

**Oral Statement by Tim Kasten in Response to Evaluation Office Recommendations
Subcommittee Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives
18 July 2023**

Thank you for that overview, Mike.

We much appreciate the work of the Evaluation Unit as an independent partner to advise on the ways and means to enhance and improve our delivery in the most efficient and effective way possible.

I would like to therefore take this opportunity to address **the three key UNEP-wide recommendations** that have been identified as essential for addressing institutional or systemic challenges. These recommendations pertain to **Knowledge Management, Project Monitoring, and Project Design**.

Let me begin with Knowledge Management and Project Monitoring.

The evaluation presentation emphasized the importance of storing and accessing project documentation, as well as capturing and utilizing lessons learned from projects.

Since 2021, UNEP has been transitioning to the Integrated Planning, Management, and Reporting (IPMR) solution. IPMR is a UN Secretariat-wide comprehensive project management system that is part of Umoja 2.0. IPMR enables programme managers to holistically plan and monitor their substantive work and resources based on defined activities, tasks and timetables, utilizing the results-based management (RBM) methodology, to ensure effective management of programmes and projects.

The Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting solution is a powerful enabler of the Secretary-General's management reform and data strategy initiatives, as it provides a wealth of qualitative and quantitative information about UN's programme delivery. IPMR Enables clear linkages between resources and results frameworks, both strategically to communicate programmatic results, and at a granular level, to help managers better manage day-to-day operations, including tools for enhanced oversight of Implementing Partners. Inherent to the platform is the provision of a repository for all project related data and information.

Since May of this year, we have aggressively moved forward with the aim of a full migration from our former UNEP systems into this UN platform by the end of 2023. As of last month, we have begun full utilization of this new platform as we phase out our former systems. This process has entailed a lengthy process of data cleansing and enrichment of project data, staff training and alignment of our digital systems.

This new IPMR platform, will serve as a centralized source of all project associated information, also providing the front-end of the UNEP Open Data portal. The UNEP Open Data portal – open to the public, is now being upgraded accordingly. UNEP Open

Data is part of UNEP's compliance with the standards of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

In terms of risk, the IPMR solution requires project managers to identify and address project-related risks at the onset of the planning stage, ensuring proactive risk management throughout the project lifecycle.

In addition to IPMR, we are also working on other aspects of Project Monitoring.

UNEP is strengthening its internal monitoring systems and processes. For example, our internal UNEP Quarterly Business Reviews.

The Quarterly Business Review, or QBR, has been in practice for over a year now. The QBR offers the UNEP Executive Director, and the entire senior management team, a comprehensive assessment of project delivery, finances, and human resources, as well as keeping a watching eye on and evaluation and audit recommendations. These quarterly reviews provide the SMT with a window into the overall health of our programme and enable a collective discussion on corporate opportunities and challenges towards continuous improvement.

Lastly, let me address the area of Project Design.

As part of our new programmatic approach, we are clustering projects under common strategic framing to ensure that our project delivery as a whole, provides a higher and more sustainable delivery, rather than just the sum of the outputs of distinct projects.

This approach will avoid standalone projects with limited strategic impact or scalability. Through the programmatic approach, we also aim for better knowledge management and transfer amongst projects within each strategic cluster, especially as each cluster of projects has a single directly responsible individual that leads a steering committee to ensure coherence and oversight of the collective strategic intent. This enhanced approach is now being put in place to increase cross-divisional and regional coordination and cooperation, and in so doing, to increase the impact of projects and implement the Programme of Work in a more efficient and effective manner.

We have also put in place new internal delivery arrangements at the country level where we support direct implementation of projects -- taking full advantage of the UN Development System, through the UN Country Teams. Through this new policy, our direct implementation of projects is to be more demand driven. In other words, being more responsive to country needs, bringing together relevant technical expertise across the house for a singular UNEP delivery approach. This implementation approach, combined with enhanced resource mobilization will support a more coherent and directed means to enhance SDG implementation.

UNEP has also taken significant steps to enhance project design processes. The recently established Concept Approval Group, chaired by the Deputy Executive Director and consisting of the UNEP Senior Management Team, plays a vital role in ensuring that new project design invests in change processes that lead to higher-level results. This group conducts early reviews on project concepts to not only assess the viability and sustainability of project outcomes at various levels, but to ensure strategic alignment with the overall delivery of the POW. Since Dec 2022 - the **Concept Approval Group** has held six meetings and reviewed 163 project concepts under eleven strategic programmatic clusters.

UNEP, in 2022-2023, in response to need, but also as to evaluation and audit recommendations, has updated its Programme and Project Management Manual (PPMM) which is an operational guide on end-to-end delivery of projects by UNEP. The revision of this manual, to be formally launched next month, is part of a set of measures to strengthen project management controls, and to develop guidance and tools that embed strong control mechanisms across the entire project cycle from design and approval to project closure. The PPMM is designed to guide UNEP staff and its partners in effective and efficient planning and implementation of UNEP's programmes and projects.

Complementing the Programme and Project Management Manual, UNEP will soon unveil a new UNEP Project Manager's Certification Course. This course, developed in cooperation with the UN Staff College, is designed to ensure that UNEP personnel in the project management value chain have sound and up-to-date knowledge and skills to effectively design and manage UNEP's programmes and projects. It will complement other trainings available in the UNEP Corporate Academy, designed to enhance project management and administrative capacities, and will hence strengthen implementation of the UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and its associated Programmes of Work (PoW).

In conclusion, the UNEP-wide recommendations put forth by the Evaluation Office are closely aligned with previous audit recommendations that we have already taken proactive steps to implement.

Mr. Chair, I would like to express our deep appreciation for these recommendations as they provide us with invaluable opportunities for continuous improvement which enhance our ability to deliver more impactful and sustainable outcomes for the benefit of people and the planet.

Thank you