importance of the evaluation function has increased over the years.
- The panel has found no evidence of professional or career considerations preventing the office or its staff from conducting its work in an independent or impartial manner.
- The independence and impartiality is safeguarded by the leadership and staff of the Evaluation Office and by the ED.
- A system is in place to ensure that evaluators have no vested interest in relation to the evaluation entity.
- No case of conflict of interest was found by the panel.
- No structural obstacles preventing access to needed and available information were reported.
- Evaluation consultants confirm that they were able to carry out their assignment without interference from the Evaluation Office staff or UNEP management and have been able to freely discuss and disseminate their findings and recommendations. Isolated cases of project managers trying to influence evaluation findings were reported.

- Provisions enabling the Evaluation Office to independently report to governing bodies exist in theory but need to be put in place on a regular basis.
- All evaluation reports are fully disclosed and available on the UNEP external website.
- The level of resources is insufficient to cover the need of more strategic evaluations and to independently select evaluation subjects.
- Especially, the limited core budget and lack of fungible financial resources for evaluation seriously affects planning, prioritization and evaluation coverage. The ability of the Evaluation Office to identify and carry out evaluations of strategic importance is compromised.

## CHAPTER 5

# CREDIBILITY

The panel assessed credibility by reviewing the processes through which the Evaluation Office manages its evaluations and by assessing the quality of its evaluation reports. Reference points of the assessment are the following UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System:

- 3.1 Each organization should develop an explicit policy statement on evaluation. The policy should provide a clear explanation of the concept, role and use of evaluation within the organization, including the institutional framework and definition of roles and responsibilities; an explanation of how the evaluation function and evaluations are planned, managed and budgeted; and a clear statement on disclosure and dissemination.
- 2.5 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations are responsible for appointing a professionally competent Head of the evaluation, who in turn is responsible for ensuring that the function is staffed by professionals competent in the conduct of evaluation.
- 4.2 The evaluation plan can be the result of a cyclical or purposive selection of evaluation topics. The purpose, nature and scope of evaluation must be clear to evaluators and stakeholders. The plan for conducting each evaluation must ensure due process to ascertain the timely completion of the mandate, and consideration of the most cost-effective way to obtain and analyse the necessary information.
- 5.2 Impartiality increases the credibility of evaluation and reduces the bias in the data gathering, analysis, findings, conclusions and recommendations. Impartiality provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflict of interest.
- 8.1 Each evaluation should employ design, planning and implementation processes that are inherently quality oriented, covering appropriate methodologies for data-collection, analysis and interpretation.
- 8.2 Evaluation reports must present in a complete and balanced way the evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations. They must be brief and to the point and easy to understand. They must explain the methodology followed, highlight the methodological limitations of the evaluation, key concerns and evidenced-based findings, dissident views and consequent conclusions, recommendations and lessons. They must have an executive summary that encapsulates the essence of the information contained in the report, and facilitate dissemination and distillation of lessons.
- 9.1 Each organization of the UN system should have formal job descriptions and selection criteria that state the basic professional requirements necessary for an evaluator and evaluation manager.
- 9.2 The Head of the evaluation function must have proven competencies in the management of an evaluation function and in the conduct of evaluation studies.
- 9.3 Evaluators must have the basic skill set for conducting evaluation studies and managing externally hired evaluators.
- 10.1 Transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders are essential features in all stages of the evaluation process. This improves the credibility and quality of the evaluation. It can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

10.2 Evaluation Terms of Reference and reports should be available to major stakeholders and be public documents. Documentation on evaluations in easily consultable and readable form should also contribute to both transparency and legitimacy.

The panel also took into account the perception by UNEP staff and management and other stakeholders on the credibility of the processes and of the evaluation reports.

## 5.1 GENERAL

The Evaluation Office enjoys a high level of credibility and this is mainly due to the competence of its staff. In general, the panel observed a high level of satisfaction among staff and senior management about the way in which the Evaluation Office manages and conducts its evaluations and the quality of the evaluation reports.

A quality assurance system exists and the effectiveness of the evaluation process is assessed and published in the Evaluation Synthesis Report. Each evaluation produced by a consultant is formally assessed at both draft and final stages through an Evaluation Commentary Process. The assessment criteria are provided in the ToR. The Evaluation Office staff is also versed in environmental issues and are, to a large extent, able to review the technical quality of a significant proportion of the evaluations undertaken. Evaluations are only accepted and a final payment made if the report quality is rated by the Evaluation Office as being moderately satisfactory or above. With respect to GEF projects, there has been a second level of quality assurance undertaken by the GEF Evaluation Office but this is coming to an end as experience has shown a strong concurrence between the ratings awarded for project performance and ratings of evaluation report quality. Once evaluation reports have been finalized, the evaluation team is commonly invited to discuss its findings with the relevant stakeholders. Such discussions normally take place in a presentation and discussion setting.

All draft reports, including the key evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations, are shared with stakeholders. The Evaluation Office keeps records of the feedback provided and shares them with the evaluation team and direct stakeholders.

## 5.2 CREDIBILITY OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

### EVALUATION POLICY AND GUIDELINES

As mentioned earlier, the UNEP Evaluation Policy describes the different types of evaluations to be undertaken at the organizational level and the roles and responsibilities of evaluation. The panel found that the policy is, for the most part, adhered to. The comprehensive document provides detailed information on the objective(s) of evaluation and its potential use, its guiding principles, the mandate and responsibilities of the Evaluation Office, the ways in which evaluations are programmed, the evaluation process and its different steps, the ways in which evaluations are disseminated and the process of follow-up.

All evaluations are undertaken in conformity with the Evaluation Policy. Intended primarily to guide staff decisions regarding the practices for evaluations of UNEP projects, it also serves to communicate evaluation principles to implementing partners and key stakeholders. The policy works in concert with other existing and pending agency policies, strategies and operational guidance, including those regarding project design, evaluation-related competencies of staff, performance monitoring, knowledge management, and research management. It draws in significant ways on the evaluation principles and guidance developed by the DAC/UNEG Joint Task Force. The Evaluation Office also issued specific evaluation guidelines stipulating the approach and possible methodologies and methods to be applied in its evaluations.

The Evaluation Manual (March 2008) aims to promote procedures and guidelines for evaluating UNEP projects. The document reflects current



evaluation norms and standards in the UN system. The primary audience for this manual is UNEP staff but it is also expected that the manual will provide valuable insights to UNEP partners and consultants as they evaluate UNEP projects. The focus of the guide is on evaluating projects but many of the same principles are applicable to evaluation of sub programmes and UNEP's work programme in general. The panel generally found that the Evaluation Policy and the Evaluation Manual were being adhered to.

### **COMPETENCE AND CAPACITY OF STAFF AND EVALUATION CONSULTANTS**

There is a widely held view, shared by the panel members, that the Evaluation Office staff is very competent and professional and this is a main building block of credibility. All professional evaluators' posts were advertised externally. The panel considers this recruitment procedure important in order to attract candidates who meet certain requirements, including sufficient expertise and experience in evaluation. Job descriptions exist for various posts and the head of the Evaluation Office and other staff have the required competencies.

The stated qualifications for the Evaluation Office chief and other professional evaluation staff include appropriate technical and managerial competencies and evaluation experience. These qualifications are assessed during the selection process, which follows standard UNEP recruitment procedures. Evaluation Office staff recruited from outside of UNEP are expected to have proven evaluation skills. Competence and performance are addressed during the annual performance appraisal, in which an individual's performance is assessed by the Evaluation Office chief. Interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including external evaluators and operational staff, confirmed a general perception that the staff of the Evaluation Office is professional and competent.

As the major part of evaluation work is carried out by consultants, credibility also relies on the

competence of external evaluators. With respect to external consultants contracted, no major problems were identified and they were generally considered as competent and impartial. The Evaluation Office has a well-developed roster of evaluation consultants. The selection process of consultants is credible and transparent and takes place according to UNEP rules and regulations and the selection of consultants for independent evaluations is done by the Evaluation Office. To avoid over-reliance on a limited pool of evaluators, new consultants are regularly identified and assessed. A few staff members interviewed by the panel questioned the quality and experience of the externally recruited evaluation teams. However, the disapproval appeared to be mainly inspired by their dissatisfaction with the critical nature of the findings of a specific evaluation. The performance of evaluation consultants is assessed using a specific form.

Although both the selection process of evaluation teams and their competence are generally satisfactory, the panel considers that there is room for improvement mainly in terms of a better balance between international experts and experts from partner countries, including the inclusion of national consultants in evaluation teams, when relevant. Finally, the panel noticed that in line with the increasing workload of the Evaluation Office, consultants are starting to be used to handle tasks normally assigned to Evaluation Office staff, such as the drafting of ToRs and finds that this will need to be closely monitored in order to ensure that established quality standards are being adhered to.

### **PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVALUATIONS**

UNEP has developed high-quality tools for developing its work plan and there is a very good coverage of mandatory project evaluations. The majority of the project evaluations conducted at UNEP is done by the Evaluation Office and evaluations are implemented for all projects with a budget above USD 500,000. At the same time, there are areas of UNEP's work that have not

been covered and there is limited focus on strategic and impact evaluations. The latter issue is clearly related to the resource constraints mentioned earlier. The expanding project portfolio, generally increasing demands for evaluations, the untapped benefits of strategic and impact evaluations constitute a risk to future credibility and the ability of the Evaluation Office to continue to deliver quality evaluations.

The Evaluation Office is responsible for a balanced and impartial evaluation design. This is normally specified in the ToR for the evaluations. Guidelines exist for drafting ToRs and ToR templates are equally being used. The impression of the panel is that the evaluability is severely and consistently constrained by inadequate monitoring data. Addressing the lack of monitoring data is not within the control of the Evaluation Office but is a concern as it affects the reliability of evaluation findings.

The methodologies used for various kinds of evaluations were found to be appropriate, with appropriate methods for collecting and analysing data. At the same time project evaluations were endowed with relatively small evaluation budgets, putting limitations to the size of the team, field visits and the data collection process. This caused some doubt as to the robustness of project evaluations; there have been cases when project funds have not been available to conduct terminal evaluations. For GEF projects the agency has resorted to using agency fees when this happened.

The Evaluation Office ensures there is stakeholder consultation in the design of the evaluation. Stakeholders are consulted in the early stages of the formulation of the ToR which allows them to flag issues that are important to them. The evaluation process, including the reporting (final and interim), was found to be transparent and adequate. For strategic evaluations, towards the end of the evaluation process, workshops are organized to foster discussion on evaluation findings and to promote their uptake. There was, however, feedback indicating

that project evaluation reports were not subject to presentations.

Interviews with evaluation managers and evaluators revealed that, for the most part, the evaluation teams were able to reach consensus on the findings of evaluation reports. A number of interviewees likewise pointed out that the Evaluation Office does not always fully engage with partner country stakeholders in the planning of evaluations and in discussing findings.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Evaluation Office considers that ensuring the quality of the evaluation process and of the evaluation reports is an important aspect of its work. It assesses the quality of the evaluation reports by means of a checklist, which is aligned to the GEF quality assurance tool. External advisory panels are generally not in place. In the past, the GEF has also reviewed UNEP evaluation reports and the fact that the Evaluation Office ratings have been endorsed is a proof of the credibility of the quality assurance process and the reports. In fact, the Evaluation Office has been at the top of the list when it comes to ratings for evaluation quality among GEF implementing agencies and the GEF Evaluation Office will now cease to carry out parallel ratings. It also merits mentioning that the Evaluation Office performs a self-assessment exercise annually in order to verify the quality of its operations and products.

The office deals adequately with any comments, suggestions and disagreements voiced by the stakeholders. The office asks the evaluation teams to handle comments in a fair manner but at the same time recognizes the independent position of these teams and stresses that evaluators have the last word. Well-substantiated comments and counter-arguments put forward by line management and other stakeholders are usually taken into consideration by the evaluation teams and reflected in the final report. It is the panel's impression that where conflicting views and disagreements with evaluation findings have

occurred, the issues have been handled appropriately and professionally.

### 5.3 CREDIBILITY OF THE EVALUATION REPORTS

The panel reviewed the evaluation reports of the Evaluation Office and assessed their quality by means of a checklist based on the UNEP Evaluation Quality Standards. The checklist consists of two parts. First, it lists the general characteristics of the evaluation concerned: the subject evaluated, the evaluation conducted, the actors concerned, and the final report. Subsequently, the quality of the evaluation is examined by applying three quality criteria: validity, reliability, and usability. Each of these criteria is operationalized by specific indicators, which in turn are further specified into components. Main assessment criteria are (i) Presentation of evaluation's purpose and scope, design, process and methodology and tools of investigation; (ii) Presentation of evidence or results (outputs, outcomes and/or impact of the subject evaluated); (iii) Analysis and formulation of conclusions and (iv) Formulation of recommendations.

The panel did not have detailed information on the background of the policies, programmes and projects or institutions evaluated, nor of their context and the technical credibility was not assessed. The assessment of selected evaluation reports was triangulated with information from interviews with evaluation team leaders and UNEP line management staff.

The panel has the following observations regarding the overall quality of the evaluation reports:

- The introductory chapters of the evaluation reports dealing with the evaluation purpose, and scope of work are informative and generally of good quality. The criteria applied in the respective evaluations are clearly spelled out and aligned to those described in the respective Terms of Reference. In almost all cases the 'traditional' OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency,

effectiveness, sustainability and impact have been applied.

- The evaluation's design, methodology and the tools applied in the assessment are generally sufficiently described.
- Most reports provide an indication of restrictions and challenges confronting the implementation of the evaluation. This allows the reader to form an opinion about the validity of the evaluation findings and conclusions.
- Evaluation reports encompass both positive and negative findings and discuss both successes and failures
- The non-existence of suitable performance indicators and the scarce baseline information and monitoring data needed to measure progress and results, pose a major challenge to the quality of the evaluations. Though there has been a certain improvement over time, the evaluation reports demonstrate that many evaluators struggled to identify and apply specific, measurable and time-bound criteria. This issue is by no means unique to the evaluations commissioned by the UNEP Evaluation Office. The reports sometimes indicate that the evaluation teams have faced time and manpower constraints which prevent them from cross-checking (or triangulating) different sources of information, including collecting the points of view of different stakeholder groups. In general, reports indicate a need to strengthen project monitoring and reporting within UNEP.

Taking into account the issues mentioned above, the quality of the analysis and formulation of conclusions and recommendations are generally adequate and the panel found the evaluation reports to be technically sound and objective. The majority of the evaluation reports provide substantiated findings and conclusions which are supported by a sufficient level of analysis. Moreover, the recommendations generally appear to be supported by findings and conclusions.

The panel also invited UNEP line management

to give their opinion about the quality and credibility of the evaluation reports. The impression gained from these interviews is that the staff and management of UNEP largely consider the evaluations to be credible. It was, furthermore, pointed out that evaluation reports were submitted to stakeholders and disseminated even if project managers were not satisfied with the findings. Above, the high report ratings given by GEF were mentioned and further back up the finding of credible evaluation reports.

The credibility of the evaluation process is also defined by how management deals with the findings of the respective evaluations in terms of using them to improve policy and practice as well as to account for successes and failures. This topic is discussed in Chapter 6 on utility.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSIONS ON CREDIBILITY**

A system is in place to review and ascertain the quality of the Evaluation Office, the evaluation process and of the evaluation reports. Staff of the Evaluation Office was found to be professional, evaluation consultants to be competent, the process transparent and robust and reports factual and have high quality. The only concern is the fact that there are many areas of UNEP that are not sufficiently evaluated. The limited resources available for evaluation pose a risk for the future credibility of the evaluation function.

##### **MORE SPECIFICALLY:**

- The Evaluation Office has based its approach and methodologies on international

evaluation quality standards, including UNEG Norms and Standards.

- The overall competence and professionalism of Evaluation Office staff are very good.
- The selection process of evaluation teams is credible, transparent and adequate. Nevertheless, it does not always pay sufficient attention to ensuring a balance between international and national experts.
- The evaluation process is robust and ensures stakeholder involvement in all stages of the evaluation.
- The Evaluation Office ensures the quality of the evaluation process and of evaluation reports.
- Effective arrangements are made for handling stakeholders' comments and disagreements regarding evaluation findings, whilst at the same time safeguarding the independence of the evaluation.
- Reports are logically structured, containing evidence-based findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations.
- The evaluations describe the evaluation methods including any limitations in a transparent way; they substantiate conclusions by findings that are consistent with the data collected and methods applied.
- Conclusions are based on relevant evidence and analysis and recommendations are inferred from conclusions.
- To further improve quality and credibility of evaluations, there is a general need to strengthen project monitoring and reporting.

## CHAPTER 6

# UTILITY

The panel assessed utility of UNEP's evaluation function by reviewing the use of evaluations for accountability, learning and related decision-making. The assessment included analysing the way management responded to evaluations and made use of evaluation findings and recommendations. It was conducted against the following UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System:

- 1.3 Evaluation feeds into management and decision making processes, and makes an essential contribution to managing for results. Evaluation informs the planning, programme, budgeting, implementation and reporting cycle. It aims at improving the institutional relevance and the achievement of results, optimizing the use of resources, providing client satisfaction and maximizing the impact of the contribution of the UN system.
  - 2.6 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that evaluation contributes to decision making and management. They should ensure that a system is in place for explicit planning for evaluation and for systematic consideration of the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained in evaluations. They should ensure appropriate follow-up measures including an action plan, or equivalent appropriate tools, with clear accountability for the implementation of the approved recommendations.
  - 2.7 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that there is a repository of evaluations and a mechanism for distilling and disseminating lessons to improve organizational learning and systemic improvement. They should also make evaluation findings available to stakeholders and other organizations of the UN system as well as to the public.
- 4.1 Proper application of the evaluation function implies that there is a clear intent to use evaluation findings. In the context of limited resources, the planning and selection of evaluation work has to be carefully done. Evaluations must be chosen and undertaken in a timely manner so that they can and do inform decision-making with relevant and timely information. Planning for evaluation must be an explicit part of planning and budgeting of the evaluation function and/or the organization as a whole. Annual or multi-year evaluation work programmes should be made public.
  - 4.2 The evaluation plan can be the result of a cyclical or purposive selection of evaluation topics. The purpose, nature and scope of evaluation must be clear to evaluators and stakeholders. The plan for conducting each evaluation must ensure due process to ascertain the timely completion of the mandate, and consideration of the most cost-effective way to obtain and analyse the necessary information.
- 10.1 Transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders are essential features in all stages of the evaluation process. This improves the credibility and quality of the evaluation. It can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.
  - 10.2 Evaluation Terms of Reference and reports should be available to major stakeholders and be public documents. Documentation on evaluations in easily consultable and

readable form should also contribute to both transparency and legitimacy.

- 12.1 Evaluation requires an explicit response by the governing authorities and management addressed by its recommendations. This may take the form of a management response, action plan and/or agreement clearly stating responsibilities and accountabilities.
- 12.2 There should be a systematic follow-up on the implementation of the evaluation recommendations that have been accepted by management and/or the Governing Bodies.
- 12.3 There should be a periodic report on the status of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. This report should be presented to the Governing Bodies and/or the Head of the organization.
- 13.1 Evaluation contributes to knowledge building and organizational improvement. Evaluations should be conducted and evaluation findings and recommendations presented in a manner that is easily understood by target audiences.
- 13.2 Evaluation findings and lessons drawn from evaluations should be accessible to target audiences in a user-friendly way. A repository of evaluation could be used to distil lessons that contribute to peer learning and the development of structured briefing material for the training of staff. This should be done in a way that facilitates the sharing of learning among stakeholders, including the organizations of the UN system, through a clear dissemination policy and contribution to knowledge networks.

## 6.1 GENERAL

To have an impact on decision-making, evaluations must be perceived as credible, relevant and useful, and should be presented in a clear and concise manner. Senior management can foster

a culture conducive to evaluation by showing an interest and actively engaging in the programming of evaluations, and by accepting the implications of evaluation results for learning and accountability.

The panel notes that the Evaluation Office is committed to producing evaluations that are useful and – as mentioned in the previous chapter – by trying to ensure that these evaluations are timely and of adequate quality. The potential use of the evaluations is promoted in various ways. For example, all evaluations are made available throughout UNEP and on the Internet. Second, the Evaluation Office provides a biennial synthesis report to the Executive Director and the Governing Council. The bulk of evaluations undertaken are terminal evaluations of projects and there is less scope for higher level strategic evaluations or evaluations of the linkage between UNEP's normative work and the impact of technical cooperation.

## 6.2 PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

The current Evaluation Policy and practice clarifies the purpose of evaluation within UNEP. Evaluations are meant to serve the twin organizational objectives of (i) enabling management to improve programmatic planning, implementation results, monitoring and reporting and (ii) providing substantive accountability to UNEP's Governing Council, donors and the general public.

The review of evaluation ToRs by key evaluation stakeholders ensures that the intent of evaluations is clear and is consistent with the evaluation design and that relevant issues are being covered. Consequently, the users of the evaluation as well as those who are contracted to conduct evaluations have a sufficiently detailed and comprehensive insight into the purposes of an evaluation.

Planning for evaluation in UNEP is embedded in the overall planning and budgeting for the organization. A multi-year evaluation work

programme within the medium term strategy (2010-2013) has been developed by Evaluation Office and made public.

The interviews conducted during the course of the peer review reveal a certain tension between the learning and accountability functions of evaluation. Some UNEP staff perceive the accountability function of evaluation to be almost synonymous with audit or control, which shows a limited and internally oriented interpretation of accountability. Moreover, evaluations are mainly used for accountability and learning in relation to projects and subprogrammes which reduces its utility for the organization. Evaluations mainly assess technical issues and achievements and outcomes and efficiency in implementation but there is relatively little attention to cross-cutting issues such as gender.

### **6.3 USE OF EVALUATION FOR DECISION-MAKING AT THE POLICY, PROGRAMME AND PROJECT LEVELS**

From the interviews with staff and management, review of the evaluation work programme, as well as from analysing the content of management responses to the different evaluations, it becomes apparent that the impact of evaluations on decision-making at the policy level is limited. When questioned by the panel, interviewees found it difficult to point at specific evaluations which have had a real impact on policy. The two more strategic evaluations (Subprogramme Evaluation of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) and the Formative Evaluation of the UNEP PoW for 2010-2011), however, provided valuable insights into strategic, thematic and programme design issues which have been useful for decision-making at the programme and policy levels. Especially, the Formative Evaluation of the 2010-2011 PoW was mentioned to have provided feedback to UNEP's senior management and to the Quality Assurance Section which is charged with the preparation of the next PoW and MTS. At the same time, some interviewees argued that

evaluations in relation to the MTS could go further and also assess the appropriateness and functioning of the matrix system.

This said, indications are that evaluations are demanded and considered to be useful. Examples are the Subprogramme Evaluation of the DTIE and Formative Evaluation of the UNEP PoW for 2010-2011.

The bulk of the Evaluation Office-managed evaluations are project evaluations, which are considered to be major instruments in supporting and informing programmatic decision-making as well as learning in the wider sense. The Evaluation Office has made commendable efforts to make evaluations conducted and findings available in the organization and has put emphasis on engaging different stakeholders in the evaluation process, in order to foster utility. On the whole, it has been rather successful in convincing senior management of the need to proactively promote the use of evaluations for learning and to enable evaluation results to be fed into the corporate knowledge management system. The fact that the Head of the Evaluation Office is at the level of P-5 might also be a factor reducing the voice of the Evaluation Office in internal policy discussions. The Head of the Evaluation Office is an adviser to the Project Approval Group and uses this platform to feed back findings from evaluation in the design and approval process. In developing a view about the extent to which project activities and outputs contribute to the division's or organization's stated longer term outcomes and higher level objectives, this type of evaluations provides possibilities for strategic learning and planning. At the same time the relatively little resources available to do impact evaluations was noticed.

### **6.4 MEETING THE NEEDS OF DIFFERENT USERS OF EVALUATIONS**

There are several categories of potential users of evaluations in UNEP, ranging from senior management to thematic and regional management

and staff (both at headquarters level and in the regional offices), governing bodies, government counterparts, beneficiaries and donors. These different user categories are all considered important by the Evaluation Office, as demonstrated by the ToR of the various evaluations but, at the same time, consultations with partners in recipient countries about their information needs sometimes seem deficient. Furthermore, the utility to Member States is not fully optimized as there are limited opportunities for the Evaluation Office to exchange with governing bodies.

The evidence collected during the peer review allows the panel to confirm that project officers and senior management are satisfied with the work of the Evaluation Office, with the coverage of its work plan and the projects selected and issues addressed in evaluations. On the whole, they find that the evaluations submitted to them are useful in reviewing issues of general concern for UNEP and in helping them in taking the necessary decisions in the project formulation and implementation processes. Obviously, not all staff agree with the findings of a particular evaluation and in a (limited) number of cases delays are reported in the implementation of the evaluation, limiting the utility of the evaluation. Cases were reported of new project phases or a follow-up project having started before the previous one had been evaluated. Moreover, the possibility to feed in evaluative evidence during project implementation in order to enable projects to initiate corrective actions is limited as the Evaluation Office primarily conducts end of project evaluations. This does not impair the overall satisfaction with the usefulness of Evaluation Office evaluations.

With a view to maximizing the actual use of evaluation findings – and at the same time reinforcing their credibility and independence – the panel has found in UNEP sub-optimal attention being paid to disseminating findings to broader audiences, relative to the huge efforts invested in producing the evaluations. The Evaluation Office has not developed a dissemination approach which also includes evaluation

products specifically focused on certain groups of users. Though it at times organizes workshops to discuss evaluation findings and it makes the reports of individual evaluations available on the web and sometimes as printed copies, the office does not follow the practice of many evaluation units of many development cooperation agencies of producing separate summary reports, evaluation briefs or evaluation information sheets. Such focused evaluation products provide an opportunity for specific stakeholders (the media, the general public) to relatively easily share the most important findings and issues emanating from the evaluations.

The utility and actual use of evaluations is likely to become more effective when a well-articulated dissemination and communication strategy is in place. Such a strategy might also foster more ownership of evaluation findings and recommendations among internal and external stakeholders. The fact that most evaluation reports are in English is another concern and limits the utility to non-English-speaking stakeholders.

## **6.5 CONTRIBUTION OF EVALUATION TO KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

Knowledge management can be understood to comprise a range of practices used in an organization to identify, create, represent, distribute and enable adoption of new insights and experiences. Such insights and experiences comprise knowledge either embodied in individuals or internalized through organizational processes. The knowledge generated by evaluations needs to be credible, usable and accessible. In this respect, evaluation presentations can complement written reports. Some interviewees argued that not all reports are presented and that there could be more use of this modality. Another weakness identified was that the content of the biannual synthesis report was not widely known.

UNEP, with the support of the Evaluation Office, is developing a mechanism to enhance knowledge management and use of evaluation findings, relevant lessons and good practices



to improve programme and project delivery through, e.g., interactive seminars, best practice guidelines and an online repository of evaluations and of clustered lessons learned. Still, knowledge management in UNEP is not fully developed and learning from evaluation untapped. In the past, the Evaluation Office developed synthesis reports about lessons learned but this practice needs to be revitalized. Interviewees confirmed that the contribution of evaluation to broader internal learning is still limited.

The panel considers that the current quality of evaluations offers a good basis for the potential use of the evaluations for knowledge management in UNEP but that there is a need to improve knowledge management at the organizational level.

The Evaluation Office published a report on lessons learned from evaluations in 2007. The report was considered a good practice among UNEP members. It provided a theoretical background on how to extract lessons from development programme evaluations and made a systematization of evaluative findings. The report on lessons learned is available online as a knowledge management resource but was, however, discontinued due to a lack of internal follow-up and little available resources.

All the evaluation reports are available in a publicly accessible website thus also contributing to wider knowledge management.

## **6.6 CONTRIBUTION TO MANAGING FOR RESULTS**

The panel found that UNEP shares the difficulties faced by many development cooperation agencies in putting in place effective systems to manage for results. Evaluations, with an increased focus on results at outcome and impact levels, are gradually coming into a position to support moves towards a better functioning results based management (RBM) system.

For an evaluation to be able to play a “critical and credible role in supporting accountability for

results”, it must be able to provide evidence to demonstrate whether or not expected results are being achieved. The capacity of the evaluation function to produce such information is currently hampered by the weaknesses of UNEP’s monitoring and results-based management system.

The weakness of the results-based management system is not unique to UNEP; the challenges are the same for many other development cooperation agencies. As UNEP endeavours to focus more on policy advocacy and joint programming, it will, most likely, become harder to define results and measure progress and determine attribution. In other cases, Evaluation Office evaluations and reviews have been providing results-oriented information and been influential in providing information to initiate or speed up the process of resource allocation or institutional change.

## **6.7 MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO EVALUATIONS**

The use of evaluations by the different stakeholders is also determined by the ways in which governing bodies and senior management react to evaluation findings, conclusions and on recommendations.

The panel found the Evaluation Office’s current management response mechanism to be functioning in a satisfactory manner. It is fully managed and monitored by the Evaluation Office. The management response system promotes decision-making at the operational and strategic levels, in relation to evaluation recommendations and provides a tool for accountability. An Evaluation Office review of the evaluation recommendations compliance for the period 2002-2009 reveals that overall; some 70 percent of recommendations have been either fully or partially implemented. The review notices improvement of compliance over time but performance in this respect is still constrained by project/programme managers not always completing the required ‘implementation plan’ as requested or not always updating

progress in the implementation of the evaluation recommendations.

The use of evaluations and discussion of the status of implementation of recommendations in performance discussions between the Executive Director and UNEP division directors were, in particular, appreciated by the panel. Evaluation recommendations and related follow-up are also discussed in divisional management groups. The reporting to the Executive Director on compliance in implementing recommendations and the 'buy-in' of the Executive Director is felt to have impacted positively on compliance. An inherent weakness with the MRS system and limiting its utility for managers is that the MRS database are only accessible to Evaluation Office staff, thus division directors are not in a position to monitor the status of implementation of recommendations and project managers cannot update the information on a continuous basis. This also reduces its utility as a management and accountability tool. The panel found that there could be more ownership and responsibility of the management response system by line management.

## 6.8 CONCLUSIONS ON UTILITY

The panel's conclusions on utility can be summarized as follows:

- There is a corporate evaluation policy and strategy providing the framework for independent evaluation of UNEP's contribution to international development and setting standards to apply to all evaluations undertaken by UNEP. The utility of project evaluations is high but due to very few strategic evaluations, the utility to organizational strategy or policy development is limited and untapped.
  - The base of understanding of evaluation and its importance is reasonably strong in UNEP and has been getting stronger in recent years. However, there is still room for improving the evaluation culture in UNEP whereby management and staff fully accept the role and utility of evaluations and use evaluation.
- Evaluation reports are easily accessible but more use could be made of presentations, including to staff at large and targeted evaluation briefs.
  - Project evaluations are geared and timed to decision-making and have a growing potential to contribute more to the business process cycle, with increased management 'take-up'.
  - The evaluation capacity of the Evaluation Office could be better utilized to inform decision-making at policy level beyond the current contributions made at project and subprogramme levels.
  - UNEP is making progress in strengthening its RBM system and the Evaluation Office is making a strong contribution to that process. However, the capacity of the evaluation function to provide credible and thus useful information for accountability purposes remains a challenge in view of the current weaknesses in RBM.
  - UNEP has institutionalized the practice of management response system to evaluation recommendations and the Evaluation Office tracks management responses and follow-up but could make the system more user-friendly and owned by line management.
  - Evaluations address pertinent issues through consultation with stakeholders, including beneficiaries. However, it is also noted that the level of consultation at the level of recipient countries remains somewhat limited.
  - Evaluation is not well integrated with other knowledge and learning initiatives within UNEP. Opportunities are missed to distil and disseminate learning systematically, thus contributing more broadly to knowledge management.

## CHAPTER 7

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 CONCLUSIONS

Generally, UNEP follows UNEG Norms and Standards in evaluation. The evaluation function is independent, well-established and evaluation has been growing in importance through the reform process initiated in 2006 and with the increased focus on managing for results.

The Evaluation Office is a professionally managed function and, although human resources seem insufficient to deal with the high demand for its services and to carry out mandatory project as well as strategic evaluations, the peer review panel recognizes the efforts made the last few years to strengthen the Office. The fact that the Executive Director is using evaluation-compliance statistics in performance assessment of division directors is a good indicator of the perceived independence, credibility and of actual usage.

#### INDEPENDENCE

There is adequate separation between the planning, monitoring and evaluation functions and a system is in place to ensure the absence of conflict of interest and adherence to evaluation ethics. Evaluations are conducted in an independent manner and the Evaluation Office reports on evaluation findings without interference. Independence could however be strengthened through more regular and systematic reporting to governing bodies, as envisaged in the Evaluation Policy. All evaluation reports are shared on UNEP's external website.

A large part of the workload is taken up by mandatory project evaluations and many of these belong to an (expanding) GEF portfolio. The subprogramme evaluations also demand considerable

resources. There is, however, limited scope to undertake more strategic or thematic evaluations, due to limited staff resources but also due to the absence of non-earmarked financial resources at the disposal of the Evaluation Office. This limits the ability of the Evaluation Office to independently decide on its work programme.

The fact that the Evaluation Office does not control project evaluation budgets also affects the independence of the process and reduces the scope for rationalizing the work of the Evaluation Office through clustering evaluations.

#### CREDIBILITY

The Evaluation Office enjoys a high level of credibility, mainly due to the professionalism of its staff, the rigour of the evaluation process and quality of its evaluations. Independent, external evaluators conduct most evaluations. Evaluation consultants are selected by the Evaluation Office and, generally, perceived as being independent and impartial. No case of conflict of interest was found.

Evaluations were generally found to be of high quality and a quality assurance system is in place both for evaluators and evaluation reports. However, the relatively small budgets available for project evaluations, the limited involvement of partner governments and the restricted call on national consultants, causes concern as regards the robustness of some evaluations. This said, evaluations rated by the peer review team and, over the years by GEF, consistently got good ratings. Over 90 percent of evaluation recommendations are accepted.

Methodologies used for planning as well as conducting evaluations are solid and often

innovative. The methodological development is not only benefiting UNEP but also the larger UN community. Evaluation ToRs are exhaustive and provide detailed guidance to evaluators. The evaluation process was found to be consultative and transparent.

## UTILITY

Evaluations are considered useful by UNEP managers and staff and are used for accountability and learning purposes. Evaluation outputs are used in performance appraisals. Findings often feed into the formulation of new phases or projects/programmes but less so to policy making or overall strategy formulation. Evaluations mainly assess technical issues and achievements and outcomes but there is very little attention to cross-cutting issues such as gender.

The bulk of evaluations undertaken are terminal project evaluation and there is less scope for higher level strategic evaluations or evaluation of the linkage between UNEP's normative work and technical cooperation. There has however been a move 'upstream' with the MTS evaluations and the presently conducted evaluations of subprogrammes. The peer review panel endorses the focus on terminal evaluations but recognized that this limits the possibility to identify and address weaknesses during project implementation.

The formative evaluation in relation to the MTS and related causal relationships was innovative and constructive although some respondents felt it could have gone deeper into analysing fundamental assumptions of the new matrix structure. The newly initiated subprogramme evaluations are expected to feed in to learning and to possible corrective actions for subprogramme implementation. They will also contribute to the availability to higher (above project) level performance information.

Project evaluations are conducted for all projects with a budget above USD 500,000 which means that there is evaluative evidence and learning from a large part of the UNEP project portfolio.

The present capacity constraints limit the usefulness of the Evaluation Office and this constraint is expected to increase with a growing UNEP, including GEF portfolio. Presently, as many as 100 projects have an evaluation budget. The Evaluation Office is resorting to consultants to handle the increasing workload. The panel finds that the workload, the budget and the human resource base are not balanced. Presently the staff of the Evaluation Office is stretched and the timeliness and thus the usefulness of some evaluations has been an issue. The peer review panel, moreover, identified a need to strengthen the linkage between evaluation and UNEP's Normative Work. The Biennial Evaluation Synthesis report is of good quality but not generally known within the organization.

A system for following up on recommendations is in place and functioning although there is limited ownership on behalf of the entity responsible for the evaluated programme/project/policy. The response system is presently fully managed by and under the responsibility of the Evaluation Office.

UNEP has developed cutting-edge methodologies for analysing, categorizing and disseminating lessons learned but, unfortunately, activities in this area have not been conducted during the last few years. Senior management in UNEP could make a better use of Evaluation Office's technical capacity to inform decision-making with evaluative work at policy level. Evaluation Office contributes to enhancing the practice of evaluation in the UN system.

The utility to Member States is not fully optimized as there are limited opportunities for the Evaluation Office to exchange with governing bodies.

In summary, the peer review panel gives an affirmative answer to the core question of whether the agency's evaluation function and its products are independent, credible and useful for learning and accountability purposes.

## 7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are linked to the findings and conclusions presented earlier in this report. The recommendations are presented under the headings of a number of issues and not along the three main dimensions of the review in order to make it easier to see to which area or function a recommendation should be applied.

### 1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVALUATION OFFICE, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND GOVERNING BODIES

The panel considers the current reporting lines between the Evaluation Office and the Executive Director as appropriate. However, in order to strengthen the Evaluation Office's credibility and perceived independence and to enable deeper engagement and follow-up on evaluations, further consideration should be given to a direct reporting line to the CPR or a designated sub-group and creating space for evaluation reporting, on a biannual basis, into the agenda of the Governing Council.

### 2. FOSTERING AN EVALUATION CULTURE

The panel advises the ED and senior management to continue to promote conditions in which independent and high-quality evaluation is regarded as a basic instrument for learning and to strengthen accountability to the general public and partners. More specifically, the panel recommends more higher-level or strategic evaluations, to feed into policy-making and strategic planning.

### 3. EVALUATION STAFF AND CONSULTANTS

The peer review considers the current practice of recruiting external professionals for Evaluation Office posts as appropriate. The panel recommends that the number and levels of Evaluation Office staff should be further increased over time to cover increasing demand for evaluations

and provide additional support to learning and knowledge management. In order to strengthen the authority of the Evaluation Office and to enable its Head to more regularly interact with senior management, and in line with most UN organizations, the post of the Head of the Evaluation Office should be upgraded to the level of Director.

### 4. BUDGET FOR EVALUATIONS AND EVALUATION COVERAGE

UNEP management should ensure that the evaluation function has adequate regular resources to operate in an independent and credible manner. For transparency and accountability purposes, the Evaluation Office should be able to propose and solicit funding for costed biennial evaluation work plans and this should include strategic and thematic evaluations. Also the conduct of regular country-level evaluations should be looked into. Increased focus should be placed on strategic evaluations in line with the organization's strategic and programmatic priorities and in order to feed into higher-level decision- and policy-making.

A specific budget line for evaluation, under the control of the Evaluation Office, should be established in the PoW. The budgetary threshold for projects for which an independent evaluation, managed by the Evaluation Office, is mandatory should be raised to USD 1 million. Evaluation of smaller projects should be delegated to the technical branches.

### 5. TEAM SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT OF EXTERNAL EVALUATION EXPERTISE

More attention should be paid to ensuring a better balance between international and national experts.

### 6. EVALUATION QUALITY

The ToR should pay attention to balance the level of ambition and scope of work with the

resources available. Particularly, the scope and intensity of the fieldwork should more closely match the need for structured collection of primary and other data. For larger evaluations, the panel recommends the establishment of external evaluation reference groups to enhance the quality and credibility of the evaluations. The Evaluation Office should also promote gender mainstreaming in evaluations, develop related guidance and incorporate gender issues in ToRs.

## **7. MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**

UNEP should, both in principle and in practice, establish a clear division of responsibility between the evaluation function and the organization's line management regarding the management response system. Efforts to document and track management response to evaluations should if possible be decentralized to technical branches with the Evaluation Office being responsible for an overall annual report on compliance, including implementation of recommendations. The MRS sheets should be accessible, through the PIMS, to all UNEP staff members.

## **8. ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

The Evaluation Office should go back to systematically harvest lessons from existing evaluations. Such lessons should be proactively shared, using internal and external knowledge management fora and tools. Innovative methods for extracting and sharing of evaluation findings and lessons should be further developed, building on the past experiences. A knowledge management system that links project results with the normative work done could foster greater organizational effectiveness.

## **9. MONITORING AND RBM**

UNEP should give high priority to address the disconnect between its various results-focused data collection, reporting and analysis tools. A thorough review of existing monitoring and reporting systems and applications is vital to ensure that evaluations as well as the corporate monitoring system have access to more reliable, relevant and comparable results-oriented data.

## Annex 1

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

## PROFESSIONAL PEER REVIEW OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTIONS UNEG AND UN-Habitat

### THE PEER REVIEW

Both agencies requested a peer review at the same time, which led to the decision to undertake the two reviews in parallel. This approach has the advantage of one peer panel working with both evaluation offices – sharing a common approach, using resources efficiently by saving travel cost, etc. – and organizing joint peer exchanges during the review. The latter are an important part of the peer review process and should benefit from a larger participation of peers. At the same time, separate reports for each agency will be produced. The panel composition is indicated below.

### PURPOSE OF THE PROFESSIONAL PEER REVIEW

The peer review will provide an assessment of the evaluation offices of UNEP and UN-Habitat against UNEG norms and standards. In preparation of the Approach Paper, the evaluation functions of both Agencies were asked to specify the purposes the peer review should serve, which can be summarized as follows:

- Enhancing knowledge about, confidence in and use of evaluations by governing bodies and senior management of each of the two agencies, and in the case of UN-Habitat lead to informed decisions about increasing the independence of the evaluation office;
- Improving evaluation policy and practice, including stronger planning and resourcing of evaluation (also based on greater appreciation and support of evaluation by governing bodies and senior management), by sharing good practice and building internal capacities and confidence of the evaluation offices, including taking informed decisions about monitoring activities at UN-Habitat; and

- Supporting the evaluation offices' efforts to ensure greater acceptance and integration of evaluation findings in each agency's performance management system.

The peer review will also be shared with the DAC and UNEG members as feedback on the quality of evaluation in two UNEG members.

### CORE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The peer review will apply three core criteria, which are defined in the UNEG Framework as follows:

- "Independence of evaluations and evaluation systems. The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy making, the delivery, and the management of assistance. A requisite measure of independence of the evaluation function is a recognized precondition for credibility, validity and usefulness. At the same time, each review should bear in mind in that the appropriate guarantees of the necessary independence in a particular organization will differ according to the nature of its work, its governance and decision-making arrangements, and other factors. Moreover, most organizations aim to encourage the active application and use of evaluations at all levels of management, meaning that systemic measures for ensuring the necessary objectivity and impartiality of this work should receive due attention. Indicators of independence are broadly covered by UNEG Norms N6.1 – N6.5 and amplified in the relevant Standards."
- "Credibility of evaluations. The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the

degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment. Whether and how the organization's approach to evaluation fosters partnership and helps build ownership and capacity in developing countries merits attention as a major theme. Indicators of credibility are mainly treated in UNEG Norms N5.1 – N5.3, N8.1, N9.1 – N9.3 and N11.1 – N 11.5 and amplified in the relevant Standards.”

- “Utility of evaluations. To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development cooperation. Importantly, each review should bear in mind that ensuring the utility of evaluations is only partly under the control of evaluators. It is also critically a function of the interest of managers, and member countries through their participation on governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving and using evaluations. Indicators of utility are mainly treated in UNEG Norms N2.6, N1.3, N 8.2, N10.1, N 10.2 and N.12.1 – N12.3 and amplified in the relevant Standards.”

The evaluation offices of both Agencies agree that all three criteria are relevant to the exercise and inter-related. They emphasized the greater importance of utility and credibility and requested that related criteria (such as impartiality, transparency and effectiveness of evaluation) are reviewed as well. In the case of UNEP, it was emphasized that its mandate is primarily at global and regional level, thus the provision of the second criteria and its focus on “ownership and capacity in developing countries” would need to be seen from this perspective.

The core criteria are elaborated and adapted for this peer review in the Normative Framework

which relates these criteria to questions about (a) what is evaluated; (b) how are evaluations conducted: and (c) how are evaluation findings communicated, with the ultimate aim to determine whether the evaluation offices are effective and what role the core criteria play (support, hinder, etc.).

#### **APPROACH, SCOPE OF AND LIMITATIONS TO THE PEER REVIEW**

The peer review uses a ‘reduced’ framework, which according to the UNEG Framework applies to ‘small organizations’, where smaller evaluation functions do not justify the time and financial resources that previous peer reviews have required. This choice was made by the agencies concerned and agreed to by the joint DAC-UNEG Task Force on Peer Reviews. It means that the scope of the peer review and associated work by the peer review panel are reduced, but should still render a credible assessment of the evaluation functions.

A review matrix takes each of the questions in the Normative Framework and identifies assessment criteria (which in many cases are qualitative), key informants, documented sources for the assessment, and preliminary discussion points for peer exchanges.

The peer review will emphasize the discussion among peers and with key informants, both to obtain information. In particular, the panel will engage with:

- **Stakeholders in governing bodies and senior management** to gain an understanding of their concerns and share with them insights into good evaluation practice to address the expressed intention to enhance their knowledge and confidence in evaluation;
- **Peers in the evaluation function** to learn about the evaluation functions’ practices and discuss additional or alternative ways to address common evaluation challenges. These peer discussions will be organized to bring together the evaluators from both of



the Nairobi-based agencies and the panel members to broaden the exchange and foster learning across both offices and those from which the panel members originate;

- **Operational management** to gain an understanding of their concerns and discuss issues related to learning and implementing evaluation recommendations (in particular related to UNEP). Operational management includes stakeholders outside Nairobi, who will be consulted by telephone conference prior to the panel's work in Nairobi, and possibly involved in a group discussion (via conference call) with Nairobi-based colleagues.

The review of documents will be limited.

The peer review's strongest limitation is that it cannot undertake an independent assessment of the technical credibility and independence of evaluation work conducted by UNEP and UN-Habitat; to do so, it would require technical advisers with relevant expertise, which would be difficult to accomplish and go beyond a peer review of the evaluation function. Instead, the panel will address this question by reviewing and determining whether the evaluation processes of each of the Agencies include adequate measures to ensure the best possible technical credibility and independence of evaluations.

### PANEL COMPOSITION

A number of important considerations were taken into account when composing the panel membership: (i) relevant professional experience, in particular evaluation but also normative work; (ii) independence – to avoid any potential or alleged conflict of interest or partiality, the panel members do not have any close working relationship to UNEP and/or UN-Habitat that might influence the panel's position and deliberations; and (iii) level of seniority of panel members.

The combination of these criteria together with the voluntary nature of serving on the panel resulted in the following composition:

- Margareta De Goys, Director, Evaluation Group, UNIDO, (Chair)
- Dominique de Crombrugghe, Special Evaluator for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium
- Oscar Garcia, Senior Evaluator, United Nations Development Programme Evaluation Office

Roland Rodts, will function as adviser to the peer panel. His participation is financed by the Government of Belgium.

### REVIEW PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

The peer review will follow a simplified approach, as suggested in the UNEG Framework, and entail only one visit to Nairobi. UNEP and UN-Habitat stakeholders at global, regional and country level will be consulted by phone and not through country visits. It is expected that a total of 25 working days per panel member is required to participate in the peer review, including preparatory reading, interviews (Nairobi and by phone), peer discussions in Nairobi, travel time and report writing.

Preparation of the Approach Paper	July/August 2011
Self-assessment by UNEP and UN-Habitat Evaluation Offices	September 2011
Preparatory Reading	September 2011
Conference call interviews with stakeholders not based in Nairobi	3 to 14 October 2011
Meetings in Nairobi, including report writing	17 to 28 October 2011
Finalization of draft report and circulation for comments	5 December 2012
Report revisions and finalization of report	January 2012

Conference calls with stakeholders not based in Nairobi will be organized by the chair of the peer panel and involve the panel members and adviser. The peer review process will be supported by the evaluation offices of UNEP and UN-Habitat who will be responsible for setting up all necessary appointments, making available documentation as requested, and facilitating the panel contacting other stakeholders.

## **REPORTING**

A separate report will be prepared for each of the agencies. The reports will be submitted in electronic format and printed by each agency concerned depending on their needs for hard copies.

Each report will be prepared by the peer panel and its adviser and issued as their independent assessment. The draft reports will be shared with stakeholders for comments and revised to correct factual errors and make other changes, as the panel sees fit.

The final reports will be shared by the agencies with its stakeholders and posted on their respective Internet sites. They will also be shared with the UNEG and DAC Secretariats for distribution and posting on respective Internet sites.

## **RESOURCES**

The panel members will participate without receiving remuneration and cover the cost of their travel and conference call participation. The cost of the adviser will be covered from the contributions of Belgium.

# NORMS FOR EVALUATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

## INTRODUCTION

- 0.1 The present document outlines the norms that are the guiding principle for evaluating the results achieved by the UN system, the performance of the organizations, the governing of the evaluation function within each entity of the UN system, and the value-added use of the evaluation function.
- 0.2 Complementary to these norms, a set of standards has been drawn from good practice of UNEG members. These will be revised from time to time and are intended to be applied as appropriate within each organization.

## N1 – DEFINITION

- 1.1 Purposes of evaluation include understanding why, and the extent to which, intended and unintended results are achieved, and their impact on stakeholders. Evaluation is an important source of evidence of the achievement of results and institutional performance. Evaluation is also an important contributor to building knowledge and to organizational learning. Evaluation is an important agent of change and plays a critical and credible role in supporting accountability.
- 1.2 An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area, institutional performance, etc. It focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and

sustainability of the interventions and contributions of the organizations of the UN system. An evaluation should provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful, enabling the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of the organizations of the UN system and its members.

- 1.3 Evaluation feeds into management and decision-making processes, and makes an essential contribution to managing for results. Evaluation informs the planning, programme, budgeting, implementation and reporting cycle. It aims at improving the institutional relevance and the achievement of results, optimizing the use of resources, providing client satisfaction and maximizing the impact of the contribution of the UN system.
- 1.4 There are other forms of assessment being conducted in the UN system. They vary in purpose and level of analysis, and may overlap to some extent. Evaluation is to be differentiated from the following:
  - a. Appraisal: A critical assessment of the potential value of an undertaking before a decision is made to implement it.
  - b. Monitoring: Management's continuous examination of progress achieved during the implementation of an undertaking to track compliance with the plan and to take necessary decisions to improve performance.
  - c. Review: The periodic or ad hoc often rapid assessments of the performance of an undertaking, that do not apply the due process of evaluation. Reviews tend to emphasize operational issues.

- d. Inspection: A general examination that seeks to identify vulnerable areas and malfunctions and to propose corrective action.
  - e. Investigation: A specific examination of a claim of wrongdoing and provision of evidence for eventual prosecution or disciplinary measures.
  - f. Audit: An assessment of the adequacy of management controls to ensure the economical and efficient use of resources; the safeguarding of assets; the reliability of financial and other information; the compliance with regulations, rules and established policies; the effectiveness of risk management; and the adequacy of organizational structures, systems and processes.
  - g. Research: A systematic examination designed to develop or contribute to knowledge.
  - h. Internal management consulting: Consulting services to help managers implement changes that address organizational and managerial challenges and improve internal work processes.
- 1.5 Evaluation is not a decision-making process per se, but rather serves as an input to provide decision-makers with knowledge and evidence about performance and good practices. Although evaluation is used to assess undertakings, it should provide value-added for decision-oriented processes to assist in the improvement of present and future activities, projects, programmes, strategies and policies. Thus evaluation contributes to institutional policy-making, development effectiveness and organizational effectiveness.
- 1.6 There are many types of evaluations, such those internally or externally-led, those adopting a summative or formative approach, those aimed at determining the attribution of an organization's own action or those performed jointly to assess collaborative efforts. An evaluation can be conducted in an ex-post fashion, at the

end of phase, mid-point, at the terminal moment or real-time. The evaluation approach and method must be adapted to the nature of the undertaking to ensure due process and to facilitate stakeholder participation in order to support an informed decision-making process.

- 1.7 Evaluation is therefore about *Are we doing the right thing?* It examines the rationale, the justification of the undertaking, makes a reality check and looks at the satisfaction of intended beneficiaries. Evaluation is also about *Are we doing it right?* It assesses the effectiveness of achieving expected results. It examines the efficiency of the use of inputs to yield results. Finally, evaluation asks *Are there better ways of achieving the results?* Evaluation looks at alternative ways, good practices and lessons learned.

## **N2 – RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVALUATION**

- 2.1 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations in the UN system are responsible for fostering an enabling environment for evaluation and ensuring that the role and function of evaluation are clearly stated, reflecting the principles of the UNEG Norms for Evaluation, taking into account the specificities of each organization's requirements.
- 2.2 The governance structures of evaluation vary. In some cases, it rests with the Governing Bodies in others with the Head of the organization. Responsibility for evaluation should be specified in an evaluation policy.
- 2.3 The Governing Bodies and/or the Heads of organizations are also responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to enable the evaluation function to operate effectively and with due independence.
- 2.4 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that evaluations are conducted in an impartial

and independent fashion. They are also responsible for ensuring that evaluators have the freedom to conduct their work without repercussions for career development.

- 2.5 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations are responsible for appointing a professionally competent Head of the evaluation, who in turn is responsible for ensuring that the function is staffed by professionals competent in the conduct of evaluation.
- 2.6 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that evaluation contributes to decision making and management. They should ensure that a system is in place for explicit planning for evaluation and for systematic consideration of the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained in evaluations. They should ensure appropriate follow-up measures including an action plan, or equivalent appropriate tools, with clear accountability for the implementation of the approved recommendations.
- 2.7 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that there is a repository of evaluations and a mechanism for distilling and disseminating lessons to improve organizational learning and systemic improvement. They should also make evaluation findings available to stakeholders and other organizations of the UN system as well as to the public.

### **N3 – POLICY**

- 3.1 Each organization should develop an explicit policy statement on evaluation. The policy should provide a clear explanation of the concept, role and use of evaluation within the organization, including the institutional framework and definition of roles and responsibilities; an explanation of how the evaluation function and evaluations are planned, managed and budgeted; and a clear statement on disclosure and dissemination.

### **N4 – INTENTIONALITY**

- 4.1 Proper application of the evaluation function implies that there is a clear intent to use evaluation findings. In the context of limited resources, the planning and selection of evaluation work has to be carefully done. Evaluations must be chosen and undertaken in a timely manner so that they can and do inform decision-making with relevant and timely information. Planning for evaluation must be an explicit part of planning and budgeting of the evaluation function and/or the organization as a whole. Annual or multi-year evaluation work programmes should be made public.
- 4.2 The evaluation plan can be the result of a cyclical or purposive selection of evaluation topics. The purpose, nature and scope of evaluation must be clear to evaluators and stakeholders. The plan for conducting each evaluation must ensure due process to ascertain the timely completion of the mandate, and consideration of the most cost-effective way to obtain and analyse the necessary information.

### **N5 – IMPARTIALITY**

- 5.1 Impartiality is the absence of bias in due process, methodological rigour, consideration and presentation of achievements and challenges. It also implies that the views of all stakeholders are taken into account. In the event that interested parties have different views, these are to be reflected in the evaluation analysis and reporting.
- 5.2 Impartiality increases the credibility of evaluation and reduces the bias in the data gathering, analysis, findings, conclusions and recommendations. Impartiality provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflict of interest.
- 5.3 The requirement for impartiality exists at all stages of the evaluation process, including the planning of evaluation, the formulation of mandate and scope, the selection of evaluation teams, the conduct

of the evaluation and the formulation of findings and recommendations.

## **N6 – INDEPENDENCE**

- 6.1 The evaluation function has to be located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured. It needs to have full discretion in submitting directly its reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision-making pertaining to the subject of evaluation.
- 6.2 The Head of evaluation must have the independence to supervise and report on evaluations as well as to track follow-up of management's response resulting from evaluation.
- 6.3 To avoid conflict of interest and undue pressure, evaluators need to be independent, implying that members of an evaluation team must not have been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design, or overall management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be in the near future.
- 6.4 Evaluators must have no vested interest and have the full freedom to conduct impartially their evaluative work, without potential negative effects on their career development. They must be able to express their opinion in a free manner.
- 6.5 The independence of the evaluation function should not impinge the access that evaluators have to information on the subject of evaluation.

## **N7 – EVALUABILITY**

- 7.1 During the planning stage of an undertaking, evaluation functions can contribute to the process by improving the ability to evaluate the undertaking and by building an evaluation approach into the plan. To safeguard independence this should be performed in an advisory capacity only.

- 7.2 Before undertaking a major evaluation requiring a significant investment of resources, it may be useful to conduct an evaluability exercise. This would consist of verifying if there is clarity in the intent of the subject to be evaluated, sufficient measurable indicators, assessable reliable information sources and no major factor hindering an impartial evaluation process.

## **N8 – QUALITY OF EVALUATION**

- 8.1 Each evaluation should employ design, planning and implementation processes that are inherently quality oriented, covering appropriate methodologies for data-collection, analysis and interpretation.
- 8.2 Evaluation reports must present in a complete and balanced way the evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations. They must be brief and to the point and easy to understand. They must explain the methodology followed, highlight the methodological limitations of the evaluation, key concerns and evidenced-based findings, dissident views and consequent conclusions, recommendations and lessons. They must have an executive summary that encapsulates the essence of the information contained in the report, and facilitate dissemination and distillation of lessons.

## **N9 – COMPETENCIES FOR EVALUATION**

- 9.1 Each organization of the UN system should have formal job descriptions and selection criteria that state the basic professional requirements necessary for an evaluator and evaluation manager.
- 9.2 The Head of the evaluation function must have proven competencies in the management of an evaluation function and in the conduct of evaluation studies.
- 9.3 Evaluators must have the basic skill set for conducting evaluation studies and managing externally hired evaluators.

## **N10 – TRANSPARENCY AND CONSULTATION**

- 10.1 Transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders are essential features in all stages of the evaluation process. This improves the credibility and quality of the evaluation. It can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- 10.2 Evaluation Terms of Reference and reports should be available to major stakeholders and be public documents. Documentation on evaluations in easily consultable and readable form should also contribute to both transparency and legitimacy.

## **N11 – EVALUATION ETHICS**

- 11.1 Evaluators must have personal and professional integrity.
- 11.2 Evaluators must respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators must take care that those involved in evaluations have a chance to examine the statements attributed to them.
- 11.3 Evaluators must be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environments in which they work.
- 11.4 In light of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender inequality.
- 11.5 Evaluations sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Also, the evaluators are not expected to evaluate the personal performance of individuals and must balance an evaluation of management functions with due consideration for this principle.

## **N12 – FOLLOW-UP TO EVALUATION**

- 12.1 Evaluation requires an explicit response by the governing authorities and management addressed by its recommendations. This may take the form of a management response, action plan and/or agreement clearly stating responsibilities and accountabilities.
- 12.2 There should be a systematic follow-up on the implementation of the evaluation recommendations that have been accepted by management and/or the Governing Bodies.
- 12.3 There should be a periodic report on the status of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. This report should be presented to the Governing Bodies and/or the Head of the organization.

## **N13 – CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE BUILDING**

- 13.1 Evaluation contributes to knowledge building and organizational improvement. Evaluations should be conducted and evaluation findings and recommendations presented in a manner that is easily understood by target audiences.
- 13.2 Evaluation findings and lessons drawn from evaluations should be accessible to target audiences in a user-friendly way. A repository of evaluation could be used to distil lessons that contribute to peer learning and the development of structured briefing material for the training of staff. This should be done in a way that facilitates the sharing of learning among stakeholders, including the organizations of the UN system, through a clear dissemination policy and contribution to knowledge networks.

## Annex 3

# NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

	<b>Independence</b>	<b>Credibility</b>	<b>Utility</b>
<b>Question 1: What is evaluated?</b>	<p>Is the evaluation work programme affected by the independence of the evaluation function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ who decides/ approves;</li> <li>▪ what is included/ excluded;</li> <li>▪ how representative is the evaluation work programme</li> <li>▪ what is budgeted for?</li> </ul> <p>For UN-Habitat: does the combination of monitoring and evaluation functions affect the independence of evaluation?</p>	<p>Is the credibility of the evaluation function affected by what is included/excluded in the evaluation work programme?</p> <p>Does the credibility of evaluation affect what can be included in the evaluation work programme?</p>	<p>Does the evaluation work programme focus on/ include subjects that are critical/most useful to stakeholders?</p> <p>For UN-Habitat: does the combination of monitoring and evaluation functions affect the utility of evaluation?</p>
<b>UNEG Norms</b>	<p>N2.3: the governing bodies/heads of organizations are responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to enable the evaluation function to operate effectively and with due independence</p>		<p>N1.3: evaluation feeds into management and decision-making processes and makes an essential contribution to managing for results</p> <p>N2.6: a system for explicit planning of evaluation and systematic consideration of findings</p> <p>N4.1 and N4.2: intent to use, selection of evaluation work is carefully done, the evaluation plan can be the result of a cyclical or purposive selection</p>



<p><b>Question 2: How are evaluations conducted?</b></p>	<p>Are evaluations conducted transparently and impartially? Do evaluations safeguard against conflict of interest?</p>	<p>Are evaluations/evaluators (perceived to be) transparent, impartial, of high quality/technically competent, and are using evaluation resources efficiently?</p>	<p>Does the evaluation process engage stakeholders in ways that make evaluations useful, while maintaining independence and credibility?</p>
<p><b>UNEG Norms</b></p>	<p>N.5.1: impartiality is the absence of bias in due process, methodological rigour, consideration and presentation of achievements and challenges. The requirement for impartiality exists at all points in the process: planning, conduct, reporting</p> <p>N6.2: the head of evaluation must have the independence to supervise and report on evaluations</p> <p>N6.3: to avoid conflict of interest, evaluators must not have been responsible for the subject of the evaluation</p> <p>N6.4: evaluators must not have any vested interest and have the full freedom to undertake the evaluation impartially</p>	<p>N4.2: the purpose, nature and scope of evaluation must be clear to evaluators and stakeholders, evaluation must ensure due process timely completion and cost-effective way to obtain and analyse information</p> <p>N5.2: Impartiality increases the credibility of evaluation and reduces the bias in data gathering, etc.</p> <p>N8.1: each evaluation should employ design, planning and implementation processes that are inherently quality oriented</p> <p>N9: the head of the evaluation function, evaluation staff and evaluators should have proven competencies to manage and/or conduct evaluations</p> <p>N10.1: transparency improves credibility and quality</p> <p>N11: evaluators must have personal and professional integrity, respect people and their rights, and be sensitive to beliefs etc.</p>	<p>N4.1 and N4.2: evaluations must be undertaken in a timely manner so that they can and do inform decision-making with relevant and timely information</p> <p>N10.1: transparency and consultation in the evaluation process can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation</p>

<p><b>Question 3: How are evaluation findings communicated?</b></p>	<p>Is there interference in the communication of evaluation findings?</p>	<p>Are evaluation findings communicated in an impartial way with adequate levels of technical and political credibility?</p>	<p>Are evaluation findings communicated in a useful, constructive and timely way?</p>
<p><b>UNEG Norms</b></p>	<p>N6.1: the head of evaluation should have full discretion in submitting directly its reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision-making</p>	<p>N8.2: evaluation reports must present in a complete and balanced way the evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations</p> <p>N10.2: documentation on evaluations in easily consultable and readable form should also contribute to both transparency and legitimacy</p>	<p>N2.7: governing bodies and/or heads of organizations and of the evaluation function are responsible for ensuring that there is a repository of evaluation and a mechanism for distilling and disseminating lessons to improve organizational learning and systemic improvement</p> <p>N13: evaluation contributes to knowledge building, findings and lessons should be accessible to target audiences and user-friendly</p> <p>N12: evaluation requires an explicit response by governing bodies and management to address recommendations. There should be systematic follow-up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations and a periodic status report, which should be presented to governing bodies</p>
<p><b>Question 4: Is there a system in place to follow up on evaluation recommendations?</b></p>			

## Annex 4

# PEOPLE CONSULTED

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Philip Edwards, Consultant

Camille Bann, Consultant

Bernard Mazijn, Consultant

Rob van de Berg, Director, Evaluation Office,  
GEF

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## Annex 6

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