UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Evaluation Policy

Evaluation Office

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APPROVED

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INDEX

ACRONYMS

CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CSS	Corporate Services Section
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DED	Deputy Executive Director
EA	Expected Accomplishments
ED	Executive Director
EOU	Evaluation Office of UNEP
GC	Governing Council
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OIOS	Office for Internal Oversight Services
OfO	Office for Operations
PoW	Programme of Work
PSPT	Programme Support and Planning Team
QAS	Quality Assurance Section
RMS	Resource Mobilization Section
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGB	Secretary General's Bulletin
SMT	Senior Management Team
SPC	Sub-Programme Coordinator
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WB	World Bank

I. **OVERVIEW**

1.   This document presents the revised evaluation policy of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as approved in 2016. The purpose of the policy is to establish a clear institutional basis for the UNEP evaluation function. The policy explains the objectives, roles and functions of evaluation within UNEP, defines the institutional framework within which it operates and outlines the general processes by which it is operationalised. In the context of UNEP, and in operational terms, evaluation can be defined as "a systematic and discrete process, as objective as possible, to determine relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and/or sustainability of any element of a programme's performance relative to its mandate or objectives."[1] The policy seeks to increase transparency, coherence and efficiency in generating and using evaluative knowledge for organisational learning and effective management for results, and to support accountability.

2.   Evaluation of UNEP's performance is conducted against UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS), a strategic document approved by the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of UNEP. The MTS sets out UNEP's vision, objectives, priorities and impact measures for a four-year period. The UNEP MTS for 2014-2017 defines UNEP's vision as: "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"[2]. Ultimately UNEP aims to achieve long-term improvements in the quality of the environment and human living conditions.

3.   The evaluation of the delivery of results specified in UNEP's MTS is built upon the results of evaluations of the sub-programmes as embodied in the organization's Biennial Programme of Work and Budget (PoW). Evaluations at sub-programme level are informed by in-depth project level or portfolio evaluations. Evaluating UNEP's contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be integrated into standard evaluation approaches.

4.   The UNEP evaluation function puts emphasis on results and operates in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards for evaluation[3]. UNEP senior management will ensure that findings from evaluations receive due attention from management at different levels in the organization and that lessons and recommendations from evaluation are integrated into programme and project implementation and design.

5.   The roles and responsibilities for evaluation in UNEP are summarized below:

●   The **Executive Director** (ED) is the guardian of the evaluation function and is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented on behalf of the Secretary General and Member States. The ED is responsible for overseeing the work of the evaluation function, ensuring the function is adequately resourced, and approving the evaluation work plan for onward submission to United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (UNEA) / Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) as part of UNEP's PoW.

●   The **Deputy Executive Director** (DED) is responsible for overseeing that evaluation findings are fed back into future programming and budget planning and management through the work of Division Directors, the Programme Strategy and Planning Team (PSPT) and the Office for Operations (OfO), including the Quality Assurance Section (QAS), Corporate Services Section (CSS) and Donor Partnerships and Contributions Section.

●   The **UNEA / CPR** will review the Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report encompassing the findings of all UNEP evaluations. The Executive Director will ensure that an annual segment is created within the UNEA/CPR agenda and the Director of the Evaluation Office will brief UNEA / CPR on all evaluation activities, findings and recommendation compliance.

●   The **Evaluation Office of UNEP** (EOU) is an independent unit reporting directly to the ED and is responsible for implementing the evaluation work plan by conducting and managing independent evaluations at MTS / PoW, sub-programme, portfolio and project levels. It ensures quality in evaluations conducted,

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[1] Adapted from ST/SGB/2000/8, "Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation" and "Methods of Evaluation and Guidance to Programmes for Developing an Evaluation Policy", OIOS.

[2] This vision is presented in the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2014-17, which was approved by the UNEP Governing Council in 2012. In future, the MTS will be approved by the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (UNEA).

[3] UNEG (2005), "Norms for Evaluation in the UN System" and "Standards for Evaluation in the UN System"

provides analysis of findings and lessons for management, prepares the Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report and disseminates evaluation findings and results to UNEP, Member States and stakeholders. The EOU promotes the uptake of lessons and tracks compliance with evaluation recommendations.

- **The Senior Management Team** (SMT) discusses and comments on evaluations, approves management responses to evaluations and ensures that findings are incorporated in the design and implementation of programme activities. The SMT also provides input into the design of the evaluation work plan and recommends areas for evaluation. Specifically, **Division Directors** are responsible for ensuring that accepted evaluation recommendations are implemented within their respective divisions.

- **Sub-Programme Coordinators** (SPC) are responsible for informing the EOU of upcoming evaluations, coordinating the review of evaluation reports and the preparation of management responses for sub-programme evaluations.[4] They are responsible for ensuring that project and sub-programme level evaluation findings inform strategic planning processes.

II. MANDATE

6.   The mandate for conducting evaluations in UNEP derives from several UN General Assembly Resolutions, summarized in the regulations and "Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation" (ST/SGB/2000/8). The rules and regulations require all UN programme activities to be evaluated (regulation 7.2) and that evaluation findings are communicated to Member States through intergovernmental bodies (rule 107.1c). This mandate is further supported by a number of UNEP Governing Council (GC) decisions (75(iv), 83, 6.13/1, 12/15 13/1 14/1, 23/3 – 11 and 27/13). These decisions authorize the evaluation of UNEP activities and require the development and continuous refinement of methodologies in collaboration with other UN entities along with the reporting of evaluation activities to the governance function of the organization. The mandate for evaluations in UNEP covers all programmes and projects of the Environment Fund, related trust funds, earmarked contributions and projects implemented by UNEP under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and under partnership agreements.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

7.   Evaluations are intended to serve the twin organizational objectives of: i) enabling management to improve programmatic planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting and ii) providing substantive accountability to the UNEA, donors and the general public. It is the policy of UNEP that the EOU shall be free to select evaluation subjects taking into account inputs from UNEP's SMT, and to conduct evaluations and prepare clear, accurate, objective, uncompromising and uncensored reports without interference from any part of the organization. To ensure transparency, full disclosure will be a key guiding principle in UNEP evaluations. To that end, all evaluation reports prepared by the EOU will be made public.

8.   It is the policy of UNEP to promote learning through discussion and the wide dissemination of evaluation findings and lessons from programme and project planning and implementation and to ensure that evaluation findings are taken up and recommendations implemented. UNEP Evaluation Office will collaborate with other UN organizations and external partners to continuously refine methods for evaluation and set standards and guidelines[5] that reflect international best practice and promote their application within the organization.

IV. PURPOSE

9.   The main reasons for conducting evaluations in UNEP are for learning / operational improvement and accountability as follows:

a)   Learning / operational improvement
- build ownership, identify good practices and lessons, and promote their uptake for future project / programme planning, design and implementation;
- provide feedback for adaptive management and positive learning of ongoing initiatives, at appropriate decision-making levels; and

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[4] A management response is a written reaction to the findings, recommendations and lessons of the evaluation. It indicates whether the recommendations are accepted or not, what actions will be taken to implement accepted recommendations and full justifications for the rejection of any recommendations.

[5] Full details of UNEP's evaluation methods and processes are specified in the "UNEP Evaluation Manual (March 2008).

- develop useable, relevant recommendations based on evaluation findings to improve programme coherence, operational performance, and to inform strategic decision-making.

b)   Accountability

- provide substantive accountability for the resources provided to the organization to implement its programme activities by assessing the results derived from the implementation of these programmes;
- provide objective assessments of project / programmatic performance against expected results and in-line with the organisation's results-based management requirements;
- assess how UNEP's activities have impacted environmental policy-making and management at the national, regional and global levels, including, where feasible, contributions towards the achievement of the SDGs; and
- provide a means, through disclosure, for transparency in the way the organization implements its programme activities and uses its resources.

V. **PRINCIPLES**

10.   The guiding principles of evaluation at UNEP emanate from: decisions taken by the UNEP Governing Council; the commitment of the UNEP Executive Director and senior management to nurture an evaluation culture; UNEG norms and standards for evaluation; UNEG ethical guidelines; the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation and the guiding principles of the policy for Independent System Wide Evaluation in the UN[6]. UNEP fully subscribes to the core principles of independence, credibility and utility as the foundation of an effective evaluation function, in conjunction with the principles of impartiality, transparency, intentionality, participation and ethical conduct. The main evaluation principles are understood as follows:

a)   Independence

11.   The extent to which the evaluation function needs to be independent has been addressed by the UNEG norms and standards for evaluation. This policy subscribes to the concept of both *organizational* and *behavioural* independence for the evaluation function. The evaluation function is independent of operational sub-programmes to ensure freedom from undue influence and to facilitate the objective assessment of programme and project activities without interference. Independence shall mean the freedom to:

- develop its work programme considering inputs from the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, Division Directors, Sub-Programme Coordinators and other relevant staff;
- select evaluation subjects, including from among those suggested by UNEP senior management/ Member States;
- develop Terms of Reference for evaluations and select independent evaluators without interference;
- determine minimum resource requirements for evaluation and manage the resources allocated for evaluations within the organization independently;
- recruit independent evaluation consultants within the guidelines of the organization;
- conduct evaluations without interference from senior management and other staff;
- follow-up and report on management responses to evaluations and the implementation of evaluation recommendations;
- submit clear, accurate, objective, uncompromising and uncensored reports to the senior management, member states and relevant stakeholders without fear of recrimination or dismissal for such; and
- publicly disclose evaluation findings.

b)   Impartiality

12.   Removing bias and maximizing objectivity are critical for the credibility and legitimacy of evaluations and for enhancing their utility. Pre-requisites for impartiality are:

- independence of the evaluation process from the management of the programmes, projects or policies being evaluated;
- objective design;
- valid measurement and analysis;
- rigorous use of appropriate benchmarks agreed upon beforehand by key stakeholders; and

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[6] http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf13/policy_for_independent_system-
wide_evaluation_of_operational_activities_for_development_of_the_united_nations.pdf

- ensuring that evaluators have not have been involved in the process of development, implementation or supervision of the programmes, projects or policies being evaluated to avoid conflicts of interest.

c)   Transparency

13.   Meaningful consultation with stakeholders and clear and open evaluation processes that encourage participation are essential for the credibility and utility of the evaluation. Transparency is enhanced by:

- sharing full information on evaluation design and methods;
- keeping stakeholders regularly informed of evaluation progress;
- comprehensive description of sources of evidence on which evaluation findings are based;
- clear and open processes for receiving comments and feedback on draft evaluation findings to build confidence in the findings and understanding of their strengths and limitations in decision-making; and
- full public disclosure of the final evaluation findings, management responses and independent quality assessments of evaluation report.

d)   Credibility

14.   Evaluations must command a high degree of credibility among member states, governing bodies and the managers at various levels who must make and implement decisions. In addition to impartiality and independence, the credibility of evaluation also requires that:

- evaluators have proven technical competence in the area under evaluation and its context as well as demonstrated competence in evaluation;
- data is collected and analysed from credible and multiple sources, using reliable methods and tools;
- all evaluation reports are internally assessed for quality and peer reviewed to ensure EOU's quality standards are met; and
- draft evaluation reports are shared with key programme or project stakeholders for comments.

e)   Utility

15.   Attaining the evaluation objectives of learning and enhancing accountability requires that evidence from evaluation is used to shape behaviour and inform decision-making. The intended audience for evaluation is of paramount consideration and particular attention will be afforded to ensuring that evaluations undertaken will serve the needs of intended users. To enhance the usefulness of the findings and recommendations:

- the scope, design and plan of the evaluation should generate relevant, high-quality products that meet the needs of intended users;
- evaluations should be timely, i.e. planned so that their findings, lessons and recommendations are available at the time when they are needed for decision making;
- the interpretation of findings should be grounded in the realities of the context;
- key stakeholders should be meaningfully engaged and involved throughout the conduct of the evaluation to build ownership and ensure the uptake of evaluation findings and recommendations;
- the evaluative function should respond to global targets and indicators of change such as the SDGs; and
- recommendations made should be time-bound, practical and realistic.

f)   Intentionality

16.   The rationale for an evaluation and the decisions to be based on it should be clear from the outset. The scope, design and plan of the evaluation should generate relevant, timely products that meet the needs of intended users.

g)   Participation

17.   Meaningful participation of stakeholders in evaluation processes provides a means to achieve many of the desired attributes of an evaluation, such as transparency, credibility and utility. Stakeholder participation in evaluation processes:

- enhances the credibility, legitimacy and relevance of the evaluation process by including a full range of perspectives and information sources;
- builds ownership of findings and recommendations;
- enhances the learning from the evaluation process; and
- is ethical; stakeholders should have prior informed consent and should be given the opportunity to respond to evaluation findings and recommendations.

However, UNEP evaluation processes will strike an appropriate balance between maintaining independence and meaningful participation.

h)   Ethical Considerations in UNEP Evaluations[7]

18.   Evaluation Office staff and evaluation consultants must:

- have personal and professional integrity;
- respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence;
- ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source;
- take care that those involved in evaluations have a chance to examine the statements attributed to them;
- be in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of human rights, discrimination and gender inequality;
- be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environments in which they work;
- discreetly report evidence of wrongdoing to the appropriate investigative body; and
- sign the UNEP Code of Conduct for Evaluations that articulates the above ethical considerations.

VI. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

Functional Location

19.   The EOU is located as a separate unit within the Executive Office and reports directly to the Executive Director. This management arrangement allows for objective and unbiased evaluation and reporting of evaluation findings as all UNEP projects and programmes report, via Division Directors, to the Deputy Executive Director.

Functional Responsibilities and Roles

Staffing of the Evaluation Function

20.   The Executive Director ensures that adequate and qualified staff are recruited for the effective functioning of the EOU. All professional staff of the UNEP EOU are required to demonstrate that they have relevant and substantive technical evaluation-related experience[8] in addition to the required UN staff competencies and considerations of regional and gender balance.

Evaluation of the Programme of Work

21.   The UNEA approves the operational budget of the EOU by reviewing and approving the EOU's allocation within the overall budget of the organization of UNEP's PoW. The Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, Division Directors, Sub-Programme Coordinators and other senior staff will contribute to the implementation of the evaluation programme by ensuring that evaluations are adequately provided for in the budgets of all projects / programmes. The EOU shall prepare a biennial evaluation work plan that forms a part of UNEP's biennial PoW and Budget. The biennial evaluation work plan will be reviewed by the SMT and approved by the Executive Director.

Evaluation Coverage and Strategy for Decentralized Project Evaluation

22.   A meta-evaluation of programme performance for each PoW period is presented in the Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report. Thematic sub-programmes are evaluated on a revolving basis, with the aim of completing at least one evaluation of each sub-programme during two four-year MTS periods. Other higher level evaluations are selected in response to specific stakeholder demands.

23.   The EOU aims to undertake evaluations of a high proportion of completed projects. This approach has been adopted to help develop and reinforce a strong evaluation and results-oriented culture among UNEP project managers. Evaluation of all GEF funded projects is mandatory at their completion and the EOU also aims to evaluate all non-GEF funded projects with a secured project budget / expenditure above an agreed

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[7] This policy adheres to Section 11 of the "Norms of Evaluation and Standards 2.5 – 2.8" of the "Standards of Evaluation", United Nations Evaluation Group, April 2005 and responds to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

[8] Typically, professional positions in the UNEP Evaluation Office require in-depth knowledge of all aspects of project and programme evaluation, proven conceptual and analytical skills and excellent knowledge in the field of results-based management.

financial threshold, as set out in the UNEP Programme Manual[9]. Projects of high strategic relevance that fall below this threshold may also be selected for evaluation. Projects that are not selected will commission an external review managed by the Project / Task Manager. In the longer term, and as the standard requirement for projects to produce comprehensive completion reports becomes more firmly established, UNEP will move to a more selective project evaluation approach. A proportion of projects will be selected for in-depth evaluation at completion and, in addition, randomly selected project reviews and completion reports will be subject to quality assessment by the EOU. The EOU will provide training and capacity building resources to ensure project managers follow best available practices in commissioning and managing external reviews.

Selecting and Prioritizing Evaluations

24.   The biennial evaluation work plan is driven by the broader objectives of the evaluation function and takes into consideration mandated responsibilities and mandatory requirements. Within this biennial evaluation plan, the EOU maintains an operational work plan of upcoming and ongoing evaluations.

25.   Operational evaluation work plans are developed by the EOU in the context of an on-going portfolio of evaluation work corresponding to project and programme cycles. A 'long list' of possible evaluations is collated and the minimum funding required for each evaluation is estimated by the EOU. Funds for project evaluations reside within project budgets. In those instances where the project evaluation budget available is lower than the minimum funding requirement estimated by the EOU, the Division or Office responsible for the project will identify alternative funding sources so that the evaluation can take place in a timely manner[10]. Funds for higher level / strategic evaluations are made available from the Environment Fund or, when appropriate, from the appropriate Trust Funds. The allocation of available financial resources to evaluations requires careful consideration as resources must be sufficient to deliver high quality evaluations in a form that promotes use by their target audiences.

26.   Human resource availability is a limiting factor in the evaluation plan; the volume of evaluation work exceeds the available human resource capacity of the EOU. Smaller projects below the stated financial threshold, unless of key strategic value, are excluded from consideration to avoid deploying scarce evaluation staff time on evaluations of small-scale initiatives. Priorities are clearly set. A number of criteria are applied to score and rank the prospective evaluation activities[11]:

- afford the highest priority to more strategic evaluations (e.g. MTS, sub-programme and thematic) and the preparation of mandated documents such as the Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report;
- afford high priority to project evaluations that contribute to strategic evaluations;
- prioritise evaluations that are mandatory and / or time-critical;
- prioritise evaluations of projects that have already been completed over those that are yet to end;
- prioritise evaluations of projects / programmes with larger total operational budgets over smaller ones;
- prioritise projects where the magnitude / distribution of benefits/effects from the intervention are expected to be high, (and among these further prioritise those where attribution of benefits/effects to the intervention is most feasible); and
- consider mid-term evaluation of projects only where the projects extend for three years or longer, have been reported as being at risk, are jointly implemented with other agencies, or are of high strategic significance (or potential reputational risk) to the organisation.

Implementation of the Evaluation Work Plan

27.   The EOU has responsibility for managing and conducting evaluations of sub-programmes and projects as well as thematic evaluations and other studies of management interest within the organization. The predominant focus of UNEP evaluations is on strategic relevance and the achievement of sustainable and up-scalable results and impact along with factors that affect such performance. UNEP regards evaluation as a key component in effective results-based management. To the greatest extent possible, the EOU will conduct joint evaluations with UNEP's partners and donors.

28.   The EOU will implement rigorous internal quality assurance processes to ensure that the quality of evaluations meets UN system, and internationally-agreed, evaluation standards. The EOU will continue to refine methods for evaluations, set standards and guidelines for evaluations, and to ensure that these are

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[9] Full details of UNEP's programming methods and processes are specified in the "UNEP Programme Manual" (May, 2013).

[10] In general, the adequacy of funding for evaluation is assessed at project approval.

[11] The method used is based on: *M.J. Spilsbury, S. Norgbey, and C. Battaglino. (2014).* Priority setting for Evaluation: Developing a strategic evaluation portfolio. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 46, pp 47-57. Elsevier.*

followed within the organization. In addition, UNEP evaluation reports will, periodically, be subject to external independent peer expert assessments of evaluation report quality.

29.   The EOU will also ensure that Sub-Programme Coordinators, Divisions Directors and Task/Project Managers and any partner agencies are aware of the requirements[12] and the importance of evaluations. The EOU will provide the required guidance, training and technical support for evaluations of UNEP activities. Where a project partner agency requests, UNEP may carry out a joint evaluation of a project in consultation with the partner agency's evaluation office.

30.   Sub-Programme Coordinators, Divisions and Task/Project Managers have the responsibility of informing the EOU of upcoming evaluation needs, reviewing evaluation reports, sharing draft reports with the relevant partner agencies for a project or programme and submitting comments to the EOU.

31.   UNEP's SMT shall provide comments to the EOU on key evaluation products including sub-programme evaluations, the Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report and other studies of management interest.

Relationship to other functions

1. **Monitoring and review are distinct from evaluation.** Monitoring is a continuous function providing managers and key stakeholders with regular feedback on the consistency or discrepancy between planned and actual activities and project / programme performance and on the internal and external factors affecting results. The monitoring function in UNEP is overseen by the Quality Assurance Section (QAS). Information from systematic monitoring serves as a critical input to evaluation. Reviews are closely associated with monitoring and are periodic, often light, assessments of the performance of an initiative and may not meet the level of independence, methodological rigour of evaluation.

2. **Audit is distinct from evaluation**. Audit is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organization's operations. It assesses and contributes to the improvement of governance, risk management and control processes in responding to risks regarding the reliability and integrity of financial and operational information; effectiveness and efficiency of operations; safeguarding of assets and compliance with regulations, rules, policies and procedures. UNEP does not have its own internal audit body. Internal Audit of UNEP is undertaken by the UN's Office for Internal Oversight Services. The UNEP Audit Focal Point is the Director of the Office for Operations.

VII.   EVALUATION TYPES AND PRODUCTS

32.   UNEP's mandate[13] is delivered through the activities incorporated in seven (7) MTS Sub–programmes: Climate Change; Disasters and Conflict; Ecosystem Management; Environmental Governance; Chemicals and Waste; Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Consumption and Production and Environment under Review.

33.   Evaluating UNEP's MTS will involve systematic assessments of the sub-programmes as embodied in the PoW. The assessment of each sub-programme is informed by in-depth project or portfolio level evaluations. Figure 1 below provides a schematic representation of UNEP's evaluation system.

34.   Types of evaluation take three main forms: i) higher level strategic and thematic evaluations including sub-programme evaluations, ii) operational assessments including project and portfolio evaluations and other studies of management interest and iii) impact and influence evaluations.

Higher Level Strategic and Thematic Evaluations

*Medium-Term Strategy Evaluations*
35.   The MTS can be evaluated at three stages during its four-year cycle: formative stage, mid-term and end of cycle. A formative evaluation may be used to inform planning processes and to enhance the quality of MTS-related planning documents, a mid-term evaluation to provide operational feedback during MTS implementation whilst a final evaluation can provide an assessment of results against the expected achievements. These evaluations will be undertaken periodically taking into account the demand for them from senior management and member states.

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[12] Evaluation requirements are clearly documented in UNEP's Programme Manual, and in the UNEP Evaluation Manual.

[13] The five main elements of UNEP's mandate are: keeping the world environmental situation under review; catalysing and promoting international cooperation and action; providing policy advice and early warning information, based upon sound science and assessments; facilitating the development, implementation and evolution of norms and standards and developing coherent inter-linkages among international environmental conventions and strengthening technology support and capacity in line with country need and priorities.

36.   At the end of each biennium the EOU will prepare a Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report. This report will summarise the performance of the organization through trends and patterns observed during the biennium from completed evaluations at all levels. The patterns and trends will be used to identify recommendations and lessons to be brought to the attention of, and discussed with, UNEP SMT. The report constitutes a document for the UNEA and is disseminated to CPR members, national governments and UNEP staff. The EOU will also undertake other strategic evaluations at corporate level on cross-cutting themes in response to stakeholder demand.

Figure 1. UNEP's Evaluation System
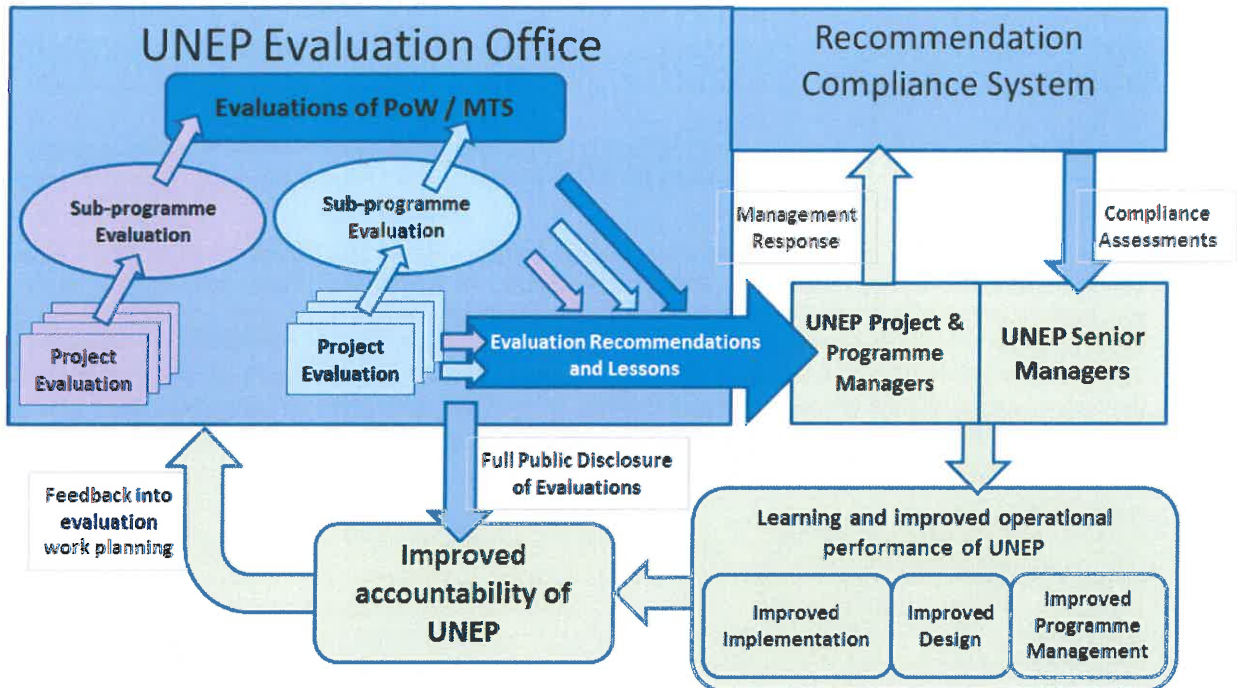
Sub-Programme Evaluations
37.   The EOU aims to evaluate each sub-programme at least once over the period of two MTS cycles. Each sub-programme evaluation will examine the relevance, achievement of results, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency of the delivery of the sub-programme. These evaluations will make use of project level evaluations to help assess the overall performance and results of the sub-programme and will be scheduled to maximize the utility of evaluation findings; time is needed for recommendations from sub-programme evaluations to inform the design of new projects and for those interventions to be evident in practice. As UNEP's sub-programmes cut across the divisional structure, the coordination and cooperation among and between UNEP divisions and regional offices will be examined. This will include an assessment of the 'complementarity' of GEF projects that make contributions to sub-programme results. The evaluations will also assess the efficiency and utility of collaborative and partnership arrangements with UN bodies, intergovernmental organizations, international, regional and national non-governmental organizations, scientific and environmental centers, private sector organizations and networks and groups.

Thematic Evaluations
38.   Thematic evaluations will be carried out on cross-cutting issues to support the strategic development of the organization as a whole and to enhance synergies across departments; strengthen UNEP's comparative advantage and to ensure that UNEP remains at the forefront of environmental and development issues.

Country Programme Evaluations
39.   UNEP maintains a network of Regional Offices and in only a few cases has country level offices that oversee a country-based programme. Country Programme Evaluations (CPEs) are therefore conducted infrequently. The rationale for a CPE is to provide evidence-based insights on the strategic positioning of UNEP in a country, its strategic partnerships, programme design and implementation, and to evaluate the performance and results of the country-based portfolio as a whole. CPEs consider whether, in the period under consideration, the UNEP strategy and interventions were able to address priority environmental, governance and management issues in the country and whether the results achieved are likely to have a lasting impact on

the environment and human well-being. CPEs also review the comparative advantages of UNEP in the context of the priorities and strategies of government and other non-state actors.

Project and Portfolio Evaluations

Project Level Evaluations

40.   *Terminal Evaluations* of projects will be undertaken at their completion by independent evaluators that are contracted by the EOU. Project-level evaluations aim to assess project relevance and performance and determine the outcomes / results stemming from the project / activity cluster. They provide judgments on actual and potential results, their sustainability and the operational efficiency of implementation and factors that affected performance. To achieve this, evaluations specifically focus on the 'theory of change' or 'impact pathways' used by the project and review evidence of actual or potential achievements along such 'pathways'. Project-level evaluations also identify lessons of operational relevance for future project design and implementation. The EOU will apply quality control processes that assess performance ratings based on the evidence presented in the evaluation reports and make judgments on the quality of such reports in relation to international best practice. Project level evaluations will feed into the higher level evaluation of sub-programmes.

41.   *Mid-Term Evaluations* are undertaken approximately half-way through project implementation. These evaluations analyze whether a project is on track, what problems and challenges the project is encountering and which corrective actions are required. Mid-term evaluations may be conducted by the EOU where: a project is of key strategic importance to UNEP and at risk. Mid-term evaluations are otherwise only mandatory for projects that extend for the duration of the MTS or longer. For projects of a shorter duration, the mid-term examination of a project's performance is viewed as an internal project management tool and is referred to as a *mid-term review*. For those projects, the responsibility for mid-term reviews rests with project/programme managers.

Portfolio Evaluations

When a cluster of thematically related projects require evaluation the EOU may, in the interests of cost efficiency, conduct a portfolio evaluation where the performance of the cluster of projects is evaluated in a single evaluation exercise. Portfolio evaluations may offer additional learning opportunities from the differing operational contexts or intervention strategies that often occur across projects. In addition to assessing and rating performance of the individual projects in the portfolio, the evaluation will also assess whether opportunities for collaboration, complementarity and synergy have been fully exploited and duplication has been avoided between the projects in the portfolio.

Evaluating Influence and Impact

Impact Evaluations

42.   Impact evaluations attempt to determine the entire range of effects of the programme / project activity on the environment and human living conditions, including unforeseen and longer-term effects[14] as well as effects beyond the immediate target group/ area. They attempt to establish the amount of such change that is attributable to the intervention. The focus is on evaluating progress towards high-level goals and providing estimates of development impact. They are particularly useful in assessing the overall performance of a project / programme in achieving long-term improvement in the quality of the environment and human living conditions and for assessing the sustainability of the impact against stated objectives.

43.   Impact evaluations are often expensive and are conducted on a selective basis with the objective of learning lessons, or demonstrating significant benefits in line with UNEP's strategic objectives. Post-project impact evaluations will be conducted on a selective basis with the aim of identifying UNEP's success in sustaining and up-scaling benefits several years after a project — or portfolio of projects — has been completed.

Influence Studies

44.   In many cases UNEP programmes are designed to effect change in normative frameworks, such as: i) the development of norms and standards; ii) the support to governments and others to integrate the norms and standards into legislation, policies and development plans; and iii) the support to governments and others to implement legislation, policies and development plans based on the international norms, standards and conventions. Evaluation of normative work is often challenging. Causality in normative work is often difficult

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[14] There are often significant time lags for long term effects to become evident. Therefore impact evaluations often analyse interventions with causal effects that occur beyond the duration of a PoW.

to establish as one moves 'along' causal pathways, and particularly challenging at the impact level[15]. In such cases, structured influence studies may be conducted.

VIII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

45.   UNEP evaluations are carried out using a consistent set of commonly applied evaluation criteria, that includes:
- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Impact
- Sustainability of outcomes
- Replication and upscaling
- Factors influencing performance, including: preparation and design, organization and management, human and financial resources management, collaboration and partnerships, stakeholder participation and ownership, supervision and backstopping and monitoring and evaluation.

46.   Consistent with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, evaluations will consider dimensions of equality, inclusion and non-discrimination as appropriate across all evaluation criteria. The EOU recognises the importance of two mutually reinforcing concepts in programming and evaluation: "human rights" and "gender equality". It understands that gender equality is both a human right, but also a dimension of development in its own right. Also, human rights are inclusive of, but not limited to, gender related human rights.

IX. USE OF EVALUATION FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

a) Reporting and Disclosure
47.   The EOU will regularly report on the implementation of its work programme to the Executive Director / SMT.

48.   In accordance with GC 4/75 (1V), the Executive Director shall report to subsequent sessions of the UNEA on evaluations carried out in the organization. The Executive Director will ensure that a regular segment is created within the UNEA/ CPR agenda to discuss evaluation issues and the Director of the Evaluation Office will brief the UNEA/ CPR on evaluation findings and activities.

49.   After the completion of evaluations, evaluation reports are fully disclosed to all evaluation stakeholders and made publicly available on the EOU web page.

b) Dissemination and Follow-up
50.   The EOU shall develop and apply appropriate and efficient mechanisms to enhance the uptake and use of evaluation findings, relevant lessons and good practices to improve programme and project delivery. A variety of approaches to dissemination may include: interactive seminars and presentations, best practice guidelines, a web-based report library, an online repository of lessons from evaluation and evaluation 'briefs' (2 page summaries) sent by email to targeted recipients. Interactive engagement with evaluation stakeholders is essential for the effective uptake of evaluation lessons.

51.   Under the guidance of the Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director, members of UNEP's SMT have the overall responsibility for ensuring that evaluation recommendations are implemented and the lessons identified through evaluations are used to improve programme and project delivery.

52.   The findings from evaluations will be discussed with relevant programme staff and senior management where specific evaluation recommendations will be reviewed. Subsequently, programme staff / senior management will prepare a formal management response to the evaluation that specifies which recommendations were accepted, what action will be taken and a timeline. They will provide a justification for any rejected recommendations. Every six months, the EOU prepares compliance assessments of the implementation of accepted recommendations based on submitted compliance reports prepared by the organizational unit responsible for the management response. The EOU ensures that implementation actions meet required standards. Recommendation compliance information is compiled and reported to the Deputy Executive Director who follows up with Division Directors, the PSPT, and OfO on the implementation of recommendations.

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[15] UNEG, (2013). UNEG Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the UN System

X. EXTERNAL COORDINATION AND PEER REVIEW OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

53.   The EOU shall participate in UNEG activities to keep abreast of progress and development in evaluation within the UN system and implement required policies, strategies and guidelines. The EOU will also maintain a close working relationship with the evaluation offices of other UN and affiliated organizations, the GEF and multilateral and bilateral organizations (e.g. WB IEG, OECD/DAC Expert Group). The EOU will participate in mandatory and voluntary UN system-wide peer review and reporting processes aimed at assessing the quality of the evaluation function or specific aspects of it[16] and encourages its staff to proactively seek new knowledge in the field of evaluation through professional contacts within and outside the UN system.

54.   To provide a mechanism to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of UNEP's evaluation function, this policy provides for periodic peer review by an independent external review team.[17] The Director of the EOU will recommend that a formal review the evaluation function of UNEP be undertaken[18]. The decision will be made by the Executive Director.

XI. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EVALUATION POLICY

55.   This policy comes into force once approved by the Executive Director of UNEP.

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[16] e.g. UN SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator – for gender, and voluntary external peer review of UNEP evaluation report quality

[17] UNEG/ DAC provides a mechanism for professional peer review of evaluation functions in multilateral organizations.

[18] Every 5-6 years.