



Joint Statement

Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS – Agenda Item 3

First Regular Session 2018

Evaluation

Wednesday, 24 January 2018

Mr. President,

I make this statement on behalf of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and my own country Switzerland. We welcome UNDP's first multi-year evaluation plan based on the new Evaluation Policy. We would like to state our appreciation that the Independent Evaluation Office has planned 100% country program evaluation coverage for country offices scheduled to submit new programs to the Board. This is an important achievement in the Independent Evaluation Office's work to assist the Board in discharging its oversight responsibilities. We would also like encourage UNDP to further engage the partner countries in the evaluation process in country program and decentralized project evaluations.

We thank the Independent Evaluation Office for its quality assessment of decentralized evaluations. Based on this review and the work plan 2018-2021 we would like to add the following three comments:

1. Decentralized Evaluations

We welcome the Independent Evaluation Office review of the quality assessment of 2016 decentralized evaluations. While there have been improvements since the review of UNDP evaluation policy in 2014, we are concerned that out of the 170 evaluations reviewed, over two thirds of evaluations have not reached a fully satisfactory rating. What's more, forty-four evaluations, at a combined cost of over a million dollars, were considered unsatisfactory. This is a cause for concern and we would urge UNDP to redouble efforts in this regard.

The quality of evaluators was mentioned as an area for improvement, could the IEO elaborate on the extent to which this was a problem leading to less than satisfactory conclusions? Does this point to gaps in the procurement system for consultants or to other issues?

We take note of the efforts to strengthen support for decentralized evaluations. We welcome the initiative by the Independent Evaluation Office to continue this assessment process to provide a comparison of evaluation quality and to monitor if the wide range of activities to support country offices in their evaluation capacity leads to an improvement of the quality. In this regard, we would like to enquire whether UNDP is planning to set targets for specific levels of improvement in future years.

We encourage UNDP management to work with the Independent Evaluation Office to continue its efforts to strengthen the quality and process of decentralized evaluations, ensure their independence from undue influence by managers and explore further measures to ensure their validity. Furthermore, we welcome increased collaboration with other UN agencies on quality assurance of decentralized evaluations as stipulated in the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) guidelines. It is important that UNDP is better at integrating or considering crosscutting issues such as human rights, disabilities, minorities, vulnerable groups, poverty dynamics, climate change and especially gender issues within evaluation reports and supporting particularly those regions facing the greatest challenges in the quality of the reports.

2. Joint Evaluations and System-wide Approach

We welcome the Independent Evaluation Office's goal to maximize coordination and joint activities with other independent oversight units, within UNDP and throughout the broader evaluation and oversight community. In this regard we also welcome and look forward to the evaluation of UNDP's inter-agency financing and operational services planned to be presented to second regular session later this year. This year's revision of UNICEF's Evaluation Policy offers an excellent opportunity to share UNDP's experience gained from its previously revised Evaluation Policy.

Collaborative approaches are critical to fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context we support both UNDP's plans to evaluate European portfolios as a cluster and the thematic areas identified for future consideration. We encourage UNDP to elaborate their plans for further thematic evaluations, with a particular focus institutional effectiveness and on linking resources to results. We would also

emphasize the inclusion of the 2030 Agenda more explicitly in the corporate evaluations.

The new Strategic Plan of UNDP and the recently published report of the UN Secretary General on the Repositioning the UN Development System to Deliver on the 2030 Agenda pursue a more system-wide approach. The Independent Evaluation Office is invited to clarify how UNDP IEO will engage with sister functions in UNICEF, UNWOMEN and UNFPA to evaluate the common chapter of the strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women with identical outcome indicators in six areas of collaboration. We would like to propose a joint-evaluation among all four agencies, encompassing individual recommendations to each agency, and would suggest this to be specified in the work plan 2018-2021. We also encourage UNDP to be more proactive in looking to do more joint country portfolio evaluations. The need for increased UN coherence and the modest scale of some UN country portfolios make for a strong case for joint evaluations in many cases.

The report of the UN Secretary General notes the goal to establish an independent system-wide evaluation unit, to be administered by the Department of Management and directly accountable to the ECOSOC. We encourage the Independent Evaluation Office to support this unit and to work closely together on system-wide aspects as the workplan for 2018-21 is further developed.

3. Resource Allocation

Thirdly, to improve the identified deficits in quality and coverage of evaluations, it is crucial that enough resources are allocated for the evaluation function. The evaluation policy sets clear targets.

We welcome that UNDP has increased the budget for the Evaluation Office and allocates the targeted 0.2 percent of the estimated combined programmatic resources for its function, and that it has created separate budget lines for evaluation and audit. However, as we noted with concern at the previous Board Meeting, in 2016 overall only 0.44 per cent of the resources were allocated to the entire evaluation function, hence less than half of the targeted 1 per cent as determined by the Evaluation Policy. What is the total allocation for evaluation for the period 2018-2021? Has the budget for the entire evaluation function also increased? We would welcome comments from the IEO and management on how the current harmonised cost-recovery policy contributes

to evaluations, and how adjustments possibly can secure sufficient resources for evaluations.

We would also like to note that within the current level of expenditure, we note that the quality assessment of decentralised evaluations found that governance, as a theme for UNDP evaluations, is significantly under-represented when compared to UNDP's expenditure on governance programming. We would also like to ask UNDP to further elaborate on the plans for finalising the list of evaluations in Annex 3 of the workplan. In this regard we would wish to highlight our interest in having an evaluation on conflict prevention and recovery conducted during this strategic plan cycle.

We remain committed partners for supporting UNDP in its continued efforts for evidence based programming. Supporting UNDP's evaluation function is and will remain a priority in the future for us.

Thank you very much.