United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Policy

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United Nations
Sustainable Development Group
System-Wide Evaluation Office

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Summary

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The United Nations Sustainable Development Group's (UNSDG) system-wide evaluation policy sets out the rationale, purpose, scope and definitions for system-wide evaluation and outlines the guiding principles, evaluation procedures (including planning, conduct and follow-up) and mechanisms for maximizing use of evaluation evidence. The policy defines roles, responsibilities, resources and risks and also sets out the arrangements for reporting and for policy implementation and review. It is the result of consultations with key stakeholders

The UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) is charged with delivery of this policy and providing guidance to entities in support of their contributions to system-wide evaluations. To date there has been no coherent system-wide evaluation of the contributions of the diffuse development system entities to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus, the UNSDG system-wide evaluation policy and the UNSDG SWEO fulfil a unique role in supporting the United Nations system to evaluate its collective contribution to these global goals and to sustainable development.

The policy will be operational on the date it is formally adopted by the UNSDG. An independent review of the policy will be undertaken by 2030, preceding the next policy revision.

Definitions used in this policy

United Nations development system

The United Nations development system is constituted and collectively owned by the United Nations entities that carry out operational activities for development to support countries in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. While it is recognized that the primary accountability for individual programmes lies with respective governing bodies, all entities engaged in operational activities for development are also accountable for the shared results and impact of the United Nations development system.

Evaluation

An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area, or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria, such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful, evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders. The purpose of evaluation is to promote accountability and learning.

System-wide evaluation

System-wide evaluation is the systematic and impartial assessment of the results and performance of the United Nations development system to provide integrated and comprehensive support to address the challenges of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs. Independent system-wide evaluations are focused on collective development results and performance of UNSDG entities that cannot be adequately addressed through existing accountability mechanisms. Independent system-wide evaluations are distinguished from other types of joint and inter-agency evaluations undertaken by two or more United Nations entities, because they encompass the entirety of the United Nations system. UNSDG system-wide evaluations are not expected to evaluate the performance of individual entities. As with all evaluations, the purpose of UNSDG system-wide evaluation is to promote accountability and learning. The evaluations should provide credible, useful, evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of their findings, recommendations and learning into the decision-making processes of the United Nations development system.

Joint evaluation

A joint evaluation is a joint evaluative effort by more than one entity on a topic of mutual interest, or on a programme or set of activities that are co-financed and implemented, with the degree of 'jointness', varying from cooperation in the evaluation process to pooling of resources or even to combined reporting.

Evaluation synthesis

Evaluation synthesis is the systematic collation and analysis of existing quality-assessed evaluation evidence (for example, findings, conclusions, lessons, recommendations) by evaluation, theme, SDG or type of intervention to develop new findings to inform strategic, policy and programme decision-making.

I. Context and rationale for a system-wide evaluation function

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1 This policy, and the creation of the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office to deliver it, is the culmination of much consideration by Member States of the need to understand better the collective contribution of the United Nations system to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The absence of any coherent mechanism to understand this contribution has been highlighted over many years by Member States. Delivery of the outcomes expected in this UNSDG system-wide evaluation policy will fill a substantial gap in understanding and enable learning on how to improve that collective contribution.

2 The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) first affirmed the need for the establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism within the United Nations in A/RES/64/289 (see Table 1 for the full list of resolutions related to system-wide evaluation). In A/RES/67/226 Member States requested that the Secretary-General establish an Interim Coordination Mechanism for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system comprised of the Joint Inspection Unit, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). Member States also requested that the Secretary-General, through the Interim Coordination Mechanism, develop a policy for independent system-wide evaluation of

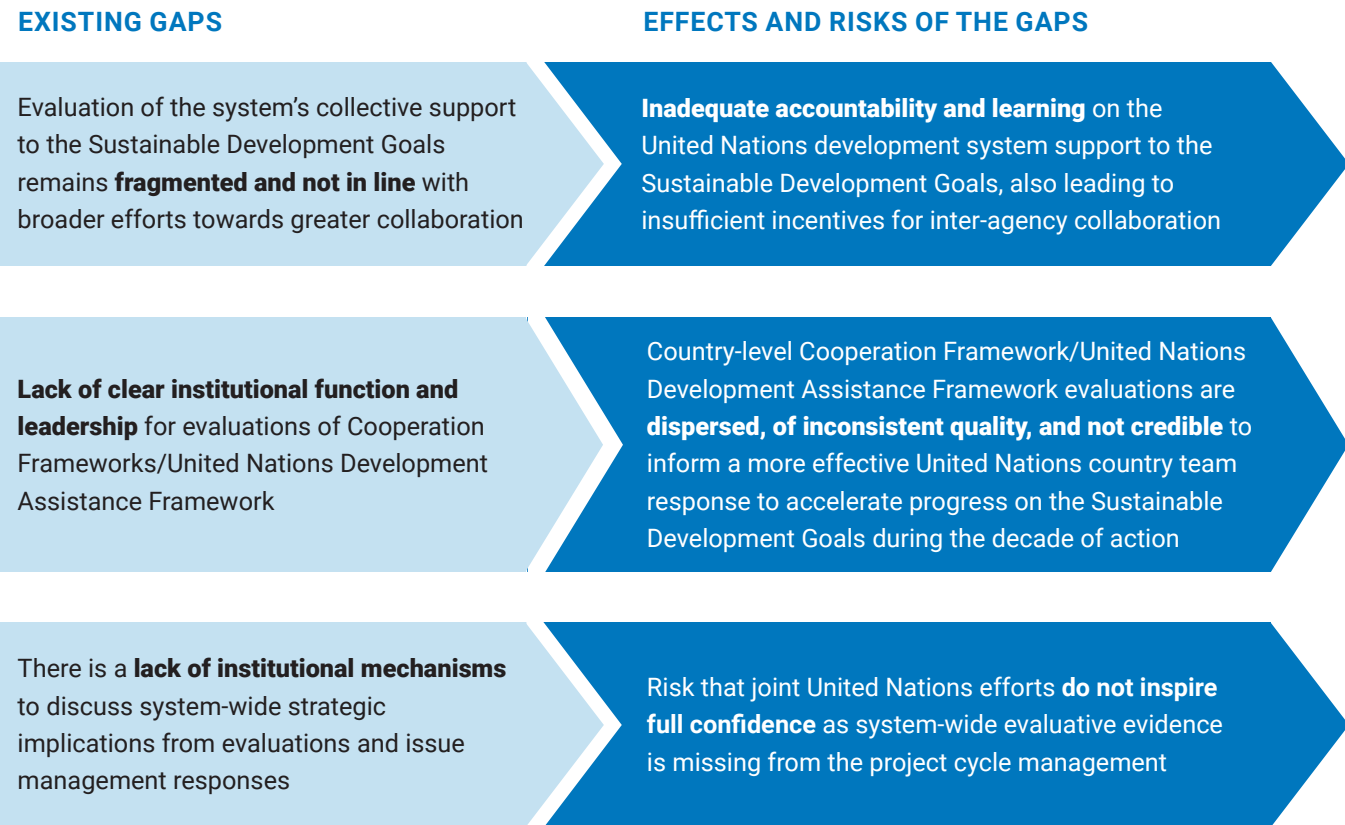## Table 1: Legislative mandates and resolutions on system-wide evaluation

BODY	RESOLUTION	TITLE
UNGA	A/RES/64/289	System-wide coherence
UNGA	A/RES/67/226	Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
UNGA	A/RES/68/229	Operational activities for development of the United Nations system
UNGA	A/RES/69/237	Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level
UNGA	A/RES/70/1	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
UNGA	A/RES/71/243	Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
UNGA	A/RES/72/279	Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
UNGA	A/RES/75/233	Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system
UNGA	A/RES/76/4	Review of the functioning of the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system, including its funding arrangement
UNGA	A/RES/77/283	Strengthening voluntary national reviews through country-led evaluation
UNGA	A/RES/78/1	Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly
ECOSOC	E/RES/2023/31	Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

operational activities for development. Resolution A/RES/68/229 notes that a policy (A/68/658-E/2014/7) was drafted, and two pilot system-wide evaluations were subsequently completed. A comprehensive review of the Interim Coordination Mechanism in 2017 reaffirmed the need for system-wide evaluation, set out the lessons learned from policy implementation, and recommended the establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation office. The

General Assembly (A/RES/71/243) underscored "the importance of strengthening a high-quality, independent and impartial system-wide evaluation mechanism of operational activities for development that enhances coherence and interdependence in the overall evaluation architecture of the United Nations development system" and invited the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to consider the outcome of the independent review.

3 The 2018 report "Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet" (A/72/684-E/2018/7), set out the proposals of the Secretary-General to make the United Nations development system more strategic, accountable, collaborative and responsive to national development needs and priorities, including through the establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation office. The General Assembly, (in A/RES/72/279), welcomed the strengthening of independent system-wide evaluation measures by the Secretary-General, including measures to improve capacities.

4 In 2019, the Secretary-General established a transition arrangement to provide a dedicated capacity to help coordinate system-wide evaluations.[1] The Secretary-General, in his 2020 report (A/75/79−E/2020/55), highlighted the gaps that hinder the ability of the United Nations to provide high-quality system-wide evaluations (see Figure 1), and set out the approach to strengthen the existing evaluation architecture, including the establishment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office[2] to provide leadership and strategic guidance to the system-wide evaluation function, headed by an Executive Director reporting directly to the Secretary-General.

Figure 1: Gaps to be addressed through strengthened system-wide evaluation

EXISTING GAPS

EFFECTS AND RISKS OF THE GAPS

Evaluation of the system's collective support to the Sustainable Development Goals remains **fragmented and not in line** with broader efforts towards greater collaboration

Inadequate accountability and learning on the United Nations development system support to the Sustainable Development Goals, also leading to insufficient incentives for inter-agency collaboration

Lack of clear institutional function and leadership for evaluations of Cooperation Frameworks/United Nations Development Assistance Framework

Country-level Cooperation Framework/United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations are **dispersed, of inconsistent quality, and not credible** to inform a more effective United Nations country team response to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals during the decade of action

There is a **lack of institutional mechanisms** to discuss system-wide strategic implications from evaluations and issue management responses

Risk that joint United Nations efforts **do not inspire full confidence** as system-wide evaluative evidence is missing from the project cycle management

Source: United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office

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1 During this transition period, two evaluations were completed: Evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund and the Evaluation of the United Nations development system's socioeconomic response to COVID-19.

2 Introducing the name, United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office to ensure clear anchoring in the United Nations development system.

5 These commitments to system-wide evaluation are also reflected in the Funding Compact[3] (revised and subsequently endorsed by ECOSOC in 2024[4]) and in the Management and Accountability Framework of the United Nations Development and Resident Coordinator System (2021).

6 In 2020, the General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/75/233 further emphasized the need to ensure the independence, credibility and effectiveness of the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office. Subsequently, in its resolution A/RES/76/4, the General Assembly requested that the Secretary-General provide Member States with the information needed to fully support and facilitate the establishment and functioning of an independent and well-resourced evaluation office. The Secretary-General has provided this information in his regular reports to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (see A76/75-E/2021/57, A77/69-E/2022/47, A/78/72-E/2023/59, A/79/72-E/2024/12).

7 In 2023, ECOSOC, in its resolution 2023/31, noted the establishment of the evaluation office (SWEO) and looked forward to updates on its work and functioning. In A/79/72-E2024/12, the Secretary-General notes the appointment of the first Executive Director in 2023, and that the foundational elements of the SWEO have been consolidated to deliver the full range of expected functions, including the preparation of this policy and the development of a proposed programme plan. As proposed by the Secretary-General in his 2020 report (A/75/79) the SWEO is lean and will continue to rely on the critical mandates and expertise of existing evaluation offices and complements the remit of independent oversight bodies such as the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Joint Inspection Unit.

8 In the SDG Political Declaration (A/Res/78/1) adopted by Member States in September 2023, there was broad recognition that the world had drastically changed since the first SDG Summit in 2019 and the adoption of the SDGs in 2015. With only 15 per cent of targets on track, Member States noted the need to undertake immediate course correction and acceleration. In A/79/72, the Secretary-General reaffirmed the core role of the development system to support this critical pivoting; scaling up support for SDG acceleration requires much more from Member States and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) alike. At the centre rests the need for strengthening the ability of the United Nations development system to deliver in a coherent and coordinated manner. System-wide evaluation provides the means to assess the performance of this integrated and collective effort to support the achievement of the SDGs.

9 This policy sets out the framework for an effective system-wide evaluation function and draws upon experience and good practice from other United Nations evaluation functions. However, the system-wide evaluation function is unique within the United Nations system and, while the SWEO provides leadership and focus for system-wide evaluation activities, for the function to be effective and useful, all parts of the United Nations system need to be committed and engaged in realizing its potential.

10 This policy reflects consultation with United Nations entities and Member States at the time of its development, as well as existing resolutions and decisions of Member States. It is anticipated that the policy framework will evolve over time as reflected in relevant decisions and resolutions by ECOSOC and the General Assembly, in particular the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

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3 A/74/73/Add.1–E/2019/14/Add. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, 2019: funding compact

4 A/79/72/Add.2 Funding compact for United Nations support to the Sustainable Development Goals, 2024.

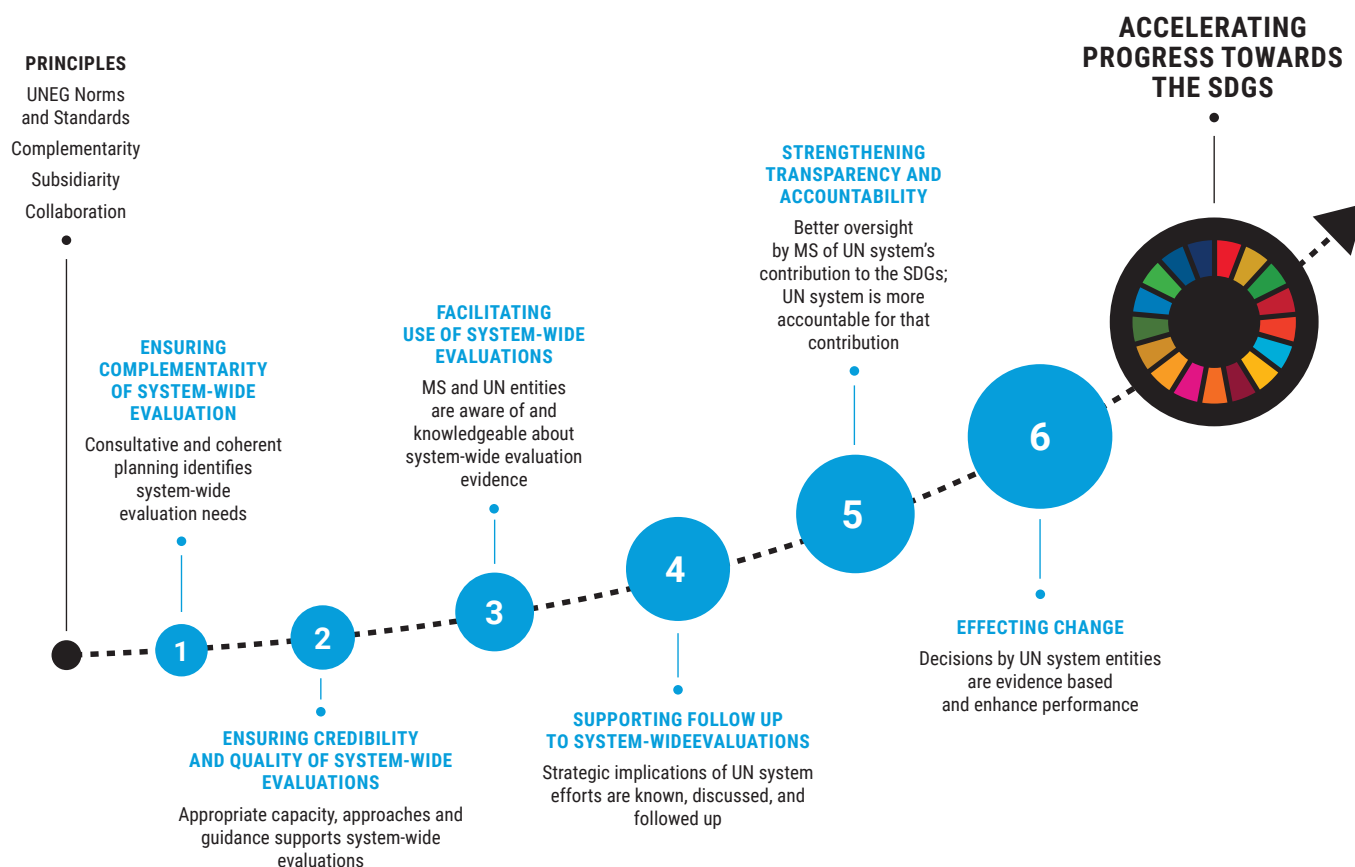# II. Purpose and scope of the UNSDG system-wide evaluation policy

© UN Bangkok

11 UNSDG system-wide evaluation assesses the combined contributions of United Nations entities to achieve the goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is a whole-of-United Nations approach with a focus on collective performance, results and learning across the development system. As such it is a unique function that has not been delivered coherently in the past, despite the concerns of member states and United Nations entities. It is designed to complement, not replace, the evaluation work of United Nations entities. At the time of writing this policy, there are primarily two types of system-wide evaluations within the United Nations development system: Cooperation Framework evaluations and global system-wide evaluations managed by the SWEO. System-wide evaluation at all levels is expected to follow the provisions set out in this policy under the overall leadership and strategic guidance of the SWEO.

12 The overarching purpose of system-wide evaluation[5] is to provide independent evaluation evidence to strengthen oversight, transparency and accountability, and to incentivize joint work and collective learning among United Nations development system entities. This collective learning may be of particular value to United Nations entities with limited evaluation capacity or country presence. System-wide evaluations are not expected to evaluate the performance of individual entities. Figure 2 summarizes the value that system-wide evaluation can bring.

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5   Secretary-General report A/75/79.

Figure 2: The value of system-wide evaluation

PRINCIPLES
UNEG Norms and Standards
Complementarity
Subsidiarity
Collaboration

ACCELERATING PROGRESS TOWARDS THE SDGS

ENSURING COMPLEMENTARITY OF SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION
Consultative and coherent planning identifies system-wide evaluation needs

1

ENSURING CREDIBILITY AND QUALITY OF SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATIONS
Appropriate capacity, approaches and guidance supports system-wide evaluations

2

FACILITATING USE OF SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATIONS
MS and UN entities are aware of and knowledgeable about system-wide evaluation evidence

3

SUPPORTING FOLLOW UP TO SYSTEM-WIDEEVALUATIONS
Strategic implications of UN system efforts are known, discussed, and followed up

4

STRENGTHENING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
Better oversight by MS of UN system's contribution to the SDGs; UN system is more accountable for that contribution

5

6

EFFECTING CHANGE
Decisions by UN system entities are evidence based and enhance performance

Source: United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office

13 System-wide evaluation is of particular value to:

a Governing and legislative bodies in their oversight, decision-making and direction-setting roles for the United Nations development system as a whole

b United Nations development system leadership at country, regional and global levels to inform strategy and policy development, programme design and planning and the achievement of results across the United Nations development system

c Member States, as they look to the United Nations for support to national efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Country level

14 At the country level, mandatory independent system-wide evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (Cooperation Framework) ensures accountability, supports learning, and informs decisions regarding subsequent Cooperation Framework cycles, including the common country analysis and Cooperation Framework design. These evaluations systematically assess the contribution of the UNCT to the achievement of national development results and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Regional level

15 At the regional level, the focus of system-wide evaluation is on knowledge management and use of evaluation evidence, fostering inter-country learning and exchange to enhance the collective support to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and on regional-level support to the conduct and use of Cooperation Framework evaluations.

Source: United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office

Global level

16 Global system-wide evaluations are conducted by the SWEO to assess development system results and performance complementing the evaluation work of UNSDG entities. System-wide evaluations are focused on activities that cannot be adequately addressed through existing accountability mechanisms. The SWEO also conducts evaluations of multi-donor trust funds and initiatives in which United Nations entities work together towards a common objective.

17 The UNSDG SWEO has a key role in mapping the availability of evaluation evidence to enhance collective knowledge sharing and promote learning through the production of syntheses and summaries of evaluation evidence across the United Nations system in order to inform programme planning and the achievement of results across the United Nations development system. Alongside this mapping, UNSDG SWEO also promotes and incentivizes joint evaluations, conducted, in the main, by United Nations entity evaluation offices.

18 System-wide evaluations at these three levels are expected to be mutually reinforcing, informed by the work conducted at each level to enhance coherence and make full use of evaluation capacities.

19 Excluded from this policy are other independent oversight mechanisms. Also excluded are analytical exercises and reviews that are neither independent nor evaluative (see Box 1). However, data and information from these mechanisms, exercises and reviews may be utilized as inputs to system-wide evaluations. Active engagement and collaboration with the functions that produce them contribute to meeting holistic evidence and learning needs and ensure appropriate division of labour.

20 As noted in A/RES/77/273, voluntary national reviews of progress towards the SDGs, supported by country-led evaluations, are key to sharing experience, challenges, successes and lessons learned in delivering the SDGs at the country level. Voluntary national reviews and country-led evaluations are conducted by Member States and as such are beyond the scope of this policy. However, as noted below (Partnerships, section X), it is expected that UNCTs will support the development of national evaluation systems and the SWEO may contribute to multi-stakeholder partnerships in this regard.

III. Guiding principles

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21 This policy subscribes to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for evaluation complemented by additional principles that are particularly important for system-wide evaluations. Application of these guiding principles ensures evaluation quality, reflected in the independence, utility and credibility of system-wide evaluations, which is in turn supported by transparency, impartiality, professionalism and ethics. High quality evaluations enhance accountability and learning (Figure 3). All system-wide evaluation activities will adhere to these norms, standards and guiding principles.

UNEG Norms and Standards

22 Whereas UNEG Norms and Standards are well established, the specific implications for UNSDG system-wide evaluation are set out here.

Internationally agreed principles, goals and targets

23 Within the United Nations system, it is the responsibility of evaluation managers and evaluators to uphold and promote the principles and values to which the United Nations is committed, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The mandate for system-wide evaluations is framed by the General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions (see Table 1).

Utility

24 In commissioning and conducting an evaluation, there should be a clear intention to use its findings, conclusions and recommendations to inform decisions and actions. The utility of system-wide evaluation is manifest when it is used to make relevant and timely contributions to organizational learning, decision-making processes and accountability for results.

Credibility

25 For evaluations to be credible, they must be independent, impartial and use rigorous methodology. Key elements of credibility include transparent evaluation processes, inclusive approaches involving relevant stakeholders and robust quality assurance systems. System-wide evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations are informed by systematic and judicious use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid data and by accurate quantitative and qualitative analysis. Terms of reference for system-wide evaluations should detail the approach and methodology for data collection and analysis to ensure triangulation of evidence. Evaluations are conducted following ethical principles and managed by evaluators who exhibit professional and cultural competencies.
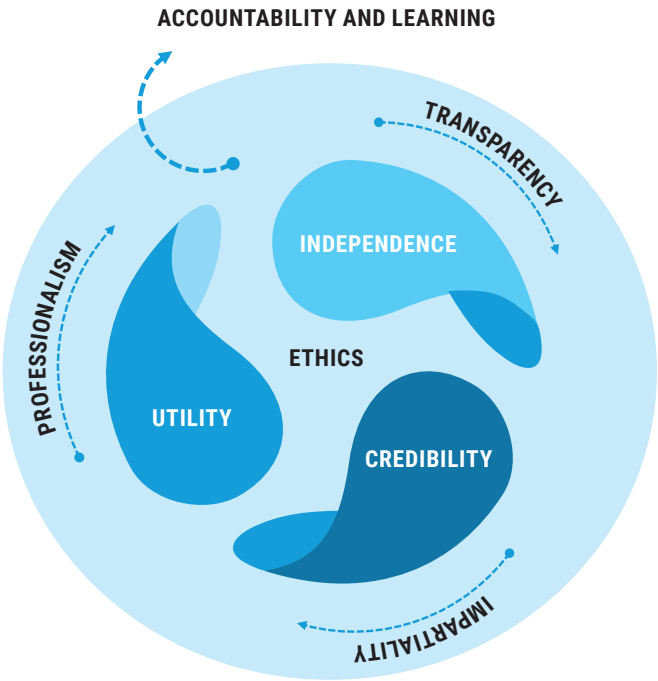
Independence

26 To be credible, UNSDG system-wide evaluation must be independent both behaviourally and organizationally. Organizational independence requires that the evaluation function be positioned independently from management functions, with responsibility for setting the evaluation agenda and with adequate resources to conduct its work. Organizational independence ensures that evaluation managers have full discretion to submit evaluation reports directly to the appropriate level of decision-making. Behavioural independence is the ability to evaluate without undue influence by any party. Evaluators must have full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially, without the risk of negative effects on their career development, and they must be able to present freely their professional assessment. Evaluators should have full and open access to information on any given subject.

27 The UNSDG SWEO is a stand-alone office, and independence of the evaluation function is vested in the Executive Director, who provides leadership and oversight of the evaluation function, and who has the power to commission, produce, publish and disseminate duly quality-assured, global, system-wide evaluation reports in the public domain without undue influence by any party.

28 Cooperation Framework evaluations are commissioned and managed by Resident Coordinators with the United Nations Country Team. To ensure that

Figure 3: United Nations Evaluation Group Norms of particular relevance to system-wide evaluation

Source: United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office

Cooperation Framework evaluations are free from undue influence and that reporting is unbiased and transparent, mechanisms to buttress independence include: external review of draft terms of reference, inception and evaluation reports; and other quality assurance processes.

29 The UNSDG SWEO provides guidance on appropriate channels for evaluators to report challenges to the independence of evaluations for all system-wide evaluations.

Impartiality

30 The key elements of impartiality are objectivity, professional integrity and absence of bias. The requirement for impartiality exists at all stages of the system-wide evaluation process, including planning an evaluation, formulating the purpose and scope, selecting the evaluation team, providing access to stakeholders, conducting the evaluation and formulating findings and recommendations. Evaluation team members must not have been (or expect soon to be) directly responsible for the policy setting, design, or management of the evaluation subject.

Transparency

31 Transparency is a fundamental element of system-wide evaluation and as such all final evaluation products will be published. Transparency will be carried through evaluation processes ensuring trust, building confidence in the results of evaluation, enhancing stakeholder ownership and increasing public accountability. Meaningful consultation with key stakeholders is essential for the credibility and utility of system-wide evaluations. Without compromising their independence, and in order to promote an evaluation culture, key users should be engaged throughout the evaluation process, through transparent and inclusive approaches.

Professionalism

32 System-wide evaluations should be conducted with professionalism and integrity. The Executive Director of UNSDG SWEO must have professional evaluation expertise and competence, as defined in the UNEG evaluation competency framework for heads of evaluation. Persons engaged in planning, designing, conducting and managing evaluation activities should possess the necessary evaluation competencies and training, combining management, technical and evaluation experience with the appropriate skills sets. UNEG standards will inform the formal job descriptions and selection criteria that set out basic professional requirements. Evaluators will adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards, including: applying methodological rigour, impartiality, credibility, transparency and the responsible handling of confidential information.

Ethics

33 All system-wide evaluations must conform to the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and other relevant guidance and must be conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for: the beliefs, manners and customs of all social and cultural environments; human rights and gender equality; and non-discrimination, disability inclusion and the "do no harm" principle. This is particularly important in relation to the involvement of vulnerable groups in evaluations. All evaluation managers and evaluators must ensure that sensitive data are protected, they must ensure anonymity as appropriate and ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced to their source in line with the data protection and privacy policies of the United Nations.[6] Evaluators should obtain informed consent for the use of privileged information from those who provide it. At the same time, they must validate statements made in the report with the sources of the relevant information and ensure that evaluation findings are triangulated to avoid them being based solely on evidence that cannot be disclosed or verified.

34 All evaluation managers and evaluators will sign the UNEG Pledge of Commitment to Ethical Conduct in Evaluation. If any evidence of potential wrongdoing is uncovered (such as financial mismanagement, sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment), it must be reported to a competent body in line with guidance from the SWEO for all system-wide evaluations.

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6   Including ST/SGB/2024/1 Data protection and privacy policy for the Secretariat of the United Nations.

Human rights and gender equality

35 The UNEG Norms bring together the complementary and mutually reinforcing concepts of human rights and gender equality. The universally recognized values and principles of human rights should be integrated into all stages of a system-wide evaluation. It is the responsibility of evaluators and evaluation managers to ensure that these values are respected, addressed and promoted, underpinning the commitment to the principle of "leaving no one behind".

36 Similarly, the principle of gender equality is integral to all United Nations policies, systems and interventions. System-wide evaluations acknowledge and respond to this principle through their design, approach and methods to further understanding of the effects of the United Nations system actions on gender equality and learning on effective interventions that support the principle of gender equality.

National evaluation capacities

37 Member States are the primary drivers of progress towards the SDGs and have committed to systematic follow-up and review of the implementation of 2030 Agenda, which is country-led and country-driven. National evaluation capacities should be supported upon request of Member States in collaboration with other United Nations entities.[7]

Principles particular to system-wide evaluation

Complementarity

38 UNSDG system-wide evaluation complements the evaluation and other oversight work of UNSDG entities with a focus on collective results and attention to system-wide issues that are not adequately addressed through other United Nations oversight and accountability mechanisms.

Subsidiarity

39 UNSDG system-wide evaluations draw on and do not duplicate evaluation activities that are adequately covered by agency programme evaluations, including joint and inter-agency evaluations. Consultation and joint planning of evaluation activities should aim to maximize collective learning opportunities, while avoiding duplication and overload. In this regard, the UNSDG SWEO plays an important role in mapping evaluation evidence and conducting syntheses and summaries.

Collaboration

40 The shared responsibilities for effective and useful system-wide evaluation are assured by active engagement, cooperation and collaboration across the United Nations development system. This will be supported through collaboration with the evaluation offices of United Nations entities, including through contributions to the planning and management of system-wide evaluations and related activities, leveraging the evaluation work of individual entities to draw on and augment their contributions and capacities to assess collective results across the United Nations development system.

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7   In line with General Assembly resolution 69/237 on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level and General Assembly resolution 77/283 on strengthening voluntary national reviews through country-led evaluation.

IV. Evaluation procedures

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Planning

41 All system-wide evaluation activities are planned and managed through costed, multi-year rolling evaluation workplans.

42 Country-level costed evaluation plans are developed as part of the Cooperation Framework by Resident Coordinator Offices in consultation with the UNCTs[8] – encompassing Cooperation Framework evaluations and other relevant country-level evaluations conducted by United Nations entities as outlined in the Cooperation Framework guidance. These plans are reviewed annually.

43 The Development Coordination Office consolidates planned Cooperation Framework evaluations into a four-year rolling regional plan, enabling adequate support to the conduct and quality assurance of those evaluations and promoting lesson learning and use across the region. These plans are reviewed annually.

44 The Global System-Wide Evaluation Plan[9] is prepared by the UNSDG SWEO through a consultative process, in alignment with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycle. The plan sets out the purpose, nature and scope of global system-wide evaluations and related activities, as well as the resources needed to conduct them. The plan is based on

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8 Where appropriate, it is recommended that United Nations entities also include this information in costed evaluation plans submitted with their country programme documents or strategies.

9 The Global System-Wide Evaluation Plan will be included in the Annual Report of the Executive Director of the UNSDG SWEO.

criteria for identifying priorities for system-wide evaluation, balancing consultation and transparency with the prerogative of the UNSDG SWEO to exercise independence in selecting and proposing evaluations. A systematic approach is used to identify evaluations to be included in the evaluation plan, drawing on independent analyses of key information, mapping of available evaluation evidence and emerging priorities. This takes into account the evaluation plans of United Nations entities to ensure complementarity and subsidiarity. The methodology along with the workplan is shared with key stakeholders. The plan is informed by consultations to ensure that it reflects the views of key stakeholders, including United Nations entities and the legislative body, the Economic and Social Council. The workplan is subject to annual review and revision to reflect priorities and learning needs in light of evolving circumstances.

45 In preparing the plan, the UNSDG SWEO also consults with the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Joint Inspection Unit, and the Board of Auditors in line with the current mechanisms used to promote cooperation across these entities.

46 It is recommended that resource commitments (either staff or funding) to support global system-wide evaluations and related activities are reflected in the evaluation plans of the evaluation offices of United Nations entities whenever relevant. Commitments will be reviewed annually as part of the update of rolling evaluation plans by both the UNSDG SWEO and United Nations entities' evaluation offices.[10]

Priorities for system-wide evaluation

47 The universe of potential topics for system-wide evaluation activities takes into account the following:

- Priorities set out in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review
- Priorities emerging from intergovernmental summits and resolutions, for example the six transitions highlighted by the SDG Summit in

2023 that are essential to achievement of the SDGs: 1) food systems transformation; 2) energy transitions and access; 3) digital connectivity; 4) education and skills gaps; 5) decent jobs and social protection, including healthcare; and 6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution

- Pooled funds and joint initiatives, in which United Nations entities are working towards a common objective
- United Nations system-wide strategies and plans,[11] as appropriate.

48 There is no coverage norm for global system-wide evaluations. The number would vary from year to year but is expected to be small, with details set out in the Global System-Wide Evaluation Plan. Selection of topics will be guided by the following criteria taking into consideration a gender perspective, disability inclusion, non-discrimination, human rights and environmental dimensions as appropriate:

- Strategic significance of the subject, in relation to system-wide priorities, levels of investment, potential risks, need for evidence for decision-making, and performance issues or concerns in relation to achievements of expected results, evidence gaps and new and emerging issues
- System-wide utility relating to a cross-cutting issue, theme, programme or policy question, importance of the knowledge gap that is to be filled, potential for system-wide learning (innovation), potential for replication and scaling-up, and degree of comparative advantage of United Nations
- Value-added or complementarity relating to results and performance that cannot be adequately addressed through existing accountability mechanisms to complement the evaluation work of United Nations entities
- Feasibility of implementing the evaluation: evaluability and resources to conduct a high-quality evaluation within the time period.

49 Global and (when conducted) regional system-wide evaluations will utilize appropriate methods and

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10 If an entity's evaluation office does not update evaluation plans annually, the UNSDG SWEO will consult directly with the office.
11 Such as the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy.

approaches depending on their topic and stage of evolution and as defined by learning and accountability requirements.

50 Evaluation synthesis and summary reports may be produced at country, regional and global levels to draw evidence from many evaluations.

51 At the country level, Cooperation Framework evaluations are conducted in accordance with relevant guidance in the penultimate year of the Cooperation Framework cycle to inform the development of subsequent common country analyses and Cooperation Frameworks. Cooperation Framework evaluations assess systematically the United Nation's contribution to development results as well as internal and external gaps and overlaps, supporting the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Management and conduct of system-wide evaluations

52 All system-wide evaluations are designed, managed and conducted with rigour, in line with UNEG Norms and Standards and the principles set out in this policy. At the country level, Cooperation Framework evaluations are commissioned and managed by the Resident Coordinator in collaboration with the UNCT. All other system-wide evaluations are commissioned and managed by the UNSDG SWEO.

53 System-wide evaluations have particular arrangements and requirements for their commissioning, management and reporting, with specific guidance, procedures, governance arrangements and quality assurance mechanisms. Guidelines for Cooperation Framework evaluations were developed by UNEG and the Development Coordination Office in 2021.[12] The UNSDG SWEO will develop detailed guidance for conducting all other system-wide evaluations.

54 The key elements for ensuring useful, credible and professional independent system-wide evaluations, conducted through transparent and collaborative processes, include:

a Terms of reference that conform to UNEG standards and UNSDG system-wide evaluation guidance, provide for the use of the evaluation, and are developed in consultation with stakeholders to ensure transparency and promote engagement

b Evaluation managers who take all necessary actions to ensure the independence, impartiality and transparency of the evaluation process, including through establishment of appropriate governance structures

c Evaluation teams that are selected through an open and transparent process, in line with United Nations rules, policies and procedures. With due regard to geographical and gender diversity and disability inclusion, evaluation teams should include professionals from the region or country concerned in the evaluation, including young evaluators, as appropriate

d Evaluations that have clear governance structures, which will consist of management groups and evaluation reference groups composed of internal stakeholders. They may be complemented by mechanisms to engage external stakeholders, as required[13]

e An approach and methods that follow the appropriate system-wide evaluation guidance and are clearly presented in the evaluation report

f System-wide evaluation reports that meet evaluation reporting standards and are made available publicly, together with the related evaluation quality assessment and management response.

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12 Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework provide a step-by-step approach to conducting Cooperation Framework evaluations, providing an overview of the evaluation process, data collection, analysis and reporting, and evaluation dissemination and post-evaluation tasks.

13 The detailed governance arrangements for system-wide evaluations will be set out in the respective guidance and specified in terms of reference.

V. Quality assurance and assessment

55 For evaluations to be credible they must be of high quality. This is ensured through two basic processes – quality assurance and quality assessment.

56 Quality assurance takes place throughout the evaluation process. Its purpose is to promote quality throughout the evaluation. As set out in Cooperation Framework and global system-wide evaluation guidance, key features of system-wide evaluation quality assurance are:

- Guidance and tools for conducting and managing evaluations that are consistent with the UNEG Norms and Standards

- Establishment of evaluation management and reference groups to review key outputs of the evaluation, including the terms of reference

- Recruitment of evaluators based on proof of qualifications, skills and experience

- Use of standard checklists and quality criteria for review of terms of reference, inception reports and final evaluation reports.

57 The quality of all completed evaluation reports is assessed by independent external assessors and takes place once the evaluation report is finalized (post-hoc). This process is managed by the UNSDG SWEO for all system-wide evaluations, including Cooperation Framework evaluations. The results of these quality assessments are made publicly available alongside the evaluation reports, contributing to the transparency, credibility and utility of evaluations, and reported in the Annual Report of the Executive Director of the UNSDG SWEO.

VI. Management response and follow-up

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58 The delivery of timely system-wide evaluation reports with relevant and targeted recommendations is intended to strengthen learning and accountability for development system results and to improve performance, collaboration and alignment of United Nations development system entities.

59 Evaluation recommendations require robust and transparent mechanisms to prepare timely management responses. All system-wide evaluations require a formal management response produced within an agreed timeframe. Management responses are discussed with stakeholders and published along with the reports. Management response actions should be recorded, and their implementation tracked.

60 The Development Coordination Office, as UNSDG Secretariat, facilitates the preparation and publication of global system-wide evaluation management responses, which are presented to UNSDG, along with the evaluation reports. For Cooperation Framework evaluations, the Resident Coordinator in collaboration with the UNCT is responsible for the preparation of the management response.

61 The principals of United Nations entities should ensure that the recommendations relevant to their agencies and agency-specific management response are discussed internally and, when appropriate, with their respective governing bodies, and that follow-up actions are implemented.

62 The Development Coordination Office, as UNSDG Secretariat, maintains the system-wide evaluation management response and follow-up database for all system-wide evaluations and works with United Nations entities to facilitate reporting on the implementation of the management responses through existing mechanisms.

63 Progress on the implementation status of evaluation recommendations is reported in the Annual Report of the Executive Director of the UNSDG SWEO in order to ensure that system-wide evaluations have meaningful impact.

VII. Maximizing use of system-wide evaluation evidence

64 Evaluations are opportunities for learning, improving performance and demonstrating accountability. Not using evidence generated through evaluations is a lost investment and missed opportunity. Key to using evaluation evidence is ensuring from the outset that evaluations will be used, including through understanding, and being able to respond to, the needs of potential users of the evaluation.

65 System-wide evaluation seeks to provide relevant, timely, credible and high-quality evidence to a range of users, at country, regional and global levels. At the country level, key users are national governments, development partners, Resident Coordinators and UNCTs. At the regional level, the United Nations Regional Collaborative Platforms and regional intergovernmental institutions will be the main users. At the global level, the key users are governing and legislative bodies and United Nations system entities and leadership, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its subsidiary mechanisms,[14] to help ensure that the lessons and recommendations derived from system-wide evaluations are applied in the work of the entities of the United Nations development system. At all levels, other important users of system-wide evaluation include international financial institutions, foundations, civil society, think tanks, academia, and voluntary organizations for professional evaluation.

66 Evaluation use is supported by consultative processes for planning system-wide evaluations that address issues of interest or concern to stakeholders and provide evidence to them. Ensuring that evaluation evidence is available in a timely manner to support decision-making, that the evaluation is credible and that recommendations are of high quality, all enhance the use of evaluation evidence.

67 Evaluation use is also facilitated through effective management response and follow-up mechanisms. United Nations entities have a key role in dissemination of the findings and lessons from system-wide evaluations; and in ensuring the use of system-wide evaluation evidence in decision-making, including by governing bodies. It is recommended that United Nations entity evaluation offices include in their annual reports details of system-wide evaluations and their follow-up and use.

68 Of key importance to enhancing the use of evaluation evidence is ensuring that it is available and accessible. The UNSDG SWEO, UNSDG, UN INFO, and UNEG websites are key platforms for publishing system-wide evaluation evidence. Other United Nations entity and oversight body platforms may contain data or evidence that may be used in system-wide evaluation products.

69 The SWEO has an important role in disseminating evaluation evidence to promote learning and use, including by developing syntheses, evidence summaries and evidence maps to provide accessible and user-friendly knowledge products and dissemination tools. The SWEO will pursue interactions with key stakeholders with the objective of raising awareness and promoting the uptake of the evidence generated through system-wide evaluations and related activities. Importantly, to strengthen system-wide evaluation capacities and to ensure system-wide evaluation evidence and learning contributes to capacity development initiatives, the SWEO will cooperate with the United Nations System Staff College, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and through partnership with other relevant United Nations and international evaluation and evidence bodies.

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14 The work of the Executive Board is supported by two high-level committees: The High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management. Under each committee there are inter-agency mechanisms and networks to coordinate specific topics.

VIII. Roles and responsibilities

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70 An effective and useful system-wide evaluation function reflects the shared responsibilities of all of its stakeholders.

Economic and Social Council

71 As set out in General Assembly Resolution 48/162, and strengthened under General Assembly Resolution 72/305, the ECOSOC operational activities segment provides coordination, guidance and oversight to the United Nations development system. In relation to the SWEO, the Economic and Social Council may wish to consider the system-wide evaluation reports and the implementation rate of management to evaluation recommendations, and provide guidance therein, while upholding the independence of the office in the performance of its system-wide evaluation function.

Heads of UNSDG entities

72 Heads of UNSDG entities encourage the use of evaluation evidence, promote a culture of learning and accountability and safeguard the provisions of the UNSDG system-wide evaluation policy, which includes independence, impartiality and transparency provisions, roles and responsibilities, and resources.

The UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office

73 The UNSDG SWEO is responsible for the provision of independent evaluation evidence[15] to strengthen learning, transparency and accountability, to incentivize joint work and collective learning, and to conduct system-wide evaluations and advance evidence from them on the United Nations development

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15 Without prejudice to the Joint Inspection Unit system-wide mandate for independent evaluations and inspections.

system's contribution towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

74 To ensure independence, impartiality and credibility, the UNSDG SWEO is a stand-alone independent office and provides leadership and strategic guidance for the system-wide evaluation function in accordance with this policy. The main responsibilities of the SWEO include:

a Commissioning and managing relevant, timely, credible and high-quality global and (as relevant) regional system-wide evaluations of development system results and performance to complement the evaluation work of United Nations entities

b Promoting increased collaboration on joint and system-wide evaluation, including by mapping the availability of evaluation evidence, to inform the development of a multi-year rolling system-wide evaluation plan

c Enhancing collective knowledge-sharing and learning through the production of syntheses and summaries of evaluation evidence across the United Nations system and supporting the use of system-wide evaluation evidence to inform programme planning and the achievement of results across the United Nations development system

d Leading the formulation and implementation of the system-wide evaluation policy, ensuring application of related guidance and latest evaluation practice

e Advising the Development Coordination Office on models and guidance for the system-wide evaluation function at country and regional levels, including on the design and operationalization of evaluation quality assurance systems to support credible Cooperation Framework evaluations

f Ensuring that independent post-hoc quality assessment is conducted of all completed system-wide evaluations and published alongside evaluation reports

g Analysing the alignment between management responses and the recommendations of system-wide evaluations

h Collaborating with the evaluation offices of United Nations entities to enhance coherence and make full use of evaluation capacities

i Coordinating its work with the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Joint Inspection Unit

j Working in partnerships to contribute to the strengthening of capacities for the generation and use of evidence to inform progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Executive Director of the UNSDG SWEO

75 The Executive Director is appointed by the Secretary-General. The Executive Director is responsible for the management of the independent stand-alone UNSDG SWEO within the United Nations Secretariat, reporting directly to the Secretary-General but exercising operational independence in the performance of the evaluation function. The Executive Director oversees the preparation of the reports of the SWEO, including the annual report for submission to the Economic and Social Council, as set out in A/75/79–E/2020/55.

76 Through the UNSDG SWEO, the Executive Director supports the strengthening of oversight, accountability and lesson learning among United Nations development system entities. The Executive Director provides global leadership and standard-setting for the system-wide evaluation function at all levels, contributing to the Secretary-General's promotion of a system-wide culture of accountability and learning, including through the following:

a A normative framework: leading the formulation and implementation of the system-wide evaluation policy, ensuring adherence to UNEG Norms and Standards and applying related guidance and the latest evaluation practice

b Oversight: providing assurance that all system-wide evaluations are conducted in compliance with this policy

c Planning: elaborating the global system-wide evaluation multi-year rolling workplan in consultation with UNSDG, Member States and other stakeholders, encouraging complementarity among evaluations commissioned across the system

d Resourcing: overseeing the resource mobilization for an adequately resourced evaluation capacity within the SWEO, in line with this policy and the UNEG Norms and Standards

e   Commissioning and managing global system-wide evaluations: delivering high-quality evaluations utilizing appropriate approaches and methods with timely publication of evaluation reports and submission to the appropriate levels of decision-making

f   Quality assurance and assessment: ensuring that global system-wide evaluations adhere to evaluation quality assurance processes and that the quality of evaluation reports is independently assessed

g   Follow up to system-wide evaluations: periodically reporting to the UNSDG on the implementation of management responses to system-wide evaluations

h   Use: promoting and championing the use of system-wide evaluation evidence throughout the United Nations system and beyond, including by participating as an observer in the UNSDG as appropriate and by invitation

i   Reporting: preparing the Annual Report of the Executive Director of the System-Wide Evaluation Office and facilitating dialogue with United Nations entities on the performance of the system-wide evaluation function

j   Cooperation and international engagement: leading engagement with United Nations entities, UNEG, and international evaluation and evidence bodies.

United Nations Sustainable Development Group

77 The UNSDG is the high-level inter-agency forum for programme and operational guidance and decision-making across the United Nations development system. It provides strategic direction and oversight to ensure United Nations development system entities deliver coherent, effective and efficient support to countries seeking to attain sustainable development. As part of this role, it strengthens learning and accountability for development system results and performance, drawing on system-wide evaluations.

78 In line with its comprehensive responsibilities for sustainable development as delegated by the Secretary-General and under the chairpersonship of its Deputy Secretary-General, the UNSDG:

a   Considers the system-wide evaluation rolling workplan and makes suggestions for timely and relevant topics

b   Considers system-wide evaluation reports and ensures appropriate follow-up to evaluation recommendations

c   Ensures that substantive management responses to system-wide evaluation recommendations are published, that follow-up actions are implemented and that progress on implementation is reported annually

d   Uses system-wide evaluation evidence in its decision-making, including when developing system-wide policies, strategies, programmes, action plans etc., including in the work of its groups and task teams

e   Prepares a response to the annual system-wide evaluation report and ensures that actions are taken to support a high-performing system-wide evaluation function.

United Nations Sustainable Development Group entities

79 All heads of UNSDG entities foster an integrated, whole-of-system approach, focused on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in their entities at all levels.

80 UNSDG entities are responsible for ensuring engagement with, use of and follow-up to, system-wide evaluation reports and recommendations at global, regional and country levels, specifically:

a   Contributing to the development and implementation of the system-wide evaluation policy

b   Contributing to the development of system-wide evaluation rolling workplans

c   Ensuring unfettered access to data and information required for the system-wide evaluations

d   Considering system-wide evaluation reports, ensuring timely preparation of management responses to recommendations, and ensuring that follow-up actions are implemented and

that progress on implementation is reported annually[16]

  e   Disseminating the findings and lessons from system-wide evaluations and ensuring the use of system-wide evaluation evidence in decision-making

  f   Utilizing existing mechanisms to share system-wide evaluation reports and follow up with entity governing bodies.

United Nations Sustainable Development Group entity evaluation offices and units

81   Collaboration between the UNSDG SWEO and the evaluation offices and units of United Nations entities underpins the accountability of their respective entities for engagement with, use of and follow-up to, system-wide evaluation at all levels. Importantly, they play an essential role in building the culture for evaluation to strengthen collective learning system-wide.

82   In line with the subsidiarity principle, system-wide evaluation builds on and does not duplicate the work of United Nations entities' evaluation offices. System-wide evaluation draws on evaluation evidence produced by United Nations entity evaluation offices. System-wide evaluation complements and leverages the work of United Nations entities' evaluation offices, to maximize existing capacities and minimize additional costs in relation to the planning, conduct and use of system-wide evaluations and related activities. Direct contributions by United Nations entity evaluation offices to system-wide evaluations may include participation in evaluation management groups, provision of co-funding and in-kind contributions and support to dissemination activities.[17]

83   United Nations entity evaluation offices have varying capacities available to support system-wide evaluations. Engagement with entity evaluation offices should recognize these constraints and seek to facilitate their contributions without overburdening individual offices.

The Development Coordination Office

84   The Development Coordination Office is the Secretariat of the UNSDG and assumes managerial and oversight functions of the Resident Coordinator system. With a presence at regional and global levels, the Development Coordination Office fulfils a key role in facilitating and supporting system-wide evaluation.

85   Specifically, the Development Coordination Office:

  a   Facilitates communication and engagement between the SWEO, the Resident Coordinator system and UNCTs; and between the SWEO and Regional Collaboration Platforms

  b   Prepares multi-year system-wide Cooperation Framework evaluation rolling workplans at the regional level and, in consultation with the Regional Collaboration Platforms and Resident Coordinators, makes suggestions for timely and relevant topics for the global plan

  c   Considers the implications of system-wide evaluation evidence to inform policies, strategies and programmes related to the Resident Coordinator system

  d   Promotes the use of system-wide evaluation evidence in decision-making and facilitates learning from evaluation evidence across regions and countries

  e   In consultation with the UNSDG SWEO, develops guidance and quality assurance mechanisms for country-level system-wide evaluation activities

  f   Through existing mechanisms, maintains a platform to store and monitor system-wide evaluations, their management responses and follow-up

  g   Takes into account the annual report on the implementation of the system-wide evaluation policy and the advice of the UNSDG SWEO in order to inform appropriate action to strengthen system-wide evaluation conduct and use at regional and country levels.

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16   UNSDG members already provide regular updates to UN INFO to report on their activities in-country in line with the joint workplan derived from the Cooperation Framework and joint workplans, linked to resources invested by all partners to advance the SDGs.

17   This may also include the provision of co-funding and in-kind contributions and potential secondments of professional evaluation staff.

86 The Development Coordination Office provides secretariat support to the UNSDG and its subsidiary mechanisms. In this role the Development Coordination Office facilitates with UNSDG entities:

    a Communication and engagement with the UNSDG SWEO

    b The preparation of management responses of the system-wide evaluations conducted by the UNSDG SWEO.

87 Specifically, in relation to evaluation of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, the Development Coordination Office:

    a Ensures conduct and use of independent, timely, useful and high-quality Cooperation Framework evaluations, in accordance with the Management and Accountability Framework, the Cooperation Framework and other relevant guidance

    b Provides a global platform for the public dissemination of Cooperation Framework evaluations and their management responses and follow-up.

Resident Coordinators

88 The Resident Coordinator ensures an independent, final United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework evaluation and a management response that promotes national ownership through involvement of national partners, civil society and other relevant stakeholders in the process and informs the development of subsequent common country analyses and Cooperation Frameworks, as set out in the Management and Accountability Framework, Cooperation Framework and other relevant guidance.

89 The Resident Coordinator, in collaboration with the UNCT:

    a Prepares a costed multi-year rolling evaluation plan (aligned with Cooperation Framework timeframe and reviewed annually) encompassing Cooperation Framework evaluations and other country-level evaluations conducted by United Nations entities

    b Commissions and manages an independent and timely Cooperation Framework evaluation of high quality

    c Prepares a management response to the evaluation and undertakes any follow-up actions

    d Ensures that the common country analysis and Cooperation Framework are informed by the results of the Cooperation Framework evaluation and other evaluation evidence

    e Ensures timely publication and dissemination of the Cooperation Framework evaluation to national partners, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to stimulate dialogue on achievement of the SDGs.

IX. Institutional architecture

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90 Given the shared nature of the system-wide evaluation function, effective mechanisms that ensure coherence, collaboration and coordination across the function are essential. To this end, the UNSDG SWEO will coordinate and collaborate with pre-existing evaluation and evidence-generating bodies. This will be complemented by the establishment of dedicated mechanisms to facilitate planning, management and the use of system-wide evaluation. In addition, the UNSDG SWEO seeks to coordinate with other United Nations oversight bodies that undertake evaluations.

Collaboration with other United Nations evaluation and oversight bodies

United Nations Evaluation Group

91 The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) is an inter-agency voluntary professional network that brings together the evaluation units of the United Nations system, including United Nations Secretariat departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and affiliated organizations. Among its roles, UNEG maintains the database of United Nations evaluations through which the UNSDG SWEO accesses evaluation reports.

92 The UNSDG SWEO will participate as a member of UNEG, contributing to the development of common technical guidance and to evaluation capacity strengthening. Membership of UNEG facilitates coordination and coherence, contributes to evaluation planning and mapping, promotes use and learning and benefits from the evaluation capacities of UNEG members. System-wide evaluation draws on relevant UNEG guidance and related materials.

Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group

93 Inter-agency humanitarian evaluations are independent assessments of results of the collective humanitarian response by member organizations of the

Inter-Agency Standing Committee to a specific crisis or theme. They gauge the extent to which planned collective results have been realized and assess the contribution of humanitarian reform efforts towards achieving these objectives.

94   The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group and UNSDG SWEO engage periodically, with the possibility that the UNSDG SWEO could participate in the steering group meetings to share and compare respective workplans and identify opportunities to promote learning and use of evaluation evidence system-wide.

Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Joint Inspection Unit

95   The Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Joint Inspection Unit perform evaluation functions within their unique mandates. The UNSDG system-wide evaluation office is distinctive from, but complementary to, the remit of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Joint Inspection Unit. The UNSDG SWEO will seek to coordinate with the Joint Inspection Unit and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, including through regular discussions on each body's ongoing work in the areas of evaluation, the emerging risks and challenges they face and their respective plans for future work in order to share experiences, learning and understanding, and to ensure that oversight entities do not simultaneously focus on the same evaluation areas.

Mechanisms to strengthen system-wide evaluation planning, management and use

The System-Wide Evaluation Steering Group

96   The System-Wide Evaluation Steering Group brings together representatives of the United Nations entity evaluation offices (at the level of heads of evaluation offices or alternates with delegated authority), leveraging capacities and resources on system-wide evaluation and sharing knowledge and experience. It promotes and advises on system-wide evaluations, provides inputs and resources (for example, funding, staff-time, best practices) to the design and conduct of system-wide evaluations and actively supports the dissemination and use of system-wide evaluation products. The steering group meets once a year in person, usually at the time of the UNEG annual meeting. Other meetings are conducted virtually.

97   This group is complemented by the Independent Evaluation Advisory Panel.

The **Joint Inspection Unit** was established as an independent, external oversight body with a system-wide mandate as a standing subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly (Resolution 31/192) and of other governing bodies and legislative organs of the United Nations entities that accepted its statute. Its mandate is to provide an independent view through inspection and evaluation aimed at improving management and methods and at achieving greater coordination between organizations. In its reports and notes, the Joint Inspection Unit identifies best practices, proposes benchmarks and facilitates information-sharing throughout all the organizations of the United Nations system that have adopted its statute.

The **Office of Internal Oversight Services** is the internal oversight body of the United Nations in accordance with its mandate (A/RES/48/218 B). This office assists the Secretary-General in fulfilling his oversight responsibilities in respect of the resources and staff of the organization through the provision of audit, investigation, inspection and evaluation services. The office's oversight services contribute to supporting the Sustainable Development Goals and the overarching United Nations Charter by promoting responsible administration of resources, improved programme performance, and a culture of accountability and transparency in an evolving global landscape. Evidence-based inspections and evaluations: provide accountability for the activities and resources of the organization; help programmes deliver better results; and foster institutional learning by United Nations management, staff and partners.

The Independent Evaluation Advisory Panel

98 The UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Independent Advisory Panel provides substantive strategic advice to the Executive Director of the UNSDG SWEO on system-wide evaluation in the following areas:

a The implementation of the policy

b The global system-wide evaluation plan

c The conduct and use of system-wide evaluation.

99 The Independent Evaluation Advisory Panel is an independent, external body convened twice a year (once in person) reporting to the Executive Director. The panel will prepare an annual summary of its work and recommendations, which is shared with the Secretary-General and the UNSDG. The panel will provide oversight of the conduct of a periodic independent review of the implementation of the system-wide evaluation policy. The UNSDG SWEO serves as Secretary of the Independent Evaluation Advisory Panel.

100 The panel consists of up to five technical experts in the field of evaluation and development with: (i) extensive experience of evaluation of complex programmes and organizational performance to improve relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and coherence; and (ii) a good understanding of the United Nations development system, including United Nations reform at country, regional or global levels. Membership will reflect geographic and gender balance. Panel members are appointed for a two-year period and can be reappointed once.

X. Partnerships

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Partnerships with international evaluation and evidence bodies

101 Learning from UNSDG system-wide evaluations will be shared with key evaluation and evidence bodies including governments, international financial institutions, foundations, civil society, think tanks, academia and voluntary organizations for professional evaluation.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships to strengthen evaluation capacities

102 In line with General Assembly resolutions 70/1 (endorsing the 2030 Agenda), 69/237 (building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level) and 77/283 (strengthening voluntary national reviews through country-led evaluation) as well as the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review, the delivery of the UNSDG system-wide evaluation policy will be strengthened through multi-stakeholder partnerships with governments, voluntary organizations for professional evaluation, civil society organizations and academia, among others, in partnership with the United Nations Evaluation Group, as part of the efforts to also support the strengthening of evaluation capacities in the respective entities.

XI. Resources

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103 Adequate, predictable and sustainable resourcing of system-wide evaluation is fundamental to ensure independence and transparency of the function. Resourcing of system-wide evaluation should respect the principles of complementarity, subsidiarity and collaboration outlined above.

104 System-wide evaluation is financed through various funding sources for different types of evaluation activities. The budgets for system-wide evaluations should be consistent with ambition and in line with available resources.

105 The resources for the UNSDG SWEO are set out in the proposed programme plan for the SWEO. Any evaluations of joint programmes and initiatives conducted by the UNSDG SWEO are funded by extrabudgetary resources, which should be reflected in multi-donor trust fund budgets, in line with relevant United Nations rules and regulations.

106 Arrangements for financing Cooperation Framework evaluations are set out in the Cooperation Framework guidance.

107 System-wide evaluation management is highly specialized, and practitioners require specific technical, strategic and interpersonal skills. The job descriptions for specialist system-wide evaluation positions should meet the requirements of the UNEG professional competency framework. Consultants or other external evaluation specialists hired to conduct system-wide evaluations and for evaluation-related tasks will be expected to adhere to the highest ethical and technical standards.

108 System-wide evaluation will be expected to meet United Nations commitments to gender equity, geographical diversity and disability inclusion in its recruitment of external specialists and will use a mix of national, regional and international evaluators, including young and emerging evaluators.

XII. Risks

109 The relatively limited history and experience of system-wide evaluation poses risks to the delivery of the policy set out here; the system-wide evaluation policy is also subject to similar risks faced by other evaluation policies in the United Nations system. Given the collaboration and cooperation required to deliver and utilize system-wide evaluations, full delivery of the policy will require strong leadership and commitment from all stakeholders across the system assigned responsibilities in sections VIII and IX to foster appreciation of the value of system-wide evaluation. Mitigation measures to address these risks must be undertaken.

110 The risks are wide-ranging and evolve with time. Appropriate risk identification and mitigation measures will require ongoing monitoring and reassessment throughout the delivery of this policy. Some of the risks, at present, include managing the expectations of United Nations development system entities and Member States, limited use of evaluation evidence, the perception of high transaction costs of system-wide evaluations and resource constraints. Mitigation measures will be tailored to address the risks that may emerge.

XIII. Reporting

111 The Executive Director has the authority and discretion to submit evaluation reports at the appropriate level of decision-making, and the prerogative to share such reports directly with the Economic and Social Council.

112 The Executive Director prepares the Annual Report of the Executive Director of the UNSDG SWEO, which is submitted to the Secretary-General. All such reports shall be made available to ECOSOC, together with separate comments as the Secretary-General deems appropriate. The report includes activities and achievements, results of quality assessments, management response status, progress in implementing the system-wide evaluation policy and highlighting learning from system-wide evaluations at all levels.

XIV. Policy implementation and review

113 This policy will be operational on the date it is formally adopted by the UNSDG.

114 This policy will be complemented by the preparation of a UNSDG SWEO strategy. The system-wide evaluation function will be supported by guidance at all levels.

115 A periodic independent review of implementation of the policy will be carried out regularly and timed to respond as appropriate to priorities and institutional arrangements for United Nations coordination and collaboration set out in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review to inform necessary adjustments to guidance and policy implementation. This review will be conducted under the oversight of the Independent Evaluation Advisory Panel. The first review will be undertaken by 2030, preceding the next policy revision.

List of Acronyms

2030 Agenda	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SWEO	System-Wide Evaluation Office
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group