

Statement by Indran A. Naidoo, Director UNDP IEO
UNDP Executive Board Annual Session 2015 Session
Annual Report on Evaluation 2014

Distinguished members of the Board and colleagues, I am pleased to present to you this morning the Annual Report on Evaluation for 2014. This report provides information on the evaluation activities of UNDP, UNCDF and UNV, and in particular it elaborates the activities and plans of the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office.

To begin, I would like to consider with you the resources at the disposal of the Independent Evaluation Office. In 2014, the Evaluation Office expenditures for evaluations and other corporate-related activities totalled \$8 million, of which \$7.4 million came from regular (core) resources and \$600,000 from other (non-core) resources. This represents a 3.5% decrease in expenditure from 2013, due to a 5.3% cut in budget allocation, following a similar reduction the year before. The Independent Evaluation Office fully utilised its available budget.

The independent evaluation office has 21 staff members, including 15 international professionals and six general service staff. The office did for part of 2014 have vacant senior posts, including Deputy Director position, a situation that placed a heavy burden on existing staff and had a knock-on effect on timeliness of some deliverables.

Full gender parity was maintained by the Office in 2014, with women in 60 per cent of international professional posts. Among consultants recruited, 52 per cent were female, similar to the previous year. Eighteen nationalities are represented among IEO staff. Also, the Office remains committed to work with national experts when undertaking country-level evaluations, with six out of seven evaluations completed in 2014 having national experts as key team members.

As you well know, the IEO medium-term plan, covering the 2014-2017 was approved by the Executive Board in January 2014.

In 2014 the Office focused significant effort on three major thematic evaluations that will be presented to the Board in 2015; these focus on the contribution of UNDP human development reports; the role of UNDP in supporting national achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and the UNDP contribution to gender equality. The HDR and MDG evaluations will be discussed this afternoon. The Gender evaluation will be taken up by the Board in September. The joint evaluation of the Global Environment Fund (GEF)/UNDP Small Grants Programme, originally due in 2014, will also come to the Board in September 2015. We suggest that during the September session, we discuss informally several other joint evaluations on UNDPs work on environment and sustainable development, including the joint evaluation of UNDP / GEF support to protected areas management. Moreover, in progress is an evaluation of the results and impact of UNDPs work to help countries remove and mitigate the risks from land mines and unexploded ordinance, which will come to the Board next January.

At the second regular session of 2016 we are scheduled to submit a thematic evaluation covering the UNDP contribution to anti-corruption and public integrity strategies, as well as an evaluation of the UNDP response in the immediate aftermath of crisis.

In 2014, the IEO conducted six country-level evaluations – or Assessments of Development Results (ADRs). Four – on Armenia, Malaysia, Uruguay and Zimbabwe - are being made available to the Board in 2015 together with their new country programme documents. The ADRs for Somalia and Tanzania will be made available to the Executive Board in 2016 together with their new country programmes. You may wish to note that eight more country-level evaluations have begun in 2015, covering Albania, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Gabon, Mauritania, Morocco, Sao Tome and Principe, and Viet Nam. All will be made available to the Executive Board in 2016.

Last year, the IEO also worked on strengthening the ADR approach and methodology. The process involved codifying the process revisions made over the past few years and addressing issues raised by UNDP colleagues and other key stakeholders through a consultative process. The revised guidance is also ensuring alignment of the ADRs with the UNDP strategic plan. In the near future we would like to discuss with the Board the relationship between the ADRs and UNDAF/One-UN evaluations.

In 2014, the Evaluation Advisory Panel continued to support the work of the Independent Evaluation Office. The Panel, comprising eleven eminent international experts in the areas of evaluation and development, providing critical guidance and review of IEO's key evaluations and initiatives.

One key area of partnership between the Independent Evaluation Office and the UNDP Administration involves support to national evaluation capacity development. On the IEO side, the main activity in this regard has been to stage biennial international conferences on national evaluation capacities. Whilst strengthening of national evaluation capacity in line with GA resolution 69/237 needs to be addressed by UNDP principally as a programmatic and governance issue led by the Administration, the IEO, with its evaluation expertise, has an important role to play and has built a platform for government officials from programme countries to discuss evaluation lessons and experiences. In 2014, the IEO consolidated achievements from the prior conference in Brazil and we are now preparing for the next conference, to be held in Bangkok this coming October. This conference will come on the heels of the Sustainable Development Goals summit, and I have no doubt that it will be a moment when the need for strengthening national evaluation capacities will be increasingly obvious to all. It should also provide an opportunity to launch an integrated global programme for evaluation capacity in the post-MDG era.

In 2014, the Independent Evaluation Office continued to serve as Secretariat to the UN Evaluation group, a professional association of over 45 UN funds, programmes, specialized agencies and Secretariat Departments.

It is important to note that our plans for the delivery of evaluations this year and next rely on the availability of resources. As noted earlier, the budget of the Independent Evaluation Office continues to shrink, with annual reductions these past two years. We have also been advised of a likely administrative holdback of 15% of this year's budget, as part of an organisation-wide

reduction in core financing. This represents a million dollar reduction of the IEO budget in 2015, and will have an effect on the volume and scheduling of thematic and ADR evaluations that can be carried out. As UNDPs work in response to crisis has been previously evaluated on two occasions this past decade, we expect to delay or then cancel this evaluation if the budget hold back is implemented, and we are likely to delay carrying out the planned evaluation on UNDP support to disabilities-inclusive development. In addition, we will reconsider the number of ADRs to be carried out.

In any case, 2015 and 2016 will be extremely busy years for IEO. In addition to completing those already committed for presentation to the Board in 2016, we will need to begin the evaluations aligned to completion of the UNDP strategic plan, 2014-2017. The Board will be happy to know that the IEO has begun planning the scheduled thematic evaluation of UNDP's institutional effectiveness as a collaborative endeavour with the Office of Audit and Investigation. We expect that this exercise, together with reviews of UNDP's Global and Regional programmes will be closely coordinated as inputs to IEO's independent evaluation of the strategic plan itself.

Mr. President and distinguished delegates, before I finish, let me speak briefly about the decentralised evaluation work of UNDP.

In 2014, 60 per cent of 136 UNDP country offices reported having at least one dedicated monitoring and evaluation specialist. This represented an increase from 45 per cent in 2013, with improvements in all five regions. However, a distinction is not made between work on monitoring activities and on evaluation activities, so the actual level of evaluation capacity across country offices and regions remains difficult to assess. In 2014, a total of 244 evaluations were commissioned by 102 country offices, representing an 18 per cent decline in evaluations from 2013. 77 percent of the evaluations completed last year received a management response, yielding over fourteen hundred key follow-up actions.

In light of the concerns about decentralized evaluation quality raised by the Evaluation Policy external review, the Independent Evaluation Office suspended the application of its quality assessment methodology in 2014, as the experts found the process to have failed in detecting weaknesses in the system. We do, however, remain committed to providing support to the decentralized evaluation system through Quality Assessments, and will be revisiting and revamping our criteria and tools appropriately and in accordance with the expectations set out in the revised evaluation policy. This includes a more rigorous attention to review of impartiality. The costing of the Administration's evaluation strategy mirrors the Board's earlier decision calling for a costed programme of work from this office. We would like to suggest that these costed programmes should be presented concurrently to the Board in an informal session later this year. This would allow for a detailed discussion on evaluation coverage and funding under the revised policy.

Distinguished delegates and colleagues, this concludes my remarks on the annual report on evaluation.