



Final report

Formative Evaluation of the UNEP Medium-term Strategy 2014-2017

A review of UNEP programming processes and documents

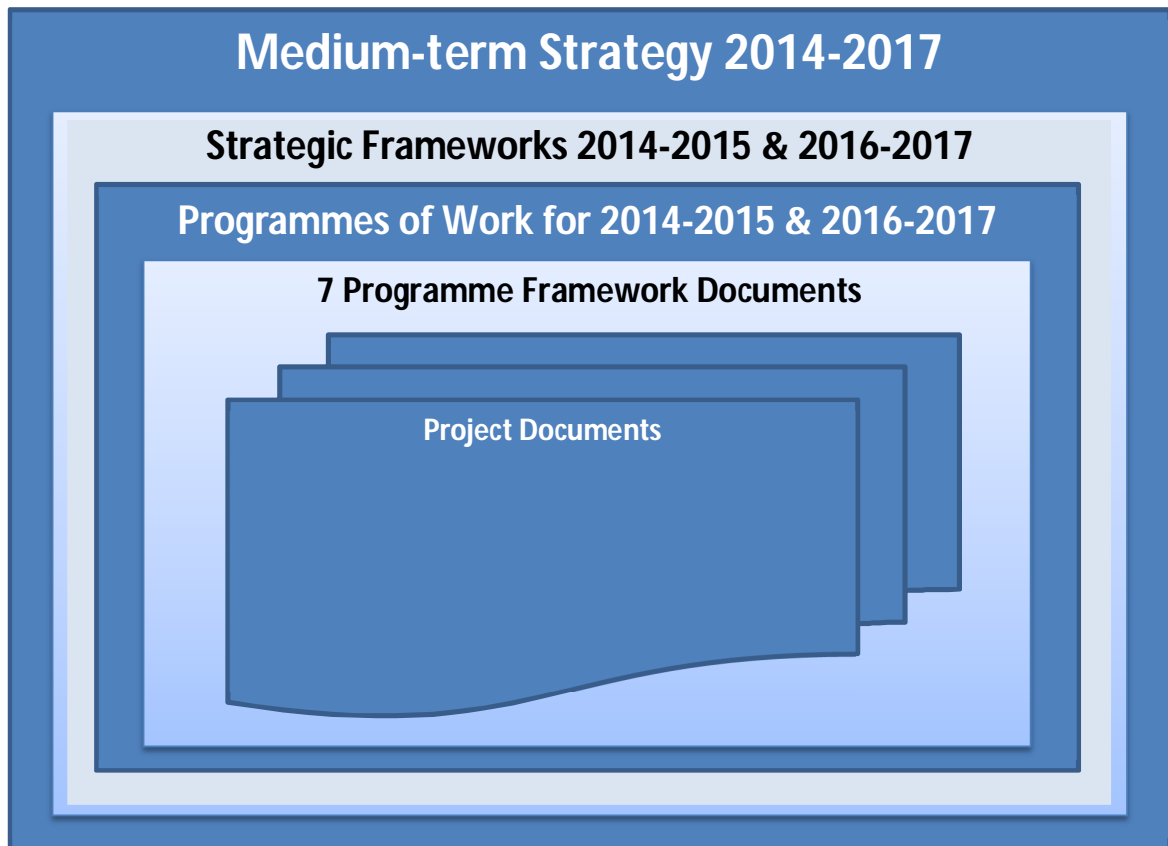


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List of acronyms & abbreviations

Acronym/Abbreviation	Meaning
CPC	UN Committee on Programme Coordination
CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
DCPI	Division of Communication and Public Information
DELCC	Division of Environmental Law and Conventions
DEPI	Division of Environmental Policy Implementation
DEWA	Division of Early Warning and Assessments
DTIE	Division of Technology, Industry and Economics
EA	Expected Accomplishments
EO	Evaluation Office
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MTS	Medium-term Strategy
OFO	Office for Operations and Corporate Services
PF	Programme Framework
PIMS	Programme Information and Management System
PoW	Programme of Work
ProDoc	Project Document
PRC	Project Review Committee
PSPT	Programme Strategy and Planning Team
QAS	Quality Assurance Section
RO	Regional Office
RSO	Regional Support Office
SF	Strategic Framework
SMT	Senior Management Team
SP	Sub-programme
SPC	Sub-programme Coordinator
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

"In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." - Dwight D. Eisenhower

Summary of findings and recommendations

INTRODUCTION

The Evaluation

- i. **The Scope of the evaluation** encompasses both the development process and the substance of the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2014-2017, and includes the Programmes of Work (PoWs) for 2014-2015 and 2016-2017, the Programme Framework (PF) documents for each Sub-programme, their associated project concepts and approved Project Documents (ProDocs).
- ii. **The evaluation objective** of this Formative Evaluation is to assess the appropriateness of the design of the MTS and its associated planning documents in time to inform the next MTS and PoW planning cycle. The evaluation is intended to provide findings, lessons learned and recommendations in the first biennium of the 2014-17 MTS, based on an analysis of the quality, coherence and causal relationships specified across UNEP's planning documents. It is intended to support decision-making by UNEP member states and Senior Management regarding future UNEP strategic planning processes. It also provides findings and recommendations to improve the project development process and the quality of ProDocs.
- iii. **The evaluation approach and methodology** is based on careful review of draft and approved versions of the MTS 2014-2017, the PoWs for 2014-2015 and 2016-2017, the seven PF documents for the MTS period and all ProDocs approved between January 2011 and May 2014¹ and a sample of ProDocs approved between May 2014 and January 2015. It also considered planning related guidance documents, presentations and correspondence by the Office for Operations, and minutes of Task Team, Senior Management Team (SMT) and UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) meetings. The evaluation team conducted interviews and held informal discussions with staff in the Office for Operations (OfO), the Programme Strategy and Planning Team (PSPT) and the Regional Support Office (RSO), Task Team members and Sub-programme Coordinators (SPCs).
- iv. **The main evaluation questions** are concerned with the relevance and internal coherence of UNEP's strategic and planning documents from the highest level (MTS) down to the lowest (ProDocs) for the period 2014-2017. They also address the effectiveness of the internal development processes of these documents.
- v. **Limitations to the evaluation** included the following: The timing of the evaluation was delayed. Programme Frameworks were not formally approved within UNEP until September 2014 and, even though the EO assessed the quality of draft PFs in May-June 2014, the final assessment could only take place after formal approval. Additionally, the large number of project documents prohibited a complete assessment of the causal linkages of all approved projects to the 2014-15 PoW results framework. A sampling approach was adopted.

Background

- vi. **UNEP** is the United Nations' designated entity for addressing environmental issues at the global and regional levels. The mandate and objectives of UNEP mainly emanate from the 1972 UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 2997 (XXVII) establishing UNEP and consecutive decisions and declarations. This authority and responsibility have been further enhanced by the outcome

¹ To gauge changes over time in the quality of project design, all projects approved since the last Formative Evaluation in 2011 were assessed. To gauge the quality of project design in the current MTS period the Evaluation Office also assessed the quality of a sample of project documents approved since the beginning of the current biennium.

document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), “*The future we want*” and subsequent GA Resolution 67/213 of 21 December 2012.

- vii. UNEP’s vision for 2014-2017, which defines the long-term ambition of UNEP, continues the vision presented in the MTS 2010-2013: “To be the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment”.
- viii. UNEP is structured into an Executive Office, five Divisions, six Regional Offices (ROs) and several corporate support offices and teams. UNEP also provides secretariat services to the Environment Management Group and hosts the Secretariats of nine Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). For the period 2014-2017, UNEP’s strategic focus is on seven **Sub-programmes (SPs)**. Each of these SPs has a Lead Division Director, but it is intended that the SPs are jointly implemented by UNEP Divisions and ROs. Each SP has a **Sub-programme Coordinator (SPC)** and will soon also have regional coordinators in the ROs. A **Programme Strategy and Planning Team (PSPT)** was created in the first quarter of 2014. For all but one Sub-programme, new SPCs were recruited in the course of 2014. They are based in Nairobi and report to the Head of Strategic Planning, PSPT, with a second reporting line to the lead Division Director of their sub-programme. Administratively, they are hosted in the corresponding Division.

1. Main planning documents

- ix. The **UNEP Medium-term Strategy (MTS)** is a strategic document approved by the UNEP Governing Council (the United Nations Environment Assembly – UNEA – of UNEP in future) that sets out UNEP’s vision, objectives, priorities and impact measures for a four-year period. It outlines the emerging issues to be taken into consideration in the MTS, reviews the programmatic and operational achievements of the preceding MTS and identifies lessons learned. An addendum to the document sets out the strategic focus for the MTS including SP objectives, Expected Accomplishments (EAs) and implementation strategies; the associated overall business strategy; a description of UNEP’s corporate risk management strategy; and arrangements for the evaluation of the MTS. The MTS 2014-2017 was prepared over the last quarter of 2011 and first half of 2012 during which period it was reviewed several times by the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). It was approved by the UNEP Governing Council in February 2013.
- x. The **Strategic Framework (SF)** is a planning document approved by the UNGA for a two-year period as part of the overall, biennial Strategic Framework of the United Nations. The SFs constitute the principal policy directive of the UN and should serve as the basis for programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. The SF 2014-2015 was prepared from early 2012 onwards and was approved by the UNGA in September 2012. Preparations for the SF 2016-2017 started in mid-2013 and it was approved in September 2014. Both SFs were reviewed by the UNEP CPR.
- xi. The **Biennial Programme of Work and Budget (PoW)** is UNEP’s actual work plan and budget document approved by UNEP’s Governing Council (UNEA for the PoW 2016-2017) and the UNGA’s Fifth Committee. Essentially, it builds on the MTS and SF, providing more detail by adding the human and financial resource estimates and outputs for UNEP corporate functions and each SP. It describes the overall orientation of UNEP, lessons learned, resource projections and policy making organs of UNEP. It also presents the objectives, strategy, results framework and resource requirements of executive management, the seven SPs and the programme support functions (including units of measure, baselines and targets for each EA).
- xii. The **PoW 2014-2015** was drafted during the second quarter of 2012 and, after review by several bodies (UNEP CPR, UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)

and UNEP Governing Council), approved by the UNGA's Fifth Committee in December 2013. Preparation of the **PoW 2016-2017** was initiated in the last quarter of 2013. The UNEA of UNEP approved the PoW 2016-2017 during its First session held from 23 to 27 June 2014, but it will still be reviewed by the ACABQ (June 2015), then approved by the UNGA Fifth Committee (December 2015) and finally, **a report** outlining any required changes relating to budget and programme will be provided to UNEA 2 (May 2016) for final approval.

- xiii. The **Programme Frameworks** (PFs) are internal UNEP planning documents that present the context and intervention logic of the sub-programme, explaining how projects – presented in the form of **project concepts** – are expected to deliver the PoW outputs, and how these outputs would contribute to outcomes and impact. For the MTS 2014-2017, it was decided to have one single PF for each SP. PFs are approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT).
- xiv. Projects are the “building blocks” that operationalize UNEP's PoW. The **Project Document** (ProDoc) specifies the project boundaries in terms of project duration and planned resources, and shows the logical flow of project elements towards a clearly specified objective. All UNEP Project Concepts are reviewed and approved by the SMT as part of a Programme Framework and the PoW. Fully developed ProDocs are reviewed by a Project Review Committee (PRC).

EVALUATION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- xv. The evaluation reaches a number of conclusions and makes a series of recommendations to further enhance UNEP planning documents and processes with the goal of improving organisational performance. Conscious that UNEP planning processes are already perceived as rather cumbersome and time-consuming, the proposed recommendations do not add additional requirements, procedures or processes but aim to strengthen those already in place. There are generally fewer recommendations for the higher level planning processes and documents (MTS and PoWs), whilst more opportunities for improvement have been identified at the Programme Framework and Project Document level. It is at these latter levels that the greatest potential for improvement coincides with the highest likelihood of translation into improved UNEP strategic focus and operational performance.

Table ES1. Focus and number of recommendations

Focus of recommendations	Number of recommendations
Planning processes	2
Contents of the MTS and PoW documents	3
Contents of Programme Framework documents	6
Contents of Project Concepts and Project Documents	7

Planning processes

- xvi. Since the Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011, UNEP has made considerable improvements in the strategic planning processes. Preparation processes for the MTS 2014-2017 and corresponding PoWs were highly consultative with prominent roles for Sub-programme Coordinators and focal points, involving a broad array of internal and external stakeholders and with an important role played by a Task Team of hand-picked staff across the organization that had a strategic perspective. However, because the preparation processes involved many review steps by multiple review bodies, they required very long preparation timelines. Additionally, it was a real challenge to formulate results statements and indicators that would be acceptable for all parties, often ending up in compromise.
- xvii. Due to tight deadlines in the PoW development process, the preparation of Programme Framework documents was postponed until after the PoW had been submitted to the UNEP GC,

and their approval came too late for them to be useful as strategic planning tools for the MTS 2014-2017 or PoW 2014-2015. However, the development of Theories of Change for the PFs did help to strengthen the causal relationships between results levels presented in the sub-programme-specific sections of the Programme of Work 2016-2017. There was also a sequencing problem in the preparation of the PFs whereby project identification took place before the programme logic (Theory of Change) for the Sub-programmes was developed. Thus, the programme logic presented in the PFs was not based on an in-depth problem analysis for the Sub-programme but was “reconstructed” from the EA and PoW Output statements in the MTS and PoW 2014-2015, and the predetermined project pipeline.

Recommendation 1: For the PFs to fulfil their full potential as a strategic planning tool on which higher level strategy (MTS, SF and PoW) can be based, they should be regarded as a ‘living document’. PFs should be regularly updated by SPCs –in consultation with Divisions and Regional Offices– between PoW planning cycles and re-approved by the SMT at the onset of each new planning cycle so that they can constitute the reference and basis for MTS and PoW development, and not the other way around. As such, the Theories of Change presented in the PFs should be based on an in-depth and up-to-date problem analysis for the SP. The EAs and PoW Outputs in the MTS and PoWs should be derived from these Theories of Change, which should also provide the basis for identification of new projects.

- xviii. Significant efforts have been made to strengthen project design and approval processes: involvement of Sub-programme Coordinators in the project design process, more systematic peer review of draft ProDocs by colleagues before submission to PRC, clearer guidelines in a revamped UNEP Programme Manual, an RBM training module on project design rolled out to the majority of programme staff, improved PRC guidelines and quality-at-entry criteria, the Project Preparation Proposal etc. However, because QAS provides feedback on early drafts of ProDocs and clears ProDocs before submission to PRC, there is a risk of bias stemming from conflicting roles. In addition, QAS lacks staff resources to provide systematic, in-depth guidance to all projects under preparation. The evaluation also found that PRC comments are not always taken on board and verification of the final ProDoc at approval could be more rigorous.

Recommendation 2: The project design support function and the project design quality assurance function, currently both within QAS, should be separated to avoid conflicting roles. QAS should focus on project quality assurance, providing an objective assessment of design quality at submission to PRC and at submission to the DED for signature. Project design support should be done jointly by SPCs and Branch Heads, who should also ensure that Project design documents are subject to in-depth peer review by SP staff or subject experts prior to submission to PRC. The quality rating of projects submitted to PRC and to the DED for final approval should also be used as a performance measure for Division Directors, Branch Heads and SPCs.

Contents of the MTS and PoW documents

- xix. The MTS 2014-2017 presents a clear vision and business plan for the organisation. While remaining broadly in line with MTS 2010-2013, it also builds on lessons learned from the previous period. The MTS document clearly explains how UNEP is expected to influence environmental decision-making, by leading efforts to achieve UN system-wide coherence and by fully utilizing strategic partnerships “*to catalyse transformative change and leverage impact*”. The MTS document demonstrates clearly how UNEP’s mandate, vision and strategic approach is relevant to the broader global context by linking the global environmental challenges to the areas of strategic focus of UNEP (the sub-programmes).
- xx. The sub-programme objectives are coherent with the vision and key goal statement for UNEP, most of them indicating a behavioural change among stakeholders in the form of a transition or

move towards some environmental aspect of sustainable development. The new MTS also presents service lines for UNEP which are directly derived from its comparative advantages, and along which many PoW Outputs would be forged during PoW development.

- xxi. The MTS declares that UNEP intends to promote “further integration of gender considerations in programme planning and delivery, entailing integration of a gender perspective into all phases of UNEP’s programme cycle, from planning to monitoring and evaluation.” Quite some progress has been made in integrating gender in the PoWs, including in an Executive Office EA (Geographical representation and gender balance of staff), a Programme Support indicator of achievement (percentage of UNEP projects that can demonstrate the integration of gender considerations in project implementation) and, increasingly, in sub-programme narratives and results.
- xxii. However, while UNEP’s ambition is to tackle global environmental challenges, the MTS does not present longer term objectives for environmental benefits and human well-being. UNEP’s vision is inward-looking, indicating what UNEP intends to keep doing, rather than what it wants to achieve.

Recommendation 3. UNEP’s vision statement in the MTS should not only describe where UNEP as an organisation wants to be in the long term future (10-20 years from now) but should also present how UNEP envisions the long term future of humankind and its living environment. In-line with this global vision, UNEP should set long-term environmental objectives for each sub-programme with indicators, baselines and long-term targets. The Environment under Review Sub-programme should play a stronger role in helping define higher-level indicators for UNEP and measuring the baselines for these indicators. Sub-programme strategy sections in the MTS should also present the changes that might need to happen (intermediate states) in between EAs and sub-programme objectives and summarize the external factors affecting achievement of these objectives.

- xxiii. A result focus and strengthened accountability are clearly evident in UNEP’s new strategic planning documents. The MTS proposes an adequate independent evaluation approach but does not mention any form of self-evaluation, which is currently lacking in UNEP, and monitoring arrangements are not detailed in the MTS and PoW documents. A larger portion of expected accomplishments and PoW outputs have been formulated at the right results level and PoW outputs are, overall, more logically connected to the EAs. In the PoW 2014-2015, sets of indicators of achievement for the EAs often lack specificity or miss part of the results captured in the EA. For the PoW 2016-2017, several indicators have been added to provide a fuller picture of the changes and improve the accuracy of measurement, but this will increase the monitoring and reporting burden.

Recommendation 4. Continued efforts to improve the clarity of results statements and the robustness of their associated indicators in the MTS/SFs/PoWs are required. EAs should be set at the immediate / direct outcome level, representing changes that can be directly caused by the use of UNEP outputs. EA milestones could be used to indicate progress towards EA achievement and would be easier to monitor than some of the EA indicators that are more appropriately assessed through evaluation. Regional targets for the EA indicators could be set to reflect where the geographical emphasis of UNEP’s support should be towards specific, expected results. PoW Outputs should be formulated as concrete types of products or services delivered by UNEP interventions, in line with the UNEP service lines.

- xxiv. Human and financial resource needs estimates are presented in the PoWs for all elements of the work plan. Human and financial resource needs were initially estimated by OfO for the corporate functions and the SPCs for each sub-programme, but the sub-programme allocations of the Environment Fund were re-negotiated by the Division Directors to avoid disruption of the existing resource allocation patterns. Resource allocation principles, criteria and priorities are

not described in the PoW (or in any of the other main planning documents). In addition, the PoWs do not clarify the mechanisms in place to ensure a transparent prioritization of extrabudgetary funding even though this was a recognized weakness from the previous MTS period. Within sub-programmes, there is no prioritization of outputs or EAs.

Recommendation 5. The PoWs should provide more clarity on the principles, criteria and priorities of resource allocation to sub-programmes and among divisions and offices in UNEP. The resource allocation process for Regular Budget, Environment Fund and Earmarked Contributions should be more transparent across the organisation.

Substantive findings and recommendations – Programme Framework documents

- xxv. The evaluation very much supports UNEP's decision to undertake more detailed planning efforts at the Programme Framework level. This level of detailed planning has been emphasised and strengthened since the last formative evaluation. The bulk of the planning effort for the PFs in the 2014-17 MTS preceded the appointment of the current Sub-programme Coordinators. Whilst this evaluation makes a number of suggestions to strengthen the Programme Frameworks, the Evaluation Office remain convinced that this level of planning combined with the new roles of SPCs and the PSPT has the potential to form an effective link between longer term strategic planning and the operational 'building blocks' of UNEP's substantive work – the projects.
- xxvi. The final, approved PF documents had been abridged and were missing much of the content proposed in the initial guidelines prepared by QAS. There is no comprehensive problem analysis to justify the strategic focus and the type of support (outputs) UNEP intends to provide in the PF documents. Each PF document presents a narrative of a Theory of Change for the sub-programme describing how UNEP PoW Outputs are expected to contribute to outcomes, and how these outcomes are expected to lead to impact on the environment and human well-being, passing through one or more intermediate states. While the cause-to-effect logic of those ToCs is usually sound, the narratives are often quite hard to follow, especially as these are rarely accompanied by a diagram depicting the main causal pathways. Most ToC narratives present the most important external factors (drivers and assumptions) affecting change along the causal pathways. However, PF documents do not present how drivers will be promoted or how risks will be managed.
- xxvii. PF documents list numerous partners but remain unclear on who the strategically most important partners are and how UNEP intends to engage with them. PF documents also mention the main target groups of the sub-programme, but their roles or how and why they would be affected by changes promoted by the sub-programme are not explained. ToC narratives are very vague about the stakeholders that can affect, or can be affected by, changes along the causal pathways.
- xxviii. There was good consultation with the regions during the development of the PFs but regional priorities are not mentioned in the final approved PF documents, with the exception of 'Environment under Review'. The PFs do not address the issue of coherence of projects at the regional level as promised in the MTS. The PF documents also lack a specific strategy or criteria for regional or country targeting of interventions.

Recommendation 6. The PFs should capture the ongoing strategic thinking of the SP through an up-to-date description of context and robust problem and stakeholder analyses to underpin the strategy of the SP presented in a clear Theory of Change. PFs should reflect changing external realities, regional priorities, new opportunities / issues, and progress in implementation. More precisely:

- PF documents should present a thorough problem analysis, explaining the causes and consequences of the key problems that the sub-programmes are expected to address. This problem and contextual analysis should be frequently updated in light of the evolving global and regional situation.
 - PF documents should systematically present a detailed ToC narrative supported by an accompanying diagram to enhance clarity. They should also present how drivers will be promoted and a credible risk management strategy for the most important assumptions with a moderate to high likelihood of proving false.
 - PF documents should provide more clarity on the roles of key stakeholders in the sub-programme, and how and why they would be affected by changes promoted by the sub-programme. The ToC narratives should also be clearer about the stakeholders that can affect, or can be affected by, changes along the causal pathways.
 - The PFs should indicate regional priorities for the sub-programme and also propose a specific strategy or criteria for regional or country targeting of interventions.
- xxix. PF documents recognize the importance of strategic partnerships to disseminate norms, tools and technologies. Several PFs propose projects that include pilots or that will be implemented in only a sample of countries, so that up-scaling becomes essential to achieve large scale impact. In most cases, an explanation is provided on how pilots will be up-scaled and what kind of regional or global process they intend to support. However, there is still much room for strengthening awareness-raising, knowledge transfer and up-scaling strategies in PF documents. On the other hand, financial sustainability of results, which is closely linked to up-scaling, is not explicitly addressed in PF documents though some sub-programmes foresee specific projects to develop financing mechanisms, which are expected to enhance the financial sustainability and up-scaling of results achieved by other projects in the sub-programme.

Recommendation 7. PF documents should present the sub-programme’s knowledge management and up-scaling strategy, which can be part of every individual project and/or conceived at the level of sub-programme components or the sub-programme as a whole. It is important to emphasize the sub-programme-wide or component-wide role of those projects that have technology transfer, knowledge management or up-scaling as their main objective, because they are essential to increase the scale of outcomes and impact within the sub-programme. Sustainability of results also needs to be explicitly addressed in PF documents as part of the sub-programme logic, in particular recognizing those projects that aim at developing financing mechanisms to support continuation of project results beyond UNEP’s interventions.

- xxx. PF documents present the overall project portfolio in a table, indicating the responsible division and the project manager in charge of the project, but they do not present a management and coordination structure either at the sub-programme level or at the project concept level. Neither do they articulate sub-programme-wide roles and responsibilities of UNEP divisions, branches and units. With only one exception (Eco-system Management), PF documents also do not describe an overall steering mechanism for the sub-programme.

Recommendation 8. PF documents should present the steering or coordination mechanism at the sub-programme level and articulate sub-programme-wide roles and responsibilities of UNEP divisions, branches and units, and Regional Offices.

- xxxi. The PF documents present a budget estimate (but no human resources estimate) for the overall portfolio for four years, indicating different sources of funding. However, they do not propose a credible resource mobilization strategy for their sub-programme.

Recommendation 9. PF documents should provide a robust Resource Mobilisation strategy for the sub-programme.

xxxii. None of the PF documents currently presents a gender dimension to the sub-programme.

Recommendation 10. PF documents should strengthen gender analysis and integration of gender considerations in sub-programme planning. More guidance seems to be necessary for the integration of meaningful gender components into PF documents.

xxxiii. The level of integration of the GEF portfolio in the PF documents is rather limited. In most cases, a simple list is provided in the annex of the PF document, with no other mention of the GEF portfolio within the document, for instance under the Programme Framework Logic where reference is made only to the “regular” projects.

Recommendation 11. For the GEF portfolio to be fully integrated in the sub-programmes, it needs to be justified within the sub-programme-wide problem analysis and be integrated in the sub-programme Theory of Change presented in the PF documents.

Substantive findings and recommendations – Project Concepts and Project Documents

xxxiv. Project concepts in Programme Framework documents often provide insufficient information to judge the strategic merit of the project in the broader strategic context of the sub-programme. This is especially true for new areas of work where the track record and strategic relevance of the intervention have yet to be established.

Recommendation 12. Project concepts should provide sufficient information to justify the strategic merit of the project in the broader strategic context of the sub-programme. For this, they would require an adequate project description, including the project outcome(s) and outputs, key drivers and assumptions, contribution to EA(s) and delivery of PoW outputs, and linkages with other projects. Projects should be linked to one main EA and not to a single PoW Output – it is indeed extremely rare that a project would deliver one service or product only.

xxxv. Many project concepts do not indicate the countries in which the project will be implemented. If they do, the choice of countries is rarely explained. Due to special attention by PRC, recent ProDocs identify the regional and country dimension of the project better and provide a clearer description of the expected role of Regional Offices, but still remain unclear on what and how resources will be channelled to the Regional Offices. Participating countries are often unconfirmed and sometimes even unknown, which adds a considerable amount of uncertainty to the project. Many critical aspects of project design, e.g. stakeholder and partnership analysis, sustainability, scale-up and replication strategy, safeguards etc. will remain general descriptions and lack accuracy if the location of the project is unknown.

Recommendation 13. While project concepts might keep open the selection of countries in which the project will be implemented, they still need to indicate clear selection criteria. At the Project Document stage, however, participating countries need to be confirmed before PRC approval, and the ProDocs need to be fully tailored to the specificities of the selected countries. In rare cases, e.g. in the Disasters and Conflicts Sub-programme where crises can often not be predicted, it might be acceptable that country identification is done during project inception or implementation, but clear criteria for selection of countries should be presented in the ProDoc. ProDocs should also be clearer on the role of Regional Offices in the project.

- xxxvi. ProDocs have much improved in the way they present the project context and often contain a convincing problem analysis. The use of ToC in ProDocs to explain the project logic has also improved and become more consistent since the requirement was introduced. However, most ProDocs limit themselves to presenting general groups of project partners and describe at a theoretical level how they fit into the project. In most ProDocs, identification of other project stakeholders is incomplete and stakeholder analysis is weak.

Recommendation 14. ProDocs should include a stakeholder analysis indicating how each of the most important stakeholders (individuals or groups) are expected/likely to affect, or to be affected by, the project and explain how this would happen in connection to the Theory of Change of the project. A thorough analysis of partners (i.e. the stakeholders with whom the project will establish a formal collaborative relationship) should be conducted before project submission to PRC. This would include an analysis (e.g. SWOT) of potential partners, followed by consultations, discussions on objectives, an agreement on priorities and, eventually, on the legal instruments with future partners. The ProDoc should present a table showing the confirmed partners and summarize their roles and responsibilities, and their strengths and weaknesses. They should also provide sufficient detail on specific legal agreements foreseen for the project and draft agreements should be shared with the PRC as part of the project approval package.

- xxxvii. Only a small minority of ProDocs describe how the project will mobilize resources during implementation, although there are signs of improvement in recent project documents. In ProDocs, the detailed budget table is often neglected. Budget tables follow different templates and often show deficiencies which are rarely picked up by PRC. The latest template doesn't show the estimated total cost for each project output.

Recommendation 15. ProDocs should provide more detail on the Resource Mobilisation strategy of the project. The budget template in ProDocs should show resource distribution over divisions and regional offices, and also show how unsecured funding is expected to be allocated between project outputs. A finance staff member should always be included in the PRC to review the coherence and feasibility of project budgets and their compliance with UNEP financial rules and regulations.

- xxxviii. Most ProDocs have a gender section and it is clear from the PRC reports that this chapter is given importance. However, this chapter often suffers from an over-generalized treatment and tends to present an overview of gender aspects relevant to the projects rather than detailing an analysis complemented by a strategy. At times, the gender goals proclaimed sound rather unconvincing, especially because gender-related activities are usually not to be found in the work plan or the detailed budget of the project.

Recommendation 16. ProDocs should strengthen gender analysis and integration of gender considerations in project planning. More guidance seems to be necessary for the integration of meaningful gender components into projects; global and regional projects in particular.

- xxxix. Most ProDocs do not present a credible knowledge management and up-scaling strategy. Sharing of project information, lessons learnt and best practice reports among UNEP offices and Secretariats through online platforms is the most common knowledge management approach proposed in ProDocs. These cover the first part of the knowledge management process definition of capturing, developing, and sharing knowledge but don't include the important aspects of storing, effectively using and maintaining knowledge.
- xl. Only a minority of ProDocs propose a mechanism to secure funding to maintain the benefits from the project's outcomes beyond the end date and few ProDocs include activities - and indicators - to advise stakeholders on how to apply for funding from other sources, to engage the private sector or on how to use returns, e.g. project revenues for financial sustainability.

Recommendation 17. ProDocs should always present a credible knowledge management and up-scaling strategy, and also explain how knowledge management and up-scaling will be continued after project completion. ProDocs also need to propose credible mechanisms to secure funding to sustain results after the projects' end date.

- xli. During the period 2010-2014, the ProDoc template has been continuously revised with several improvements, but still has a number of weaknesses that need to be addressed. While efforts to streamline UNEP templates with donor templates have been made, it is not always clear to project developers on what is needed for PRC in the case of projects that are being funded by entities that have their own templates.

Recommendation 18. The ProDoc template should be modified as follows: Project justification, problem analysis and problem relevance should be presented together to avoid repetitions; relevance and implementation arrangements should be presented separately; and the resource mobilisation strategy should be presented separately from the Project Sustainability and Replicability section. It is also good practice to present the main steps of the project design *process* in an annex, including which stakeholders were consulted and how, locations visited, internal peer reviewers and all other information that would show the efforts made to ensure sufficient research, analysis and consultations during the project design process. Lastly, there is a need for enhanced clarity and guidance to project developers on what is needed for PRC in the case of projects that are being funded by entities that have their own templates.

MAIN REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

1. In February 2011, the UNEP Governing Council (GC/26) requested UNEP to prepare, for its twenty-seventh session in February 2013, a Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for the period 2014–2017 with a vision, objectives, priorities, impact measures and a mechanism for review by Governments; and a results-oriented and streamlined Programme of Work (PoW) and Budget for the biennium 2014–2015. UNEP is also required to prepare a Strategic Framework (SF) for each biennium, as part of the overall, biennial Strategic Framework of the United Nations. In addition, UNEP internally decided to prepare Programme Frameworks (PFs) for each sub-programme, which are meant to present the sub-programme implementation strategy and identify the projects (in the shape of project concepts) that UNEP intends to implement in order to achieve the results in a given sub-programme under the MTS period. Each project concept is expected to be developed into a complete Project Document (ProDocs) for internal approval in UNEP.

1.1 Scope of the Evaluation

2. The scope of this evaluation encompasses both the development process and the substance of the UNEP MTS 2014-17, and includes the SFs and PoWs for 2014-2015 and 2016-2017, the PF documents for each sub-programme and their associated project concepts and approved ProDocs.

1.2 Evaluation Objectives

3. The primary objective of this Formative Evaluation is to assess the appropriateness of design of the MTS and its associated planning documents in time to inform the next MTS and PoW planning cycle. The evaluation is intended to provide findings, lessons learned and recommendations early in the first biennium of the 2014-17 MTS, based on an analysis of the quality, coherence and causal relationships specified across UNEP's planning documents. It is intended to support decision making by UNEP member states and Senior Management regarding future UNEP strategic planning processes. It also provides findings and recommendations to improve the project development process and the quality of ProDocs.
4. The Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011 examined the quality of project proposals, their causal linkages to the results specified in higher level planning documents and made a number of suggestions and recommendations for improvements. The evaluation was welcomed by UNEP senior management and there has been considerable documented use of its findings. This evaluation aims to repeat the earlier analysis using current programming documents and re-examine the major findings of the earlier study to record any progress made and to identify further opportunities to improve the results orientation, coherence and synergies across activities within UNEP's Programme of Work.

1.3 Evaluation Approach and Methodology

5. The evaluation is largely based on a desk review and analysis of key documentation complemented by formal interviews and informal discussions:
6. Document Review: The evaluation team carefully reviewed draft and approved versions of the MTS 2014-2017, the SFs and PoWs for 2014-2015 and 2016-2017, the seven Programme

Framework documents for the MTS period and a representative sample of ProDocs approved between January 2011 and January 2015. It also consulted the Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011, several roadmap and guidance documents, presentations and correspondence prepared by the Office for Operations (OfO), and the minutes of Task Team, Senior Management Team (SMT) and UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) meetings.

7. Interviews and informal discussion: The evaluation team conducted interviews and held informal discussions with staff in the Office for Operations, the Programme Strategy and Planning Team and the Regional Support Office, Task Team members and sub-programme coordinators.

1.4 Main Evaluation Questions

8. The evaluation is mainly concerned with the relevance and internal coherence of UNEP's strategic and planning documents from the highest level (MTS) down to the lowest (ProDocs) for the period 2014-2017. It also addresses the effectiveness of the internal development processes of these documents. For each strategy or planning document / process and document, a separate assessment rubric was used (see Annex VI). The main questions across the different processes and documents were:

- a. Process questions

1. What were the key steps in the development and approval process of the strategy/planning document? Was the sequence logical? Was the process effective?
2. What were the main inputs to the document? Were these adequate/appropriate? How inclusive was the process?

- b. Questions regarding the contents of the strategic/planning document

3. How well does the strategy/planning document incorporate recommendations from previous evaluations? How well does the document incorporate lessons from the implementation of previous cycles? How well was the outcome of the Rio +20 Summit integrated in the strategy/planning document?
4. How well does the document explain the intervention logic, including causal linkages, drivers and assumptions and stakeholder roles?
5. How well is UNEP's business model articulated in the document? How coherent with each other are the different elements of the business model?
6. How well is UNEP's role and position in the UN system reflected in the document?
7. How responsive is the strategy/planning document to regional and national priorities? How much room does it leave to adjust objectives and strategy to regional and national specificities?
8. How is RBM built into the document? How well are management, supervision, monitoring and evaluation arrangements articulated in the document?
9. How much room is there for responding to changing conditions or emerging issues?
10. How well are the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and the GEF portfolio integrated in the strategy/planning document?

1.5 Limitations to the Evaluation

9. The evaluation was delayed because PFs were not formally approved until September 2014 and, even though the EO assessed the quality of the draft PFs in May-June 2014, their final assessment could only take place after such approval.

10. The large number of project documents prohibited the assessment of the causal linkages of ALL approved projects to the UNEP results framework. A sampling approach was adopted.

2 EVALUATION BACKGROUND

2.1 The United Nations Environment Programme

11. UNEP is the United Nations' designated entity for addressing environmental issues at the global and regional levels. Its core objectives are to serve as an authoritative advocate for the global environment, to support governments in setting the global environmental agenda, and to promote the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the UN system. The mandate and objectives of UNEP mainly emanate from the 1972 UNGA Resolution 2997 (XXVII) establishing UNEP and consecutive decisions and declarations. This authority and responsibility have been further enhanced by the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), "The future we want" and subsequent GA Resolution 67/213 of 21 December 2012, which decided that UNEP should be strengthened and upgraded, and which established universal membership of UNEP's governing body, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of UNEP. The UNEA of UNEP met for the first time in June 2014 in Nairobi.
12. UNEP's vision for 2014-2017, which defines the long-term ambition of UNEP, continues the vision presented in the MTS 2010-2013: To be the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, that promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and that serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.
13. The vision statement comprises four interrelated areas to support partners and countries alike:
 1. Keeping the world environmental situation under review;
 2. Providing policy advice and early warning information, based upon sound science and assessments;
 3. Catalysing and promoting international cooperation and action including strengthening technical support and capacity in line with country needs and priorities; and
 4. Facilitating the development, implementation and evolution of laws, norms and standards and developing coherent inter-linkages among multilateral environmental agreements.
14. UNEP recognizes the intrinsic value of the environment in serving the economic and social pillars of sustainable development. UNEP also recognizes that ecosystem health underpins human well-being, and thus poverty eradication, and that the future of humanity is inextricably linked to the planet's life support systems, through the provision of environmental goods and services. These factors support UNEP's vision and are explicitly recognized in UNEP's goal for the MTS 2014-2017: *To catalyze a transition towards low carbon, resource efficient and equitable development based on the protection and sustainable use of ecosystem services, coherent environmental governance and the reduction of environmental risks for the well-being of current and future generations and the attainment of global environmental goals in order to contribute to sustainable development.*
15. The six areas of work – called service lines in the MTS 2014-2017 – within UNEP's mandate also constitute its comparative advantage. They are:

- Leveraging sound science for policy and decision-making;
- Providing technical assistance for environmental law, policy and planning;
- Promoting UN-system wide coherence on environmental matters;
- Raising awareness and outreach;
- Testing innovative solutions and technologies and upscaling results through partnerships; and
- Facilitating access to funding for the environment.

16. To fulfil its mandate, UNEP is structured into an Executive Office, five Divisions, six Regional Offices (ROs) and several corporate support offices and teams. UNEP also hosts the secretariats of the Environment Management Group and nine Multilateral Environmental Agreements. For the period 2014-2017, UNEP’s strategic focus is on seven sub-programmes. Each of these sub-programmes has a Lead Division Director, but it is intended that they are jointly implemented by all UNEP Divisions and Regional Offices (Figure 1).

Figure 1. UNEP sub-programmes and Divisions

Division of Communication and Public Information (DCPI)	Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI)	Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA)	Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE)	Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELIC)
Climate Change (CC)				
Disasters and Conflicts (DC)				
Ecosystem Management (EM)				
Environmental Governance (EG)				
Chemicals and Waste (CW)				
Resource Efficiency (RE)				
Environment under Review (EuR)				

17.

18. Each sub-programme has a **Sub-programme Coordinator** (SPC) and is soon expected to have regional coordinators in the Regional Offices. The SPCs initially reported to the Sub-programme’s Lead Division Director and were often co-located with the Division or main executing Branch of the sub-programme. The SPC position was very heterogeneous during the MTS 2010-2013: varying from a full-time P5 staff supported by a full-time P3 staff member (CC) to a single P3/P4 staff who assumed several other responsibilities (Environmental Governance - EG). There was also a high turn-over of SPCs between 2010 and 2015 with at least 2 and up to 4 different SPCs or acting SPCs for the same sub-programme over the 5-year period. A **Programme Strategy and Planning Team** (PSPT) was created in the first quarter of 2014. New SPCs were recruited on full-time P5 positions in the course of 2014 for all but the Climate Change Sub-programme,. They are based in Nairobi and report to the Head of Strategic Planning, PSPT, with a second reporting line to the Lead Division Director. Administratively, they are hosted and funded by the divisions.

2.2 Strategic programming and planning processes and documents

19. The **UNEP Medium-term Strategy** is a strategic document approved by the UNEP Governing Council (the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP in future) that sets out UNEP's vision, objectives, priorities and impact measures for a four-year period. It outlines the emerging issues to be taken into consideration in the MTS, reviews the programmatic and operational achievements of the preceding MTS and identifies lessons learned. An addendum to the document sets out the strategic focus for the MTS including sub-programme objectives, Expected Accomplishments (EAs) and implementation strategies; the associated overall business strategy; a description of UNEP's corporate risk management strategy; and arrangements for the evaluation of the MTS.
20. The MTS 2014-2017 was prepared over the last quarter of 2011 and first half of 2012 during which period it was reviewed several times by the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). It was approved by the UNEP Governing Council in February 2013.
21. The **Strategic Framework** is a planning document approved by the UNGA for a two-year period as part of the overall, biennial Strategic Framework of the United Nations under which it is presented as Programme 11: Environment. The SFs constitute the principal policy directive of the UN and should serve as the basis for programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. The SF for UNEP presents the overall orientation of the organization for the biennium; essentially the same information for each sub-programme as presented in the MTS except that indicators of achievement are added for the EAs; and the legislative mandates for UNEP and its sub-programmes.
22. The SF 2014-2015 was prepared from early 2012 onwards and was approved by the UNGA in September 2012 as part of the overall UN Strategic Framework 2014-2015. Preparations for the SF 2016-2017 started mid-2013 and it was approved in September 2014. Both SFs were reviewed by the UNEP CPR.
23. The **Biennial Programme of Work and Budget** is UNEP's actual work plan and budget document approved by UNEP's Governing Council (the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP for the PoW 2016-2017) and the UNGA's Fifth Committee. Essentially, it builds on the MTS and SF, providing more detail by adding the human and financial resource estimates and outputs for UNEP corporate functions and each sub-programme. It describes the overall orientation of UNEP, lessons learned, resource projections and policy making organs of UNEP. It also presents the objectives, strategy, results framework and resource requirements of executive management, the seven sub-programmes and the programme support functions (including units of measure, baselines and targets for each EA).
24. The PoW 2014-2015 was drafted during the second quarter of 2012 and, after review by several bodies (UNEP CPR, UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and UNEP Governing Council), approved by the UNGA's Fifth Committee in December 2013. Preparation of the PoW 2016-2017 was initiated in the last quarter of 2013. The UNEA approved the PoW 2016-2017 during its First session held from 23 to 27 June 2014, but it must still be reviewed by the ACABQ in June 2015, then approved by the UNGA's Fifth Committee (December 2015), and, finally, a report outlining any required changes relating to budget and programme will be provided to UNEA 2 (May 2016) for final approval. Table 1 below shows the key milestones in the review and approval process of the MTS, Strategic Framework and PoW.

Table 1. External review and approval process of the MTS, Strategic Framework and PoW

	MTS 2014-2017	Strategic Frameworks	Programmes of Work

Nov 2011	Consultations with the CPR on evaluation findings and lessons learned over the current MTS period, implications for MTS/PoW roadmap		
Feb 2012	CPR review of draft MTS 2014-2017	CPR review of the Strategic Framework 2014-2015	
28 Feb 2012		Submission of the Strategic Framework 2014-2015 to the UN CPC	
22 May 2012	CPR review of revised MTS		CPR review of budget outline for PoW
11 Jun 2012		CPC review of Strategic Framework 2014-2015	
Early Jul 2012			SMT review of draft PoW 2014-2015
16 Jul 2012			Submission of first draft PoW 2014-2015 to CPR
Jul 2012	CPR review of implications of Rio+20 on the MTS	CPR review of implications of Rio+20 on the Strategic Framework 2014-2015	CPR review of implications of Rio+20 on the PoW
21, 23, 28 Aug 2012			1 st round of CPR review of PoW 2014-2015
11, 13 Sep 2012			2 nd round of CPR review of the PoW 2014-2015
18 Sep 2012		GA approval of UN Strategic Framework 2014-2015 including UNEP's SF	
2 Oct 2012			3 rd round of CPR review of the PoW 2014-2015
Oct 2012			Submission of PoW 2014-2015 to ACABQ
Nov 2012			ACABQ review of PoW 2014-2015
13 Nov 2012			Submission of PoW 2014-2015 to Governing Council
8-9 Jan 2013	Submission of MTS 2014-2017 to Governing Council		
Feb 2013	UNEP Governing Council review of MTS 2014-2017		UNEP Governing Council review of PoW 2014-2015
May 2013			ACABQ review of the regular budget component of the PoW 2014-2015
Jun 2013		CPC review of revision to the Strategic Framework 2014-2015	
Dec 2013			UNGA Fifth Committee review & approval of PoWs of the agencies under the UN Secretariat including UNEP's PoW 2014-2015
3 Mar 2014		Strategic Framework 2016-2017 submitted to UNGA	
20 Mar 2014			CPR review of PoW 2016-2017
12 Apr 2014			PoW submitted to UNEA for review
June 2014		CPC review of Strategic Framework 2016-2017	UNEA approval of PoW 2016-2017
16 Sep 2014		69 th session of the UNGA – approval of Strategic Framework 2016-2017	
June 2015			ACABQ review of PoW 2016-2017
Dec 2015			UNGA Fifth Committee review & approval of PoW 2016-2017
May 2016			UNEA approval of revisions to the PoW 2016-2017

25.

26. The **Programme Frameworks** are planning documents that identify the projects (in the shape of project concepts) that UNEP intends to develop to achieve the results in a given sub-programme within the MTS. For the MTS 2014-2017, it was decided to have one single PF for each sub-

programme (as opposed to the variable approach with one per EA, per set of related EAs or per sub-programme as was the case under the MTS 2010-2013). PFs present the intervention logic of the sub-programme (Theory of Change²), explaining how projects are expected to deliver the PoW outputs, and how these outputs would contribute to outcomes and impact. PFs are internal UNEP documents approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT). They replace the Programme Approval Group process: once a PF has been approved, Project Managers can develop the individual projects, requiring no further concept approval³. It took practically the whole of 2013 to prepare the PFs for all sub-programmes, and three submissions to SMT before they were finally approved in September 2014 – nine months into the 2014-2015 biennium.

27. Projects are the “building blocks” that operationalize UNEP’s PoW. The **Project Document** specifies the project boundaries in terms of project duration and planned resources, and shows the logical flow of project elements towards a clearly specified objective. The ProDoc includes a project overview and justification for the proposed intervention; the project objectives and approach, including a Theory of Change¹¹ (ToC) for the project; relationships with past and ongoing projects; a stakeholder analysis; a delivery plan and budget; the project management and operational structure; a risk analysis; and monitoring, reporting and evaluation arrangements.
28. All UNEP Project Concepts are reviewed and approved by the SMT as part of a Programme Framework and the PoW. Fully developed ProDocs are reviewed by a Project Review Committee (PRC). The Sub-programme Coordinators (SPCs) are expected to coordinate the steps involved in getting a project from concept to approved ProDoc, according to the following steps:
 - **Step 1** - Project design: A project is designed in consultation with Regional Offices and relevant Divisions, using the ProDoc template provided by QAS.
 - **Step 2** - Peer Review by UNEP colleague(s): This is a recommended practice.
 - **Step 3** - Submission to the Division Director of the Accountable Division for review and sign-off.
 - **Step 4** - Submission to the SPC for review. In the case of GEF-funded projects, the GEF Portfolio Manager reviews first and recommends to the Lead Division Director.
 - **Step 5** - Submission to the Quality Assurance Section (QAS) / PRC or GEF PRC - Once the SPC is satisfied with the quality of the ProDoc s/he submits it to QAS for review and submission to the PRC. As the secretary of the PRC, QAS ensures that the ProDoc meets the minimum quality requirements and then organizes the PRC.
 - **Step 6** - Review by PRC: The PRC reviews projects based on standard criteria and decides whether the project is recommended for approval by the DED or needs to be revised.
 - **Step 7** - Revision by Project Manager (PM): The PM revises the ProDoc as needed based on the comments received, and submits it back to the SPC / GEF Portfolio Manager who will then submit the revised ProDoc to QAS. QAS will check the revised document and decide whether an additional PRC review is necessary.
 - **Step 8** - Submission to the Deputy Executive Director (DED): After DED signature the project starts officially. In the case of GEF financed projects, the GEF Coordination Office submits the PRC-endorsed document to the GEF for approval. Once it is approved, the Task Manager is

² A **Theory of Change** (ToC) of a project or programme depicts the anticipated causal pathways from outputs (products and services delivered by the programme) through outcomes (changes resulting from the use made by key stakeholders of programme outputs) towards impact (long term changes in environmental benefits and living conditions). A ToC further defines the external factors that influence change along the major pathways; i.e. factors that affect whether one result can lead to the next. These external factors are either drivers (when the programme has a certain level of control) or assumptions (when the programme has no control). A ToC should also clearly identify the main stakeholders involved in the change processes.

³ Concepts not included in a PF would be reviewed in a separate project review process.

responsible for shepherding the project through the steps necessary for DED and Director sign-off according to their delegated authorities.

3 EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 Assessment of the Medium-term Strategy and Programme of Work development process

29. **UNEP's Medium Term Strategy 2014-2017** preparation process, which mostly took place in the last quarter of 2011 and first half of 2012, was coordinated by the Office for Operations (OfO). Inputs to the draft MTS were provided by the Division for Early Warning and Assessment - DEWA (through a priority analysis on global environmental trends and problem hotspots), the Division for Regional Cooperation - DRC⁴ (regional priority and partner analysis) and the Division for Environment Law and Conventions - DELC (MEA priority analysis). Sub-programme Coordinators provided lessons learned, recommendations and priorities relating to their sub-programme. OfO reviewed the achievements from operations management covering human resources, information technology, finance, administration and procurement, resource mobilization, and results based management. The UNEP Senior Management Team (SMT) provided overall guidance and feedback during the process.
30. A **Task Team on the MTS/PoW** was established to brainstorm on the issues required for OfO to coordinate the development of the MTS 2014-2017, Strategic Framework and Programme of Work (PoW) for 2014-2015. The Task Team served as an important resource for the SMT in its deliberations of these strategic planning documents. It was composed of hand-picked UNEP staff from a variety of divisions and offices who were thought to be able to contribute to discussions on UNEP strategy. The Task Team reviewed the priority analyses conducted by DEWA, DRC, DELC and also the lessons learned, recommendations and priorities relating to each sub-programme prepared by the SPCs. Drawing upon the expertise of SPCs, it also considered the level of ambition in terms of Expected Accomplishments (EAs), indicators and means of measurement including external factors that could affect UNEP's delivery of Expected Accomplishments. The Task Team further brainstormed on the lessons learned from the MTS 2010-2013 and discussed what kind of corporate strategy/business model should underpin UNEP's work for the MTS 2014-2017 period. For this, it was expected to draw upon findings from programme performance reviews, audits and evaluations. The Task Team also reviewed the output from OfO on the achievements to date from operations management, including a review of the budgeting methodology to ensure strategic budgeting and alignment of human and financial resources with programme priorities. The aim was to ensure that UNEP planned its Expected Accomplishments with a solid grasp of resources required, ensured an appropriate complementarity between the Regular Budget, the Environment Fund and Extra-budgetary resources, and improved predictability of funding. The Task Team presented its recommendations to the SMT on 19 December 2011.
31. OfO prepared a zero draft of the MTS by the end of 2011, and circulated it to SPCs to further refine the Sub-programme objectives, strategies, expected accomplishments and indicators (the latter not being presented in the MTS but in the Strategic Framework 2014-2015), in consultation with Sub-programme focal points which had been appointed in the UNEP Divisions, Regional Offices and Collaborating Centres. The detailed content of the MTS thus came from OfO and the SPCs working in consultation with Divisions, while the Task Team provided some of

⁴ This division was dissolved in October 2013.

the initial thinking and feedback along the drafting process to support the work of SPCs and Divisions. The draft MTS was then circulated for comments to UNEP Major Groups, reviewed again by the Task Team and submitted to SMT for review. The draft MTS was reviewed for the first time by the CPR in February 2012. The document therefore went through several reviews and revisions in the course of a rather short period of time.

32. The **Strategic Framework 2014-2015** for UNEP was largely based on the MTS 2014-2017, but also presented indicators for the EAs and, for each sub-programme, an additional (one to one-and-a-half page long) narrative of the implementation strategy for each sub-programme. These narratives were prepared by the SPCs based on consultations with Sub-programme focal points in the Divisions and ROs. To meet UN requirements, UNEP had to submit a draft SF 2014-2015 to the UN Committee on Programme and Coordination (CPC) by end February 2012 for review in June 2012. Prior to that, the SF was reviewed by the Task Team, SMT and the CPR.
33. The Rio +20 Outcome Document and consecutive UNGA Resolutions 66/288 and 67/213 are mentioned in the final MTS document and SF but did not prompt any revisions largely because its content had already been anticipated and incorporated in the documents. OfO verified alignment of the MTS with the UNGA Resolutions and made a presentation on its findings to the CPR. It was agreed that no fundamental changes to the MTS were required and resubmission of the document to the CPC in 2013 was unnecessary.
34. The **Biennial Programme of Work and Budget 2014-2015** was prepared mainly by OfO with substantive inputs from the SPCs on PoW Outputs, means of measurement and targets for the EA indicators, external factors affecting sub-programme delivery and budget requirements. OfO prepared a budget for corporate costs in consultation with Divisions and drafted the sections on Executive Direction (covering the overall direction of the organization and encompassing the Executive Office and evaluation), Programme Support (covering the work of OfO), and Policy Making Organs (covering the work of UNEP's engagement with its governing bodies and covering the work of the Secretariat of Governing Bodies).
35. OfO also conducted a mapping exercise of human and financial resources vs. programmatic needs involving the SPCs. For this, the SPCs prepared a comprehensive budget and human resource requirements proposal for their Sub-programme for 2014-2015, aligning core staff and activity funds across relevant Divisions and Regional Offices with specific Sub-programme outputs. The proposals were based on a common identification of needs and entailed significant consultation with the UNEP branches and units involved in SP implementation. However, the general perception is that these detailed proposals were hardly taken into account in the final allocation of core resources to the respective Divisions and Regional Office. This allocation was the result of negotiations within the Senior Management Team; the SPCs were not party to the discussions. As a result, there is a disconnect between actual resource allocations and resource requirements proposals made for all Sub-programmes.
36. The SPCs consulted with their Sub-programme Focal Points in the Divisions, Regional Offices and UNEP Collaborating Centres (who, in turn, consulted with their colleagues within the division, RO or Centre) to identify the PoW Outputs and budget requirements. DELC and DRC solicited comments on the draft PoW from MEAs and Major Groups, respectively. The UNEP SMT reviewed the draft PoW twice in the course of July 2012, prior to its submission to CPR. The PoW was reviewed by the CPR in August/September 2012, and further by the ACABQ in late 2012 and the UNEP Governing Council in February 2013.
37. The UNEP GC decided, in February 2013, that a subcommittee of the CPR was to meet annually to review the MTS and PoW in a manner coherent with the budgetary cycle of the UN, and to

endorse the draft MTS and PoW for the UNEA's approval. The UNEA was to meet in even years, when it would approve the next PoW (every two years and for the first time in June 2014) and the next MTS (every four years and for the first time in May 2016).

38. The **SF 2016-2017** was prepared between May and September 2013 by OfO in collaboration with the SPCs and in consultation with the UNEP CPR. It is largely based on the MTS 2014-2017 and SF 2014-2015. The main changes compared to the previous SF are the EA indicators; upon request by the UNEP CPR, many new indicators were introduced, the majority of existing ones were modified and several were abandoned to better show progress on the EAs, including in more qualitative terms. One disadvantage of changing indicators from one biennium to another is that the possibility to show progress on indicators over longer periods of time is compromised. In addition, for the majority of the new indicators, there is no baseline information available which makes measuring progress in relative terms (e.g. percentage increases) impossible.
39. Preparation of the **PoW 2016-2017** was initiated in the last quarter of 2013 and the plan was drafted, as the document itself states, "primarily by making incremental changes to the programme for the biennium 2014-2015". OfO led the process in collaboration with the SPCs. Draft elements of the PoW 2016-2017 including the EA indicator targets, the PoW Outputs and UNEP's executive management and operations strategy, were discussed with the CPR as early as October 2013. The draft PoW was reviewed several times by the UNEP CPR between December 2013 and March 2014 i.e. about half a year earlier than usual so that it could be submitted to the UNEA in April 2014, two months prior to the UNEA meeting in June. It was also shared with MEA Secretariats through DELC and Major Groups through the Secretariat of Governing Bodies and Stakeholders (SGBS - created in October 2013 after DRC was dismantled). The UNEA approved the PoW 2016-2017 during its First session held from 23 to 27 June 2014, but it will still be reviewed by the ACABQ (June 2015), then approved by the UNGA's Fifth Committee (December 2015) and, finally, a report outlining any required changes relating to budget and programme will be provided to UNEA 2 (May 2016) for final approval.
40. UNEP's OfO and SPCs have succeeded in facilitating all these highly consultative planning processes that operate in parallel and represent a considerable workload and coordination challenge. The recent creation of the PSPT and recruitment of senior, full-time, SPCs should facilitate future programming processes.
41. In the course of SF and PoW preparation, SPCs received numerous - and sometimes contradictory - contributions, suggestions and requests for contents and modifications of the contents from a highly diverse group of persons and bodies consulted (including OfO, Sub-programme Focal Points, SMT, PRC, MEAs, Major Groups, the UN CPC, the UN ACABQ and the UNGA Fifth Committee). With so many interests to consider, it was a real challenge to formulate EA indicators, units of measure and targets, and PoW Outputs that would be acceptable for all parties. The end result is a sub-optimal compromise on results statements and indicators, often quite far removed from best practice in Results Based Management. The language used in results statements and indicators tends to be imprecise and sometimes convoluted as the result of an attempt to accommodate so many interests.
42. In addition to the UNEP CPR, Governing Council and UNEA, three further UN bodies external to UNEP were involved in reviewing and clearing the SFs and PoWs, some of which twice: the UN Committee on Programme and Coordination (CPC), the ACABQ, and the UNGA's Fifth Committee. This in part explains the very long lead time – 23 months – between the first CPR review of the draft MTS and its actual period of implementation. The lead time between CPR review of the first draft PoWs and their actual implementation period has increased from 18 to 22 months due to the new requirement of submitting the PoW to UNEA for approval. In practice,

this could mean that the CPR will be asked to review the first draft MTS 2018-2021, the Strategic Framework 2018-2019 and the PoW 2018-2019 simultaneously early 2016 so that both the MTS 2018-2021 and the PoW 2018-2019 can be approved by UNEA in June 2016. Planning for the MTS 2018-2021 has already been initiated within UNEP and in consultation with the CPR.

43. Another important point about the external review and approval processes is that inconsistencies crept into the different planning documents. For example, after PoW approval by the UNEP GC in February 2013, the UN CPC still requested changes in the Strategic Framework for the same biennium after their review in June 2013. As a result, EA statements and indicators in the SF and the PoW do not entirely correspond.

3.2 Review of the MTS 2014-2017 document

3.2.1 Main inputs to the MTS 2014-2017

44. Inputs to the MTS came from OfO and SPCs, based on internal consultations (Divisions and ROs) and consultations with partners (mostly through ROs), MEAs (through DELC) and Collaborating Centres. Both the foresight process and GEO-5 are mentioned as sources of information on emerging issues for consideration by the MTS. The MTS indeed presents the six main emerging environmental issues derived from the foresight process (food security, climate change, land-water interactions, biodiversity, chemicals & waste and renewable energy) and also lists a number of issues cutting across environmental themes (governance and sustainable development, green economy, science-policy interface and human behaviour towards the environment). However, there is no comprehensive problem analysis in the MTS document.
45. The MTS 2014-2017 states explicitly that its strategic approach is one of “continuity with improvement” and it remains broadly in line with the strategic direction articulated in the MTS 2010-2013. Nonetheless, there are a few important changes, such as the addition of the new sub-programme Environment under Review which aims at bringing environmental scientific information and knowledge to policy and decision-makers. This objective was previously considered *within* all sub-programmes, not as a stand-alone objective. The addition of the seventh sub-programme is somehow justified in the MTS document by the foresight process, but seems to have been driven mostly by internal politics i.e. the desire within UNEP to give more budgetary autonomy to DEWA and DCPI, who under the MTS 2010-2013 were not leading any sub-programme and were therefore largely dependent on resource sharing arrangements under the DELC-led Environmental Governance sub-programme for their budget allocations. The struggle to fund the UNEP flagship publication GEO-5 was a frequently mentioned example to argue for a separate sub-programme.
46. Keeping the environment under review is one of UNEP’s core mandates. It is an essential service that UNEP is expected to provide cutting across all other sub-programmes, rather than an environmental goal in itself. From a logical point of view, it makes little sense to isolate it from the thematic sub-programmes which are climate change, disasters and conflicts, chemicals and waste, and resource efficiency. But on the other hand, it gives this mandated role much more visibility and provides a stronger incentive to donors to support this important role which was previously less visible within the Environmental Governance Sub-programme. Additionally, the Environmental Governance and Ecosystem Management Sub-programmes do not reflect high-level, environmental goals either, but rather means or approaches to achieve them. The fact that now three out of seven sub-programmes reflect approaches or means to contribute in solving environmental challenges creates the risk of duplication between sub-programmes. The “means” are already provided by the divisions (public information, assessments, policy,

technology, eco-system management approaches, law, finance etc.) which corresponded to the sub-programmes before 2010. On the other hand, a major theme which is not immediately evident in the sub-programmes (but addressed through the ecosystem management approach) is natural resource degradation, including biodiversity loss and land and water degradation.

47. Compared to the MTS 2010-2013, the MTS 2013-2014 also introduced the objectives of food security as part of the essential ecosystem services which the Ecosystem Management Sub-programme intends to promote, and the Green Economy cutting across all sub-programmes but hosted by the Resource Efficiency Sub-programme.
48. The Rio +20 Outcome Document and consecutive UNGA Resolution 66/288 are mentioned in the final MTS document in a few dispersed, single sentences. The document states, for instance, that the areas on which UNEP will focus (corresponding to the sub-programmes) were “reviewed” against GA Resolution 66/288. Comparing MTS drafts prior to and after the UNGA Resolution, the evaluation found no change at all in the substance (strategic focus, sub-programme objectives, EAs etc.) of the document. The MTS document had already been fully drafted (and twice reviewed by the UNEP CPR) by the time the Rio +20 Conference took place. OfO verified alignment of the MTS with the UNGA Resolutions 66/288 and 67/213, and discussed its findings with the CPR. It was agreed that no fundamental changes to the MTS were required.
49. Special space is given in the section on ‘Strategic Focus for 2014-2017’ to integrating the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020). In fact, a text box filling an entire page was added in the MTS document to show the correspondence between MTS EAs for each sub-programme and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity⁵.

3.2.2 Use of lessons learned from implementation and recommendations from the Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011

50. Overall, the lessons listed in the MTS document under the Lessons Learned section are well integrated in its contents. However, some lessons were only partially taken up: the MTS still contains several EAs that are pitched at a results level above or below the immediate outcome level and/or use vague terms which can be interpreted in a variety of ways and thus undermine accountability (please refer to paragraph 56 for examples). Also, EAs, indicators and means of measurement were not defined at the same time (as stipulated by one of the lessons learned) but with some time elapsing in-between during the development of the consecutive programming documents (MTS, SF and PoW). In addition, a number of lessons learned from the MTS 2010-2013 and PoW 2010-2011 mentioned in the Road Map and Lessons Learned document⁶, are not mentioned in the MTS and have also not been taken into account. For example, the MTS would provide broad results for what UNEP would aim to achieve in each two-year period, without necessarily spelling out the exact language of the EAs, in terms that distinguish UNEP’s results from one biennium to the next. In reality, the MTS spells out the EAs for the full four-year period covered by the strategy and exactly the same language for the EAs was used later for the Strategic Framework and PoW 2014-2015. Another lesson was that the PoW should be developed using Programme Frameworks as a tool to determine what kind of projects are required to deliver the PoW. As discussed later under Section 3.4, the PFs were

⁵ This is quite substantive considering that the whole MTS document is only 34 pages long, and that, for instance, only one page is dedicated to the description of each sub-programme.

⁶ Road Map and Lessons Learned for the Design of the UNEP Medium Term Strategy 2014-2017 and the Strategic Framework and Programme of Work 2014-2015 (8 December 2011)

developed well after the PoW was drafted. Table A1 in Annex III shows all the lessons learned listed in the MTS document and how well the document incorporates these lessons.

51. The main recommendation from the Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011 specifically related to the MTS was that EAs should be defined at immediate outcome level where UNEP's performance can more readily be measured, and attributed. This was to be considered as an issue of the highest priority in the development of the next UNEP Medium Term Strategy. Most but not all EAs have been pitched at the immediate outcome level, directly attributable to UNEP's outputs (please see paragraph 56 for concrete examples).

3.2.3 Clarity of UNEP's role and position in the UN System

52. UNEP's role and position in the UN system is derived from UNEP's mandate and is well articulated and repeated several times in the MTS document. UNEP is expected to be the leading environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, and to be the authority on the environment UN System-wide.
53. The MTS mentions under its Operations Strategy that UNEP's revamped policy on partnerships entails "bringing coherence through UN system-wide partners on environmental issues through the Environment Management Group, United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and UN Country Teams (UNCT)". It further mentions that UNEP aims to strengthen its coherence and efficiency by working within established UN regional coordination structures, including the regional UNGDG teams and Regional Coordination Mechanisms, and at the country level, within UNCT structures and programming processes.
54. One of the six service lines presented under the 'Business Model' section is to promote UN-system wide coherence on environmental matters. In fact, leading efforts to achieve UN-system wide coherence on environmental issues and leveraging impact through strategic partnerships are, perhaps, considered the most essential ingredients of the business model.

3.2.4 Clarity and coherence of UNEP's business model

55. The section on Strategic Focus for 2014-2017 describes in some detail UNEP's long-term vision (with four interrelated areas of support to partners and countries), the key goal of UNEP for the MTS period and the seven areas of strategic focus (the sub-programmes). One page is dedicated to each sub-programme, and presents the overall sub-programme objective as well as two to three EAs. The sub-programme objectives are coherent with the vision and key goal statement. Most sub-programme objectives indicate a behavioural change among stakeholders in the form of a transition or move towards some environmental aspect of sustainable development e.g. towards climate resilience; lower emissions pathways; sustainable use of natural resources; integrated management of land, water and living resources; strong synergies and coherence in environmental governance; sound management of chemicals and waste etc. The Environment under Review sub-programme objective, however, is at a somewhat lower level akin to enhanced capacity ("empowered" stakeholders in their policy and decision making), emphasizing what UNEP intends to provide (scientific information and knowledge) rather than what specific behavioural change it wants to promote among stakeholders.
56. UNEP's vision statement is inward-looking and based on the present, actually more akin to a mission statement. It indicates what UNEP does and intends to keep doing, rather than what it wants to achieve. A vision statement should focus on the future, and be a source of inspiration and motivation for staff. It should not just represent the future of the organization but the future of the environment and society on which the organization hopes to effect change.

57. Four years is a rather short-term horizon over which to envision significant changes in environmental benefits and human well-being. The key goal for UNEP for the period 2014-2017 is “a transition towards low carbon, resource efficient and equitable development”, which is very broad and imprecise and is bound to remain valid for many MTS periods to come, but doesn’t pin down the changes UNEP hopes to contribute to in the longer term in terms of impact on the environment and human well-being. The same can be said of most sub-programme objectives which remain at the level of societal/behavioral change. There are no indicators or targets in the MTS to show progress in terms of global environmental challenges and human well-being in the longer term. UNEP can indeed keep catalyzing and promoting transitions forever, without ever measuring and being able to show its contributions to the environment pillar of sustainable development, let alone its contributions to human well-being. The organization’s ambition is to tackle global environmental challenges, and it should therefore set longer term objectives, targets and indicators in this regard against which to measure its progress.
58. The EAs are supposed to be the direct outcomes that UNEP wants to achieve through its outputs, “direct” meaning here directly attributable to UNEP’s efforts. While the EAs are all directly and logically connected to the respective sub-programme objectives, many are pitched at a results level above the level that could be directly attributed to UNEP. Here are some examples:
- Climate Change SP EA(b): Energy efficiency is improved and the use of renewable energy is increased in partner countries to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants as part of their low emission development pathways
 - Chemicals and Waste SP EA(b): Countries, including Major Groups and stakeholders, increasingly use the scientific and technical knowledge and tools needed to implement sound chemicals management and the related MEAs
 - Resource Efficiency SP EA(b): Uptake of sustainable consumption and production and green economy instruments and management practices in sectoral policies and in business and financial operations across global supply chains is increased, in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication
59. The MTS does not mention any external factors (drivers and assumptions) affecting the achievement of EAs or sub-programme objectives or the key goal of UNEP for the MTS. These external factors are important as they show the “whole picture” in which UNEP tries to bring about change and help delineate and justify UNEP’s intervention focus within the larger variety of problems and their root causes that need to be addressed to achieve lasting impact on the environment and human living conditions.
60. UNEP’s comparative advantages are listed under the section on UNEP’s Business Model, and the UNEP service lines (see paragraph 13) are based directly on these comparative advantages. The service lines themselves are described in quite some detail in the same section. In the view of some interviewees, the service lines seem like an unnecessary addition to the already complex matrix arrangement within UNEP with thematic sub-programmes cutting across divisions and delivery also through regions. However, the main purpose of presenting UNEP’s work along service lines was to summarize the types of outputs that UNEP would be delivering to achieve its objectives. Later on, SPCs were requested to forge the PoW Outputs along these service lines which was expected to create more operational coherence across the sub-programmes.
61. The presentation of UNEP’s business model in the MTS document could be improved on several aspects. “Clients” or target audiences or beneficiaries are not well described in the MTS document. In most cases the document refers vaguely to “countries and other stakeholders”. Some EA statements provide a bit more detail mentioning developing countries, the UN System,

MEA bodies or Major Groups. A few sub-programme strategies mention the private sector. There is also no presentation of the specific priorities or needs of the different stakeholders. One would not expect a highly detailed stakeholder analysis in the MTS, but a clearer presentation of key stakeholders and their needs would be useful to better justify the MTS objectives and proposed UNEP support.

62. The MTS document does not provide a presentation of UNEP's organizational structure, implementation arrangements and delivery mechanisms, and therefore no information on the division of roles, responsibilities and authority between divisions, SPCs and ROs, except for some statements about the increasing role of ROs vis-à-vis programme implementation in the regions. Some operational policies and processes are referred to in the document (e.g. Partnership Policy, Strategic Presence Policy etc.) but without any description of their contents. The MTS doesn't present or justify resource needs estimates, mobilization, allocation and management arrangements.

3.2.5 Relevance of UNEP's business model to the broader global context

63. The MTS document demonstrates clearly how UNEP's mandate, vision and strategic approach is relevant to the broader global context by linking the global environmental changes to emerging environmental issues, and those issues to the sub-programmes (areas of strategic focus). Each sub-programme is introduced by an "Environmental Outlook" which provides in a few bullet points a very short description of the issues at hand (e.g. increasing needs for food security, shelter and employment for growing populations mean ecosystem services must be managed across environmental and economic agendas) but without an in-depth problem analysis. The MTS explains clearly how UNEP is expected to influence environmental decision-making, within the broader international environmental governance landscape through six well defined service lines (see para 13), by leading efforts to achieve UN system-wide coherence and by fully utilizing strategic partnerships "to catalyse transformative change and leverage impact".
64. Because its development mostly preceded the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) discussions, the MTS 2014-2017 does not make reference to those at all, except under the Environmental Governance Sub-programme where UNEP will provide technical support to countries in developing and reporting on the environmental aspects of SDGs. In the context of ongoing planning processes, recent discussions among senior managers⁷ led to agreement that "there should be a high degree of alignment between the MTS 2018-2021 and the SDGs, while allowing room to play to UNEP's normative role and comparative advantage in addressing emerging environmental issues. The MTS 2018-2021 should take into account the following factors: relevance, coherence, impact, sustainability, and results-based budgeting".

3.2.6 Integration of gender consideration in the MTS

65. The only mention of gender in the MTS is under the Operations Strategy section, where the MTS declares that "UNEP's emphasis on results will also mean further integration of gender considerations in programme planning and delivery, entailing integration of a gender perspective into all phases of UNEP's programme cycle, from planning to monitoring and evaluation. This process will entail the development of a gender action plan, which shows how gender considerations are factored into project planning." None of the sub-programme descriptions mention gender.

⁷ Executive Director's memo "UNEP Leadership Retreat" sent to all UNEP Staff 18th March 2015.

3.2.7 Responsiveness of the MTS to Regional and National Priorities

66. The MTS in itself is global in scope and does not specifically articulate regional or national priorities. Regional priorities were collected from the ROs and taken into account when shaping the “global” EAs. The MTS also mentions that the PoW will clarify what UNEP will deliver regionally and nationally, and what will be delivered at the global level. The PoW does mention for each PoW Output whether it is global or regional in scope, but it doesn't specify for regional outputs in which regions they would be delivered.
67. The MTS also indicates that its Programme Frameworks would show the coherence of UNEP work at regional level, and would facilitate UNEP's further involvement in the “Delivering as One UN” processes at regional and country level for those countries indicating interest in this delivery mechanism. In reality, the PFs do not address the issue of coherence of projects at the regional level (please see paragraphs 121-122).

3.2.8 Integration of Results-based Management in the MTS

68. While the introduction of results-based management (RBM) in UNEP is mentioned in different places in the MTS document (a results-based MTS, results-based monitoring, results-oriented projects, independent evaluation regime, RBM training etc.), RBM is not really integrated in the MTS document. Objectives and expected accomplishments are presented for each of the seven sub-programmes, but accountability for achieving these objectives is not articulated in the MTS even though the document says that “accountability will be the cornerstone of UNEP's results-based management”. The MTS does not present indicators or short or longer term targets for its sub-programme objectives. EA indicators and targets are presented in the biennial Strategic Framework and PoW documents.
69. The MTS proposes an adequate evaluation approach including independent evaluation at different levels (MTS, sub-programmes and projects) though it does not mention any form of self-evaluation (for instance through high quality project completion reporting) which is seriously lacking in UNEP. Monitoring arrangements are a lot less detailed in the MTS document. It is proposed to utilize PIMS (UNEP's Programme Information and Management System) and other data sources for permanently tracking and reviewing progress in achieving the results in the MTS and PoW and for a formal review of programme performance on a six monthly basis. The improved approach here is that progress is routinely assessed against planned deliverables and results in projects that are designed to deliver the MTS and associated PoWs. Project reporting feeds directly in PoW Output and EA reporting.

3.2.9 Flexibility of the MTS for responding to changing conditions or emerging issues

70. There doesn't seem to be much flexibility built in the MTS to respond to changing conditions or emerging issues. As indicated in paragraph 48, one of the lessons learned mentioned in the ‘Roadmap’ document was that the MTS should not “set in stone” the EAs for a four-year period, but rather leave the results statements quite general by indicating what UNEP would aim to achieve in each two-year period, without spelling out the precise language of the EAs. In reality, the MTS does spell out the EAs for the full four-year period covered by the strategy. However, the EAs are quite broad statements which should leave some flexibility in focus and in the way UNEP would choose to contribute to the EA and also leaving room to incorporate changing conditions and emerging issues.

3.2.10 Linkages between Sub-programmes

71. The MTS does not clearly present linkages among sub-programmes. Under the section on Strategic Focus for 2014-2017 the document claims that within each of the sub-programmes, UNEP has refined its ambition to enable the organization to ensure synergies between sub-programmes. However, there is really only one opportunity for synergy mentioned, between the Ecosystem Management, Climate Change and Disasters and Conflicts sub-programmes where UNEP would demonstrate the effectiveness of Ecosystem based Approaches to reducing vulnerability to climate-change-related disasters.

3.2.11 Integration of the MEAs and the GEF portfolio in the MTS

72. The environmental MEAs appear well integrated in the MTS document. Secretariats of the MEAs were consulted during the MTS drafting process, including by the Task Team, though, according to evaluation interviewees, they did not seem to show much interest. One of UNEP's comparative advantages mentioned in the document is its longstanding linkages to key environmental bodies through its establishment and hosting of convention secretariats for MEAs. The Operations Strategy section indicates that UNEP provides capacity building and technology support to assist countries in implementing their environmental policies, which are largely based on provisions and targets from MEAs. MEAs are targeted by several EAs under different sub-programmes (Ecosystem Management - EM, EG and Chemicals and Waste - CW). Under UNEP's Business Model section, partnerships with MEAs are mentioned as one of the ways how UNEP, both a normative and operational entity, coordinates its work and exercises leadership in the area of the environment in the UN System and beyond.
73. The MTS document mentions the integration of the GEF portfolio into UNEP's Divisions as an operational achievement under the period 2010-2013. It indicates ongoing efforts to strengthen alignment of the GEF portfolio to further enhance complementarity with the UNEP Programme of Work. Over the new MTS period, the entire stream of GEF revenue is expected to directly support the achievement of the MTS, while respecting the concepts of complementarity and additionality. The MTS document does not articulate a specific mechanism or strategy for this to happen.

3.3 Review of the PoWs for 2014-2015 and 2016-2017

3.3.1 Main inputs to the PoWs

74. Inputs to the PoW 2014-2015 came from OfO and SPCs, based on internal consultations (Divisions and ROs) and consultations with partners (mostly through ROs), MEAs (through DELC) and Collaborating Centres. The PoW 2014-2015 is guided by the MTS 2014-2017 and Strategic Framework 2014-2015 from which it reproduces UNEP's core objective, sub-programme objectives, EA statements and indicators. The PoW also takes into account the UNGA Resolution 66/288 following the UNCSD (Rio +20) and the UNGA Resolution 67/213 (December 2012) on the strengthening of UNEP. The PoW re-emphasizes the three cornerstones of UNEP's strategy, which are: to play a leadership role in the UN system (become the "authority for the environment" in the UN system) and beyond on the environment; to promote coherence in the UN system on environmental matters; and to invest in strategic partnerships, including with Major Groups, to catalyze transformational change and leverage impact.
75. The PoW 2016-2017 was drafted, as the document itself explains, "primarily by making incremental changes to the programme for the biennium 2014-2015". Main changes were the EA indicators (which had been changed for the SF 2016-2017), enhanced causal relationship

sections under each sub-programme (which benefitted from early PF development), some minor adjustments to sub-programme objectives, EAs and PoW Outputs (except for EM where an effort was made to revise the outputs so that they would logically follow from the outputs for the previous biennium), addition of main partners under each PoW Output, and addition of a few new outputs (e.g. CC). Outputs initially assigned to DRC, which was dissolved in October 2013, were either deleted or redistributed over the Regional Support Office (RSO), the Secretariat for Governing Bodies and Stakeholders (SGBS) or other divisions. Due to the development schedule of the PoW 2016-2017, it could not be informed by lessons learned from the implementation of the PoW 2014-2015. However, it took into account a number of lessons learned elicited by the Programme Performance Review for 2012-2013 as discussed in the next section.

3.3.2 Use of lessons learned from implementation and recommendations from the Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011

76. The Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011 recommended closer linkages between preparation of the MTS, the SFs, the PoWs and the PFs. The MTS 2014-2017 and SF 2014-2015 development were closely linked, but the development of the PoW 2014-2015 came afterwards and was still rather disconnected. PFs were developed much later, mostly to present project concepts (please see paragraphs 103-107). The Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011 also recommended that strategic planning processes need to better engage UNEP staff. This was addressed by appointing sub-programme Focal Points in the divisions and ROs, who were also supposed to consult with colleagues and then provide inputs through the respective SPCs. The evaluation further recommended that the EAs and indicators should be formulated to better align with basic principles of Results Based Management. To enhance both the ease of monitoring and the evaluability of the PoW, performance measures should be 'SMART' (specific, measurable, achievable/attributable, relevant and time-bound). In reality, EA indicators were revised but, as a result of the many actors involved in reviewing them, were not much improved. Interestingly, for many EAs one or more indicators present in the Strategic Framework 2014-2015 are not included in the PoW 2014-2015. As reporting in UNEP is based on the indicators from the PoWs, the absence of many SF indicators will leave gaps in UNEP reporting towards the UNGA. Table A2 in Annex III shows the implementation status of all recommendations made by the Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011 relative to the PoWs 2014-2015 and 2016-2017.
77. Most lessons learned that are explicitly mentioned in the PoW documents have been taken into account in formulating the PoWs. Table A3 in Annex III reproduces these lessons learned and the extent to which these lessons have been taken into account in the PoWs. One lesson seems to have been only partly taken into account: the need for an iterative process to ensure that the EAs (UNEP's results) and outputs (UNEP's products and services) are driven by demand for services by countries. Indeed, PoW Outputs were developed by SPCs largely based on inputs by and negotiation with UNEP divisions and ROs. Priorities of individual countries are not explicitly reflected in the PoWs because the PoWs are UNEP's global work programmes. However, countries did influence the wording of PoWs to an extent through the CPR who reviewed the PoWs several times.
78. There are also a number of lessons learned mentioned in the 'Roadmap' document or the MTS document, which were not mentioned in the PoW documents. The extent to which these lessons have been taken into account in formulating the PoWs is presented in Table A4 in Annex III. A lesson learned regarding resource allocation was that the PoWs should make clear what UNEP would deliver with its Environment Fund resources, what it could deliver by mobilizing extra-budgetary resources and which mechanisms are in place to ensure a transparent prioritization of extra-budgetary funding. The PoWs show how budget and human resources are distributed

between sub-programmes and, for each sub-programme, the PoWs present how these resources are distributed over the UNEP Divisions. However, within sub-programmes, there is no prioritization of outputs or EAs. Resource allocation principles, criteria and priorities are not presented in the PoW.

3.3.3 Clarity of UNEP's role and position in the UN System

79. UNEP's role, as it was presented in the MTS 2014-2017, is reiterated in the Overall Orientation sections of the PoW documents: UNEP should lead in the UN system and beyond on environmental matters and promote coherence in the UN system to reduce fragmentation and increase effectiveness and efficiency. UNEP would strengthen its leadership in key UN coordination bodies and lead efforts to formulate UN system-wide strategies on the environment. Partnerships, especially within the UN system, are considered fundamental for delivering UNEP's PoW within the sub-programmes. Several EAs, EA indicators and PoW Outputs refer to increased coherence and mainstreaming within the UN system on environmental issues. There is also one specific EA for the Executive Office which is: "Promotion by UNEP of greater coherence and complementarities relating to environmental issues in the United Nations system".

3.3.4 Clarity and coherence of UNEP's business model

80. The PoW documents do not repeat the description of UNEP's business model present in the MTS document. There is also no repetition of UNEP's strengths or comparative advantages. However, they do mention UNEP's goal statement and, as would be expected, they use the same sub-programme objectives and EAs as the MTS, with a few, minor adjustments to the wording.

81. In both PoW documents, for each sub-programme there is a separate section for Strategy, Causal Relationships and External Factors. Between the PoW 2014-2015 and the PoW 2016-2017 the section on Causal Relationships has been expanded, e.g. by more clearly stating the intended environmental impact of the sub-programme and adding more detail on drivers and assumptions, benefitting from the ongoing development of sub-programme Theories of Change for the Programme Frameworks. However, all three elements (Strategy, Causal Relationships and External Factors) relate to the sub-programme strategy and keeping them separated breaks up the narrative and makes it longer than necessary due to repetitions. Ideally, these three sections could be merged into one to create a tighter, more coherent narrative of the sub-programme strategy without unnecessary repetitions. However, the requirements on the UN Secretariat PoW template may make uptake of this suggestion problematic.

82. In general, outputs have been better formulated in the PoWs under the MTS period 2014-2017 compared to the previous one as they are mostly pitched at the right results level (i.e. products and services delivered by UNEP's interventions) and more logically connected to the EAs. SPCs were requested to forge the PoW Outputs along the UNEP service lines presented in the MTS and these service lines do indeed occur in a portion of the output statements – but not across the board. Many outputs state the immediate outcome they are aimed at, but not what product or service they actually entail. As a result, they are vague, for instance referring to "technical support" or "policy support". Others present a list of multiple outputs. A minority of outputs are still pitched at the outcome level, or even at a results level that goes beyond the EA. Here are a few examples of the persisting issues with PoW Outputs:

- Climate Change SP PoW Output 111 (2014-2015): Technical support provided to countries to develop and pilot methods and tools and dissemination of these through

knowledge networks along with research results, lessons learnt and good practices – This output is a combination of multiple outputs

- Chemicals and Waste SP PoW 515 (2014-2015): Consolidated advisory and support services promote the sound management of chemicals at national level; including mainstreaming into national policies and programmes, instruments and schemes for the governance of chemicals production, use, trade and release – This outputs is very broad. It states what the support is aimed at (several outcomes, actually), but not what products or services it entails.
 - Ecosystem Management SP PoW 313 (2016-2017): Technical support provided to countries to use ecosystem management tools and approaches, and partnerships strengthened to improve integrated water resource management, including water quality – This output is too vague about the actual output and aims at multiple outputs/outcomes
 - Environment under Review SP PoW 732 (2016-2017): Capacities of regional forums, national institutions and major groups and stakeholders are enhanced to better utilize environmental information, knowledge contained in, and outcomes of, major UNEP-led assessments (e.g., GEO-5) in regional and national policy and planning processes, including data related to gender aspects – This is a direct outcome of UNEP's work. It is not clear what output(s) will lead to it.
83. One of the reasons for these remaining problems is that PoW Outputs are used as place-holders for project outputs, usually many different outputs from one or more projects. The SPCs dealt with this either describing the output in very imprecise terms such as “support” or “assistance” further specified by its intended purpose but remaining very vague about the actual deliverables, or by placing the PoW output at a results level above the (project) output level. These problems will remain unless it is accepted that one project may link to multiple PoW outputs. This would in any case be more logical because the majority of projects are bound to deliver more than one type of product or service. In a results-oriented organisation, alignment of projects outcomes with the Expected Accomplishments is much more important than “classification” of projects according to generalised ‘output sets’ (i.e. PoW outputs).
84. In the PoW 2014-2015 UNEP partners are listed together for each sub-programme under the Strategy section. In the PoW 2016-2017 they are listed under each output, which makes it clearer where and for what UNEP partners will be engaged. Partners are too numerous for the PoW documents to provide details on what exactly their individual roles will be, so listing partners under each output is probably the highest level of detail desirable if the PoW document is to remain of a reasonable length. A higher level of detail would rather be expected in the Programme Framework documents, which were unfortunately not available to CPR members at the time of the review of both PoWs. On the other hand, the PoWs could be criticized for listing too many partners, without really indicating which are the most strategic. At least for the PoWs, it could be made clearer how UNEP intends to engage with them and what strengths and experience they would bring.
85. The PoW documents provide some detail on UNEP's policy making organs (the UNEA of UNEP and its subsidiary body, the CPR), changes in executive management arrangements and the functions of OfO. The dismantling of DRC since October 2013 is first mentioned in the PoW 2016-2017. The equally important creation of the Programme Strategy and Planning Team (PSPT) under the Executive Office since mid-2014 is not mentioned in any of the PoW documents. The PSPT hosts the SPCs and is in charge of strategic planning (MTS, SF and substance of the PoW), development/updating of the PFs, making recommendations on resource allocations based on programmatic priorities, supporting project design and reporting. Even though it plays this largely strategic role, the PSPT reports to the Deputy Executive Director, while the Office for

Operations, which fulfils corporate management functions, reports to the Executive Director. There might be reasons for this decision unknown by this evaluation, but it appears that the reporting lines are in reverse. The PoW documents do not spell out the division of roles and authority between the Divisions, ROs and SPCs in the delivery of the PoW.

86. The PoWs present human and financial resource needs estimates for all elements of the PoW. These were initially estimated by OfO for the corporate functions and the SPCs for each sub-programme, but the sub-programme allocations of the Environment Fund were modified / adjusted by the SMT to ensure continuity of the existing resource allocation patterns. As a result, according to key UNEP staff interviewed, the estimates made in the PoWs of funding and human resource requirements for each sub-programme do not correspond to the real needs and therefore are unlikely to reflect how actual staff and resource allocations will be made once the PoW is under way.

3.3.5 Integration of Results-based Management in the PoWs

87. Sub-programmes are delivered under the responsibility of a single Lead Division Director. EAs under the same sub-programme are not assigned to different Divisions as was the case in the previous MTS period. However, accountability for delivering each PoW Output is assigned to a specific Accountable Division (or Office) which can be different from the division of the sub-programme's Lead Division Director. Contributing Divisions are also specified for each PoW Output.
88. In the PoW 2014-2015, indicators of achievement for the EAs are often vague, using wording that can be interpreted in many ways, ranging from almost minimal to very strong UNEP influence. They often combine different aspects of UNEP's deliverables and influence, and indicate quite varied levels of change in stakeholders' behaviour or actions. At the same time, most sets of indicators for an EA miss part of the results captured in the EA. Many indicators also require an expert judgement when measured. As this judgement will often be made by programme staff themselves, there is a high risk of bias. Both issues are partly due to the broadness of the EAs and the imposed limitation of 2 or 3 indicators per EA for this PoW. CPR members also criticized the indicators in the PoW 2014-2015 because they fail to show progress on 'the bigger picture', beyond UNEP's direct interventions. Evaluation interviews revealed that neither the SPCs nor the Task Team included experts on RBM indicators.
89. For the PoW 2016-2017, several indicators have been added, with the total number per EA reaching up to 5. This is meant to provide a fuller picture of the changes intended by the EA, including, in some cases, at a much larger scale which is also less attributable to UNEP (global level change) while, at the same time, improving the accuracy of measurement. "Units of measure" were replaced by "Performance measures", and sometimes up to 3 "Performance measures" were given for a single indicator to disaggregate the measured change in several components. Baselines for the new indicators are to be specified at the start of the 2016-17 biennium and they will therefore not be useful for charting progress over the whole 2014 -17 MTS period. In addition, the increased number of indicators and "performance measures" will increase the monitoring and reporting burden. Another change between the two biennia is that for 2014-2015, most indicators relate to an absolute increase e.g. "Increased number of countries reporting...". For the next biennium, indicators mention both an absolute number increase and a percentage increase e.g. "Increased number and percentage of countries reporting..." giving a better indication of relative change.
90. Several issues with the indicators noted by the Formative Evaluation 2010-2011 are still common across the two biennia. Many indicators require an expert / evaluative judgment to be

measured, making them either prone to risks of bias (as the experts will often be UNEP staff) or too complex and expensive to be regularly monitored. This is not surprising, because measurement of immediate outcomes (or above) does often require an evaluative judgement in measuring the indicators. The PoWs do not present objectively verifiable milestones for the EAs (outcome milestones), that could have been used to indicate progress towards EA achievement and would be easier to monitor.

91. In some cases, an indicator is an inadequate proxy indicator for the EA. It wrongly assumes that there is a direct causal link between the indicator and the EA. In other cases, part of the indicator is beyond UNEP's control. On the other hand, most indicators and performance measures limit the scope of the change they measure to countries or organisations assisted by UNEP, which makes monitoring and attribution easier but limits the extent to which the indicator or performance measure captures progress at the global level. The statement "as a result of UNEP assistance" often limits assessment of UNEP's influence to countries where UNEP is implementing projects and fails to capture, or tacitly excludes, catalytic effects of UNEP's work. Here are some examples of persisting, common issues with indicators:

Table 2. Examples of problematic indicators from the Environment under Review and Environmental Governance Sub-programmes

EA	Indicators	General comments
Environment under Review (PoW 2014-15) EA(c): The capacity of countries to generate, access, analyze, use and communicate environmental information and knowledge is enhanced	i) Increase in the number of countries that take the lead in generating, analysing, managing and using environmental information in comparable formats and making the information and knowledge available to the public and policy makers	The indicator is at a results level above the EA. While the EA refers to country capacity, the indicator refers to using that capacity. The latter may not happen due to external factors, even if substantial progress was made on the EA. The indicator is also vague: Number of countries taking the lead - what does taking the lead mean? What is meant by a "country" here? How many "leaders" can there really be? The indicator measures a change without specifying how UNEP is linked to it.
	ii) Increase in the number of countries making available credible nationally generated data and access to country-specific environmental information in comparable formats available on public platforms	There is an overlap with the previous indicator both for the generation of data and making it available to the public. The indicator requires an expert judgment to ensure that the data is reliable. The indicator measures a change without specifying how UNEP is linked to it.
	iii) Increased number of Major Groups and stakeholders surveyed that acknowledge their involvement in the generation, access to and use of environmental information available on public platforms	The indicator measures an absolute number while a percentage could be more meaningful. Registered major groups are limited in number and can be surveyed comprehensively. But if the survey is voluntary, there might be a confirmation bias. A confirmation bias might also creep in already through the accreditation process: don't they have to show some engagement on environment info to become accredited? Besides, are "stakeholders" here also meant to be accredited? The indicator measures a change without

		specifying how UNEP is linked to it.
Environmental Governance (PoW 2016-2017) EA (b): The capacity of countries to develop and enforce laws and strengthen institutions to achieve internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals and comply with related obligations is enhanced	(i) Increased number of legal and institutional measures taken by countries to enforce the rule of law and improve the implementation of internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals, with the assistance of UNEP	The indicator is at a results level above the EA. While the EA refers to country capacity, the indicator refers to using that capacity. The latter may not happen due to external factors, even if substantial progress was made on the EA.

92. The Disasters and Conflicts Sub-programme uses a composite indicator (country capacity framework) to track progress in country capacity, which is a good approach and makes measuring capacity more meaningful, but some steps in capacity require an evaluative judgment (“capacity established”) and some are on a very high level (“natural resource management authorities established”). The framework would also need to be more specific to capture progress on the different EAs. A similar composite indicator could be used in other sub-programmes but would need more specificity. This has been done for one EA under the Environment Governance Sub-programme for the biennium 2016-2017.

93. Units of measure (which have become “Performance measures” for the 2016-2017 PoW) are often fine for the indicator they refer to, but what is really needed in the PoW is the Means of Verification for the indicators, not their units of measure. The latter should be obvious from the indicator statements themselves. This is why most units of measure just repeat part or all of the indicator itself. However, there are also a number of units of measure that give only partial or imprecise measure of the indicator. Many units of measure count the number of governments, UN agencies, local authorities, businesses etc. that have changed their practices, placing them at the same level, even though achieving change in governments compared to UN agencies or private businesses may require very different degrees of influence.

94. The PoW documents provide baselines and targets for the EA indicators, but no explanation on how they have been set. It is even doubtful, for many indicators, that UNEP had at its disposal the required baseline information for many indicators formulated in the PoWs. Targets have been set by considering expected achievements of ongoing and planned UNEP interventions, without knowledge of changes in the indicator that could happen due to external factors. This was done with the intention of only measuring the indicator in those countries where UNEP would directly intervene, so without considering intended, positive spill-over effects in the rest of the world or unanticipated contributions from other actors.

3.3.6 Integration of gender consideration in the PoWs

95. The Review of Gender Mainstreaming in UNEP⁸ conducted in 2012, noted that although gender was a priority in the MTS and PoWs, gender equality still needed to be fully integrated into UNEP’s programmatic priorities. UNEP PoWs since the biennium 2004-2005 have included a commitment to make gender a cross-cutting priority in all UNEP sub-programmes, but gender was not reflected in any EA performance indicators or PoW outputs. The integration of gender in

⁸ Review Of Gender Mainstreaming In UNEP, Franklina Mantilla, Evaluation Office, Unep, July 2012

the PoW does not yet appear as a “core element of the programme” as claimed by both PoWs 2014-2015 and 2016-2017, but quite some progress has been made since the Review mentioned above.

96. Both PoWs indicate that “UNEP is committed to ensuring that gender perspectives are fully integrated into its programmes, policies and operational strategy. A new gender policy and plan of action developed in the biennium 2014–2015 will focus on the integration of gender considerations in human resources, programme and project planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation processes.” One of the Executive Office’s EAs is to ensure “Geographical representation and gender balance of staff” with one of its indicators being the percentage of women appointed to senior-level posts in the Professional and management categories in UNEP. One of the indicators of achievement for Programme Support in UNEP is the percentage of UNEP projects that can demonstrate the integration of gender considerations in project implementation, with targets of 50 and 60 percent for 2014-2015 and 2016-2017, respectively. Both PoWs mention the newly institutionalized Environmental and Social Safeguards, including on gender, to reduce risks in the areas of environmental and social sustainability. The PoW 2016-2017 further refers to the recently created Environment and Social Safeguards Unit which is to ensure “that such safeguards, including in the area of gender, are integrated within the Programme and its project portfolio”.
97. Integration of gender in sub-programme narratives has increased between the two PoWs of the MTS period. In the PoW 2014-2015, only one sub-programme (Environment under Review) explicitly refers to gender, which foresees an explicit gender-related output, the global Gender and Environment Outlook, under its EA(c)⁹. One indicator of achievement for this EA is the increase in the number of countries that take the lead in generating, analysing, managing and using environmental information in comparable formats and with a focus on gender-sensitive tools, and making the information and knowledge available to the public and policy-makers, as a result of UNEP intervention. The Outlook would provide information on gender and environmental management for utilization by UNEP’s stakeholders in policymaking and implementation. In the PoW 2016-2017, gender is referred to in 3 additional sub-programmes: the strategy of the Disasters and Conflicts SP indicates that “UNEP will integrate gender perspectives in project design and use gender-sensitive indicators to contribute to the knowledge on sex-differentiated and age-differentiated impacts of natural and man-made disasters to influence policymaking processes”; the strategy of the EG SP indicates that “integration of gender perspectives and the use of gender-sensitive indicators will be integral to this sub-programme”; and the CW SP “is underpinned by the recognition that human health impacts are often gender-differentiated and socially determined, with the greatest burdens carried by women and children, and poor and disadvantaged communities that have access to the fewest options to reduce risks. Thus, UNEP will ensure that it builds into its support, gender-differentiated and socially differentiated considerations.”

3.3.7 Responsiveness of the PoWs to regional and national priorities

98. The PoWs present the indicators and targets for the immediate outcomes that UNEP tries to achieve (the EAs). These indicators and targets are global, so it is not possible to determine the regional focus of certain EAs from them. Regional EA targets could be a good means of showing the regional emphasis of UNEP’s immediate outcomes.

⁹ EA(c): The capacity of countries to generate, access, analyse, use and communicate environmental information and knowledge, including data related to gender aspects, is enhanced.

99. Similar to the MTS, the PoWs are global in scope and do not respond to regional or national priorities. The MTS mentions that the PoWs will clarify what UNEP will deliver regionally and nationally, and what will be delivered at the global level. The PoWs do specify the scope of each PoW Output (global or regional), but they don't specify for regional outputs in which regions they would be delivered. It is not obvious how a PoW output (i.e. goods or services delivered by UNEP) can really be confined to a single region. UNEP Regional Offices were given an opportunity to comment on the PoW Outputs proposed by the SPCs but SPCs found it very difficult to take their quite disparate comments on board and "please everybody".
100. According to the MTS, the Programme Frameworks would show the coherence of UNEP work at regional level, and would facilitate UNEP's further involvement in the "Delivering as One UN" processes at regional and country level where an interest existed, but this is not the case (see paragraph 124).

3.3.8 Flexibility of the PoWs for responding to changing conditions or emerging issues

101. The PoW documents provide a rather rigid results framework that doesn't leave much room for responding to changing conditions or emerging issues. While the EA statements from the MTS are broad enough to leave some flexibility in focus and in the "how", the PoWs make the results framework much more rigid by specifying indicators and targets for each EA, and also the outputs through which UNEP will contribute to each EA. The PoW still leaves considerable freedom, however, in the allocation of resources and also in the choice of the geographical focus of each EA and output.

3.3.9 Linkages between Sub-programmes

102. The importance of harnessing synergies between sub-programmes to leverage impact is mentioned under the Overall Orientation section of the PoW documents together with several examples: synergies between disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and ecosystem management; synergies between climate change mitigation and resource efficiency etc. These examples are reiterated under the Strategy section of the presentation of each sub-programme. This is indicative of a strong intent, over the new MTS period, to actively take advantage of synergies between SPs.

3.3.10 Integration of the MEAs and the GEF portfolio in the PoWs

103. The environmental MEAs are well-integrated in the PoWs. Secretariats of the MEAs were consulted during the drafting process of each PoW. MEAs are mentioned as references or partners in most sub-programme strategies and directly supported by a number of PoW Outputs. A large portion of the Environmental Governance Sub-programme is dedicated to supporting the implementation of MEAs, but other sub-programmes also provide support to MEAs that are more specific to their thematic areas.
104. The PoW 2014-2015 foresees that the UNEP GEF-funded portfolio is increasingly integrated in UNEP strategic planning and contributes to the EAs of the sub-programmes, particularly those on climate change, ecosystem management and chemicals and waste. The PoW mentions that "the current trend is towards cost-sharing for GEF-funded activities from the Environment Fund or other extra-budgetary resources. The project review and acceptance process for GEF-funded projects is being harmonized with the processes for UNEP projects financed from other sources. Instead of treating the GEF-funded portfolio separately from the main programme of work, as had been done in the past, the programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015, for the first time, integrates it fully while respecting GEF-specific criteria, procedures and the GEF review and

approval process for funding.” The PoW 2014–2015 provides, also for the first time, budgetary information regarding the UNEP GEF portfolio. The PoW 2016-2017 foresees that the GEF-funded portfolio will be fully integrated in UNEP strategic planning “with the aim of ensuring that the organization’s programme of work and its GEF-financed portfolio are mutually complementary and add value to each other.” The GEF is mentioned as a key partner under many PoW Outputs. In most cases, this is because the GEF would provide funding to projects that are expected to contribute to the PoW Output.

105. However, GEF-funded projects are still largely managed by dedicated GEF Task Managers and Funds Management Officers within the Divisions. GEF-funded projects are also not yet recorded in UNEP’s Programme Information and Management System (PIMS) where all UNEP PoW projects are reported upon. Reporting and monitoring on GEF projects still happens largely outside PIMS, with the exception of a small number of GEF projects that are considered to be components of larger UNEP PoW projects. This indicates that, in reality, GEF integration in UNEP hasn’t fully happened yet.

3.4 Assessment of the Programme Framework development process

106. The Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011 had recommended that Programme Frameworks would be developed before or in tandem with the PoW 2014-2015. However, due to tight deadlines in the PoW development process, their preparation was postponed until after the PoW had been submitted to the UNEP GC. In fact, it took practically the whole of 2013 to prepare the PFs for all sub-programmes, and three submissions to SMT before they were finally approved in September 2014 – nine months into the 2014-2015 biennium. Fortunately, SPCs and staff were aware which projects had received implicit senior management approval so that their development did not have to wait for final approval of the PF documents.
107. The PFs were drafted on the basis of a number of principles, as set out in QAS guidelines¹⁰:
- PF should use a Theory of Change analysis to explain the choice of products and services and the associated projects that make up each EA in a sub-programme;
 - An estimated budget for each identified project should be provided;
 - The PF should include consideration of EF, RB, XB, GEF, Adaptation Fund, MLF;
 - The regional portfolio of UNEP’s work must be evident in the presentation of the project portfolio and based on criteria documented in the PF, which will include both thematic criteria and criteria relating to country/regional demand and opportunities for leveraging impact and take into consideration the locality of the current project portfolio; and
 - Roles, estimate percent of staff time and budgets should be included so that Divisions and Regional Offices are clear of their roles against the financial and human resources required.
108. Early drafts of the PFs and accompanying spreadsheets did indeed contain most of this information. However, the final PF documents that were approved by SMT in September 2014 had been abridged and were missing much of the content expected from adherence to the principles set out above (see below under section 3.5).
109. Following QAS guidance, the first step in developing the PFs was for the SPCs, through consultations with Divisions and ROs, to identify the outputs (products and services) that UNEP

¹⁰ Guidelines for Developing the Programme Framework, Draft, March 2013

would need to deliver to achieve the results in the MTS and PoW, and the projects required to deliver these outputs. The identification of projects to feature in the PF documents was largely based on the existing ongoing and pipelined projects. In practice, this was done by numerous Email exchanges and meetings between the SPCs and managers in the Divisions and ROs. A second step was, through further consultations, to reconfigure the project portfolio by region, based on regional/country demand and opportunities. This second step included, almost as an afterthought, the preparation of a description of causal relationships between the projects and the results in the MTS and PoW. The third step was to elaborate the project concepts to be annexed to the PF documents. The fourth and final step was then to identify more precisely *what* each participating Divisions and ROs would be held accountable for, what the financial and human resource requirements for each participating Division and RO were, and to provide additional partner information.

110. For the PFs to be really useful as a planning tool, not only was their timing too late in the MTS/SF/PoW development process, but also a major element of their planning process was missing, and the steps in the PF development process were in the wrong order. Indeed, the PFs should have been developed around a ToC of the sub-programme which was based on in-depth problem and stakeholder analyses. Projects should then have been identified based on the products and services required within the ToC. In reality, project identification took place *before* the Theories of Change for the sub-programmes were developed. Also, the Theories of Change presented in the PFs were not based on an in-depth problem analysis for the sub-programme (which was also largely missing in the MTS and the PoW documents) but were “reconstructed” from the EA and PoW Output statements in the MTS and PoW following the suggested reconstruction approach used for ex-post evaluations. Instead of being used as a strategic planning tool, the Theories of Change were used to show the logic between an agreed results framework and a set of pre-identified projects. It is then not surprising that the match between the Theories of Change and both the results in the MTS and PoW, and the project portfolio was quite good, because the ToCs were reconstructed exactly with this obligatory match in mind, after the MTS, PoW and projects had already been identified. However, as a strategic planning tool for the MTS 2014-2017 and PoW 2014-2015, the Theories of Change painstakingly prepared by the SPCs were entirely useless. Had the process proceeded in the sequence suggested by the Evaluation Office, it may have highlighted both gaps, and less strategically important ongoing projects, in the portfolio.
111. ROs were consulted during the development of the PFs. At some point, they were even requested to consult with regional fora and partners to identify the priorities for each sub-programme in their region. The RSO helped coordinate and compile the regional priorities to be integrated as a specific section in the PF documents. However, some SPCs pushed back on this level of detail in the PFs and, in the end, the idea of including a regional dimension in the PFs was abandoned.
112. According to staff interviewed for this evaluation, strategic guidance by SMT during the preparation of the PFs was rather limited. In fact, ownership by the SMT of the whole PF development process appears to have been weak, which could be explained in part by the fact that most Division Directors were either ending their terms or had just been recruited. The majority of SPCs were inexperienced in the ToC approach and were ‘thrown in the deep end’ without proper training or guidance material. The few SPCs that had experience with results-based planning were frustrated because of the “reverse” approach imposed by the (wrong) order in which the planning process was taking place. They saw the reconstruction of Theories of Change mostly as ‘window-dressing’ to satisfy OfO requirements in order to get the project concepts approved by the SMT. These factors led to Theories of Change presented in the different PF documents being of a quite heterogeneous quality. OfO employed an external

consultant who brought some much needed guidance and support to the SPCs for the development of the sub-programme Theories of Change which modestly improved the ToCs.

3.5 Review of the Programme Frameworks for the period 2014-2017

3.5.1 Problem analysis and Theory of Change

113. Each Programme Framework document presents a narrative of a Theory of Change (ToC) of the sub-programme in a text box presenting the “Programme Framework Logic” under the second section of the document called “Logic and Geographic basis of the Project Portfolio”. This narrative describes how UNEP PoW outputs are expected to contribute to outcomes (often separated into direct/immediate outcomes and medium-term outcomes), and how these outcomes are expected to lead to impact on the environment and human well-being, passing through one or more intermediate states. While the cause-to-effect logic of those ToCs is usually sound, the narratives are often quite hard to follow. These were, in most cases, written as accompanying text to a ToC diagram, not as stand-alone text. ToC diagrams were prepared for all sub-programmes, but it was decided for the sake of brevity to leave them out of the final PF documents and the text was not adjusted. Only the CC PF document has preserved its ToC diagram which helps considerably in visualising and understanding the intended causal pathways of that sub-programme.
114. None of the PF documents presents a thorough analysis of the key problems that the sub-programme is expected to address, with their root causes and their most significant consequences on the environment and human living conditions. The rationale for UNEP’s engagement in the sub-programmes and the type of support (outputs) provided by UNEP is largely based on mandate, the MTS, Governing Council/UNEA decisions and commitments (e.g. those made by the Executive Office post Rio+20), requests and comparative advantage (i.e. former experience). Only in the CW and EG PF documents is there mention of some of the problems to be addressed, but not in a structured manner and not with respect to the ToC of the sub-programmes. The PF document for DC Sub-programme does not explain why UNEP should be involved in that area at all.
115. Most ToC narratives present intermediate states, which are changes that need to happen between outcomes and impact. They also list the most important external factors (drivers and assumptions) affecting change along the causal pathways. However, PF documents do not present how drivers, which are external factors over which UNEP has some level of control, will be promoted. Nor do they present risk management strategies to deal with assumptions that have proven to be false. Furthermore, the ToC narratives are very vague about the stakeholders that can affect or can be affected by changes along the causal pathways. Stakeholder roles, and why such stakeholders would be affected by changes promoted by the sub-programme, are not explained.
116. The majority of sub-programmes are sub-divided in relatively discreet components in-line with the EAs (e.g. the CC SP is subdivided in adaptation, mitigation and REDD+). Some sub-programmes have only two discreet EAs but have a third EA that cuts across both the first two EAs (e.g. CW and EM). For most sub-programmes the arrangement of the EAs differs from the MTS 2010-2013. The PF documents do not explain, however, the rationale for re-arrangement of the EAs.
117. Most PF documents do not refer to other sub-programmes even though, according to the MTS, such linkages exist and are expected to be further taken advantage of in future. Only the

DC Sub-programme PF document refers to linkages with EM (ecosystem-based approaches) and CC (adaptation) and the disaster risk reduction component of the sub-programme. These references are, however, not reciprocated in the EM and CC PF documents.

3.5.2 Coherence of the project portfolio

118. The first section of the PF documents called “Programme Framework Overview” includes a table showing the overall project portfolio. Projects in the table are ordered according to the EA and (main) PoW they are expected to contribute to. In the text box presenting the “Programme Framework Logic”, and in the “Logic and Geographic basis of the Project Portfolio” section of the document, an explanation is provided how projects are linked to EAs and PoW Outputs, but this is not the case for all sub-programmes and the extent to which causal linkages are explained is very variable. The table and narrative suggest that each project is linked to a single output (sometimes more than one project are linked to the same output). This is rarely true, as projects usually deliver more than one product or service. It is not always clear why certain projects are linked to a specific EA or PoW rather than another.
119. The needs and work of MEAs are well integrated in the PF documents for sub-programmes where this is most relevant (CC, EG, CW and EM). In most cases, project concepts describe how the project will support the implementation of the MEA in question or how it will anchor its work in decisions taken at different MEA Conferences of the Parties. The level of integration of the GEF portfolio in the PF documents is rather limited. In most cases, a simple list is provided in the annex of the PF document, with no other mention of the GEF portfolio within the document, for instance under the Programme Framework Logic where reference is made only to the “regular” projects. For the CW Sub-programme both GEF and MLF (OzoneAction) projects are also included next to the relevant POW outputs in the table showing the overall project portfolio, at least showing their linkages to the UNEP results framework down to the PoW Output level.
120. PF documents do not clarify how work done in the previous MTS period is carried forward in the new MTS. However, individual project concepts indicate the start and end date of the project, thereby showing which projects were already ongoing at the start of the MTS period.
121. Some PF documents explain subject-specific terminology in the main narrative or project concepts e.g. IWRM, EbA etc., but others do not e.g. ecosystem management, mainstreaming etc. They are thus targeted at a well-informed, largely internal readership.

3.5.3 Clarity of Sub-programme implementation arrangements

122. PF documents do not present a management and coordination structure either at the sub-programme level or at the project concept level. Neither do they articulate sub-programme-wide roles and responsibilities of UNEP divisions, branches and units. The table presenting the overall project portfolio in the beginning of the document lists the responsible division (and, in one case, the relevant regional office) and the project manager in charge of the project (often, rather cryptically, indicated by initials only). Branches or units are not mentioned. Annexes presenting the GEF portfolio do not indicate the responsible division/person.
123. With only one exception, PF documents do not describe an overall steering / management mechanism for the sub-programme. The exception is the EM Sub-programme where it is proposed to create an Ecosystem Management Steering Committee which intends to provide leadership and guidance for the sub-programme. None of the PF documents describe monitoring and evaluation arrangements, either at SP-level or project concept level.

3.5.4 Clarity and adequacy of Sub-programme resources

124. The PF documents present a budget estimate for the overall portfolio for four years, indicating different sources of funding and estimates for each of the two biennia. The CW Sub-programme document gives figures only for 2014-2015 and some errors are evident in the totals. None of the PF documents provide budget information for the individual project concepts except, in some cases, for the GEF-funded projects.
125. The anticipated budget for each sub-programme is quite speculative, presumably due, in large part, to the uncertain nature of voluntary contributions, with the unsecured portion ranging from 33 to 75 percent. Surprisingly, none of the PF document proposes a credible resource mobilization strategy for the sub-programme. Only the CW Sub-programme document provides some limited indications of how resources will be mobilised. Only a few project concepts provide a brief overview of resource mobilization options at project level. None of the PF documents indicate human resource needs estimates for the sub-programme or the individual projects.

3.5.5 Sensitivity to regional and national priorities

126. According to the MTS, the PFs would show the coherence of UNEP work at regional level, and would facilitate UNEP's further involvement in the "Delivering as One UN" processes at regional and country level for those countries indicating interest in this delivery mechanism. In reality, the PFs do not reflect coherence of projects at the regional level. The DRC (now RSO and the ROs) was asked to collect regional priorities for each of the seven sub-programmes and went even as far as drafting specific paragraphs on regional priorities for each Programme Framework. However, the number of priorities coming from the regions and demand for support /services often exceeded what could be accommodated in the targeted budget of the sub-programmes. Regional priorities were not summarized to the level needed to easily fit in the PF document format and, in the end, the idea of presenting the regional dimension in the PFs was abandoned, with the exception of 'Environment under Review'.
127. The Overview table in the beginning of each PF document shows the geographic scope of each project (either global or regional). Only a few regional projects are led by a Regional Office. Additionally, a small proportion of project concepts mention (potential) collaborations with ROs where this would seem relevant. In most cases the role of ROs remains undefined even if the project is regional in nature. Surprisingly, in the DC SP, which has a lot of country-level engagement, the role of ROs in implementation is not mentioned at all, not even in the project concepts. The EuR Sub-programme document has an annex which presents RO inputs, but it is actually more about activities in the regions and does not necessarily explain which responsibilities ROs will take on¹¹.
128. It is difficult to understand from the information provided in the PF documents how responsive the sub-programmes are to region- or country-specific needs and priorities. Several PF documents mention that country needs vary widely and that interventions must be tailored to national circumstances. In general, project concepts are relatively weak in terms of clarifying how the project responds to regional / national needs. The PF documents do not propose criteria or a specific strategy for regional or country targeting of interventions. The DC Sub-programme, however, mentions a country targeting strategy presented in a separate document.

¹¹ The exception seems to be RONA, where all activities listed seem to be clearly identified as being led by RONA itself (rather than HQ).

Many project concepts do not indicate the countries in which the project will be implemented hinting at the prevalence of a supply-driven approach.

3.5.6 Clarity on Sub-programme partnerships and stakeholders

129. The PF documents provide a list of the key implementation partners. In some cases, partners are also mentioned throughout the Programme Framework Logic narrative. Rarely, however, do they provide the reason behind specific collaborations. When reasons are given (e.g. CW SP) these are quite general and not specific for each partner: “to enhance [UNEP’s] impact and capitalize on the comparative advantage of different organizations”. Global partnerships are considered “critical to raising awareness, extending UNEP’s capacity and up-scaling results”. Partnerships at regional and country level are needed “to maximize learning from projects, increase capacity in the region, and to promote exchange of knowledge and experience in the region”.
130. Most partnerships seem to be rather well-established with known organizations so it was, presumably, felt that there was no need to further elaborate. It is clear that some partnerships are considered important because of the comparative advantages some of the partners have, but the specific roles each partner would play are generally not described in detail.
131. PF documents mention the main target groups of the sub-programme, but these are dispersed throughout the document, not summarized in one place. Main stakeholder groups at the sub-programme level (such as policy makers, private sector companies, MEAs) are indicated, but their roles or why they are perceived as stakeholders is not presented. Stakeholders that may be affected negatively have not been identified. None of the PF documents presents a gender dimension to the sub-programme.

3.5.7 Quality of individual project concepts

132. The quality of individual project concepts is variable. Most project concepts contain a short project outcome statement and a description of expected outputs. The project descriptions vary in quality and depth, some attempt to establish a link with the PoW outputs, while others only provide a basic narrative of project activities. The project idea and approach could often be better structured in outputs and activities. Some project concepts identify their outcomes and list some assumptions/drivers, whilst others don’t. Some concepts are quite detailed and informative, others are very brief and generic in terms of what the projects will deliver, why and how. In some cases, the intended results are vaguely specified and it is difficult to understand what exactly the intended results are, particularly in cases when the results are about “transitions” or “shifts” to a “green economy” or “SCP patterns”. When project concepts use terminology that is not clearly defined, it is challenging to understand what the intended concrete results will be.
133. Linkages between projects and the sub-programme EAs and PoW outputs are shown by the portfolio overview table in the beginning of the PF document and, sometimes, mentioned also under the Programme Framework Logic. The project individual concepts are focused on describing the intended results of the project without describing how the project contributes to sub-programme level results. The causal linkages from project outputs to PoW outputs and EAs are not clearly articulated and assumptions and drivers have not been adequately identified. In some rare cases, however, contribution to other EAs or how the project makes use of PoW outputs delivered by other projects has been identified.

134. Not all project concepts include an identification of countries or regions/sub-regions of intervention, with several projects leaving this point to be clarified in future. In some cases it is explicitly mentioned that this should happen in cooperation with partners and regional offices. The projects with clear geographic targeting do not necessarily justify the choice. In some cases, it seems that this is taken for granted or that it is generally known.
135. In general, the projects described in project concepts seem to have been established on solid (often long-standing) partnerships with other UN agencies and other relevant organizations. The majority of project concepts clearly identify these implementation partners and, infrequently, briefly describe their planned roles. Identification of stakeholders in the project concepts is less detailed. Often the concepts just briefly mention who the target groups of the project are, and, in most cases just an overall categorization is provided, e.g. communities, private sector, civil society, businesses, government, etc. there is a lack of specificity especially since the target countries have often not been identified either.
136. Project concepts do not indicate resource estimates (either financial or human). However, in those PF documents where GEF projects are presented in annex, an estimated GEF grant amount and total project budget is often provided for the MTS period.
137. Only a few project concepts refer to linkages with other projects. In most cases, these linkages are about providing outputs to or using outputs from these other projects rather than real collaboration. Only one project concept, that is within the EM Sub-programme, refers to the use of outputs from projects in other sub-programmes.
138. Several PFs propose projects that include pilots or that will be implemented in only a sample of countries, so that up-scaling becomes essential to achieve large scale impact. In most cases, an explanation is provided on how to scale up the pilots and what kind of regional or global process they intend to support. Concepts for global or regional projects that can support only a sample of countries, mention that the project will rely on knowledge management platforms and other media to disseminate approaches and lessons learned. But in general, due to space restrictions, the concepts only briefly describe how the results will be up-scaled/mainstreamed and more details would be useful.
139. Given the above limitations, it raises the important question as to whether sufficient information is available in project concepts to judge the strategic merit of the project in the broader strategic context of the sub-programme. This is especially true for new areas of work where the track record and strategic relevance of the intervention have yet to be established.

3.6 Assessment of the project design and approval process

140. The different steps in the project design and approval process are presented above in the report (see paragraph 24). Project design capacity is quite weak in UNEP. Most project managers have little project design experience because this is not an activity frequently undertaken by them. Others do not have the time to invest much effort in project design and there seems to be an attitude of doing the bare minimum required to pass the corporate quality check. Some divisions have set up internal project support units (e.g. DEPI) that assist project managers with project design paying particular attention to legal instruments. The involvement of SPCs in the project design process since mid-2013 is an important improvement as they help ensure that the projects are aligned with sub-programme objectives. However, project design experience, technical expertise and familiarity with the specific context of each project varies widely among SPCs and, up to the arrival of the “new generation” of SPCs in the second half of 2014, their capacity to provide substantive guidance to project designers, in part due to competing

responsibilities, was often limited. Additionally, expectations in terms of guidance and support provided by SPCs to project design processes were rather unclear.

141. The quality of the project design process can have important consequences on overall project performance. It has strong influence on project relevance (are we doing the right things?) and effectiveness (are we doing things right?). An in-depth problem analysis and development of a Theory of Change of the project, for example, are very helpful in ensuring that a project aims at relevant objectives and that it proposes a realistic strategy on how to achieve these objectives, taking into account the role of different stakeholders and the effects of external factors on the intended change processes. How much effort is invested in analysing the context and problems the project is meant to address, and in reflecting on the most suitable way of addressing these problems, has a direct bearing on project performance. The project design process also affects ownership by project stakeholders (have they been adequately involved in the design process?), which, in turn, may influence their efforts during implementation and also the sustainability of project achievements. The project design process in UNEP remains largely an internal process, rarely involving future stakeholders apart from donors and implementation partners. Project designers often mention the lack of resources for project design as the main reason for limited stakeholder participation in project design.
142. Since 2013, it has been recommended as best practice that draft ProDocs would be peer reviewed by colleagues within UNEP before submission to the PRC. This practice has been used but not systematically. "Peers" usually have little time to thoroughly review a full project document and, therefore, an efficient way of using the peer review (introduced for instance in the DC SP) is by choosing peer reviewers for their expertise, and then asking them to review very specific sections of the draft ProDoc corresponding to their area of expertise.
143. ProDocs need to follow a standard template, provided by QAS and available for downloading on the UNEP Intranet. This template has evolved and improved over time. A major revision took place around 2012 based on recommendations from the Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011, but other revisions have followed with the most recent in November 2014. The most notable improvements in the latest template are:
 - Clearer guidance through improved annotations in the template e.g. definitions for results levels (outputs, outcomes and milestones) in the logframe;
 - A compulsory problem analysis (with problem tree) and Theory of Change of the project under the Project Approach section, early in the document;
 - Separate sections thus more emphasis for stakeholder and partner analysis (with required table), sustainability and replicability
 - A compulsory monitoring plan and budget in table format
144. However, the latest ProDoc format also has some new shortcomings:
 - Project justification, problem analysis and project relevance are now discussed in separate sections. These elements are very closely related, which is likely to lead to repetitions in the ProDocs;
 - 'Relevance' and 'implementation arrangements' are placed under the same section, even though these elements are quite unrelated;
 - The resource mobilisation strategy, which was in earlier versions part of the project statement and approach, is now subsumed under the Project Sustainability and Replicability section. This makes little sense because the guidance annotations still indicate that this concerns "how the project will mobilize resources during implementation and, should full funding not materialize, identify implementation

priorities including the strategy that enables a scaled down project”, which is not really related to either sustainability or replication.

- The revised template for the detailed project budget distinguishes between secured and unsecured funding, but presents how it will be spent on the different project outputs and spread over the consecutive years of implementation only for secured funding. For unsecured funding, it foresees only one column per budget category so that it remains unknown how unsecured funding is planned to be distributed over the different project outputs. Thus, the estimated total cost for each project output is unknown, which goes against the principles of results based budgeting. In addition, as the unsecured budget can amount up to 75 percent of the total project cost estimate, this leaves far too much flexibility in how newly secured funds can be allocated to different project outputs. Project managers will be allowed to allocate extra-budgetary funds solely on the basis of donor preferences.

145. The UNEP Quality Assurance Section (QAS) provides the opportunity to project designers to submit early drafts of ProDocs to QAS for feedback and guidance before submission to PRC. OfO has also organized several rounds of RBM training, including a module on project design, for project managers and SPCs. Coupled to the “pre-PRC” guidance received from QAS, project managers are gradually improving their grasp of UNEP’s design quality expectations and their project design capacity but skills acquired during training and practice can easily be lost if the activity is not repeated quite frequently. To date, not all project designers have been trained or take advantage of this pre-PRC guidance. Besides, QAS does not possess the human resources to provide systematic, in-depth guidance to all projects under preparation. There is also the risk of conflicting roles if the same unit provides guidance to designers (i.e. participates in the design process) and then clears (i.e. assesses the design of) the ProDocs for submission to PRC. QAS tries to mitigate this risk by assigning different staff to providing the pre-PRC guidance and to clearing the ProDoc for PRC review.

146. The PRC reviews the ProDocs according to a standardized list of criteria¹². Guiding questions for these criteria have been prepared and are used as a reference by the reviewers and also to structure the PRC report which is prepared for each project. Since mid-2014 QAS has also introduced the rating of ProDocs along these same criteria, but this has not been done systematically. QAS has rated over 40 ProDocs so far, and the average rating for these ProDocs falls in the moderately unsatisfactory range.

147. QAS introduced a new rubric for the assessment of the quality of project design in November 2014. This rubric, which is set out as a scoring matrix, is a clear improvement as it provides the criteria the projects need to be assessed against and a description for each quality category on the rating scale. This evaluation recommends the following modifications to the rubric¹³:

- Scoring: the current scoring matrix uses a four point rating scale (unsatisfactory, moderately unsatisfactory, moderately satisfactory, highly satisfactory). However, it does not include the “highly unsatisfactory” and “satisfactory” rating categories. A six point rating scale that includes the ‘satisfactory’ and ‘highly unsatisfactory’ categories would be more appropriate

¹² Including: feasibility, coherence with the PoW, relevance to stakeholder/country/regional needs, clarity of stakeholder identification, geographic focus, adequacy of budgeting and resource mobilization strategy, appropriateness of implementation arrangements, accountability, clarity of roles and responsibilities of Divisions, ROs and partners, adequacy of the risk management strategy, appropriateness of monitoring and evaluation provisions, inclusion of environmental, economic and social safeguards and gender sensitivity, and credibility of the sustainability and up-scaling strategies.

¹³ The Evaluation Office has developed a modified matrix for consideration by QAS which addresses points ii, iii and iv.

- and in line with the rating scale used by the UNEP Evaluation Office to assess the quality of project design in project-level evaluations.
- ii. **Weighting:** a weighting system is provided for each criterion, based on their relative importance as perceived by QAS. However, this weighting is currently not taken into account into the final calculation of the project score.
 - iii. The current version of the matrix requires the reviewer to manually calculate the average score in case some of the criteria are deemed “not applicable”. It is recommended to factor this into the spreadsheet template, using appropriate formulae, to limit the possibilities of mistakes in the final calculations.
 - iv. **Criteria:** it is recommended to add additional questions based on the template used by the Evaluation Office to assess the quality of project design. Examples include questions on whether risks and assumptions identified in the ToC are presented as risks in the management risk table and whether it is clearly described how the intended results are intended to contribute to the relevant EA.
148. For no discernible reason, one set of projects was assessed and rated for design quality at the time when the draft ProDoc was received for pre-PRC guidance and another set was assessed and rated when the ProDoc was submitted to PRC, but no project was assessed at both stages in its design process. This limits QAS’ ability to assess the extent to which the ProDocs have improved in response to QAS / PRC review processes. This evaluation recommends that the rubric is used to score project documents at the time of initial submission to QAS for review and again after the project has received PRC approval, but before it is submitted to the Deputy Executive Director for signature. It is also recommended that all files, including ProDocs and assigned ratings, be stored in PIMS or archived in another system so as to allow easy reference. For each project, a brief post-PRC summary should be prepared (and archived in PIMS) which should include the design quality ratings at the time of project document submission to QAS, the scores for the quality of the approved ProDoc and a brief narrative summary providing an overview of key issues. This summary should be submitted to the Deputy Executive Director for information prior to signature. The project quality ratings at the time of initial submission to QAS and post PRC approval should also be collated by Sub-programme / Division as a programme related performance measure.
149. PRC Reports show varying degrees of thoroughness. A review of 30+ PRC reports has shown that thoroughness has little relation with the submitting division, location of the Project Team (HQ – non-HQ – Field Office) or the nature of the project. Thoroughness rather seems to depend on the PRC composition and on the timing of the submission; i.e. late submission (often in December), fewer members on the panel, and time pressure for approval, e.g. to secure donor funding that is expiring, all seem to reduce rigor. Time pressure on the PRC can shift the focus to the need for approval and away from content and quality of the project. A stronger resistance to pressures to approve project proposals until they meet the PRC’s quality demands would have been needed in those cases.
150. Many PRC Reports found in PIMS do not include the Project Teams’ responses. Those with responses are sometimes agreeing to comments but do not actually make (sufficient) changes in the ProDoc (this goes in particular for PRC comments on the Theory of Change and the quality of the Logical Framework). The relatively large number of PRC comments that are not addressed in the final, approved project version could be a sign that projects sometimes get approved before the document has been revised, or that re-submitted documents are not as thoroughly checked for compliance as they were for technical and operational quality during the first round of review.

151. Design issues that the Evaluation Office review found in the ProDocs that were not flagged by the PRC were generally related to budget errors/inconsistencies, administrative and financial arrangements, the projects' approach to minimising its environmental footprint (e.g. airfares and sustainable procurement) and, perhaps most strikingly, the lack of adequate resource mobilization strategies.
152. An issue frequently mentioned by project managers is the lack of resources to develop high quality project documents. According to the UNEP Programme Manual "*Division Directors or Regional Office Directors should plan for a project preparation phase with a devoted budget, where the project approach and well defined expectations are spelled out, before the start of the project.*" UNEP has also recently introduced a project design and inception facility (the Project Preparation Proposal) that can be used for a project preparation phase, and project preparation budgets may be approved by Division Directors following consultation with OfO/QAS as long as the budget falls within their delegated authority. Project Managers then need to submit a Project Preparation Proposal which needs to be approved by QAS. However, Project Preparation Proposals are not always used for their intended purpose, e.g. they are often used to regularize expenditures on a donor agreement before a project has been signed off by the DED or to 'bridge' the period between phases of a project.
153. Another challenge is to juggle the different formats between donors and UNEP. UNEP has already streamlined the ProDoc template with the GEF Request for CEO Approval template, so the conversion between the two formats is fairly straightforward, but this is not the case for other donors. But for other donors (UNDA, EC etc.), it is not always clear to project developers what is needed for PRC. Project Managers see the UNEP ProDoc as a requirement for approval at the UNEP corporate level but they seldom use them to mobilize extra-budgetary funding or as a management tool and reference during project implementation, for which the donor templates are more frequently used.

3.7 Review of project design quality

154. Consecutive bi-annual synthesis reports prepared by the UNEP Evaluation Office highlighted the importance of project design quality as a factor affecting project performance. Two elements, however, need to be taken into account:
- The majority of project evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office to date are evaluations of GEF-funded projects. A relatively higher standard of design quality is applied to GEF projects in line with GEF requirements. More importantly, more resources are available for GEF project design which allows for a greater investment in context analysis, stakeholder consultations etc.
 - As mentioned in paragraph 151, many project managers indicate that they hardly use the UNEP project document as a reference once the project is up and running.
155. The above elements suggest that the project design *process* actually has more influence on project performance than the final project *document*. The latter is still very important as a 'contract' between the project implementation unit and UNEP Senior Management, a reference for implementation partners and, sometimes, a marketing instrument for fund-raising. Yet, at the end of the day, it is more the efforts during project design to analyse the context and problems, to involve and analyse the stakeholders, and to reflect upon the intervention strategy of the project, that will determine the project's success, and not so much the final project document.

156. However, the quality of a project document is usually a good indicator for the quality of the project design process that led to the project document. By looking at the different sections in the project document, the evaluation can obtain a credible picture of the analysis and strategic thinking that went into the project design, and these elements are crucial determinants for a project's future success.
157. This formative evaluation assessed the quality of project design by reviewing a total of 37 projects approved by the PRC over the period February 2011 – January 2015. The sample of projects was selected based on the following criteria:
- Inclusion of a representative pool of projects from the period 2011 to 2015, which would allow the evaluation team to look at progress since the preparation of the last formative evaluation.
 - A focus on projects prepared and approved in 2014 (and, to the extent possible, 2015) in order to allow for a more detailed analysis of the projects approved during the current Medium Term Strategy.
158. The following table summarises the number of projects reviews per year of approval.

Table 3. Project documents reviewed per year

Year	Number of projects
2011	5
2012	5
2013	9
2014	16
2015	2
Total	37

159.

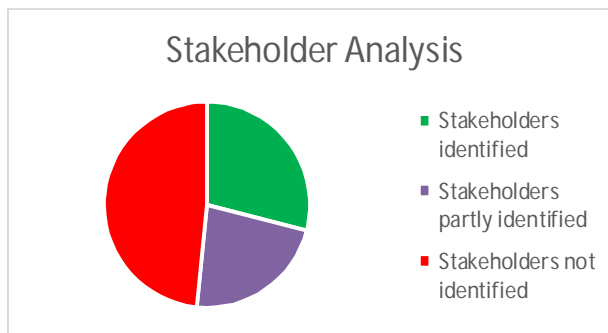
3.7.1 Project preparation and readiness

160. **Situation and problem analysis.** The majority of ProDocs start with good situation and problem analyses. Documents, especially those starting from 2013, provide good descriptions of the institutional, sectoral, legal and policy context and the global, regional or national significance of the interventions. Many of them describe complementarities with other UNEP projects, at times also with other UN agencies and - but to a much smaller degree - in relation to UNDAFs in the countries targeted by the project. Most of the documents were clear in terms of UNEP mandate and cross-cutting issues such as South-South cooperation and the Bali Strategic Plan, though not always explicitly.
161. **Project justification.** Overall, projects form a coherent part of the PFs and their relevance in terms of sub-programme higher-level results are well described. Newer projects more often provide descriptions on linkages with other projects in the same PF. Linkages with other sub-programmes are rarely mentioned. Projects that are pilots or have pilot project/ demonstration sites explain their relevance to higher level sub-programme results (but usually fall short of explaining their geographical selection criteria). However, plans to encourage other agencies,

governments, or NGOs to adopt the model and replicate it (a critical component of such interventions)¹⁴ are often missing.

162. For the PRC it is particularly important to understand the project's history. ProDocs often do not spell out how projects have been identified and initiated. Consultations that must have taken place beforehand are often not, or not sufficiently, described. There seems to be an assumption that ProDocs are *internal* documents or documents written for an informed audience, e.g. UNEP and the donor, and therefore do not need information about the project's initiation - especially for projects that are scale-ups, continuations or are building on previous initiatives. The external reader can often only guess the pre-existing context, consultations, motivations and the expectations of UNEP, partners (including donors) and beneficiaries.

163. **Stakeholder identification.** Most ProDocs do not contain a stakeholder analysis or only partly identify stakeholders. For example, a ProDoc may state that a project will be implemented with seven governments, but name only two of them. In many ProDocs, stakeholders, especially beneficiaries, are only identified after project inception. In some cases, the stakeholder identification is even an activity of the first project output. This has implications for the planning,



scope, time and costs of a project, and eventually on achieving the intended results. A typical statement in the project approach chapter is that countries are selected based on request for UNEP's assistance from their governments. The fact that participating countries are often unconfirmed and sometimes even unknown adds a considerable amount of uncertainty to the project. If

participation of a country is not confirmed, at least the expressed interest of a government should be clearly mentioned in the stakeholder analysis. If participants cannot be confirmed, the project is lacking a fundamental part of its business case. Many critical aspects of the project intervention, e.g. risk management, financial planning and budgeting, sustainability, scale-up and replication efforts, partnership analysis, project governance, implementation arrangements and the provision of social safeguards will remain general descriptions and lack accuracy if the beneficiaries, stakeholders, and locations of the project are not specified in the document. The analysis of seven of the most recent approved projects showed that more attention was being paid to listing key stakeholders and, in two cases, the stakeholder analysis was comprehensive.

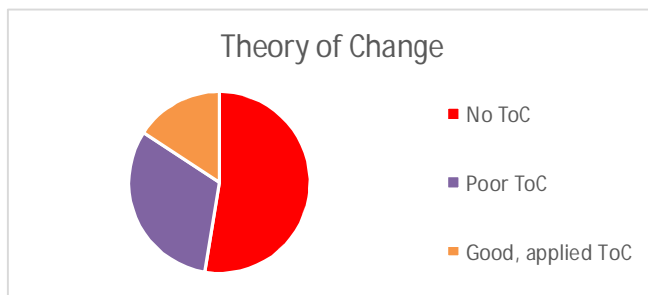
164. In most cases, stakeholder analyses tend to list a myriad of general stakeholder categories (NGOs, ministries, governments, communities, etc.) that often do not appear in the document again. For the most important stakeholders that are going to be involved in the actual implementation of the project, the Stakeholder Analysis should consider the strengths and weaknesses for each one of them separately. The analysis should also include the individuals and groups that are most likely to affect, or to be affected by the project and describe why and how the project will attempt to change the stakeholders' behaviour and whether stakeholders are already contribution to certain causal pathways of the project. There should be a clear link between this analysis and the description of the intervention in the ToC.

¹⁴ A lack of investment in strategies for pilot / demonstration uptake and replication is a common finding in many project Terminal Evaluations.

165. **Gender and indigenous people.** Most ProDocs have a gender section and it is clear from the PRC reports that this chapter is given importance. However, this chapter generally suffers from an over-generalized treatment. A meaningful gender or indigenous people analysis usually requires a geographic specification and it is therefore not surprising that those projects with defined locations have the most robust analyses. At times, the gender goals proclaimed – especially for those projects that work on a global or regional level on very technical subjects – sound a little unconvincing. The pretence is further underlined by the fact that gender-related activities are usually not to be found again in the work plan or the detailed budget. More guidance seems to be necessary for the integration of meaningful gender components into global and regional projects. The analysis of seven of the most recent approved projects confirmed this finding; the gender analyses were brief and not integrated in the other sections of the ProDoc. They also tend to present an overview of gender aspects relevant to the projects rather than detailing an analysis complemented by a strategy.

3.7.2 Intended results and causality

166. **Theory of Change.** The ToC, and its added-value for the quality of project design, do not seem to be sufficiently understood. This is reflected in the fact that only few ProDocs since 2011 have made use of it. Additionally, the ProDoc template up to November 2013, did not specifically ask for a ToC to be included. The few existing ToC diagrams have been created with



Microsoft Word's "shapes" which is a rather cumbersome and ineffective software for the visualization of non-linear or interconnected causal pathways.

167. Two thirds of ProDocs reviewed have no ToC at all, the remainder have either a poor ToC (that usually just put elements of the logical framework in boxes, occasionally accompanied with arrows), or one that is acceptable but is not

actually used to improve the project design. Among the seven recent projects reviewed by the Evaluation Office, six present a ToC, with two presenting ToCs that identify drivers and assumptions as well as causal pathways. Overall, only six out of 37 ProDocs have good ToCs with causal pathways that are also reflected in the projects' design, Logical Frameworks and the risk tables. On closer inspection, the need to improve identification of the key causal pathways in project interventions becomes evident.

168. Most of the ProDocs use the "Project Approach" chapter to explain the project's strategy, meaning the major types of intervention employed to deliver the intended objective, typically capacity-building, institutional strengthening, policy support, and the development, dissemination, and/or scaling up of technical innovations.
169. The interventions are usually accompanied by a description of the activities that are designed to deliver certain defined outputs. Project activities, in general, are appropriate to produce outputs (and are also relevant, in most cases, in terms of contributing to the identified PoW output(s)), however the change they drive often ends at the output level. To a lesser extent documents explain how their outputs aim to make a significant contribution to the outcome(s). The intended causal pathways leading from project outputs to EA contribution are hardly ever described. The majority of Prodocs do not adequately 'close the gap' between their outputs, i.e. products and services delivered by the project, the direct outcomes, e.g. improved knowledge/ awareness/ capacity, and the longer-term outcomes, i.e. change in behaviour. To use a typical example: projects struggle to show how outputs such as workshops, training, consultations and

best practice reports lead governments to adopt or pass a new law or to implement/enforce a new policy.

170. The logical means-end pathways are usually best described between activities and outputs and are weaker between outputs and outcomes, particularly if the project's outcome is pitched at quite a high level. In those cases where the outcomes were on a different (lower level) than Expected Accomplishments, the causal pathway shows a lack of intermediate stages, assumptions and drivers to bridge the gap between outcomes and the higher levels results.
171. The analysis of seven of the most recent project documents showed that, with the exception of one case, there was an increased effort in the identification of the causal pathways. However, a lack of understanding of the relation between assumptions, risks and mitigation measures can still be noted, especially in terms of developing adequate mitigation plans which address the assumptions mentioned in the ToC. Additionally, although the project documents include reference to the PoW outputs and EAs in the ToC sections, there is room for improvement in the identification of the link to the delivery of the PoW through the identification of sufficient products/intermediate states.
172. **Logical Framework.** Almost all PRC reports have – to varying degrees – commented on the Logical Framework, which shows the high level of importance that is afforded to this part of the ProDoc. As a consequence, every ProDoc has a Logical Framework that shows outcome(s), outputs – which by and large match the work plans – indicators and means of verification. Overall, terms are used coherently. If terminology is wrongly used it is usually that assumptions are confused with drivers. Objectives, results, outcomes and impact are sometimes used synonymously.
173. The introduction of outcome milestones in the new ProDoc template to show progress on achieving the direct outcome was a useful step to enhance project design. Outcome milestones could be either outputs that are considered to have a large influence on the likelihood of achieving the direct outcome ('upward' linkages to outcomes may depend on the usefulness of the output) or intermediate targets of the outcome indicators. However, in practice these milestones are often re-phrased outputs without great influence on the outcome - which, in turn, only further emphasises the need to address the lack of project actions that are needed to drive the intended change from outputs to the outcome level.
174. **Indicators.** Output indicators are often activity centred and are not appropriate to measure contribution to the PoW Output(s), let alone to measure contribution to the EA. Outputs also need to be relevant, high quality, delivered at the right time and accessible to target stakeholders, which are factors that cannot be taken into account with purely quantitative output indicators. More thought has been put into the definition of outcome indicators. Still there are a number of outcome indicators that will not measure the achievements of projects. Some of those have attribution problems, e.g. "number of agreements signed with the United Nations", "increase in government financial allocations to clean energy". Others, and that seems to be the majority, struggle to find indicators that measure enhanced knowledge or awareness of stakeholders. Most indicators chosen are output or activity-based (e.g. "Number of workshops delivered", "Number of information materials disseminated", "best practice report compiled") and fall short of measuring the intended outcome (change of behaviour).
175. Since the introduction of the new ProDoc template, most projects have indicators with baselines and targets. None of the assessed projects has explained their method for the baseline data collection (baselines are most often "zero" - probably based on the assumption that nothing has happened in the respective area before project start) and no ProDocs justify their

performance targets¹⁵. While the project team would know why, for example, the project targets the development of “four management tools”, the rationale behind that number does not unfold for the reader of the Logical Framework. However, it should also be mentioned that the template does not ask for justification/ explanation of baselines and targets. This should be rectified.

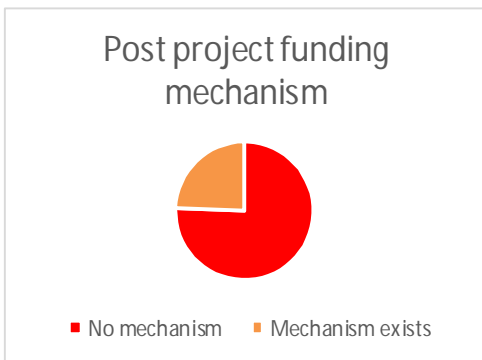
176. The review of seven of the most recent projects showed that more effort has been put into the definition of output indicators, leading to the selection of indicators which can more easily measure the contribution to the PoW Outputs. In general, the observations made for outcome level indicators remain valid. However, there are still cases of very low quality indicators which do not relate to the outcome.
177. Finally, the ProDoc template states underneath the logical framework: “IMPORTANT: For projects without full funding, state what results from the logframe will be delivered from the funding available.” The review has shown that not a single project with unsecured funding has done so. Among the seven recent projects reviews, three were fully funded and two presented “scale down” options in case the full budget could not be realised. However, these considerations were not reflected in the logframe.
178. **Monitoring.** While adequate fund allocation for evaluation¹⁶ can be found in almost every project budget, a budget for monitoring the project’s progress. Projects usually state that monitoring is to be undertaken by the Project Manager, implying that monitoring costs are covered by the staff budget line item, often not considering that, for example, project site visits and on-site team meetings require travel costs and staff time that might not be available. In short, the monitoring section should describe what information is required for a project manager to manage a project towards the achievement of the intended results. Monitoring becomes a risk area especially for those projects that are implemented/executed in countries that have no UNEP office presence. Corrective action would then potentially have to wait until the mid-term evaluation, should there be one. UNEP projects should adopt the good practice applied in GEF-funded projects and specify a costed monitoring plan that covers both monitoring and evaluation.
179. **Evaluation.** Monitoring, reporting, auditing and evaluating are at times used synonymously throughout text of ProDocs’. The separate sections on “reporting”, “monitoring” and “evaluation” in the ProDoc template are very helpful in that regard. Projects reflect the difference between monitoring and evaluation, project teams plan for evaluations and – as PRC comments show - consult with the Evaluation Office on the practical details thereof.

3.7.3 Sustainability, replication and up-scaling

180. **Sustainability.** PRC reports often ask projects to present a strategy to sustaining outcomes / benefits, because their activities are usually sufficient to promote government and stakeholder awareness and interests, but do not necessarily promote commitment to execute, enforce and pursue the programmes, plans, agreements, monitoring systems etc. prepared and agreed upon under the project. Some projects have therefore integrated incentives and/or require governments to request inclusion into a project, or even ask them to submit an application. It

¹⁵ At output level, setting a target is usually about determining the minimal number, scope, timing and quality of output needed to meaningfully contribute to the outcome. For outcome level targets and higher-level results it’s more about setting a meaningful (and realistic) threshold of change that would need to be met so that the next level change can happen.

¹⁶ The UNEP Evaluation Office is systematically asked to comment on evaluation arrangements in ProDocs before the PRC.



would be worthwhile to explore whether these projects are more successful in terms of ownership and sustaining benefits than others.

181. An issue less often addressed is the *financial* sustainability of project outcomes. Ten out of 37 project designs have mechanisms to secure funding to maintain the benefits from the projects' outcomes beyond the end date (this is simply counting the mechanisms, not a statement on the quality of mechanisms). A number of ProDocs suggest that the solution lies in the success of a

project without actually having specific activities for promoting sustainability – assuming that results will become best practice, and will be replicated and up-scaled by either follow-on projects or other stakeholders. The impact drivers for those optimistic causal pathways remain unspecified. Other projects suggest that partners find the financial means to consolidate outcomes that are of interest to them, therefore seeing financial sustainability in continuous external financing.

182. Few ProDocs include activities - and indicators – to advise stakeholders on how to apply for funding from other sources, to engage the private sector or on how to use returns, e.g. project revenues for financial sustainability. This is an approach that should be encouraged for future projects. Four of the seven more recently reviewed projects include some considerations of this type in their project documents.

183. **Communication and knowledge management.** The “Public Awareness, Communication Strategy” chapter is usually short and generic, often referring to DCPI for the communication component of the project (but not always translating this into an actual budget allocation). Some projects mention “wider dissemination of project results” without going into specifics. Statements like “Outputs from the project will be outreached through UNEP’s regional networks” equally leave much room for speculation. This observation can also be linked to the issues concerning stakeholder analyses and the ToC discussed earlier. If the key intended users are not properly specified in the stakeholder analysis or through the ToC the outreach/ dissemination to intended users is also likely to be weak and restricted to generalities.

184. The most common knowledge management approach used in the assessed projects is the sharing of project information, lessons learnt and best practice reports among UNEP offices and Secretariats (without details on the archiving and accessibility), and the extension of existing online platforms or websites, seemingly avoiding the creation of entirely new portals. The ProDocs, however, do not elaborate on how these online means are maintained beyond a project’s lifetime. Overall, projects cover the first part of the knowledge management process definition of capturing, developing, and sharing knowledge but indicate little on storing, effectively using and maintaining knowledge. The analysis of seven of the most recent approved projects has showed that in some cases communication strategies were more detailed and included specific budgets and products, but it is early to state whether this is a general trend.

3.7.4 Identification of risks, social safeguards and UNEP’s environmental footprint

185. **Risk Table.** Risks are often specified in a very generic manner (the evaluation noted that in the small sample of ProDocs assessed, two were submitted with exactly the same risk table) and thereby raise the question of the usefulness and purpose of the risk table. If the purpose is for the project teams to create effective mitigation measures, it should include concrete action

plans for “high” or “medium to high” level risks. Therefore the risk description would need to be more specific, e.g. saying which donor could withdraw, how corruption could manifest itself, which project component requires funding to sustain benefits. Equally, responsibilities and time of action should be determined. The monitoring of risk and action plans should also feature in the monitoring plan of a ProDoc.

186. At times risk responses that are clearly the responsibility of UNEP e.g. activities related to project management are incorrectly assigned to external partners. Some risk tables even assign the monitoring of a country’s stability or a government’s commitment to a partner, which is creating new risks to the project. More often the responsibility is generically given to the “UNEP Project Team”, a division or a branch, and the question of “when?” the risk will be assessed is answered with a non-specific “ongoing”.
187. Many risks descriptions do not extend to the risks’ implications. For example “Lack of funding”, or “Lack of donor commitment” are conditions that have an effect on the project but focus too narrowly on the root causes. The related risks to the root cause (“lack of funding”) could be “implementation stops, project objectives cannot be achieved, damage to UNEP reputation/ loss of credibility with donors” etc. and should also show in the risk table. Risk ratings should be based on the risk itself, i.e. risk likelihood should not be confused with likelihood of the cause. Likewise it is easier to determine the impact of a risk when looking at its final consequence.
188. A risk often included is “political will” or “political stability/ conflict” in a participating country and is most often responded to by “close monitoring” or “careful selection of countries”. If the stakeholder or country has already been determined a risk response of “careful selection” is already obsolete. If conflict or political will, in a participating country, depends on e.g. elections that fall into the duration of the project implementation, “close monitoring” is not a viable mitigation measure but should be replaced by a concrete adaptation, change or exit strategy. ‘Political will’ may be influenced in some countries through advocacy actions taken by the project or project stakeholders, (i.e. it is a driver) yet in other situations it may be difficult to influence by the project and should be regarded as an externality (an assumption). This is seldom discussed in ProDocs.
189. **Social Safeguards.** Insufficient attention is paid to safeguards. Environmental, social or political factors that could have positive or negative effects on projects are seldom mentioned. This could be because the ProDoc template asks for factors to be mentioned but not specifically for those with a potentially *negative* impact.
190. **Environmental footprint.** UNEP describes its environmental sustainability efforts as follows: “UNEP has been climate neutral since 1st January 2008. This was achieved by reducing greenhouse gas emissions as far as possible and procuring offsets to compensate for the remaining emissions. (...) The biggest source of emissions is from work-related flights, consequently, efforts have been made to reduce flights by using e-communication technologies.”¹⁷
191. ProDocs do not elaborate on how they are planning to avoid or minimize the project’s environmental footprint. Surprisingly, one project risk table mentioned the increased use of e-

¹⁷ <http://www.greeningtheblue.org/what-the-un-is-doing/united-nations-environment-programme-unep>

communication as a risk response to funding shortage. If e-communication is a possibility it should be the *modus operandi* in the first place and not a fall back option.

192. 36 out of 37 projects indicated a budget allocation to the line item “travel on official business” in the “personnel component”. Five point six percent of the total programmed amount of these projects is planned for staff travel. Budget tables do not provide cost break downs with sufficient detail to support a detailed finding, however, a preliminary examination of project activities suggests that this figure would be many times higher if funding for travel of consultants and workshop participants (at least one of which show in every project) was added. The budget table should be more transparent in showing how much of the project budget is really going into air travel. ProDocs should elaborate on the mechanisms used to reduce their negative environmental footprint and also state if they foresee procurement of carbon offsets for *staff* travel only, or for *all* travel related to the project.

3.7.5 Management, governance and partnership arrangements

193. **Project Structure.** Most projects show the project implementation structure through an organizational diagram for the implementation of the project. They usually describe the composition of the (planned) Project Steering Committee, reporting lines and the role of the Project Manager and his/her first reporting supervisor. They usually describe the relationship with other divisions and, to a lesser degree, with external partners. PRC reports often criticize that ProDocs fall short in including the Regional Offices involved in the project and in stating what each is to provide and achieve. While this is mostly addressed in the post-PRC revisions, it usually remains unclear whether the Regional Offices are budget owners. However, the analysis of seven of the most recent projects shows a tendency to more clearly identify the regional and country dimension of the projects. It is clear from the PRC reports that this aspect has now been afforded more attention and therefore information is provided in the final ProDoc. However, reference to UNDAFs and one UN programming are limited even for those projects clearly targeting thematic areas in countries where it is reasonable to assume that other agencies are active.
194. **Partnership analysis.** The analysis of partners is a crucial planning process and serves the purpose of identifying the right project partners to achieve the project's objective. This preparatory work should happen before submission and there should normally be additional documentation beyond outside the ProDoc. This would include an analysis (e.g. SWOT) of potential partners, records of consultations, discussions on objectives, an agreement on priorities and, eventually, on the legal instruments. The ProDoc could then present a table showing the confirmed partners and summarize their roles and responsibilities, and their strengths and weaknesses. The latter should, if necessary, be linked to the risk table.
195. Commonly, ProDocs list general groups, i.e. UN agencies, national governments, experts, private sector, NGOs, academia etc. and describe from a theoretical standpoint how they may fit into the project. The other common practice is to name potential partners, e.g. Worldbank, GIZ, UNIDO, Microsoft etc., and to put a “(tbc)” behind their names. These partners are afforded a “wish list” status, as they often do not, or only partly, re-appear in the diagram of the project structure, in the budget or in the work plan. It was further noted that no capacity assessment have been attached to the PRC submissions of those implementing partners that are confirmed to enter high volume PCAs with UNEP. The most recent PRC guidelines require partners to be screened before a project goes for PRC approval. Possibly as a result of the new guidelines, and/or because of increased attention paid by PRC to this point, the analysis of seven of the most recent project documents has shown that partners are listed and explanations on their roles and responsibilities are provided. However, in many cases, the rationale for choosing a

given partner is not clear or is taken for granted (reasons provided include “long standing cooperation” or “donors’ choice”). One project in particular stands out for the level of analysis provided in the partnership section, but even in this case not all the required due diligence reports were provided at the time of ProDoc approval.

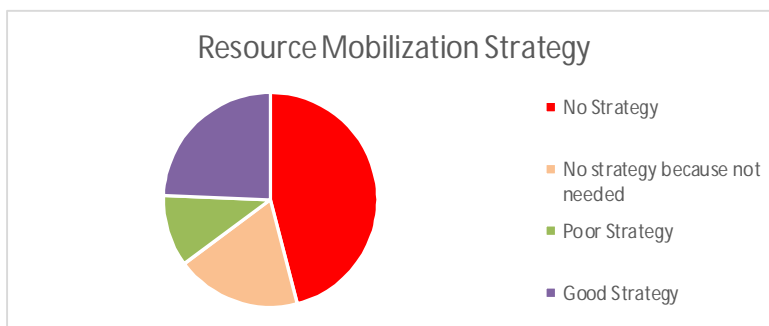
196. **Work Plan.** The Work Plan has a column for “Responsible Party” and one for “Partners”. Most Work Plans show UNEP as “Responsible Party” in the output box and leave the activity boxes blank, so that the reader does not know whether UNEP is facilitating this output and the respective activities, or actually implementing them. This is often linked to the issue of partner “wish lists” (see above).
197. In light of the implementation of International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) in UNEP, it would be useful to have clear differentiation on *principal* and *agent* for all projects to minimize the risk of under-expenditure, as IPSAS follows the “delivery principle”, i.e. the recognition of expenditure on the basis of goods and services *received* (under UNSAS reported expenditure represented disbursements and unliquidated obligations).¹⁸
198. **Legal instruments.** This section of the ProDoc is almost meaningless when not filled with specific information. Most documents simply list the common UNEP agreement modalities (donor agreement, PCA or SSFA with Implementing Partners, MoU with partner UN agency) rather than to state who exactly they are planning to sub-contract and for what amounts under what legal obligation. This is related to the fact that partners, contrary to best practice, are often selected after project approval (see above), nevertheless, the planned amount should still be specified.
199. **Private sector engagement.** Some projects entail the purchasing and disseminating of goods and/ or services that are provided by private companies, e.g. solar lantern, equipment for ODS destruction facilities, transport of refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment, soil-water infrastructure maintenance systems, large quantities of seedlings, rangeland restoration etc. None of the projects reviewed was expected to receive (or grant) funding from (or to) for-profit entities.
200. Crucial questions that are not answered when involving private business include: Who will undertake the procurement? Does the team have the capacity to determine the specifications of the goods or services needed? Can the goods or services be procured locally? If not, how will goods be shipped to the target country and what are the related costs? Who does the quality assurance and collects the end user rating? How will goods be distributed at project site and what is the business model if they are sold? Has there been a market analysis, e.g. what is the purchasing power? Is there a government tax that will make the product too expensive? Is usage and maintenance of goods ensured given the local context? What happens to equipment at the end of the project?
201. ProDocs should answer these questions - even if implementing partners carry out the business related activities - as the achievement of results depends on them. Unless closely monitored, these interventions become risks that should be met by predetermined mitigation measures.

¹⁸For general information on IPSAS see: <https://www.ifac.org/publications-resources/2014-handbook-international-public-sector-accounting-pronouncements>. For the difference between *principals* and *agents* see: <https://www.ifac.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/ipsas-9-revenue-from-exch-3.pdf>.

202. One review report showed that a project that planned to distribute solar lanterns and grid-charged batteries through an implementing partner in a post-disaster country failed to do so because the lanterns became subject to high government and sales tax and the existing national power grid was not sufficiently powerful/reliable to charge the batteries.
203. The Programme Manual has a short section on best practice in “procurement planning” but no practical guidance on how to address the above listed questions or how to build and review a solid business model.

3.7.6 Financial planning and budgeting

204. **Budget.** The detailed budget table is the most neglected mandatory part of all ProDocs. The fact that over quarter of the budgets were missing in PIMS and that it took considerable time and effort for the Evaluation Office to obtain those excel files can be interpreted as symptomatic of the importance that was given to them. Additionally, the available budgets followed different templates, showed deficiencies and were not clearly marked as approved at a specified date. Not a single Supplement was approved with a revised budget even though this should be standard practice. In many cases the PRC did not pick up on budgetary errors / inconsistencies.
205. The instruction provided in the ProDoc Template (chapter 1, table 1) specifies that any other Division or Regional Office listed in the Project Information Table “*needs to appear in the Delivery Plan and in the Budget showing allocation and responsibility*”. Work plans usually do not show the roles and responsibilities of other divisions and offices. Budget allocations in that respect are never provided. This could be a problem of the budget template that does not have a provision to reflect budget allocation to other divisions and offices. The template also does not provide the possibility for Divisions to show which budget items are covered with secured funding and which are allocated unsecured funding at the time of submission.
206. Furthermore there is no place within the ProDoc template that asks for an explanation for how non-US currencies and exchange rates are being dealt with, how UNEP in-kind contribution should be reflected in a budget, and how the Programme Support Costs were determined. It could be worthwhile to modify the budget template to include these elements and to ensure a Finance staff member serves the PRC to ensure correctness of project budgets and their compliance with UNEP financial rules and regulations.
207. **Resource mobilization (RM).** This chapter clearly presents a challenge for project teams. The guidance in the ProDoc template reads that projects without full funding must “describe how the project will mobilize resources during implementation for the project”. Only 24 percent of ProDocs have done that correctly.
208. The majority of ProDocs simply list their sources of secured funding and/or state that “*more funding will be sought during the implementation of the project*”. If a lack of funding is identified in the risk table, the usual response is “fundraising” without adding this as an activity in the work plan or specifying who, when and how the fundraising will be conducted. The analysis of the most recent cohort of projects has shown that projects requiring additional funding tend to present fundraising achievement to date and, to a lesser extent, describe the action to obtain additional funds.
209. Projects that provide a RM Strategy usually describe how funding is envisaged to be secured via



contacts that project managers have with donors' representatives and that Project Managers will approach the relevant donors on a case by case basis, e.g. at international conferences. This "individualized" fund raising might be effective but a) may risk the exclusion of Regional Offices or other existing capacities, and b) does not support the endeavour for coherence and more transparency stipulated in the UNEP Policy Guidelines on RM. It should be noted that the notion of "individualized fundraising" and the idea of ad-hoc conversations with potential donors at events are still present in the most recent ProDocs, but overall more efforts have been put into presenting actual opportunities and listing them in the ProDocs.

210. The ProDoc template guidance further reads that *"should full funding not materialize there should also be a documented strategy that enables a scaled down project."* Consequently, a number of projects without full funding and without a RM Strategy have simply indicated that in case that funding does not materialize, *"the scope of the project shall be scaled down"*. This is quite alarming considering that the project approval threshold for confirmed funding is only 25% of the total budget (or US\$200,000 whichever is higher). A project should consider each of its outputs as essential to the success of the project and rather than opting immediately for scaling down, it should try everything to mobilize the missing funding. Change management should happen when acceptance tolerances are exceeded and not as part of the project design. In addition, if it is not specified which outputs will be scaled down or taken out and why, the effects of such scale-downs on the validity of the means-end pathways of the project remain unknown.
211. More specificity and better justification would be useful when the project would consider postponing certain activities or outputs (which outputs are most urgent instead of which outputs are most critical) or scaling down geographically e.g. by letting go of some countries or pilot locations (which locations would receive priority?). However, statements about which activities or outputs are more or less important to the success of the project can be counterproductive to fundraising efforts as potential donors who read the ProDoc might wonder whether some project activities or outputs are really necessary.
212. Given that all RM initiatives need to go through the Donor Partnerships and Contributions (DPC) unit¹⁹ in the UNEP Office for Operations, to ensure coherence and complementarity with UNEP priorities, one would expect some kind of reference in the ProDocs to the DPC or the UNEP Policy Guidelines on RM. While most ProDocs make reference in the Communication chapter on the involvement of DCPI and in the Evaluation chapter on the involvement of the Evaluation Office, it is noticeable that project teams make no references to UNEP's DPC (or RMS) within the Resource Mobilization Strategy section.
213. **Cost-effectiveness.** All projects make reference to how they intend to build upon pre-existing institutions and partnerships. The most common statement is that projects will "seek synergies" or "complementarities" with existing projects in the same thematic area or with other UNEP initiatives. Some documents give specific names for these other initiatives that help the reader to better contextualize the project. However, very few ProDocs describe how exactly they will complement each other in practice, and the cost saving aspect is usually not evident.
214. **Financial and administrative arrangements** including flows of funds and procurement processes are not described in most ProDocs, but there is also no place in the template that asks for elaboration of this important operational part of the project. These elements are spelled out

¹⁹ Previously called the Resource Mobilization Section (RMS).

in the legal instruments used to formalize the relationship between service providers and partners, and the project. Draft legal instruments are not usually provided as part of the project file submitted to PRC. For national projects that are located in countries without UNEP office presence, administrative arrangements with UNDP or UNOPS are mostly mentioned within the governance structure section of the ProDoc but do not usually touch on the legal and financial implications thereof.

215. In some cases it is mentioned that UNEP is administrating a Fund or setting up a Trust Fund but documents do not say how funds are managed. The flow of funds for partnership agreements and goods and services required by the project are often not explained; and neither are the payment modalities. Whether UNEP chooses advances, reimbursement or direct payment has implications on risk control, timeliness of delivery and reporting obligations, and should be aligned to the implementation capacity of the funds recipient.
216. **Overall presentation of the ProDocs.** A number of ProDocs still have comments, track changes and typos in their final, approved version. The scanned documents sometimes miss pages, signatures, are difficult to read (because of low quality scans), or are far too large in size to be sent by email, and regularly omit annexes that are mentioned in the main document. As these documents reflect UNEP as an organization to the “outside world”, more attention should be paid to presentation and format.

ANNEX I. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION

ANNEX II. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS
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Response to comments received during the Senior Management Meeting of 25th June 2015

Comment	EO Response
<p>Christophe Bouvier, Director, Office of Operations: Recommendations are being taken seriously, even if OfO is not in agreement with all of them. He is working with the team to see how to implement the recommendations. His two main 'take-aways' are: (i) Preparation of Programme Framework documents needs to be moved upstream in the overall strategic planning processes; and (ii) Quality assurance of project documents needs to happen early on in the design process within the sub-programmes and branches.</p>	<p>The two 'take-aways' are indeed important recommendations of the evaluation. They will require a quite important shift in the way programming is done in UNEP but should not increase complexity or the burden of work for the organization as a whole.</p> <p>The acceptance of recommendations by OfO and the justification for partial acceptance or rejection will be presented in the recommendations implementation plan for the evaluation, which will be prepared by OfO in consultation with the PSPT and Executive Office.</p>
<p>Peter Gilruth, Programme Strategy and Planning Director: It is important to look at the recommendations closely for the preparation of the 2018-2021 MTS. There are still 4-5 points in the strategic planning processes that can be improved. For instance, the connection between SPCs and Division Directors need to be strengthened in the form of "strategic partnerships". UNEP needs to act upstream, at the level of Division Directors, as we have seen a lot of missed opportunities.</p>	<p>The evaluation is indeed intended to provide recommendations for the preparation of the 2018-2021 MTS, among other planning processes.</p> <p>The evaluation did not analyse the current relationship between the recently recruited, Nairobi-based SPCs and Division Directors. It is, however, briefly discussed in the recent Chemicals and Waste Sub-programme evaluation.</p>
<p>Jacqueline McGlade, Chief Scientist and Director, Division for Early Warning and Assessment: The evaluation should have stressed even more strongly the need to create solid baselines.</p> <p>Integrating gender requires a change in the way we work. Stronger leadership is needed to enforce change and recommendations and the evaluation should be stronger on this point. The EuR sub-programme would like to contribute by making linkages between projects stronger.</p>	<p>Recommendation 3 proposes that the Environment under Review Sub-programme would play a stronger role in helping define higher-level indicators for UNEP and measuring the baselines for these indicators.</p> <p>The evaluation did not analyze how strong current leadership is on gender in UNEP though it did find a further need for guidance to improve integration of the gender dimension in programming.</p>
<p>Naysán Sahba, Director, Division of Communications and Public Information: He has a few questions that the evaluation could address:</p> <p>How well was communication integrated in the MTS planning process?</p> <p>What exactly is meant by the conflict of interest identified in QAS's work?</p>	<p>Communication is addressed as part of the assessment of how replication and up-scaling is taken into account in planning documents. How well communication happened along the planning processes was not assessed by the evaluation.</p> <p>The risk is that QAS could not judge the quality of a project design in an impartial way, if it had provided advice on that same project design. QAS' judgement could be affected either positively, when its advice had been followed, or</p>

	negatively, when its advice had been rejected, regardless of the relevance of that advice. The term “risk of conflict of interest” was replaced by “risk of conflicting roles” for more clarity.
<p>Michele Candotti, Chief Executive Office: We need to reflect on how to avoid over-engineering processes and try to improve efficiency. We need to look at the recommendations in light of other processes that might also need revision. The top three improvements since the previous formative evaluation are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of Theory of Change and better definition of results levels based on OECD definitions • The presentation of UNEP’s business model • Improved project design 	The recommendations made by the evaluation have been shaped not to require additional processes or to increase the work burden of the organisation. Most recommendations require little effort to implement and could yield significant benefits for UNEP.
<p>Munyaradzi Chenje, Director, Regional Support Office: Regional issues are flagged in the evaluation, but how do we make sure to mainstream the regional work? How can South-south cooperation be further integrated in the Programme of Work?</p>	These are indeed important questions that would require further reflection in UNEP. Recommendation 4 proposes that regional targets are set for EA indicators to show geographic emphasis of UNEP efforts. Recommendation 5 proposes that the Programme Framework documents should indicate regional priorities for the sub-programme and also propose a specific strategy or criteria for regional or country targeting of interventions. Recommendation 12 stipulates that ProDocs should be clearer on the role of Regional Offices in the project.
<p>Tim Kasten, Deputy Director, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics: Glad to see that improvements to date have been reflected. The report mentions that the preparation timelines are very long. How can these be shortened while maintaining improvements?</p>	Preparation timelines are, unfortunately, largely imposed by external processes and requirements.
<p>Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director: The recommendations need to be seen in broader context of other processes. Recommendations may add delays, therefore we need to set up a meeting and look at the practicality of some recommendations. Funds are not always available to prepare projects.</p>	The recommendations implementation plan for the evaluation will be prepared by OfO in consultation with the PSPT and Executive Office.
<p>Achim Steiner, Executive Director: It should be clear that this is not an evaluation of the MTS, but that it is about the planning process. He suggests to call this evaluation the “Formative evaluation of the planning process of the MTS” rather than the Formative Evaluation of the MTS.</p>	The sub-title “A review of UNEP programming processes” has been added to the title. The standards and benchmarks used for the evaluation varied according to the specific evaluation question asked. Care was taken not to assess processes and documents against the

<p>The evaluation needs to clarify what standards/benchmarks are used to assess the documents. There is a lot of judgment in the document, much more than we are used to. The MTS is a license to operate but it does not talk about implementation, too much focus on planning should be avoided and the emphasis should be on implementation.</p> <p>Robert Chambers recently published an article about RBM being a killing process curbing the ability of NGOs to deliver. The point is taken that RBM was introduced and promoted in 2010, but the recommendations of this evaluation should be put into proportion and translated into something closer to the management realities. To what extent does design quality really affect results?</p> <p>The current number of recommendations is too high and they go two steps further than justifiable. The notion of QAS having a conflict of interest in assuring quality is debatable. There should be more reflection on how to de-complex the process. We should hold a working session to see how we can reduce the complexity of processes. There is a difference between what can be done and what the evaluation suggests. The report can be left as it is or, alternatively, the Evaluation Office could take up the intellectual challenge and revise the summary in light of the comments made.</p>	<p>ideal but rather against what could realistically be done or achieved, given the institutional structures within which UNEP operates. Where appropriate, comparisons were made with the processes and documents related to the MTS 2010-2013 which were evaluated previously. Many factors affect project performance. The design process and the quality of the project document (which are strongly related) are important factors as they affected project relevance, stakeholder buy-in, effectiveness, sustainability and up-scaling among others. Non-critical recommendations have been removed and the remaining recommendations have been re-organised per process/document for easier implementation. A key finding presented in the 2012-13 Evaluation Sythesis report is the link between project / programme design limitations and later performance. The conflicting roles of QAS in project design have been explained above.</p> <p>The Evaluation Office welcomes the proposal for OfO or the Executive Office to discuss ways to simplify programming processes, though many steps are imposed by external processes. The summary has been shortened and re-structured, without, however, omitting the opportunities for improvement that remain in UNEP's programming processes and documents.</p>
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Response to comments received from UNEP staff

Maria Cristina Zucca, Sub-programme Coordinator, Environmental Governance

Comment	EO Response
<p>Slide 4*: I think we can respond to this point (missing serious problem analysis in MTS and related documents) in this new MTS - we should make sure that the big picture comes together very clearly in the MTS 2018-19 and cascading documents. I think the recommendation should not be limited to including the problem analysis in the Programme Framework (PF), the problem analysis should also be in the MTS. I agree that the PFs should be updated regularly and be seen as truly living documents (see also first point in slide 17).</p>	<p>The evaluation proposes that the PF documents form the basis for MTS development, i.e. the problem analysis for the sub-programmes, which needs to be presented in the PF documents, has to take place before the MTS is prepared. If the problem analysis is presented in the PF documents on which the MTS is based, it may not be necessary to present a detailed problem analysis in the MTS document itself.</p>
<p>Slide 9 (on clarity on resource allocations): I think</p>	<p>Recommendation 5 addresses this issue,</p>

<p>this recommendation is very important and it should not be up to either SPCs or project managers to address this "corporate" issue. UNEP has to overall streamline its processes in terms of resource allocation. For instance, recently there has been a mixed approach in resource allocation, with some XB resources going to Subprogrammes (then re-allocated to projects through the facilitation of the SPC) and some directly to Divisions (e.g. on UNEA resolutions follow-up) which makes it difficult for a SPC or Lead Director to follow up on expenditures, funding gaps etc.</p>	<p>recommending that the PoWs should provide more clarity on the principles, criteria and priorities of resource allocation to sub-programmes and among divisions and offices in UNEP. It also recommends that the resource allocation process for Regular Budget, Environment Fund and Earmarked Contributions should be more transparent across the organisation.</p>
<p>Slide 10: Very important recommendation (more explicit reference to regional/country focus in PFs and in projects) but it is important to avoid giving all responsibility to project managers. Enhanced regional delivery should be based on a corporate policy and mechanisms that facilitate the consideration of regional priorities in our planning processes in a more streamlined way.</p>	<p>As explained in the evaluation, a mechanism was put in place for regional consultations, but the results of these consultations were omitted from the final PFs.</p>
<p>Slide 11: gender. In general, I think we need more in depth support (from Gender Unit/experts) to understand how to meaningfully integrate gender in our planning documents.</p>	<p>This evaluation did not assess the depth of support from the Gender Unit or experts in UNEP, but the way gender is integrated in the planning documents and staff interviews suggest that more guidance is needed at all levels.</p>
<p>Slide 17: it should be clarified how PFs should contribute to MTS and POW development, considering that so far PFs have been developed as a follow up of having the MTS and POW approved. It may be in theory a good idea but it requires more thinking (planning projects portfolios much in advance may be a challenge - i.e. situations change, hence the need for SPFs to be living documents)</p>	<p>PFs should be the first step in UNEP planning, under which a project portfolio is developed and above which higher-level programming documents are constituted. PFs should not be considered as a set of projects with a nice cover to show how these projects somehow fit together and jointly contribute to achieving sub-programme objectives pre-determined in the MTS and PoWs. This new approach would indeed be radically different from the previous one, and require a lot of additional reflection on its concrete implementation.</p>
<p>Slide 18: careful consideration should be given to the pace at which project templates change (frequent changes result in excessive burden for project managers) . Also, while efforts to streamline UNEP templates with donor templates have been made, there is still need for enhanced clarity and guidance to project developers on what is needed for PRC in the case of projects</p>	<p>This is a valid comment which was incorporated in recommendation 18.</p>

that are being funded by entities that have their own templates (e.g. GEF, UNDA etc.).	
GEF integration in our planning, monitoring, reporting systems is also an important issue to reflect on - for future MTS.	Agreed.

*) The comments refer to the slides of the PowerPoint presentation made to SMT on 25th June 2015 rather than the evaluation text itself.

Vincent Sweeney, Coordinator, Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land Based Activities (GPA), Division of Environmental Policy Implementation

Comment	EO Response
My suggestion is that the Table of contents indicate that there is a summary of recommendations. It appears to be a lengthy document but the main points are contained in the Summary, so more persons are likely to read it (as I did). An Executive Summary would also be useful (20 pages is too long to call it an Executive Summary).	Agreed. The extended summary was taken out of the main report document and a new (shorter) summary of findings and recommendations was drafted for the main document.
Were any Project Managers interviewed?	Several staff interviewed (please see annex 4) are project managers in addition to their other corporate or sub-programme level responsibilities. The evaluation team did not interview staff who only play a project management role in UNEP, but all UNEP staff were given the opportunity to comment on the draft report.
<p>Recommendation 16: <i>ProDocs should provide sufficient detail on specific legal agreements foreseen for the project and draft agreements should be shared with the PRC as part of the project approval package.</i></p> <p>Legal Agreements are seldom drafted at the time of the ProDoc submission to PRC. This does not seem like a reasonable expectation!</p>	Agreed. The recommendation was deleted.
<p>Recommendation 18: <i>The ProDoc template should be modified as follows: [...] and the detailed project budget should indicate the total cost of each output, and how unsecured funds would be spread over the different outputs.</i></p> <p>It would be nice if the budget template also allowed for budgeting via activities. This is complex but very useful for managing (day-to-day) the project.</p>	Budgeting for activities is best done for the project's annual work plans and budget. It would indeed be too complex (and probably very tentative) to provide this level of detail at the project document stage.
It is highly desirable for SUBSTANTIVE input to be provided by QAS prior to submission to PRC. The	In the view of the EO, QAS does play a gatekeeper role to ensure that project design

<p>PRC should not be viewed as a “gatekeeper” or “roadblock”, but rather as the final stage in the process. Early feedback on issues related to ToC and logframe would negate the need for a back-and-forth between project managers and QAS/PRC, which is very frustrating and counter-productive.</p> <p>It is essential that <i>the UNEP Quality Assurance Section (QAS) provides the opportunity to project designers to submit early drafts of ProDocs to QAS for feedback and guidance before submission to PRC.</i></p> <p>I do not understand why this should be viewed as a conflict of interest. The role of different Units in ONE organization should be to support the others, when and where needed. QAS should not be seen as a “regulator”, but as a partner and facilitator. There should not be this perception that QAS is an impediment to project delivery.</p> <p>In-depth peer review by SP staff or subject experts prior to submission to PRC does unfortunately not guarantee that criteria of the PRC are met. The QAS MUST be involved in the project design support process!</p>	<p>quality meets minimum quality standards. The PRC may provide additional recommendations on how to improve project design, but QAS should not be both judge and party.</p>
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**ANNEX III. COMPLIANCE WITH RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FORMATIVE EVALUATION
OF THE POW 2010-2011 AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM IMPLEMENTATION**

Table A1. Key lessons from the period 2010-2012 mentioned in the MTS document

Lesson learned	How the lesson is integrated in the MTS document
<p>The aim for the MTS 2014-2017 is to help leverage impact from a more coordinated approach to environmental and development challenges, starting within the UN system. To play its unique role and position within the UN system in coordinating environmental matters, UNEP must take full advantage of coordination mechanisms such as the Environment Management Group (EMG), the UN Development Group (UNDG), UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCMs), the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and the High-level Committee on Management of the UN system Chief Executives Board etc.</p>	<p>MTS mentions under its Operations Strategy that UNEP's revamped policy on partnerships entails "bringing coherence through UN system-wide partners on environmental issues through the EMG, UNDG and UN Country Teams".</p> <p>It further mentions that UNEP aims to strengthen its coherence and efficiency by working within established UN regional coordination structures, including the regional UNDG teams and RCMs, and at the country level, within UN Country Team (UNCT) structures and programming processes.</p> <p>The Business Strategy section mentions a specific "service line" related to promoting UN-system wide coherence on environmental matters.</p>
<p>A strong corporate strategy and business model should enable the organization to play an increasingly strategic role within the UN, catalysing change and leveraging impact from partners, and go a step further in identifying new or strengthening existing strategic partnerships.</p>	<p>The importance of strategic partnerships and UNEP catalysing role within and outside the UN is emphasized throughout the MTS document, including under the Strategy descriptions of each sub-programme and the "fundamental principles underlying UNEP's approach" listed under the Business Strategy section. In the description of service lines, strategic partnerships are mainly considered as the means to upscale solutions and technologies developed with UNEP support.</p>
<p>Clearly identifying UNEP's service lines in the MTS 2014-2017 will help inform partnerships, ensure that UNEP builds on its comparative advantage, while relying on partners to occupy other niches, thereby yielding a stronger impact than could be achieved by any one partner alone.</p>	<p>UNEP's six main service lines are described in quite some detail under the Business Strategy section in the MTS document.</p> <p>According to the same section PoW Outputs and projects should be "defined with service lines in mind".</p>
<p>There is a need for an iterative process to ensure that the EAs and outputs are driven by demand for services by countries, MEA priorities and other stakeholders, and consistent with UNEP's resource base. In determining how UNEP responds to demand for its services from UN partners, countries and other stakeholders, it is also important for UNEP to assess the political value it adds for partners and countries. A key factor would be the extent to which UNEP will improve countries' and partners' perceptions of the utility of its products and services and, in turn, the ability for UNEP to sustain and upscale results internationally.</p>	<p>The bases for the MTS are described above (foresight process, consultations etc.) and it seems that partner and country demand has to an extent influenced the formulation of the results framework. The importance of upscaling results through strategic partnerships is emphasized throughout the MTS document.</p> <p>However, how UNEP would assess the political value it adds for partners and countries, and how UNEP would improve the perception of countries and partners of the utility of its products and services, is not clear from the MTS document.</p>
<p>With respect to planning, the causal pathways that link projects and expected results in the UNEP MTS can be further strengthened. Programme Frameworks should continue to be used to help determine which projects will be required to deliver the PoW, and ensure that there is both causal logic between the projects and the results in the MTS/PoW, and synergy between projects.</p>	<p>This is not obvious from the MTS document itself, but UNEP did prepare new Programme Frameworks for each sub-programme under this MTS period. The quality of these documents is variable.</p>
<p>It is critical that EAs are directly <i>attributable</i> to UNEP's</p>	<p>The MTS 2014-2017 still contains many EAs pitched at a</p>

work. This entails that EAs are realistic in terms of UNEP's level of ambition, and that the indicators to measure achievement against EAs allow for attribution to UNEP. The strategic objectives of each sub-programme would identify the larger goal to which UNEP will <i>contribute</i> .	results level above the immediate programmatic outcome level. Others are pitched in part or entirely at the output level. Many EAs also use vague terms which can be interpreted in many ways and undermine accountability.
Sub-programme evaluations have also been instrumental in shaping the design of the sub-programmes in the PoW.	Sub-programme evaluations are part of the evaluation framework described in the section on evaluation of the MTS.
Strong programme monitoring will include identifying indicators and means of measurement at the time of the design of the EAs—rather than subsequently—in order to ensure that EAs, indicators and means of measurement are all adequate and properly aligned.	This was not done. SPCs were asked to define the EAs for the MTS first, and later to define the indicators for the SF. Means of measurement were replaced by units of measure in the PoW. There were various issues with the indicators and units of measure presented in the PoWs.
UNEP should endeavour to establish a clear business model and business processes for its engagement at regional and country level in developing and implementing the MTS 2014-2017 and PoWs, and UNEP should continue its effort in pursuing the incremental approach in implementing its Strategic Presence Policy within available means. In follow-up, accountability for delivering results in the PoW must be further strengthened, including by enhancing the engagement of Regional Offices, clarifying what UNEP will deliver regionally and nationally, and what will be delivered at the global level.	The MTS presents a decent business model. Under the Operations Strategy section, the MTS indicates that UNEP intends to improve certain business processes such as aligning financial and human resources planning with the results UNEP aims to achieve; compliance with international standards for public accounting; introducing the UN Secretariat-wide UMOJA Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution; and project performance monitoring and reporting. It also indicates a clearer division of responsibilities between the UNEP Divisions and Regional Offices (ROs). The Divisions would continue to lead on normative work and advocacy at the global level, while DRC and the ROs would strengthen their programme coordination function to ensure an integrated and relevant delivery of the sub-programmes at regional and national level. DRC and ROs would provide the critical link between the sub-programmes and the regional and national needs and priorities, and would coordinate and orchestrate the UNEP-wide demand-driven support to UN agencies and countries in particular regions in a triangular partnership between Divisions, Regional Offices and partners. While Divisions and partners would provide the needed technical and substantive support to strengthen regional delivery, the ROs would be involved in different roles (leading and supporting) in delivering about 80 per cent of the outputs in the PoW.

Table A2. Implementation status of recommendations made by the Formative Evaluation of the PoW 2010-2011 relative to the PoWs 2014-2015 and 2016-2017

Formative Evaluation recommendation	Implementation status
In future MTSS, the EAs and indicators should be formulated to better align with basic principles of Results Based Management. Performance measures should be 'SMART' (specific, measurable, achievable/attributionable, relevant and time-bound). This would enhance both the ease of monitoring and the evaluability of the PoW.	EA indicators (in SF and PoW) were revised, but not much improved for the biennium 2014-2015. For the biennium 2016-2017, for most EAs several indicators were added – up to 5 indicators per EA.
For POWs within the 2014-2017 MTS, POW Outputs should be defined at the same results level as project outputs but can describe an aggregation of project outputs or specify the most significant output required to achieve an EA. EAs should be specified at the same results level as project outcomes, but may encapsulate several project outcomes.	Yes, in most cases POW Outputs are defined at the same results level as project outputs (products and services delivered by UNEP projects). They usually describe an aggregation of project outputs.

Table A3. Integration in the PoW documents of lessons learned mentioned in the PoW documents

Lesson learned	How the lesson is integrated in the PoW document
UNEP as the environment programme of the UN must take full leadership on environmental matters becoming not only the voice but the authority for the environment in the UN system. UNEP must therefore take full advantage of existing UN coordination mechanisms (EMG, UNDG, UNCTs and Regional Coordination Mechanisms, the High level Committee on Programmes and the High level Committee on Management of the UN Chief Executives Board).	UNEP's role in the UN system is integrated in a few PoW Outputs under each sub-programme, in terms of bringing about more coordination in the UN system and/or in terms of upscaling and harmonizing the use of norms, tools and methods for broader use than what UNEP can do on its own through pilot demonstrations. A specific EA for the Executive Office relates to promotion of greater coherence and complementarities in the UN system on environmental issues.
The need for an iterative process to ensure that the EAs (UNEP's results) and outputs (UNEP's products and services) are driven by demand for services by countries.	PoW Outputs were developed by SPCs largely based on inputs by and negotiation with UNEP divisions and ROs. Priorities of individual countries are not reflected in the PoWs because the PoWs are UNEP's global work programmes. Countries did influence the wording of PoWs through the CPR who reviewed the PoWs several times. A novelty in this MTS was the introduction of service lines (basically the broad categories of outputs that UNEP is best placed to deliver). While the use of a ToC analysis in constructing the PoW should have been instrumental in determining what outputs would lead to the EAs, the outputs were largely drafted before the ToC of each sub-programme was developed. The ToCs were reconstructed based on pre-determined EAs and PoW statements.
UNEP's operational support must drive results-based management so that human and financial resource management, resource allocation decision-making, UNEP's approach to partnerships, its information technology support are all mutually reinforcing and contributing to effective programme and project management in a results-based context.	The EAs and indicators in the Programme Support section place attention on UNEP's performance monitoring. A new corporate risk management system consistent with that of other UN entities, is also proposed, that would enable adaptive management of programmes and projects.
The need to further strengthen accountability for delivering results in the PoW, including by specifying the engagement of ROs, clarifying what outputs UNEP will deliver globally and regionally.	The PoWs were designed to a) show which Divisions are accountable for a given output in the PoW and those that will contribute to the delivery of that output; b) show what will be delivered at a global level and/or in the regions (but without specifying the region); and c) budget by establishing a method for deriving each sub-programme budget allotments against the deliverables in the PoW.

Table A4. Integration in the PoW documents of lessons learned in the Roadmap and/or MTS document

Lesson learned	How the lesson is integrated in the PoW document
Need to identify strategic partnerships to help catalyze change and leverage impact. These strategic partnerships need to be clearly distinguished from project partnerships.	Strategic partnerships are presented under each sub-programme. At the global or regional levels, strategic partnerships and project partnerships are often the same. (National partnerships are usually not considered strategic.) The PoW 2016-2017 goes a step further by presenting the key partnerships under each PoW Output.
UNEP will show clearly how its budget and human resources are aligned with programmatic priorities. Resource allocation criteria and priorities will also be clarified in the programme of work, so that it is clear what UNEP will deliver with its Environment Fund resources, what it could deliver by mobilizing extrabudgetary resources and which mechanisms are in place to ensure a transparent prioritization of extrabudgetary funding. The manner in which UNEP handles its resource allocation will	The PoWs show how budget and human resources are distributed between sub-programmes. For each sub-programme, the PoWs present how these resources are distributed over the UNEP Divisions. However, within sub-programmes, there is no prioritization of outputs or EAs. Resource allocation criteria and priorities are not clarified in the PoW. It is not clear from the PoWs what UNEP will deliver with its different funding resources.

help enhance predictability in financing for activities that underpin all UNEP sub-programmes.	
Given that projects are the main delivery vehicle used by UNEP to achieve the results in the MTS and PoW, project management capacity needs to be improved throughout the organization, including through training; an annual review of the quality of project management and supervision; a revised programme manual; an enhanced Project Review Committee; and improved project formats focusing on key issues such as sustainability, replicability, ToC, partnerships, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.	The PoWs 2014-2015 only mention staff training to improve substantive, administrative and management skills in RBM. A budget has been set aside for this training in both biennia.

ANNEX IV. PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Sheila Aggarwal-Khan	Programme Strategy and Planning Team
Jan Betlem	Quality Assurance Section
Maria Elena Zuniga	Quality Assurance Section
Sofia Chaichee	Quality Assurance Section
Peter Gilruth	Programme Strategy and Planning Team
Claudia ten Have	Sub-programme Coordinator
Monika MacDevette	Sub-programme Coordinator
Maria Cristina Zucca	Sub-programme Coordinator
Oli Brown	Sub-programme Coordinator
Jochem Zoetelief	Regional Support Office
Maryam Niamir-Fuller	Chair Task Team for MTS and PoW

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ANNEX VI. ASSESSMENT RUBRICS