

9th Annual Subcommittee Meeting
Agenda Item 6(c)
Evaluation Synthesis Report
Management Response

Oral Statement by Tim Kasten

Thank you, Mike, for the comprehensive overview of the 2020 – 2021 Evaluation Synthesis Report.

While acknowledging the positive performance trend over the last 5 biennia within UNEP's overall project performance, we agree that we can do more on the 4 areas highlighted in the report, namely -

1. to strengthen the likelihood of impact,
2. to ensure achievement of project outcomes,
3. to promote sustainability, and
4. to improve on human rights and gender

I am also pleased to be able to outline how UNEP has incorporated the evaluation findings and lessons learned from the three evaluations of high strategic importance:

- (i) the UNEP sub-programme on Environment under Review;
- (ii) UNEP's enhanced coordination and implementation of the 10YFP and its programme; and
- (iii) the Review of Poverty Reduction which I will address in the second part of my response.

Let me begin with a focus on how UNEP is strengthening the likelihood of impact

The Evaluation Synthesis report underscores a continued need for project design and implementation actions that focus on – and invest more in – influencing the change processes that lead beyond project outcomes to higher level results.

In December 2021, UNEP endorsed the approach to a new standardized Delivery Model which, among others, clarified roles, responsibilities and accountability of project management. This new Delivery Model Policy was approved as final in September 2022 and presented earlier today under Agenda Item 6 a). The Delivery Model will be about influencing the change processes to strengthen UNEP's capacity to shift the needle through coherent strategic action and to maximize the impact of our work to address the triple planetary crisis.

There are four areas in particular that I would like to highlight in our efforts to address this recommendation:

- **First, a new Concept Approval Group**, to be chaired by the Deputy Executive Director, and consist of the UNEP Senior Management Team, aims to ensure that project designs invest in the change processes that lead beyond project outcomes to higher level results. The Concept Approval Group provides an early review to assess the probability that project outcomes will be sustained at a socio-political, institutional, and financial level; and that environmental and social safeguards are taken into consideration.
- **Second, projects will be grouped into a strategic programmatic approach to bring together our technical expertise in a more coherent way.** The Programmatic approach is used to avoid standalone projects with limited strategic impact or scalability. Instead, the Programmatic approach brings together groups of synergistic projects that *collectively* contribute to the direct outcomes of the Programme of Work. This mechanism is now being put in place to increase cross-divisional and regional coordination and cooperation, and through so doing, to increase the impact of projects and implement the Programme of Work in a more efficient and effective manner.
- **Third, the respective roles of Regional Offices and Divisions have been clarified for enhanced UNEP delivery at the Regional and Country levels.** In a nutshell: Regional Offices will represent UNEP in the regions and provide strategic and programmatic direction for UNEP's work. The Divisions will provide sectoral and technical depth and thematic coherence for UNEP's work and be directly accountable for project management. In carrying out their responsibilities, Regional Offices will provide thought leadership and coordination for UNEP's work as it relates to regional and national priorities and subsequently guide the technical work of the project design and implementation process, enriching it with regional and national perspectives. An improved understanding and recognition of national and regional circumstances will increase the likelihood of impact and project outputs and sustainability of project interventions.
- **And fourth, we are adjusting our review processes for project concepts and project documents to better manage project risks.** The Delivery Model introduces a project risk tiering system currently under development to dedicate the necessary resources to manage high and medium-risk projects, while maintaining a close eye on low-risk projects.

On Achieving Project Outcomes

The evaluation report highlights that project design and implementation actions need to place stronger emphasis in terms of resources allocated and management attention, on activities that drive the intended change processes *beyond* the delivery of outputs – in other words a greater focus on outcomes rather than just outputs.

In addition to the four relevant areas I mentioned already, to further address the issue of impact:

- UNEP is working to ensure enhanced Senior Management oversight of project performance, by rolling out quarterly business reviews to give a health check on all projects across UNEP, as well as to provide dedicated reports for each Division and Office. The Quarterly Business Reviews provide a periodic view on Project Delivery, Finances, Human Resources and Audit Recommendations in quarterly Senior Management Team meetings.
- UNEP is also transitioning to an Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting solution that will help project managers and Directors to focus on results-based management by enabling clear linkages between resources and results frameworks, and improved day-to-day management of projects.

On Promoting Sustainability Project sustainability is of course not about the perpetual renewal of a project, but rather the probability of project outcomes being maintained and their impact living on beyond project completion.

In response to this, once again, we believe working with and through UN Reform and our new approach to delivery will support this. In the first instance, enhanced regional office engagement and country team participation will help to ensure that UNEP works towards directly meeting country demand. In doing so, we hope to increasingly get the environmental component of sustainable development integrated into the UNSD Cooperation Framework. As noted on Monday under Agenda Item 3, the Cooperation Framework is a negotiated document between the UN and the government – i.e., designed to meet and respond to the national priorities as presented by government. The closer we can align ourselves to the Cooperation Framework, we believe we will have more traction and uptake of our work as they will be directly responsive to the needs and requests of a solid UN and Nationally agreed plan.

Additionally, our project design and planning documents, under our new delivery model should be more strategic and aligned to impacts. Finally, UNEP will also put more effort into programme and project exit strategies and on creating the conditions that help to sustain direct outcomes in both project design processes and during project

implementation. Strategies that enhance country ownership can also help ensure the continuance of project outcomes.

On Human rights and gender equality

UNEP is fully committed to apply a human rights based-approach and upscaling measures to promote and improve mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment in the organization's strategies, programmes and core business processes that will *inter-alia* promote diversity and inclusivity, showcase measurable results, and foster positive change.

UNEP will work to fully implement Environment Assembly resolution 4/17 on promoting gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance. This will entail strengthening institutional capacity to achieve gender-transformative and human rights outcomes in programme delivery as outlined in the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy (2022-2025). This involves operationalizing gender and human rights dimensions, intersectoral perspectives and non-discrimination issues in programme and project design. UNEP will further foster the wide-spread use of a gender lens to ensure that gender equality and human rights perspectives are fully integrated through associated principles.

We also understand that a human rights based-approach and gender equality are areas UNEP needs to enhance. Hence, we will explore how we can ensure that the design, implementation and monitoring of projects have effectively applied a human rights-based approach and adhered to UNEP Gender Policy to ensure that UNEP interventions reach the most marginalized segments of the population. I also refer to the evaluation and management response to the Gender evaluation also to be presented shortly. The new Concept Approval Group and the Project Review Committee will also pay greater attention to these issues.

Finally on this issue, we continue to work on eight environmental and social safeguard issues (Biodiversity, Ecosystems and Sustainable Natural Resource Management; Climate Change and Disaster Risks; Pollution Prevention and Resource Efficiency; Community Health, Safety and Security; Cultural Heritage; Displacement and Involuntary Resettlement; Indigenous Peoples; and Labor and working conditions) and their risks identified through a Safeguard Risk Identification process. Noting that all UNEP projects are screened to ensure no one is left behind and to incorporate human rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment, as well that the sustainability, resilience and accountability principles are all taken into account and recommendations provided to project managers.

I would also like to now respond to the evaluation findings and lessons learned on the three strategic evaluations:

1. The UNEP sub-programme on Environment under Review

We welcome the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Biennial Evaluation Synthesis. After this week's meeting and following last week's GEO-7 scoping meeting, the UNEP Science Division will develop an 'Implementation Plan' for the six recommendations outlined in the report.

- Coinciding with the end of the evaluation period, the Environment Under Review subprogramme has enjoyed some success in “reflecting it’s crosscutting work better in UNEP planning documents and increasing the synergies and institutional alignment with other Divisions” –Conclusion #3 and Recommendation #5. Notably, the triple planetary crisis identified in the *Making Peace with Nature: A scientific blueprint to tack the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies*” synthesis report provides important context for UNEP’s 2022-2025 MTS which identifies climate, biodiversity and pollution as the pillars of coordinated, inter-disciplinary interventions.
- UNEP’s flagship assessment, the Global Environment Outlook, has adopted an innovative, user-centric approach in the 7th assessment process (GEO-7). Rather than continuing to document declining environmental indicators across ecosystems, GEO-7 is taking a ‘solutions’ focus and will map out specific solutions pathways needed to:
 - phase out 80% of fossil fuel use by 2050,
 - reduce the environmental impact of the food system by 2/3 by 2050, and
 - create a near-zero-waste, fully circular economy by 2050.
- Another important innovation is that UNEP’s experts in energy, food systems, biodiversity and circularity will play an important role in the assessment process which will undoubtedly increase the coordination and use of GEO-7 within UNEP and the influence of this flagship on subsequent UNEP planning processes, addressing recommendations #4, #5 and #6 of the evaluation.
- Regarding capacity-building (Recommendation #4), almost all the initiatives contributing to the Environment Under Review subprogramme include activities to strengthen capacity of stakeholders to collect, analyze and use environmental data and assessments. In a new initiative to systematize these efforts, an assessment is being undertaken to produce a capacity development benchmarking report which will identify gaps and make recommendations for a UNEP-wide strategy on capacity development.
- Finally, with respect to Recommendation #2 on “ensuring the coherence of assessments across UNEP and supporting senior managers in setting the

organization's agenda according to the findings of data and assessments", UNEP hosts the *Ad hoc Global Assessment Dialogue (AGAD)* -- an informal process that brings together the Heads of Secretariats and the Co-Chairs of major global environmental assessments to exchange and share best practices. This experience is shared with other parts of UNEP, such as the process to establish a science-policy panel for the sound management of chemicals and waste.

2. On UNEP's enhanced coordination and implementation of the 10YFP

- I am pleased to inform that on 19 October, the Board of the 10YFP -- with the participation of Member States and stakeholders -- approved a new Global Strategy for Sustainable Consumption, aligned with UNEP's MTS. The global strategy is a strong, inclusive and ambitious global strategy to be implemented through 2030 and focused on 4 global priorities which respond directly to lessons learnt. Each global priority in the new strategy responds to several recommendations in the evaluation. The four priorities are:
 - First, to further position sustainable consumption and production as an essential requirement and means to achieve global commitments for sustainable development, climate, biodiversity and pollution;
 - Second, to enable changes through circularity, transformative multistakeholder and public-private partnerships, tools and solutions across high-impact sectors;
 - Third, to empower countries, in particular developing countries, and stakeholders to mainstream and implement sustainable consumption and production patterns, leveraging the UN Development System; and
 - Fourth, to foster a global movement and commitments for action by growing and amplifying the LiFE Campaign for sustainable consumption and production based on a coherent, science-based narrative, to change how we think about, act on and talk about consumption and production;

The new strategy will bring greater focus by producing a streamlined framework with fewer priorities than the previous One Planet Strategy -- in addition to addressing the interconnected efforts to promote Sustainable Consumption and Production in the context of the climate, biodiversity and pollution frameworks. The new strategy also has greater country-level connection and global communication and advocacy efforts, which are mentioned several times in the evaluation.

Combined with a more focused strategy in response to the lessons learnt, we have opted for a realistic and pragmatic biennial resource mobilization framework and implementation plan which has not previously been submitted as such to donors and stakeholders. This framework responds to the need to refocus the Secretariat on what

we can do best and a clear resource mobilization plan for a core budget anchored in specific targets and indicators, -- a significant departure from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund approach.

We have also established a clear connection to country efforts anchored in the UN system, in a targeted and demonstrative way. This responds to the evaluation's call for "a more country focused approach that needs to be designed and funded. Building strategic partnerships with regional bodies and UN agencies with country presence and mainstreaming Sustainable Consumption and Production on existing mechanisms, processes and initiatives at country level should be crucial elements in these efforts"

3. Responding to findings and recommendations from the review on poverty, I am pleased to inform that the following actions have been taken and are underway to strengthen UNEP's capacity to review poverty at the higher level:

- First, our new medium-term strategy for 2022-2025 seeks to deliver a transformational change for people and nature by addressing the root causes of the three planetary crises of climate change, nature and chemicals and pollution, such as poverty and inequality.
- As we cannot do this alone, our strategy is geared towards building a United Nations system that is stronger, more coordinated, and mutually supportive of environmental action aiming to ensure that no one is left behind. Therefore, a people-oriented approach and a social development perspective has been integrated in each of the three strategic pillars of the Programme of Work that aim to target the planetary crises.
- UNEP has also made significant progress in bringing in a livelihood component as part of environmental sustainability. Poverty Environment Action, The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity Initiative and The Partnership for Action on Green Economy are good examples that apply a poverty-environment methodology and demonstrate the nexus. This effort will be continued through the Programme approach which will set the tone and ambition of UNEP in terms of how it plans to address Poverty reduction and social development through programmatic delivery.
- Through the safeguards-related support, we have been guiding UNEP projects to consider absolute and relative poverty and economic externalities by advising project managers to identify and prioritize the most marginalized and vulnerable groups in the project context and weigh long-term sustainability vs. short-term economic gains. UNEP's Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework includes comprehensive guiding principles that pay particular attention to

vulnerable and marginalized groups. However, further work will still be done to operationalize this Framework.

- In addition, and over time, tools such as the new UN Secretariat wide "Integrated, Planning, Management and Reporting (IPMR)" system will also help UNEP understand financial flows going to the poverty-related SDGs. All this information will help UNEP make more evidence-based decisions on where and how to strengthen its work on social development in its programming.
- We are also in the process of recruiting a Poverty Reduction/Social Development Consultant to support the implementation of the actions agreed by UNEP to address the Poverty Review recommendations. This would be followed by longer-term options to enhance UNEP's internal capacity to spearhead the integration of the social development pillar of sustainable development into the work of UNEP. This includes options for training of staff on Leaving No One Behind, drawing on the Poverty Environment Action's knowledge products, communities of practice, and capacity building initiatives.

Before I close Mr. Chair, I would also like to inform that we now actively track, at the divisional and regional levels, the UNEP responses to these evaluations through monthly reports, and at the full organization-wide level through our Quarterly Business Reviews.

Mr. Chair, this concludes the UNEP management response to the Synthesis evaluation. I would just like to reiterate how much we appreciate these evaluations. Far from being seen as a critique of our work, we take them as positive and independent evaluations that help clarify what we may see as lessons learned and strengthen our ability to approve.

Thank you.