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Operational activities for development:

(a) Operational activities for development of  
the United Nations system

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Operational activities of the United  
Nations for international development  
cooperation: (a) Follow up to policy  
recommendations of the General Assembly  
and the Council

*Policy for Independent System-wide Evaluation of Operational Activities for  
Development of the United Nations System*

Note by the Secretary-General
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1. In December 2012, the General Assembly, in resolution 67/226, reaffirmed the need to strengthen independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development. Noting the findings and recommendations of the independent review commissioned by the Secretary-General in response to resolution 64/289<sup>1</sup>, the General Assembly reaffirmed that further strengthening of system-wide evaluation within the United Nations development system should be based on utilizing and enhancing existing mechanisms.

2. The General Assembly, also in resolution 67/226, requested the Secretary-General to establish an interim coordination mechanism for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system composed of the Joint Inspection Unit, the United Nations Evaluation Group, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of Internal Oversight Services. Furthermore, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, through the interim coordination mechanism, to develop a policy for independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, including submitting a proposal for pilot system-wide evaluations, for discussion by

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<sup>1</sup> A/66/852

During the informal consultations of the Second Committee of the General Assembly on operational activities in the fall of 2013, Member States agreed to launch two pilot independent system-wide evaluations, subject to availability of extra-budgetary resources and decided that the themes of these evaluations should be “meta-evaluation and synthesis of UNDAF evaluations with a particular focus on poverty eradication” and “evaluation of the contribution of the United Nations development system to strengthening national capacities for statistical analysis and data collection to support the achievement of the MDGs and other internationally-agreed development goals.

the Economic and Social Council at the operational activities segment of its substantive session in 2013. The Economic and Social Council, in resolution 2013/5, welcomed the establishment of the interim coordination mechanism and took note of the new policy document and called for continuing consultations with Member States on the proposals for pilot system-wide evaluations for decision by the end of 2013.

3. The interim coordination mechanism was established in late February 2013. The group met regularly over the following four months to develop a policy to support independent system-wide evaluations of operational activities for development. This policy represents the outcome of consultations with a significant number of Member States, United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, as well as relevant inter-agency mechanisms.

4. The policy intends to ensure that independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations is systematically applied to assess whether the United Nations system is efficiently and effectively responding to global, regional and country level needs and priorities, and achieving the internationally-agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

5. As noted in Section X of the policy, it is envisaged that the General Assembly would review the policy and the outcomes of its pilot implementation during the Assembly's quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system in 2016. This review would inform improvements and adjustments to the policy.

6. The United Nations system entities are ready to support Member States with the implementation of this policy, in order to achieve greater development effectiveness and impact of the work of the Organization for development in programme countries.

**GA resolution 67/226**

*Requests the Secretary-General to establish an interim coordination mechanism for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system composed of the Joint Inspection Unit, the United Nations Evaluation Group, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and also requests the Secretary-General, through the interim coordination mechanism, to develop a policy for independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, including submitting a proposal for pilot system-wide evaluations, for discussion at the operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2013.*

**I. INTRODUCTION****Background**

7. Since the mid-1990s, Member States have increasingly adopted decisions at the intergovernmental level, including through the comprehensive policy reviews of United Nations operational activities for development, aimed at enhancing the system-wide coherence of the United Nations system. System-wide coherence entails responding to country needs and priorities and making progress towards the internationally-agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in a more efficient manner. It is about ensuring that the United Nations system as a whole contributes more effectively to development than the sum of its individual parts. It entails drawing on the capacities of all organizations to capitalize on opportunities for programmatic

and operational synergies and mutually reinforcing complementarities, with a view to achieving greater development effectiveness and impact.

8. Within this broader objective of promoting system-wide coherence in both programming and operations, strengthening the capacity for independent system-wide evaluation of United Nations operational activities for development at the global, regional and country levels has in the past decade been regularly on the agenda of intergovernmental bodies, as well as United Nations entities themselves.

9. System-wide evaluations, with varying scopes and foci, have been conducted in a wide variety of forms by several entities in the United Nations system, including, but not limited to, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as well as through ad hoc and joint arrangements, including those organized by United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) members, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). In addition, since 2010 UNDAF evaluations have become mandatory and corresponding guidelines prescribing the systematic conduct of such system-wide evaluations at country level have been developed with the support of the UNEG. While OCHA has been able to assume a coordination role in system-wide evaluations in the humanitarian sector, other system-wide evaluations have, generally been without a commonly agreed governance structure or approach to commissioning, planning, funding and implementation and follow-up.

10. The purpose of the present policy document is to propose a common and coherent UN system-wide institutional framework for carrying out independent system-wide evaluations of United Nations operational activities for development. As requested by General Assembly resolution 64/289, the proposed independent system-wide evaluation mechanism would be “aimed at fully utilizing and strengthening the existing institutional framework and capacities”.<sup>2</sup> The present policy is not intended to preclude system-wide evaluations that are already undertaken by existing entities or mechanisms. Nor are independent system-wide evaluations expected to be a replacement for the various kinds of evaluations that are undertaken by UN entities such as the evaluations of UNDAFs. Such evaluations should, however, be guided by this policy, if they are intended to be independent system-wide evaluations.

### **Purpose of Independent System-wide Evaluation**

11. The primary purpose of independent system-wide evaluation of United Nations operational activities for development is to assess whether the United Nations system is efficiently and effectively responding to global, regional and country level needs and priorities, and, where relevant, achieving the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs. In particular, independent system-wide evaluations are expected to assess whether the United Nations system effectively exploits opportunities for programmatic and operational synergies and draws on the capacities of all relevant entities, with a view to enhancing system-wide coherence and impact. Independent system-wide evaluations should promote learning to inform strategy and policy development, and serve as an important instrument to enhance the accountability of the UN system and its contribution to the greater good.

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<sup>2</sup> General Assembly Resolution 64/289, OP.13.

## **Users**

12. At the governance level, the primary users of independent system-wide evaluations will be the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which have been mandated to establish, monitor and evaluate system-wide policies on United Nations operational activities for development, as well as the relevant governing bodies of the relevant United Nations entities. In particular, independent system-wide evaluations are expected to inform intergovernmental deliberations on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), through which the General Assembly establishes key system-wide policy orientations for the development cooperation and country-level modalities of the United Nations system. Independent system-wide evaluations of United Nations operational activities for development are also expected to inform ECOSOC's role in monitoring the implementation of QCPR decisions, as well as, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), the main subsidiary organ of ECOSOC and the General Assembly for planning, programming and coordination.

13. At the corporate UN system level, important primary users will be the key UN system inter-agency mechanisms such as the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and its three pillars, namely the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and High-level Committee on Management (HLCM); the Inter-agency Standing Committee for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (IASC) and the relevant Executive Committees; as well as individual UN entities.



14. At the regional level, the regional commissions, the UN Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCM) and the Regional Directors Teams will be the main users.

15. At the country level, important users of independent system-wide evaluations will be national governments, international development partners, civil society, and relevant UN entities working under the umbrella of UNDAF and One UN programmes.

## **II. DEFINITIONS, NORMS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **Definitions**

16. *Independent system-wide evaluation.* An independent system-wide evaluation is a systematic and impartial assessment of the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the combined contributions of United Nations entities towards the achievements of collective development objectives.<sup>3</sup> This includes an assessment, inter alia, of the implementation of policies, strategies, programmes and activities, as well as implementation of system-wide mandates and institutional performance issues. The latter implies a focus on how effectively the different parts of the UN system are working together. 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 United Nations system.

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<sup>3</sup> Independent system-wide evaluations are distinguished from other types of joint evaluations undertaken by two or more UN entities.

17. *System-wide.* System-wide refers to all relevant entities of the United Nations system involved in operational activities for development in a specific policy, strategy, issue, effort, area or sector at the country/regional/global level, or in the implementation of system-wide mandates.

18. *Operational activities for development.* Operational activities for development of the United Nations system are activities that UN entities carry out with the promotion of development as the primary objective. UN operational activities for development cover both longer-term development-related activities and those with shorter-term humanitarian assistance focus.

## **Norms and Standards**

19. Independent system-wide evaluations subscribe to the 2005 UNEG norms and standards for evaluation in the UN System, with particular focus on the following:

20. *Impartiality and independence.* Impartiality is the absence of bias in the evaluation process and methodology, as well as in the development and presentation of findings. It implies using rigorous methods as well as taking into account the viewpoints of various stakeholders. Impartiality provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflict of interest. 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. To ensure the impartiality, an evaluation has to be managed independently from other management functions, so that it is free from undue influence

and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured. The independent system-wide evaluation mechanism needs to have full discretion in submitting its reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision making. Evaluations are undertaken by evaluators who have no vested interest, and have not been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design, or overall implementation and management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be in the near future.

21. *Intentionality and quality.* The rationale for an evaluation and the decisions to be based on it should be clear from the outset of the evaluation. This promotes evidence-based decision-making. The scope, design and plan of the evaluation should generate relevant, cost-effective and timely products that address the specific purpose and objectives for which it was commissioned and ensure the usefulness of the findings and recommendations. Balancing technical and time requirements with practical realities including cost considerations while providing valid, reliable information is central to ensuring that the evaluation is useful. The interpretation of findings should be grounded in the realities of context, and the recommendations made should be practical and realistic. Evaluations should meet minimum quality standards and criteria as defined by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). To ensure this, the professionalism of evaluators and their intellectual integrity in applying standard evaluation methods is critical.

22. *Transparency.* Full information on evaluation design and methodology must be shared throughout the evaluation process to build confidence in the findings and promote understanding of their utility and limitations in decision-making. Consultations with the major stakeholders are undertaken to

facilitate consensus-building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations. Transparency is enhanced by making reports publicly available.

23. *Ethics and values.* Evaluators must have professional integrity and respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and to verify statements attributed to them. Evaluators should not aim to evaluate the performance of individuals. Evaluations must be sensitive to the beliefs and customs of local social and cultural environments and must be conducted legally and with due regard to the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its findings. Evaluation abides by universally shared values of equity, justice, gender equality and respect for diversity.

## **Guiding Principles**

Independent system-wide evaluation will be guided by the following principles:

24. *Subsidiarity and value-added.* Independent system-wide evaluation is guided by the principle that nothing should be done by a larger and more complex organizational set-up which can be done as well by a smaller and simpler organizational set-up. Thus the comparative advantage of independent system-wide evaluation resides in its ability to address higher level issues of significance to the United Nations system which cannot be properly addressed by individual entities or a combination of entities.

25. Independent system-wide evaluations should address performance as well as strategic direction-setting goals with larger system-wide implications. Its approach will be innovative in applying meta-analysis and synthesis and other methods for complex evaluations. It will not duplicate on-going sub-system evaluations but rather aim at supporting and enhancing the visibility and value of such evaluations. It will promote evaluations of selected themes and country-specific evaluation by various organizations and at an aggregate level will use existing evaluation information when validated and useful for cross-organizational analysis.

26. *Inclusiveness.* The utility of independent system-wide evaluation rests on its ability to ensure both independence and engagement (and not isolation). This enhances the use and value as well as validity of the evaluation and knowledge generated. It will thus ensure the appropriate involvement of key stakeholders and the consideration of their perspectives at various stages of the evaluation process.

27. *Efficiency and economy.* Independent system-wide evaluations will be conducted with due regard to efficiency and economy. It will limit transaction costs by ensuring effective coordination with on-going plans and activities in evaluation and the use of partnerships where possible. Meta-evaluation and synthesis using existing evaluations and evidence will be conducted wherever feasible. It will use the existing work as a basis for analysis and synthesis, and the development of lessons that have system-wide implications. To the extent possible, it will use existing mechanisms such as joint evaluations, sector-wide evaluations (e.g. those led by OCHA on humanitarian response) as well as established reporting and follow-up processes.

28. *National evaluation capacity development.* Independent system-wide evaluation must pay due regard to the importance of enhancing national evaluation capacity in ways complementary to the development of the evaluation capacity of the UN system. Partnerships with national and regional institutions and experts in the conduct of evaluations are particularly important for inclusion, ownership and credibility.

### **III. EVALUATION MODALITIES**

29. There are several approaches to conducting independent system-wide evaluations, from light syntheses to comprehensive country-focused evaluations involving one or several countries. The choice of the approach, or mixture of approaches, will depend on the subject of the evaluation, the evidence and the resources available.

30. In order not to duplicate existing mechanisms, the following types of evaluation should form the main focus for independent system-wide evaluation initiatives. They each have advantages, but also limitations which must be managed. The methodologies for each independent system-wide evaluation will be tailored to the subject and nature of the evaluation.

#### *Synthesis evaluations*

31. These are desk studies synthesizing existing evaluations from the UN system and other entities as well as relevant independent research. The advantages of synthesis evaluations are that they may be conducted relatively quickly and at a relatively low cost. The disadvantage is that they depend on

existing material that may not be enough to adequately answer the evaluation questions. As such, they could require light complementary data collection.

### *Evaluations of cross-cutting issues*

32. This approach incorporates and synthesizes information related to a standard set of questions on topics that are covered by evaluations conducted by a significant number of UN (and possibly other) entities during a specified time period. The advantages are that this type of evaluation generates up-to-date, topic-specific information from across the entire system and would require only a modest additional cost to cover coordination for alignment, and synthesis of the existing information. The disadvantages are that it takes time – two to three years – since the questions can only be applied to evaluations that have not yet been designed, and also that its coverage of entities, regions and countries may not be adequate as it relies on the evaluations being planned by individual entities. It may also be difficult to reconcile assessments in the event of contradicting conclusions.

### *Comprehensive evaluations*

33. These evaluations apply a common framework to produce in-depth evaluations of specific policies, strategies, programmes, issues, efforts, areas or sectors in a single or in several countries<sup>4</sup>, which are then synthesized into one study. The advantage of this approach is that it generates new knowledge from purposefully selected cases, engages the partner countries extensively in the conduct of evaluations, and builds on and enhances national evaluation capacity. The disadvantages of this approach are that it is costly, takes a long time and requires an intensive coordination effort.

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<sup>4</sup> Examples are UNDAF, Consolidated Appeals Process, peace building strategy, HIV/AIDS, gender, etc.

#### IV. GOVERNANCE FOR INDEPENDENT SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION

34. The governance mechanism for independent system-wide evaluation, as described in detail in Section V, will utilize and build on existing mechanisms as stipulated in General Assembly resolution 67/226. As recognized by the independent review of system-wide evaluation in the UN system and commissioned by the Secretary-General in response to General Assembly resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence, there are various existing system-wide evaluation mechanisms, yet they are not coordinated nor do they necessarily use similar approaches. While only one body, the JIU, has a system-wide mandate for independent evaluations, other mechanisms have been developed to ensure the independence of joint and system-wide evaluations such as the humanitarian system-wide evaluations coordinated and managed by OCHA and the independent evaluation of Delivering as One. Unlike the JIU whose governance arrangements are clearly described in the JIU Statute of 1976, many existing and past mechanisms while having well-established coordination structures do not have formalized reporting lines and follow-up arrangements. In terms of governance, many existing mechanisms utilize a multi-tier structure. Multi-tiered structures<sup>5</sup> have been tested in several large system-wide evaluations: the Evaluation of the International Response to the Genocide in Rwanda (1996) involving United Nations entities, donor agencies and non-governmental organizations, the Joint Evaluation of the International Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami (2006) also involving United Nations entities, donor agencies and non-governmental organizations, the Evaluation of the Paris Declaration (2011) which involved 22 partner countries and 18 bilateral and multilateral development assistance providers, and the Delivering-as-One Pilot Evaluation (2011/12).

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<sup>5</sup> The Rwanda and Tsunami Evaluations had no Commissioning Body.



35. The advantage of a multi-tier governance structure is that its inclusiveness enhances the impartiality, credibility, validity, transparency and utility of the evaluation. Experience to date has shown that it is important to: (a) have a commissioning body who not only commissions but also follows up on the evaluation and ensures implementation of the recommendations; (b) establish mechanisms to ensure balanced stakeholder engagement in the process; (c) set up a system to ensure impartial and professional management of the process and the conduct of the evaluation; and (d) set up a secretariat function to manage the process and day-to-day activities.

36. The proposed governance mechanism for independent system-wide evaluation comprises a Commissioning Body, a Key Stakeholder Reference Group (KSRG) to provide overall substantive and strategic advice for quality enhancement, a small Evaluation Management Group (EMG) to oversee the work of the evaluation team and ensure quality control, and a secretariat function that manages and coordinates the evaluation process. The principle of a four-tier structure, which is to ensure adherence to the norms and standards set out in this policy, should also apply to sub-system evaluations at the thematic, regional, and country-levels.

37. The norms, standards and principles outlined in this policy apply to independent system-wide evaluation mechanisms at all levels of UN operational activities for development.

## **V. MECHANISM FOR INDEPENDENT SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION**

38. The present policy framework foresees that the General Assembly and ECOSOC will be the primary entity commissioning an independent system-wide evaluation as part of the Council's role in monitoring the implementation of the QCPR resolution of the General Assembly. Potential pilot evaluations are proposed in Annex I. They cover the three different modalities of independent system-wide evaluation referred to in Section III.

39. It is envisaged that the piloting of independent system-wide evaluations at the global level will use the following modalities for commissioning, engaging stakeholders, managing and reporting. The specific roles and responsibilities of different bodies of the UN development system are spelled out in Section VI.

### **Commissioning independent system-wide evaluations**

40. In accordance with the independent system-wide evaluation policy adopted by the General Assembly, independent system-wide evaluations of operational activities for development will normally be undertaken within the framework of the QCPR and will be commissioned by the General Assembly and ECOSOC through the QCPR processes.<sup>6</sup> A proposal commissioned for an independent system-wide evaluation must specify the theme, key issues, geographical coverage, the broad questions the evaluation should answer, as well as the source of funding.

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<sup>6</sup> During the 2014-2016 pilot phase, the evaluations will be commissioned by ECOSOC based on the proposed pilots in Annex 1.

## **Substantive and strategic advice, enhancing quality and utility**

### *Key Stakeholder Reference Group (KSRG)*

41. For each independent system-wide evaluation, a Key Stakeholder Reference Group will be established by the Evaluation Management Group based on the advice of ECOSOC. Stakeholders may include member state representatives, UN agencies, but also civil society, private sector and academia. The selection of stakeholders will be guided by stakeholder mapping to ensure the inclusion of a critical number of stakeholders and ECOSOC will be consulted on its composition. Members should possess a good knowledge of the UN system, and of the subject and context of the evaluation.

42. The KSRG will provide overall substantive and strategic advice on what is being evaluated and ensure ownership of the evaluation process by different relevant stakeholders. Specific tasks include:

1. identifying key issues and questions of strategic importance for the topic being evaluated;
2. reviewing and commenting on the draft evaluation report for quality, credibility, and clarity;  
and
3. helping to disseminate the findings of the report and promoting its use.

43. The KSRG should be consulted at least twice during the evaluation: at an early stage enabling it to review the evaluation framework and draft terms of reference; and at the stage when draft evaluation report(s) are reviewed. The KSRG may be convened face-to-face or virtually.

## **Management, technical rigor, quality control and approval of products**

*Evaluation Management Group (EMG)*

44. When an independent system-wide evaluation has been commissioned, an Evaluation Management Group will be established by the JIU in consultation with ECOSOC and the CEB. The EMG should be small – four to six members – comprising experienced evaluation managers from relevant UN evaluation offices with subject matter expertise. The EMG will be chaired by the JIU in line with its mandate for independent system-wide evaluation. The JIU will safeguard the independence and impartiality of the EMG. The group will abide by professional and UNEG codes of conduct and ethical guidelines. It will maintain transparency in all its operations and deliberations.

45. The EMG is accountable for the quality of the evaluation. Its role is to ensure impartiality, enhance technical rigor and exercise quality control on all aspects of the evaluation. It provides guidance and direction to the evaluation secretariat, and is responsible for key decisions such as:

1. approving the framework for the overall approach (submitted by the ISWE Coordination Secretariat);
2. approving the Terms of Reference;
3. approving the budget for the evaluation;
4. serving as tender committee and selecting the evaluation team(s) commissioned to conduct the evaluation;
5. guiding and approving the inception report on scope, design and plan;
6. approving the evaluation products including the final report after having ascertained their quality, clarity and credibility of these products; and

7. Supporting the JIU in submitting the final evaluation report.

## **Day-to-Day Management**

### *ISWE Coordination Secretariat*

46. System-wide evaluations require day-to-day management and support by a small ISWE Coordination Secretariat. The ISWE Coordination Secretariat will work under the substantive guidance of the EMG and will be responsible for:

1. developing and updating, in consultation with UNEG, specific guidance material on independent system-wide evaluation;
2. scoping and conceptualizing the evaluation (approach note) and developing terms of reference;
3. undertaking evaluability studies for suggested independent system-wide evaluation topics;
4. conducting resource mobilization;
5. contracting independent evaluation teams;
6. supporting EMG in ensuring quality of the evaluation process;
7. managing the budget for the evaluation;
8. coordinating independent system-wide evaluation activities with other actors in the system (e.g. evaluations expected to feed into the independent system-wide evaluations);
9. acting as an interface between the independent system-wide evaluation team and participating organizations;
10. designing the communications and utilization strategy;
11. following up on recommendation uptake and implementation; and
12. preparing and finalizing a summary report of each independent system-wide evaluation.

47. The ISWE Coordination Secretariat will be attached to the JIU Secretariat as a separate unit and will have a small standing capacity to do preliminary scoping, budgeting and fundraising for the evaluation and to respond to the other tasks as outlined in Section VI. It is to be augmented with relevant temporary staff as needed for the duration of the evaluation depending on the scope and complexity of the activity. The ISWE Secretariat will be under the overall supervision of the Executive Secretary of the JIU and function under the administrative regulations and rules of the United Nations Secretariat.

### **Conduct of the Evaluation**

48. Each evaluation will be conducted by evaluators who are selected based on their professionalism, integrity and the credibility of their work through a competitive process in line with United Nations procurement rules. Evaluators should have no vested interest and must not have been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design, or overall implementation and management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be in the near future.

## **VI. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

49. Member states and UN system organizations have a shared responsibility in ensuring that independent system-wide evaluation supports accountability, evidence-based decision-making, and learning.

50. The **General Assembly** adopts the policy on independent system-wide evaluation of UN operational activities for development as well as any future revisions to it. The General Assembly can also mandate independent system-wide evaluations as part of the QCPR process.

51. **ECOSOC** will be the primary custodian of the independent system-wide evaluation policy. The Council will approve proposals for independent system-wide evaluation generated through the QCPR processes and review subsequent reports during the Operational Activities Segment of the substantive session of the Council and ensure that appropriate plans for independent system-wide evaluation are embedded within all major initiatives covering operational activities for development. The Council will appoint member states to serve on a Key Stakeholder Reference Group for individual independent system-wide evaluations.

52. **Executive Boards and Governing Bodies of the UN system** will promote the use of independent system-wide evaluations in areas related to the mandates of their respective agencies, may call for independent system-wide evaluation in their areas of concern and will ensure an enabling environment for planning, executing and implementing independent system-wide evaluations, as well as for the use of information from such evaluations in decision making.

53. The **Joint Inspection Unit**, without prejudice to its functioning in accordance with its statute, will host the Independent System-wide Evaluation Coordination Secretariat, chair the evaluation management group, review the recommendations made by independent system-wide evaluation

teams, issue the report on behalf of the evaluation management group, and follow up on the report in line with Article 12 of its Statute.

54. The **Independent System-wide Evaluation (ISWE) Coordination Secretariat**, hosted by the JIU, will facilitate the planning, coordination, management and processing of independent system-wide evaluations commissioned by the General Assembly and ECOSOC. The Secretariat will also work closely with the UNEG membership so as to ensure that independent system-wide evaluation issues are appropriately reflected in relevant evaluations undertaken by the UNEG membership during the pilot period and will liaise with and support any other relevant independent system-wide evaluation being undertaken at the thematic, regional or country level. The Secretariat will prepare an annual report on independent system-wide evaluation initiatives and present the report for discussion through the Interim Coordination Mechanism to ECOSOC. It will also carry out evaluability studies, and compile and develop guidance materials to support system-wide evaluations.

55. The **Interim Coordination Mechanism (ICM)** set up by the Secretary-General to develop this policy, with membership drawn from the JIU, UNEG, DESA, Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and OCHA will continue to exist until the pilot phase of this policy has been completed. The role of the ICM will be to champion independent system-wide evaluation within the UN system, to interact with ECOSOC on the identification of potential topics and relevant lessons and to jointly work with UNEG colleagues on the development of appropriate guidance materials.



56. The **United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)** champions the planning and use of independent system-wide evaluation at all levels, supports the development of methodological guidance materials underpinning this policy, and promotes the use of and adherence to the guidance. UNEG will contribute to the broader independent system-wide evaluation policy framework by developing support tools and approaches for undertaking joint evaluations, as well as coordinating evaluations where possible. Specific tools foreseen in this context include a Resource Pack and Tool Kit to help guide the design and implementation of joint evaluation work in cross-agency settings.<sup>7</sup> UNEG, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office (UNDOCO), will provide support for the further development and improvement of UNDAF evaluations through the provision of methodological support and advice.<sup>8</sup>

57. The **Evaluation Offices of the operational agencies** will seek to coordinate their evaluation efforts where possible to ensure systematic coverage of system-wide issues so they can feed into specific independent system-wide evaluations. They will seek to take a harmonized approach in conducting the evaluations and will conduct joint evaluations in line with the guidance provided by UNEG. They will also seek to coordinate work on issues of joint relevance to facilitate synthesis of evaluation knowledge across organizations.

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<sup>7</sup> Other support tools foreseen include, among others, “Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations”, and “The Role of Impact Evaluation in UN Agency Evaluation Systems: Guidance on Selecting, Planning and Managing Impact Evaluations”.

<sup>8</sup> In collaboration with UNDOCO, UNEG has prepared some useful guidance on planning and using UNDAF evaluations, including: “UNEG Guidance on Preparing Terms of Reference for UNDAF Evaluations” (2012); and “UNEG Guidance on Preparing Management Responses to UNDAF Evaluations”. The guidance has been endorsed by UNDG: <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=1532>

58. The **Chiefs Executive Board (CEB)** promotes the use of independent system-wide evaluation at all levels of the UN system in the area of operational activities for development and ensures an enabling environment for planning, execution and implementation of independent system-wide evaluations. Subsidiary mechanisms of the CEB (HLCP, HLCM and UNDG) will help ensure that the lessons and recommendations derived from independent system-wide evaluations are applied in the work of organizations of the UN development system. Subsidiary mechanisms of the CEB will also help ensure that issues of system-wide concern are addressed in a systematic way in the evaluation work of individual entities in support of system-wide evaluations.

59. The **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)** promotes the use of independent system-wide evaluation in the area of operational activities for humanitarian assistance and humanitarian policy development, and ensures an enabling environment for planning, execution and implementation of independent system-wide evaluations coordinated through OCHA. The IASC is responsible for ensuring that the lessons and recommendations emanating from independent system-wide evaluations are applied to the work of their respective organizations and that key lessons learned from independent system-wide evaluations are shared with ECOSOC on a regular basis. They are also responsible for ensuring that issues of system-wide concern are addressed in a systematic way in their entities' work in support of independent system-wide evaluations.

60. The **Resident Coordinators** and the **UN Country Teams** promote the use of independent system-wide evaluation, safeguard the independence of the evaluation and ensure an enabling environment for planning, executing and implementing independent system-wide evaluations at the

country level in line with this policy. Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams will make use of and participate in independent system-wide evaluation activities in the context of the evaluation frameworks established by the IASC. The Resident Coordinators and the Country Teams will prepare a joint management response as needed on any independent system-wide evaluation.

61. The **relevant key stakeholders** will be engaged in independent system-wide evaluations to ensure broad participation and ownership, at the national and international levels as relevant, and to ensure that the process benefits from their knowledge and expertise on the issue being evaluated. For independent system-wide evaluations using country case studies, key stakeholders will be brought together at the global, regional and national levels.

## **VII. QUALITY ASSURANCE**

62. The independent system-wide evaluations will be subject to quality control and assurance at several levels.

63. The ISWE Coordination Secretariat will exercise quality control by assessing whether the report satisfies the terms of reference and lives up to UNEG standards, the Key Stakeholder Reference Group will review draft reports for substantive quality, clarity and credibility, and the Evaluation Management Group will review the report for technical, professional and substantive rigor, clarity, and utility and approve it for submission to ECOSOC through the JIU. Prior to issuance of the report, and in accordance with the relevant articles of the JIU Statute, the Unit will review, and, if

appropriate, comment on the validity of the recommendations, as well as provide relevant strategic advice to the EMG and the evaluation team.

### **VIII. REPORT HANDLING, FOLLOW-UP AND REPORTING**

64. A final report on each evaluation will be submitted by the Evaluation Management Group through the Joint Inspection Unit to the relevant session of ECOSOC as well as any other concerned governing bodies using a process similar to that described in the JIU Statute Article 11 4. The CEB Secretariat may support the preparation of a joint management response by a relevant inter-agency body secretariat and submitted jointly with the final report to ECOSOC as well as the concerned governing bodies of the UN system. Recommendations addressed to ECOSOC will be discussed and decided upon at the time of the presentation of the report. Where appropriate, ECOSOC and/or the Evaluation Management Group may organize in-depth briefings or stakeholder workshops prior to or after the presentation of the report.

65. Executive heads of organizations will ensure that recommendations approved by their respective competent organs are implemented as expeditiously as possible and report back on their implementation, including through the JIU web-based tracking system.

66. The annual report on independent system-wide evaluation initiatives submitted by the ISWE Coordination Secretariat will include information on the implementation of the accepted recommendations.

## **IX. FUNDING**

67. During the pilot phase of the present policy (2014-2016), funding for operating the ISWE Coordination Secretariat and conducting thematic and global independent system-wide evaluations will be mobilized through extra-budgetary resources from Member States. It is envisaged that the ISWE Coordination Secretariat will require a standing capacity of one senior evaluation expert and one assistant during the pilot phase. When an evaluation has been decided upon and funding secured, the ISWE Coordination Secretariat will be augmented as needed to manage the evaluation and contract evaluators.

68. The longer-term funding requirements for independent system-wide evaluations including the ISWE Coordination Secretariat will be explored during the pilot phase which is expected to provide a credible baseline for the preparation of the biennial budget for independent system-wide evaluations.

69. During the pilot phase, no evaluations will be initiated unless sufficient funding has been secured. During this period, a trust fund modality should be utilized to receive contributions from member states for specific system-wide evaluations. Such a modality which ensures predictable and adequate resources should be discussed prior to the end of the pilot phase based on the experiences during the pilot.

## **X. OPERATIONALIZATION AND REVIEW OF THE POLICY**

70. This new policy will be operational upon its formal issuance by the Secretary-General and valid till 31 December 2016, the end of the current quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) cycle of the General Assembly.

71. The Secretariat for Independent System-Wide Evaluations will only be established when funding has been secured. It will conduct a limited number of pilot system-wide evaluations as requested by the General Assembly or ECOSOC. The evaluations should be amenable to applying the different approaches described in section III.

72. The policy will be further operationalized through the development of guidance material by the ISWE Coordination Secretariat in consultation with JIU, UNEG and UNDG.

73. The General Assembly will review the evaluation policy in the QCPR in 2016 and revise it as needed. The review will seek to extract lessons and make adjustments to the policy. The review will be conducted by independent consultants external to the UN system. As part of the revision process,

the General Assembly may also request a peer review of the independent system-wide evaluation pilot exercises in 2016.

## **Annex I – Proposed Pilots**

74. The policy for independent system-wide evaluation stipulates that themes for such evaluations should be generated through the QCPR processes. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/226, which requested the Secretary-General, through the interim coordination mechanism, to submit a proposal for pilot system-wide evaluations, below are proposals for pilot system-wide evaluations for ECOSOC's consideration. These proposals have been developed by the ICM following consultations with UNDG members and Member States to facilitate intergovernmental deliberations on the themes for pilot independent system-wide evaluations. Ideally at least one of each evaluation category should be piloted during the pilot phase. ECOSOC may wish to elaborate on the proposals or decide on other themes.

### **Synthesis evaluation:**

#### **1) *Meta evaluation and synthesis of UNDAF evaluations 2012-14* (starting in 2015):**

This independent system-wide evaluation planned for 2015 will synthesize the major and key findings, conclusions and recommendations of UNDAF evaluations undertaken between 2012 and 2014. In addition, a meta evaluation of the quality of the UNDAF evaluations in line with the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System and the UNDAF evaluation guidelines will also be conducted in order to assess these evaluations' overall quality, credibility, utility, as well as utilization. The meta evaluation should provide insights on the scope for improvements and adjustments to the existing guidelines. The results of this evaluation will directly feed into the QCPR in 2016.



## Evaluation of a cross-cutting issue:

- 2) *Evaluation of the UN system's activities to mainstream human rights and gender equality* (starting in 2014):

Considering the system-wide mandates to incorporate human rights and gender equality in all UN work, this independent system-wide evaluation will pay a special attention to these dimensions by examining to what extent UN interventions benefit right-holders, strengthen capacity of duty-bearers or other actors to fulfill obligations, strengthen accountability mechanisms, and monitor, and advocate for, compliance with international standards on human rights and gender equality. Relevant evaluation questions will be systematically added to evaluations that will be undertaken during 2014 and 2015 by UNEG members and feed into a report to be issued by early 2016.

- 3) *Evaluation of the UN system's contributions to strengthening national capacities for monitoring, evaluation and reporting in the context of joint programming* (starting in 2014):

Central to sustainable development is the national capacity to achieve goals and aspirations established in national plans. Capacity development underpins the mandate of all members of the UN development family. It defines how the UN does business while also providing a sound basis for enhancing national ownership and for people to take control of their own development and create societies and systems that work for them. National capacity development for monitoring, evaluation and reporting has the objective of enhancing governance and accountability to both national and external stakeholders, developing

organizational as well as national learning and change processes, and developing innovations and new directions in societies. This study will evaluate the UN system's contribution to strengthening national capacities for planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting. As of 2014, all UNDAF evaluations and reviews will be asked to systematically examine how the UN system has developed national capacities through undertaking results-based joint programming, ensuring a strategic focus and alignment of programming documents to national priorities, and implementing shared quality assurance, reporting, monitoring and evaluation systems.

### **Comprehensive evaluation:**

#### **4) *Evaluation of the UN system's work on disaster risk reduction*** (starting in late 2014):

This independent system-wide evaluation will review the results achieved by the UN system in integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) in its policies and programmes in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions and the 2013 CEB-approved UN Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience. The evaluation will assess the strategic orientation of the work, progress and results achievement under the Hyogo Framework for Action I, assess and validate the self-reporting exercises undertaken by relevant UN entities and build upon the independent reviews and evaluations undertaken on this issue in 2014 and 2015. In addition to assessing the results obtained by early 2015, the evaluation will also reflect on the expected impact of the new post-2015 framework on disaster risk reduction (Hyogo Framework for Action II), which is expected to be adopted at the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk

Reduction in March 2015. It will reflect how the Hyogo Framework for Action II will likely affect the work of the UN entities on DRR and examine whether the UN system will need to (re)position itself to align its activities with the new framework. The evaluation will start in 2014 in order to allow the evaluation team to observe the planning, implementation and outcome of the March 2015 conference. Preliminary findings of the evaluation should be made available by July 2015 to be used to inform the Secretary-General's report on DRR which will be prepared for discussion by the General Assembly in the fall of 2015. The final report of the evaluation is also expected to inform the QCPR in 2016.

5) *Evaluation of the UN system's approach to supporting job creation in post-conflict settings* (starting in 2014):

The United Nations Policy for Post-Conflict Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration (May 2008) aims to help scale up and maximize the impact, coherence and efficiency of employment support provided by UN agencies to post-conflict countries. The Policy, accompanied by an operational guidance note adopted by UNDG in September 2009, is intended to contribute to a common understanding of, and approach to, employment creation and reintegration in post-conflict scenarios at the country level. A UN joint support team was established by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNDP to support UN country teams in implementing and scaling up post-conflict employment and reintegration programmes in a number of countries emerging from conflict. This independent system-wide evaluation will assess the implementation of the results of the policy over the five years following its inception including examining the progress towards enhanced programmatic

coherence among UN entities in the roll-out countries. The evaluation will aim to extract lessons learned from the policy's roll-out, and identify key challenges and constraints to the system-wide implementation of the policy's three-track approach to post-conflict employment promotion.

6) *Evaluation of the UN system's contributions to strengthening national statistical capacities for national planning and monitoring* (starting in 2014):

National statistical capacities to collect data, particularly data disaggregated by sex, age and geography, have gained greater importance in the context of the monitoring of MDGs and the development of a post-2015 development agenda. This independent system-wide evaluation will examine the extent to which the UN system has contributed towards strengthening the capacities of programme countries to collect and use data to support the development and monitoring of national development policies and programmes. The evaluation will also involve a future-oriented assessment, applying the methodology of a prospective evaluation, to review different types of existing statistical interventions with a view to determining the effectiveness and sustainability of each type of support to statistical capacity building. The outcome of the evaluation will inform the planning and implementation of the UN system's support to the monitoring of the new development framework, which is expected to roll out in 2016.

## Annex 2- Proposed Governance Structure

## Pilot Governance mechanism for ISWE: Who does what

