

**ECOSOC OAS Session 4: Overview of evaluation and independent assessment findings and management response: Discussion on the recent evaluations, findings and actions taken**

**Wednesday, 15 May 2024, 11.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. NY time**

**Intervention by panelist: Andrea Cook, Executive Director, UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office**

**[SLIDE 2 System-Wide Evaluation Office: Purpose]**

The UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office is responsible for the provision of independent evaluation evidence to strengthen oversight, transparency, accountability, with the objective to incentivize joint work and collective learning, and to conduct and advance system-wide evaluation evidence on the UN development systems contribution towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs.

It is an independent office, reporting directly to the Secretary-General with the prerogative to share reports directly with the ECOSOC, and the authority and discretion to submit reports at the appropriate level of decision-making in the UN development system. It conducts evaluations to complement those from other UN entities, focusing on system-wide activities that cannot be adequately addressed through existing accountability mechanisms.

**[SLIDE 3 System-Wide Evaluation Timeline 2017 – 2024]**

In 2019, the transition arrangement was established which led to completion of two evaluations which made forward-looking recommendations on strengthening aspects of United Nations development system.

The ***evaluation of the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund*** made recommendations on governance, management and project design. It highlighted the need for improved clarity in value proposition and synergy with other pooled funds, which is reflected in the Funding Compact to be presented tomorrow. Reporting against the Fund's management response notes that all recommendations are now implemented as the SDG Fund revised strategy has begun to roll out.

The ***evaluation of United Nations Development System Response to COVID-19*** made recommendations to strengthen aspects of reform, including greater integration of reform actions in entities' strategic plans. DCO's management response and UNSDG follow up includes:

- review of the management and accountability framework
- distribution and follow-up on the reform checklist for the governing bodies of UNSDG entities, and
- rollout of a common output indicator framework reporting on UN development system's collective contribution to the SDGs (used by 100 UN country teams)

In 2023, the Secretary-General appointed *me* as the first Executive Director of the System-Wide Evaluation Office, and *I have redoubled* efforts to consolidate the foundational elements of the Office.

#### **[SLIDE 4 System-Wide Evaluation Policy: Roadmap]**

The office is now fully operational with staff and resources largely in place to deliver the 2024 programme of work on which I briefed Member States in January. Top priority for 2024 is finalization of the system-wide evaluation policy in line with this roadmap.

Turning to ongoing and planned system wide evaluation activities:

- ***The evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative to End Violence Against Women and Girls*** will be finalised by September meeting accountability and learning needs related to gender based violence and development system reform.
- ***An evaluation of country programme derivation from Cooperation Frameworks and UNCT configuration*** will launch in mid-2024 for completion in 2025 to learn lessons from the implementation of the first generation of Cooperation Frameworks with recommendations for improvements to UN country-level development planning processes.
- Scoping work has started for an ***evaluation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy*** five years after its launch.

As we move into 2025, we will put in place a systematic and transparent approach for identifying and prioritizing system-wide issues to evaluate in consultation with UN entities and other UN oversight bodies.

#### **[SLIDE 5 UN system evaluations by SDG focus (2021-24)]**

I would like to close by talking about work we have recently started, which highlights the role of the office in promoting system-wide learning and use of evaluation evidence. Based on an initial rough mapping of the more than 4,000 evaluation reports published at entity-level since 2021, approximately a quarter are at regional/country-level, thematic, strategic, policy, and joint/pooled funding evaluations representing a rich, but somewhat fragmented, evidence base on UN system contributions to SDG progress and development system reform. For example, this body of evidence includes:

#### **[SLIDE 6 Country programme evaluations by entity and region (2021-24)]**

- **61 UNDAF/Cooperation Framework evaluations and 256 entity-specific country programme evaluations** that include findings on development system reform and QCPR priorities.

#### **[SLIDE 7 UN system syntheses of evaluation evidence by SDG (2021-24)]**

- Increasingly, UN evaluation offices produce syntheses of evaluations to promote strategic level use of evidence. A recent example is the interagency synthesis of evaluations on SDG 5.

#### **[SLIDE 8 Preliminary mapping of UN evaluations against 2020 QCPR priorities]**

This pilot cross-system initiative will create an interactive digital map of UN system evaluation evidence and produce short summaries related to 2020 QCPR priorities as learning resources for the 2024 QCPR process.

I hope that this demonstrates the potential added value of harnessing learning from across the development system.