

Remarks of Director Indran Naidoo,
Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP at the
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*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Mr. President, distinguished Board members and colleagues, it is my pleasure to discuss with you the 2013 Annual Report on Evaluation, which provides information on the status of evaluation activities and capacity, lessons emerging from evaluations conducted this past year, and proposed future activities of the Independent Evaluation Office.

This year marks a change in the presentation of annual evaluation reports. This year we have expanded the format, enabling a more detailed descriptions of evaluation activities and greater insight into UNDP achievements—and challenges. This year's report focuses special attention on the findings from recent evaluations covering UNDP's work in conflict and post-conflict settings.

During today's session I would like to touch briefly on some of the highlights of the report.

In 2013 we established an International Evaluation Advisory Panel to provide support and advice to the independent evaluation office of UNDP. The eleven Advisory Panel members, all internationally recognized leaders in evaluation and development, were selected through an open and competitive process. Panel members provide recommendations on improvements to the overall coherence and consistency of our evaluation approach, work programme and methodologies. They review key deliverables, including specific evaluations, and they give advice on dissemination strategies, and ways to raise the prominence and use of our evaluations. Future Annual Reports on Evaluation will include comments from this panel.

In 2011, when the UNDP Evaluation Policy was last revised, the Board requested that a follow up review take place in 2014. The terms of reference for this work were finalized in late 2013, and the work commenced this past February. The Independent Evaluation Office serves as the administrative agent for this review, which is being carried out by an external consulting firm.

The policy review is examining the status of evaluation policy implementation and considering whether changes are warranted – in light of performance and changing circumstances. An informal consultation with the Board will be convened prior to the Board second session in September 2014, to discuss the recommendations put forward by the evaluation policy review team.

During 2013, the IEO presented ten thematic and programmatic evaluations to the Board. These included evaluations of UNDP contribution to Poverty Reduction; UNDP support to Conflict-affected Countries in the Context of UN Peace Operations; and UNDP contribution to South-South and Triangular Cooperation. We evaluated each of the five regional programmes plus the 4th global programme and the UNDP Strategic Plan.

Country level evaluations of UNDP, known as 'Assessments of Development Results' were presented to the Board last year for Niger and Egypt. Evaluations of UNDP support to Angola, Côte D'Ivoire, and Timor-L'este were completed in 2013, and are presented to the Board along with their new country programme documents this year. The ADR for Croatia is also being presented in 2014. During 2013, ADRs were conducted in Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Kenya and Sierra Leone. These ADRs will be made available to the Executive Board simultaneous to the submission of their country programme documents. A planned evaluation of UNDP work in Lebanon was postponed due to the Syrian crisis and the deteriorating security situation there.

In 2013, expenditures for evaluations and other corporate-related activities carried out by the IEO totalled \$8.4 million, of which \$7.8 million came from regular core resources. The allocated budget for evaluation has stagnated at UNDP during this decade, and is now in decline. Per the Board's decision last year, the 2014-2015 biennial budget for the Independent Evaluation Office will be reduced by 8 per cent. In the context of the major restructuring taking place at UNDP, and the launch of an ambitious new strategic plan, it is essential that an independent and credible evaluation function be maintained, so that questions of efficiency and impact can be answered, and management and the Board can make decisions based on evidence and results.

As of January 2014, the IEO had 22 staff members, sixteen international professionals and six general service staff. The IEO has made a concerted effort to achieve and maintain gender parity. Women make up 64 percent of our staff, and 36 percent of our international professional staff. In 2013, 52 percent of consultants hired by IEO were women, continuing an upward trajectory from 2010, when just 32% of consultants hired were women.

At the first session of 2014, the Board formally received our evaluation plan for 2014 – 2017, which is now under implementation. The plan calls for 10 thematic evaluations to be carried out between 2014 and 2017. 3 of these evaluations have already commenced, including an evaluation of the UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality, an evaluation of the Contribution of UNDP Human Development Reports; and an evaluation of the Role of UNDP in Supporting National Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

A 2012 peer review of the IEO recommended that we more fully consider the impact of UNDP support. So far, two evaluations taking an impact approach have been launched: The Impact of UNDP Support to Protected Areas Management, developed jointly with the GEF Independent Evaluation office, will be completed this year. An evaluation of the impact of UNDP Support to countries on Mine Action will commence later this summer.

The IEO programme of work in 2014 includes six thematic and programmatic evaluations. All are planned for completion and submission to the Board in 2015. In addition, six ADRs have commenced, for Armenia, Malaysia, Somalia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

As noted earlier, the review of the UNDP evaluation policy will conclude in 2014. Also, by the fourth quarter of 2014, the IEO will complete a review of ADR methodologies, with a view towards strengthening UNDP country-level evaluations and aligning ADR processes to the new strategic plan. The resulting changes will be incorporated into ADRs to be carried out in 2015 and beyond.

During 2015 we anticipate completing the six thematic and impact evaluations started in 2013–2014 and conducting 10 ADRs. Work will also begin on a joint IEO / audit assessment of UNDP institutional effectiveness.

The IEO will continue its ongoing corporate and learning functions, including supporting decentralized evaluation functions and preparing evaluation guidance for the organization.

In this and future annual reports, findings from recent evaluations will be highlighted. In the 2013 report, the focus is on UNDP's work in conflict affected countries. Four countries where ADRs were carried out last year have either experienced recent conflict or are in the midst of an ongoing conflict. The countries are Afghanistan, Algeria, Kenya and Sierra Leone. A fifth country, Iraq, was likewise the recipient of a country-level evaluation in 2013. Iraq has not been included in this report because the ADR has not yet been received and reviewed by the government of Iraq.

Results from the four ADRs reinforce the key findings set out in the Evaluation we completed last year on UNDP Support to Conflict-affected Countries in the Context of UN Peace Operations. While there are considerable differences in context across the countries, there are also many points of convergence. UNDP is well-qualified to operate in countries affected by conflict due to its flexibility, capacity to operate at varying scales, and its governance and capacity-building focus. However, UNDP needs to take better account of the risks it shoulders when taking on politically-sensitive programmes in conflict-affected countries, and should more effectively mitigate those risks.

UNDP management responses to the conflict evaluation were encouraging, as they recognize the need for stronger conflict analysis and for UNDP to develop conflict-related benchmarks and indicators for programmes and projects in conflict-affected countries. UNDP is also creating a fast response unit, designed to escalate the pace and quality of UNDP support in crisis settings and in the immediate aftermath of conflict and natural disasters.

The Annual report includes a section covering the comprehensive review and reform of the ADR programme. The effort was launched in the second half of 2013 and will conclude this

year. After 10 years in use, we feel the ADR programme needs some new thinking in light of changing circumstances. The review should help reinvigorate the ADR programme and simultaneously align it with the new UNDP strategic plan.

The annual report provides an assessment of the decentralised evaluation work of UNDP through its bureaus and country offices. In 2013, 45 percent of Country Offices reported at least one monitoring and evaluation specialist, compared to 23 percent in 2012. The staffing trends over the past three years are positive in four of five regions, especially in Africa, with continuing positive trends in the Asia / Pacific and Latin America / Caribbean regions. The Arab States region has recently added two more positions, while the Europe / CIS region dropped one position from an already low base.

In the 2013 reporting period, 102 Country Offices indicated they had carried out at least one evaluation. The total number of evaluations completed was 298. Similar to previous years, around 1/3 of the evaluations conducted were for GEF-funded projects. 2013 witnessed an increase of 22 percent in the total number of evaluations conducted across the regions. Most prominently, the Africa region nearly doubled its evaluation cohort: 89 evaluations were conducted in 2013 compared to 48 the year before. The Arab States region also saw a notable upward trend in evaluations conducted, with 30 evaluations commissioned, up from 20 evaluations in 2012.

The revised UNDP evaluation policy stipulates that all evaluations included in evaluation plans are mandatory. Starting in 2011, country programme evaluation compliance has been measured at the end of each programme period; the measurement is based on the completion of all planned evaluations during the period. Of 14 country programmes concluded in 2013, 10 were fully compliant, one was not compliant and three were partially compliant.

All evaluations that are part of bureau and Country Office evaluation plans are expected to have a management response. In 2013, 89 percent of all evaluations completed received a management response. This is a decrease from 97 percent in 2012.

In 2013, the IEO assessed the quality of 179 completed outcome, programme and project-level evaluations and 44 UNDP/GEF project terminal evaluations. Reviews of UNDAFs, joint evaluations and mid-term evaluations were not assessed. 45 percent of the assessed evaluations were rated 'satisfactory' or better, 36 percent were 'moderately satisfactory' and 19 percent were 'moderately unsatisfactory' or worse. This constitutes an improvement in quality over previous years. The number of moderately unsatisfactory reports has been halved since 2011. Likewise, the number of evaluations considered moderately satisfactory has been reduced. The number of evaluations judged to be satisfactory has increased each year, to 44 percent in 2013.

The decentralized evaluation quality assessment process going forward will more closely analyze the extent to which gender aspects have been taken into account in evaluation reports in keeping with the UNDP's heightened attention on the issue and its inclusion as an

indicator to be tracked on the new Strategic Plan Integrated Results and Resources Framework.

The annual report on evaluation includes information on the evaluation activities of the United Nations Capital Development Fund and UN Volunteers. As associated agencies to UNDP, the evaluation units of UNCDF and UNV operate within the UNDP Evaluation Policy.

UNCDF conducted three evaluations in 2013: a mid-term evaluation of the YouthStart programme, focused on helping microfinance institutions design and deliver financial services for young people; a final evaluation assessing the performance of the Gender Equitable Local Development Programme, a joint programme implemented together with UN Women that focused on increasing women's access to local government services in five countries in Africa; and a final evaluation of the results of a decentralization and local development programme intended to pilot a district development fund mechanism in Liberia. Despite the decline in evaluations conducted from 2012 levels, these evaluations nonetheless increased the total number of completed evaluations under the Corporate Management Plan since 2010 to 21, confirming UNCDF's commitment to evaluation during this period.

In 2013, UNV commissioned a Summative and Forward-Looking Evaluation of the Marking of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers. The UNV Evaluation Unit also supported a dozen decentralized evaluation processes at various stages from design to completion, covering UNV interventions in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Lesotho, Mali and Nepal. Support was also given to the evaluation of several regional initiatives, such as the Strategic Priority on Adaptation-Community-Based Adaptation (GEF), Partners for Prevention: Working with Boys and Men to Prevent Gender-based Violence and the Programme for Human Resource Development in Asia for Peacebuilding.

The Third International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities took place in São Paulo, Brazil during the last week in September last year. The conference was organized in partnership with the Brazilian Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger. Other supporting partners included the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, the World Bank Group, Regional Centres for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) and EvalPartners.

The conference focused on solutions to challenges related to the independence, credibility and use of evaluations. 160 participants from 63 countries attended, including: representatives of national institutions responsible for commissioning, conducting and using evaluations; leading experts and practitioners; UNDP colleagues; members of academia, civil society and voluntary organizations for professional evaluation; and other United Nations and development agencies from every region. The conference was made possible thanks to the generous financial support provided by the Governments of Finland, Norway and the United Kingdom.

The conference used a participatory approach and participants arrived at a common list of 18 commitments aimed at promoting national evaluation capacity development. The conference also provided an opportunity to join with EvalPartners, other UN agencies, the World Bank and supporting governments, to publicly designate 2015 as the 'International Year of Evaluation'. This effort is designed to promote rigorous assessment and evidence-based policy setting at all government levels. The IEO is currently planning the next biannual National Evaluation Capacity conference, to be held in 2015, and is in discussions with potential host countries in Asia

UNDP manages the executive secretariat of the UN Evaluation Group. Following the April 2013 independent assessment of UNEG, our office, along with other UNEG members, played an active role in developing the UNEG medium-term strategy for 2014–2019, which is intended to increase the efficiency and accountability of this voluntary association.

Mr. President, members of the Board, and colleagues, this concludes my remarks on the 2013 Annual Report in Evaluation. I look forward to your questions and comments.