

AGENDA ITEM VI. Multilateral Effectiveness

Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Functions of the United Nations Organizations

This document has been prepared by the Joint Task Force on Peer Reviews for discussion at the 12th Meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, under Agenda Item VI.

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**12th Meeting
23-24 June 2011**

Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function in United Nations Organizations A Joint Undertaking of the DAC Evaluation Network and the UN Evaluation Group

The DAC Evaluation Network (EVALNET) and the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) have established a Joint Task Force to support professional peer reviews of the evaluation function of UN organizations. The framework applied in the reviews was developed by conducting two pilot reviews of UNDP and UNICEF (see below) and consists of internationally recognized standards. The reviews are conducted by an independent peer panel consisting of professional evaluators with the support of expert advisors. Lessons from earlier peer reviews are incorporated in the approach and the framework has been revised to become a fully owned UNEG framework for peer reviews.

Peer reviews conducted so far

The peer review approach was piloted in assessing the evaluation function of UNDP in 2005 and of UNICEF in 2006. In 2007 a general framework for peer reviews was established on the basis of the experiences with the reviews of UNDP and UNICEF. This framework can be adapted according to the context of the specific organization whose evaluation function will be reviewed. Subsequently peer reviews were undertaken of the evaluation function of WFP (reported in 2007), OIOS (reported in 2009), and GEF (reported in 2009) and UNIDO (reported in 2010). On the basis of lessons emerging from these peer reviews, the framework has been revised and presented to the Annual General Meeting of UNEG in May 2010. All reports have been distributed widely and are available on the UN Evaluation Group web site at www.uneval.org (in the Evaluation Function section).

Reviews planned for 2012

For the longer term perspective a number of UN organizations have expressed an interest to undergo a peer review. During the past months the co-chairs of the Task Force have been engaged with three of these organizations (FAO, UNEP, and UN-Habitat) to establish a timeframe for the reviews.

Planning of the following reviews is confirmed:

- The review of of FAO's Office of Evaluation will take place in 2012 with preparatory work starting in the second half of 2011. It is important to note that an external peer review is mandatory and is part of the quality assurance mechanisms stipulated in FAO's Charter for the FAO Office of Evaluation;
- The review of the evaluation function of UNEP will start in the second half of 2011 and be finalised either at the end of the year or in the beginning of 2012;
- The review of the evaluation function of UN-Habitat is also starting in the second half of 2011. Due to their location in Nairobi and the relative small size of the evaluation function of both organisations, the reviews of UNEP and UN-Habitat will be conducted by the same Peer Panel. The Panel will produce separate reports for each of the organisations.

The future of peer reviews

As standard procedure the Joint Task Force takes stock of experiences following each peer review. This has resulted in the update of the approach and methodology of the reviews as mentioned above, which includes embedding the peer review instrument into UNEG. At its Annual General Meeting (May 2010), UNEG confirmed the utility of the peer reviews and adopted the modified approach as being the model for UNEG. This implies *inter alia* that UN organizations wishing to undergo a review will seek funds for the exercise, whilst assuring the independence of the peer panel implementing the review. It was also confirmed that future panels would consist of professional evaluators from UNEG and DAC EVALNET – as has been the practice thus far. It

was decided that the UNEG Task Force on Evaluating the Evaluation Function (now called the Task Force on Strengthening the Evaluation Function) will continue to take up the further work on peer reviews. Rob van den Berg (Evaluation Office, GEF) who has represented UNEG as co-chair of the Joint Task Force for four years was succeeded in January 2011 by Rachel Sauvinet-Bedouin (Evaluation Office, FAO).

Rachel Sauvinet-Bedouin and Ted Kliest
Co-chairs of the Joint Task Force on Professional Peer Reviews