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Programme questions: evaluation

## Evaluation of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

### Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

#### *Summary*

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) in supporting its three country groups in achieving their respective programmes of action. The evaluation was aimed primarily at supporting accountability and providing OHRLLS programme managers with actionable information for learning and improvement. The evaluation was conducted using surveys, interviews, on-site visits, direct observation, document reviews and secondary data analyses.

OHRLLS provided an important voice and support in intergovernmental processes for the most vulnerable members of the Organization and was effective at resource mobilization, but its advocacy efforts to raise global awareness beyond the intergovernmental processes produced uneven results. A large proportion of the Office's resources was spent on organizing substantive events, which was an area of strength overall. However, the provision of follow-up on events and communication related to programmes of action, including campaigns, were limited.

OHRLLS utilized successful partnership approaches, but coordination to achieve more coherent implementation of the three programmes of action was less effective. While the Office's subprogramme for small island developing States leveraged partnerships and networks effectively to coordinate the implementation of programmes of action, the subprogrammes for least developed countries and landlocked developing countries did not have a similar partnership mandate and did not leverage such strategic partnerships as effectively. The Office met its reporting mandate with timely

\* The dates for the substantive session are tentative.

\*\* E/AC.51/2021/1.



and good-quality reports; the utility of its publications, however, was unclear. Lastly, process gaps and limited knowledge management have prevented further efficiency gains.

OIOS makes four important recommendations to OHRLLS:

- (a) Develop an overarching advocacy strategy;
- (b) Strengthen inter-agency consultative groups;
- (c) Enhance knowledge management;
- (d) Integrate gender and human rights into reporting, as relevant.

OIOS makes one important recommendation to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General:

- (a) Identify opportunities for the greater engagement of OHRLLS with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and its members.

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## I. Introduction

1. The objective of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) in supporting its three country groups in achieving their respective programmes of action. The evaluation topic emerged from the scoping described in the evaluation inception paper (internal Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) report IED-19-009). The evaluation was conducted in conformity with the United Nations norms and standards for evaluation, as issued by the United Nations Evaluation Group.<sup>1</sup>

2. Comments were sought from OHRLLS on the draft report and considered in the final report. Formal management responses from OHRLLS and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General are provided in the annex to the present report.

## II. Background

3. OHRLLS was established in General Assembly resolution [56/227](#) with the primary mandated functions of coordinating, advocating and reporting on behalf of three country groups: least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS). The groups comprise 91 countries in total, with a cumulative population of more than one billion and overlapping membership. According to OHRLLS, there are 47 LDCs; 32 LLDCs, including 17 that are also LDCs; and 38 SIDS, 9 of which are LDCs. They face shared challenges to their sustainable development, such as vulnerability to external shocks, a marginal global economic position, limited access to technology and geographical disadvantages (see [A/72/6 \(Sect. 10\)](#)).

4. OHRLLS aims to support LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in achieving the goals of their respective programmes of action and other relevant internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Their programmes of action, which outline strategic visions and actions for advancing sustainable development, include the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.<sup>2</sup> The mandate of the Office was expanded in paragraph 120 of General Assembly resolution [69/15](#), in line with its advocacy mandate, to ensure the mainstreaming and enhancement of the coherence of issues. Each programme of action has a high level of breadth and depth, laying out the challenges faced by the respective country group along with priorities for its sustainable development.

5. OHRLLS is headed by the High Representative, who is responsible for the overall leadership and direction of the Office. She is appointed at the Under-Secretary-General level and has a direct reporting line to the Secretary-General. Twenty-eight staff posts were budgeted for the period 2018–2019. The Director is responsible for overall coordination and strategic management. Three subprogrammes, for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, are headed by the Chief of the Policy Development and Coordination, Monitoring and Reporting Service. The Advocacy and Outreach Unit is responsible for communication and outreach activities.

6. Figure I shows the Office's budget and expenditure from 2012 to 2019. The LDC subprogramme maintained the largest internal allocation in terms of financial

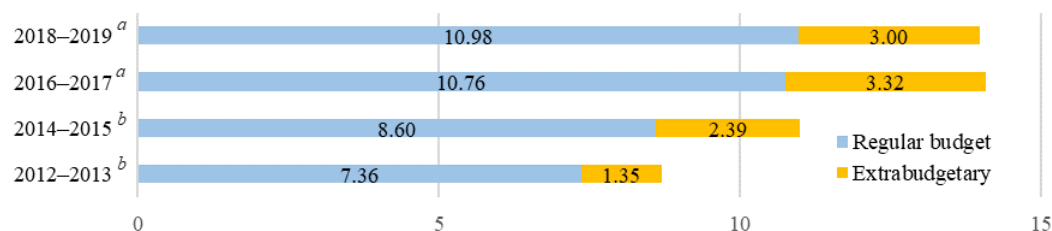
<sup>1</sup> See United Nations Evaluation Group, *Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (New York, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/samoapathway.html>.

and human resources. Regular budget resources increased between 2012–2013 and 2018–2019 by about \$3.6 million in response to an increased mandate given to the Office by Member States.

Figure I  
**OHRLLS financing by source, 2012–2019**

(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: A/70/6 and A/72/6.

<sup>a</sup> Appropriation/budget.

<sup>b</sup> Expenditure.

7. In implementing its three core functions of advocacy, coordination and reporting in accordance with its overall mandate, OHRLLS carried out work in the following main activity areas:

- (a) Reporting on programme of action implementation as an effective tool for reaching internationally agreed development goals;
- (b) Coherent and coordinated monitoring of, and follow-up on, programmes of action;
- (c) Mobilization and coordination of international support and resources for effective programme of action implementation;
- (d) Awareness-raising and advocacy with respect to the three country groups and their programmes of action;
- (e) Building effective linkages between the follow-up and review arrangements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and programmes of action.

8. The above-mentioned mandated areas are interlinked and mutually supporting. Partnerships act as a modality in support of each area.

### III. Methodology

9. The evaluation was focused on answering two main questions: the extent to which OHRLLS was efficient and effective at carrying out its key functions of advocacy, coordination and reporting.

10. The evaluation covered the period from 2016 to 2019 primarily. In line with the OHRLLS mandate, the functions were defined in the evaluation as follows:

- *Advocacy*: raising awareness and visibility and catalysing positive change around the respective priorities of country groups
- *Coordination*: bringing together and working with development partners to enhance commitment and coherence for programme of action implementation
- *Reporting*: providing information, including on monitoring and follow-up, on programmes of action with regard to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals

11. OIOS collected data between July and October 2019, deriving evidence through the following quantitative and qualitative methods:

- (a) Survey of OHRLLS staff;<sup>3</sup>
- (b) Survey of stakeholders;<sup>4</sup>
- (c) Direct observation of 16 meetings, events and conferences, including three on-site visits;<sup>5</sup>
- (d) Interviews with 20 OHRLLS staff;
- (e) Interviews with 52 stakeholders, including United Nations staff and Member State representatives and other external stakeholders;
- (f) Reviews of publications, finances, travel data, event information and Office records, and the synthesis of other oversight data;
- (g) Analysis of media, including social media and online news, in partnership with the Global Pulse initiative of the United Nations.

12. The evaluation faced limitations regarding the use of social media as a proxy indicator for the Office's outreach and engagement. All analyses were triangulated with data from multiple sources to strengthen the evaluation results.

## IV. Evaluation results

### A. In fulfilling its advocacy mandate, OHRLLS provided an important voice and support in intergovernmental processes for the most vulnerable members of the Organization

#### **OHRLLS effectively supported Member States to navigate intergovernmental machinery and reach more informed country group positions**

13. OHRLLS helped to raise the visibility of its three country groups at the intergovernmental level. In response to the Office's mandate to advocate at United Nations Headquarters on behalf of the groups, stakeholders interviewed were nearly unanimous in their agreement on the utility of having a dedicated Office that advocated their priorities in United Nations intergovernmental processes. Some Member States interviewed noted that, without such representation from OHRLLS, the special status of the world's most vulnerable countries would risk being ignored and/or their voices diluted.

14. Member States interviewed identified intergovernmental support as their main expectation for OHRLLS support, and all agreed that the expectation was being met through servicing negotiations; organizing events, conferences and meetings, including through financial support for Member State attendance; and responding to other ad hoc requests. Accordingly, the Office was heavily oriented towards providing such Secretariat support. Internal performance-monitoring data indicated that 60 per cent of OHRLLS outputs were categorized as servicing primarily intergovernmental meetings.<sup>6</sup> Through observation of several Headquarters intergovernmental meetings, it was confirmed that they functioned smoothly and efficiently, with the provision of effective OHRLLS Secretariat support.

<sup>3</sup> In all, 25 of 26 respondents, for a 96 per cent response rate.

<sup>4</sup> In all, 109 of 353 respondents, for a 31 per cent response rate.

<sup>5</sup> Visits to OHRLLS events in Cabo Verde, Chile and the Solomon Islands.

<sup>6</sup> Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System, 2014–2017.

15. The Office played a key role in advocating the needs of three country groups when outcomes were negotiated through intergovernmental processes related to programmes of action, the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Regional preparatory meetings and global midterm reviews of programmes of action demonstrated the Office's provision of substantive and process-related inputs, and reporting on programme of action implementation for LDCs and LLDCs provided conclusions and recommendations that fed into General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council resolutions, as evidenced by a high degree of alignment based on textual tracing of sampled reports. In this regard, the Office was well positioned to inform country groups and contribute to negotiated outcomes, such as ministerial and political declarations.

**OHRLLS linked the Sustainable Development Goals to the three programmes of action in its work planning and activities**

16. OHRLLS aligned its strategic framework, work planning and activities with the 2030 Agenda. In response to OIOS audit recommendations requesting an action plan to strengthen complementarities between the programmes of action and the Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>7</sup> the Office integrated the Goals into its workplans. The Office implemented various activities linked to the Goals, including publications, across its three country groups.

17. Stakeholders interviewed consistently commended the critical role of OHRLLS in the set-up of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, in 2016, which led to partial achievement of Sustainable Development Goal target 17.8. The Office's political advocacy and leadership, including by mobilizing necessary resources, negotiating a host country agreement and overseeing the initiation of administrative and programmatic activities, led to the Bank's successful operationalization. Such actions demonstrated the ability of OHRLLS to leverage its position in support of LDC development goals.

**Advocacy around resource mobilization was also effective, although external expectations for this function were unclear**

18. OHRLLS resource mobilization efforts resulted in \$14.4 million in extrabudgetary funding for the Office between 2016 and 2019.<sup>8</sup> Fundraising was successfully leveraged for the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries, as well as for meetings in support of programme of action-related activities, which accounted for the majority of extrabudgetary resources mobilized (see figure II). Programme of action-related funding supported external stakeholders, including United Nations partners and Member State representatives, in attending such meetings.

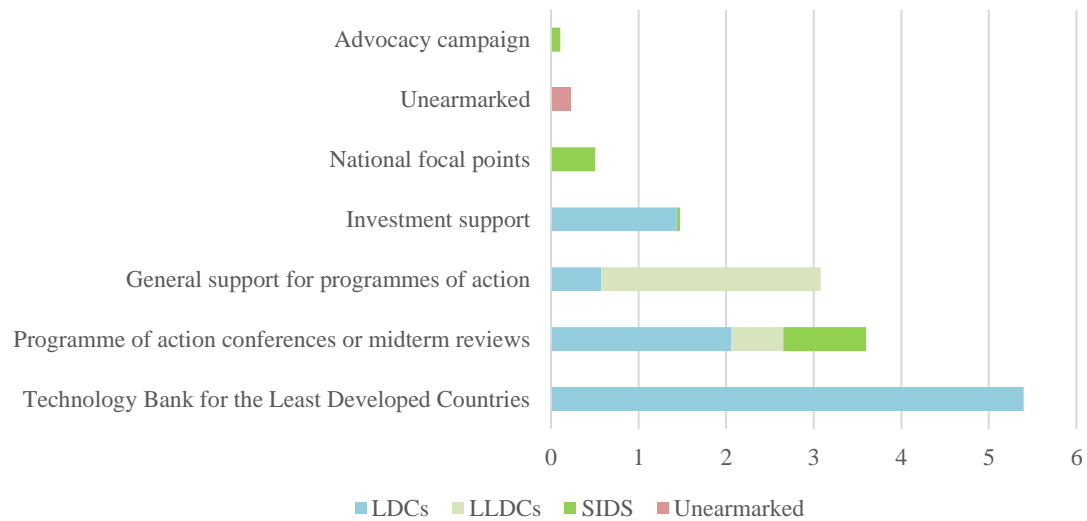
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<sup>7</sup> See OIOS report 2017/093, available at <https://oios.un.org/audit-reports>.

<sup>8</sup> OHRLLS, January 2020. The figure includes resources that had not yet been transferred.

Figure II  
**OHRLLS extrabudgetary resource mobilization, 2016–2019, was concentrated towards the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries and organization of programme of action-related activities**

(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: OHRLLS.

19. The OHRLLS mandate for mobilizing resources to more directly benefit country groups was unclear, resulting in varying expectations regarding the role that OHRLLS should play in this area. When asked about the Office's performance in supporting resource mobilization for country groups, 25 per cent of the stakeholders surveyed rated it negatively, rendering it the lowest rated of all OHRLLS activities, while 43 per cent were neutral. The ratings suggested unclear Office roles and responsibilities in this area. On the other hand, most OHRLLS staff interviewed cited the attainment of extrabudgetary resources as a positive resource mobilization outcome, given in particular the resource-constrained environment of the Secretariat over the period. However, information on the attainment of extrabudgetary resources was not systematically communicated, which may present an opportunity for further clarification of its resource mobilization role, given the challenge of meeting a broad mandate to mobilize international support for programme of action implementation.

## **B. Other advocacy efforts to raise global awareness beyond intergovernmental processes saw more uneven results**

### **OHRLLS had few resources exclusively dedicated for advocacy activities and insufficient strategic planning and monitoring**

20. While all staff engaged in advocacy to some degree, and the Office reported that advocacy was a key aspect of senior management's portfolio, OHRLLS had few resources dedicated exclusively to work in this area. The Office budgeted two posts in its Advocacy and Outreach Unit, which was charged with implementing a broad scope of work, including support for senior management and the three subprogrammes. Furthermore, OHRLLS staff reported having allocated a relatively small proportion of their time on average (16 per cent) to communications-related activities that could



be used for advocacy. OHRLLS lacked an overarching advocacy strategy that clearly linked activities to specific advocacy goals.

21. The Office's insufficient strategic planning, monitoring and reporting practices related to advocacy beyond intergovernmental processes further limited its work in these areas. OHRLLS budget framework indicators for advocacy, as approved by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, were too narrowly defined to provide meaningful information on progress towards expected achievements. More specifically, raising awareness of, and increasing debate on, relevant issues were articulated in the 2016–2019 programme budgets through the following indicators: (a) website traffic; (b) advocacy activities by the United Nations system; and (c) mainstreaming the issues of the OHRLLS three country groups into the number of negotiations and declarations in the United Nations intergovernmental processes. Furthermore, while the Office typically conducts post-event participant surveys, no systematic monitoring and learning processes were in place to assess the Office's advocacy approach.

#### **Stakeholders gave mixed feedback on global awareness-raising**

22. Stakeholders surveyed and interviewed provided mixed feedback on OHRLLS effectiveness in broader awareness-raising of programmes of action beyond the Office's work in the intergovernmental arena. Some United Nations entities acknowledged the low public awareness of programmes of action at the country and regional levels notwithstanding their having reached the midpoint or the near endpoint of their implementation.<sup>9</sup> Many stakeholders interviewed noted the limited visibility of OHRLLS beyond the community of New York-based government delegates and United Nations partners.

#### **Substantive and logistical event management was an area of strength overall, yet follow-up to events was more limited**

23. OHRLLS effectively organized a wide range of approximately 50 meetings, conferences and events per year on average for the 2016–2019 period. Stakeholders surveyed rated the Office highly on overall management (see figure III). The events organized created a space for advocacy for relevant country group priorities – given that most participants were government and United Nations partners – which provided significant opportunities for raising awareness among senior United Nations staff and global leaders. Observation of several events confirmed that high-level participants were engaged therein and that representatives of United Nations entities and government ministries were encouraged to share their perspectives.

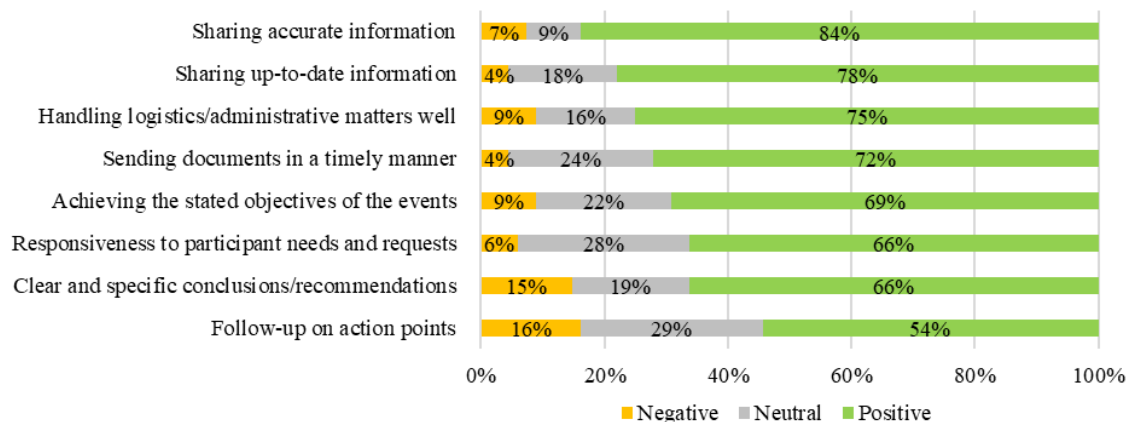
24. The Office used its partnerships, notably with United Nations entities, to leverage its convening power to advocate with regard to cross-cutting thematic issues, such as trade, development finance, energy, climate and LDC graduation. The efforts yielded positive results, as indicated by the observed level of stakeholder participation in events and contribution to various publications. For example, since 2017, the Office has published two reports and held three events on climate change in collaboration with several partners. In addition, OHRLLS partners who had worked with the Office on events were more likely to rate the events more positively on raising global awareness of country group issues than partners who had not been involved (78 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively). Through observation of multiple events, a collegial and diplomatic working relationship with OHRLLS partners during event planning and conduct was confirmed.

<sup>9</sup> The Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 and the Samoa Pathway reached their midpoint in 2019. The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 ended in 2020.

25. Success at event management did not, however, translate widely into post-event action and advocacy outcomes. Stakeholders rated aspects of event follow-up lower than they did event management (see figure III). Observation of OHRLLS facilitation outside formal intergovernmental meetings indicated a lack of action orientation; events often assumed a pro forma arrangement, with limited space for interactive dialogue, and were not guided towards clear outcomes. Some stakeholders interviewed noted the need to convene more substantive discussions on meeting agendas and objectives ahead of time through closer coordination with partners to establish clearer expected achievements for follow-up.

Figure III

**Stakeholders rated events positively overall around dimensions of organization and management, with action orientation rated the lowest**



Source: OHRLLS stakeholder survey.

**Communication efforts, including campaigns, did not fully achieve OHRLLS communication strategy objectives**

26. While OHRLLS has had multiple opportunities to do so, its materials have not reached broader target audiences as intended through Office strategic communication.<sup>10</sup> In the period 2016–2018, the Office produced on average 16 press releases per year that were not widely reported in online news outlets. Of six press releases produced for 22 sampled events, few were carried in online media reporting. In 2019, production fell to eight releases. The Office published 44 articles and op-eds over the same period. The volume of online news media covering OHRLLS activities was nonetheless relatively low and declined over the evaluation period, and there was limited coverage of the Office’s work in major international news outlets. Based on global traffic, in the top 30 ranked online news outlets, coverage of OHRLLS since 2016 has been limited to one op-ed by the Under-Secretary-General.<sup>11</sup>

27. OHRLLS has increased its social media activity on Twitter markedly since 2016, but the activity has translated into a low level of engagement across several metrics. When benchmarked against other small advocacy-focused offices at United Nations Headquarters, OHRLLS fell below a number of engagement measures (see table below). While some constituent countries may have more limited Internet access, the Office has missed opportunities to influence the wider public through its advocacy activities. Based on observation and stakeholder interviews, the missed

<sup>10</sup> OHRLLS communication strategy, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, “Initiative offers potential for sustainable growth”, China Daily, 16 May 2017.

opportunities may have been exacerbated by the difficulty associated with communicating the Office's name, which has raised the opportunity for rebranding.

### **OHRLLS social media engagement was generally lower than comparable United Nations Secretariat offices**

Area/metric	Benchmarked Offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General <sup>a</sup>			
	OHRLLS <sup>b</sup>	Children and Armed Conflict	Violence against Children	Sexual Violence in Conflict
<b>Activity</b>				
Twitter posts <sup>c</sup>	4 685	3 788	3 389	2 813
Twitter posts per week (average)	24	18	16	14
<b>Voice and reach</b>				
Twitter impressions (millions)	173.2 <sup>d</sup>	200	123	61
<b>Engagement</b>				
Twitter followers	4 729	38 212	5 922	43 804
Twitter follower increase (percentage)	327	65	636	93
Twitter retweets	5 732	13 659	52 601	4 362
Twitter replies	229	728	249	281
Twitter mentions	15 306	45 813	19 262	24 918
Facebook followers <sup>c</sup>	4 214	15 720	4 293	33 325
Facebook page likes <sup>c</sup>	4 041	15 699	4 321	33 858

Source: Twitter, Facebook and the social analytics company Crimson Hexagon.

<sup>a</sup> Each of the three Offices is about one third of the size of OHRLLS and headed by Special Representatives covering thematic areas.

<sup>b</sup> Multiple accounts administered by OHRLLS, including @OHRLLS, @fekita\_u and @SIDSGBN, are calculated cumulatively for the period January 2016–September 2019. Followers of multiple accounts may be counted more than once.

<sup>c</sup> Static indicator as at 30 September 2019.

<sup>d</sup> About 60 per cent of Twitter impressions were attributed to the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 midterm review in May 2016.

28. Since 2016, OHRLLS advocacy campaigns have had limited visibility on monitored media channels. The Office organized four such outreach activities with various thematic focuses and approaches: two campaigns oriented towards raising awareness through engagement with journalists (“Voices of a Brighter Future” and “Island Voices”) and two focused on awareness-raising regarding LDC graduation and achievements (“Towards a Bright Future for LDCs” and “Least Not Last”, respectively). Through such efforts, journalists have engaged in ongoing OHRLLS activities at the national and global levels, including participating in the high-level political forum on sustainable development, held in New York in 2019. Campaign efforts were, however, short and narrowly focused for the most part, which has not promoted the visibility of the priorities of country groups and their respective programmes of action. No major international news reporting outlets covered the campaigns. Social media conversation related to the campaigns was limited, and the Office's engagement with audiences was not sustained.

### **Member States and other stakeholders expressed interest for the Office to be a more vocal champion, given the critical development needs of its country groups**

29. Some stakeholders interviewed, including Member States, stated that the Office, building on its good work, could do more, using its position to act as a strong

champion for its country groups. While the High Representative position provided an avenue for high-level political advocacy – including through speaking engagements, attendance at special events and membership in senior management bodies – and Member States in particular expressed strong appreciation for the Office as the sole United Nations entity dedicated exclusively to the three country groups, those stakeholders suggested that the role could be executed more proactively. Several Member States and partners cited areas to which the Office could have devoted greater attention to highlight country group achievements, such as instances of LDC graduation, as well as gaps in development progress.

30. The Office's ability to engage in internal advocacy with United Nations leadership, such as the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, was identified as a key area for strengthening. Notwithstanding its membership in several senior-level decision-making and coordination forums, such as the Senior Management Group, and its having initiated regular meetings with the Deputy Secretary-General and senior managers involved in sustainable development to brief them of its activities, OHRLLS was not a regular member of other forums highly relevant to its work. They included, most notably, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, which serves as a high-level United Nations forum for joint policy formation and decision-making, including the coordination of development operations.<sup>12</sup>

### **C. OHRLLS utilized some successful partnership approaches, but coordination leading to more coherent implementation of the three programmes of action was less effective**

**While the SIDS subprogramme used partnerships and networks to coordinate around the Samoa Pathway in response to its specific partnership mandate, the LDC and LLDC subprogrammes did not as effectively leverage strategic partnerships for programme of action implementation**

31. The OHRLLS strategy with respect to facilitating partnerships for the implementation of programmes of action was most explicit and coherent in the SIDS subprogramme, compared with the LDC and LLDC subprogrammes. The effectiveness in the SIDS subprogramme was driven in part by a distinct mandate regarding partnerships and evidenced in the SIDS subprogramme workplan, staff responsibilities and budget performance measures. For example, while all three subprogrammes used an increased number of development partners as a performance indicator related to partnerships, enhanced inter-agency collaboration and partnerships were referred to as expected accomplishments in only the SIDS subprogramme. Similarly, only the SIDS subprogramme included a partnership section with a dedicated partnership focal point in the OHRLLS workplan for 2019.

32. Several SIDS initiatives led to the implementation of successful multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks. First, the Small Island Developing States Global Business Network provided a dedicated private sector forum held every two years, which has resulted in the establishment of 75 new partnerships since 2014. In an OHRLLS evaluation, it was noted that the Network had added significant value among United Nations partners and it was requested that OHRLLS upgrade the website and invest more in partnership development through private sector investments. Second, the Small Island Developing States Partnership Framework, implemented with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, provided a further mechanism through which to convene the private sector, governments and other stakeholders to contribute to the Samoa

<sup>12</sup> For more information on the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, see <https://unsdg.un.org/>.

Pathway, leading to 541 SIDS registered partnerships.<sup>13</sup> Third, the SIDS national focal point network, launched in 2018 following a successful resource mobilization effort by OHRLLS, was identified by some stakeholders interviewed as a useful link between the global and national levels for facilitating coordination, information-sharing and planning on programme of action implementation.

33. The above-mentioned initiatives faced challenges related to the facilitation of specific outcomes. For the Small Island Developing States Partnership Framework, ensuring that stakeholders who had registered partnerships through the Framework complied with its reporting requirements was a central challenge; of the 541 registered partnerships, 112 had been completed and 71 were on track, but reporting for 338 was at least two years overdue. Similarly, the Global Business Network faced challenges to moving beyond fostering connections and providing information to identify tangible outcomes. Given their similarities, opportunities existed for the two initiatives to be better aligned and/or jointly implemented.

34. Beyond partnerships formed for the delivery of specific outputs, the LDC and LLDC subprogrammes sustained fewer long-term partnerships and therefore missed opportunities to better leverage organizations whose wider reach was critical to coherent programme of action implementation. Evidence was available on the use of agreements to institutionalize their wide spectrum of engagements, including with several donors and United Nations entities. However, across all three subprogrammes, less than half the stakeholders surveyed (48 per cent) agreed that the Office had been effective overall at creating new partnerships for programme of action implementation.

#### **Other mechanisms and approaches for coordinating the support of United Nations entities to programme of action implementation yielded mixed results**

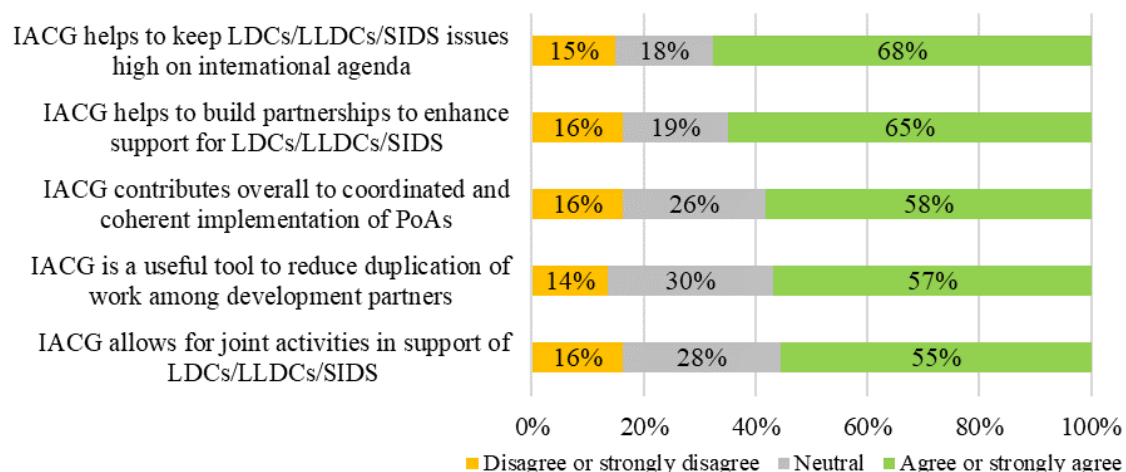
35. As the primary coordination mechanisms with United Nations partners, inter-agency consultative groups contributed to the visibility of country group issues, but had more limited added value with regard to coordinating programme of action implementation. Meetings of the consultative groups are held in person twice a year for LDCs and LLDCs and by teleconference quarterly for SIDS. Many consultative group members interviewed and surveyed described them as passive information-sharing mechanisms, and an analysis of meeting notes revealed that the groups focused mostly on entity-specific activity updates. A lack of workplans for most of the consultative groups resulted in a perceived lack of focus with regard to tangible outcomes, without reporting or accountability mechanisms for members.<sup>14</sup> While providing positive ratings overall, stakeholders rated the groups comparatively lower on helping to facilitate joint activities (55 per cent), reducing duplication (57 per cent) and contributing to coordinated and coherent programme of action implementation (58 per cent) (see figure IV). Many consultative group participants interviewed and surveyed called for greater focus and action orientation through the implementation of priority issues, collective strategies and collaborative work programmes. Collective strategies and collaborative work programmes were not specific to OHRLLS; they constrained coordination system-wide.

<sup>13</sup> For more information, see <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sids/partnershipframework>.

<sup>14</sup> The Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States developed a workplan and terms of reference in response to Joint Inspection Unit recommendations, which are contained in the comprehensive review of United Nations system support for SIDS: initial findings (JIU/REP/2016/3).

Figure IV

**While overall positive, ratings on inter-agency consultative groups were higher for creating visibility and building partnerships than for utility for coordinated and joint work**



*Abbreviation:* IACG, inter-agency consultative group.

*Source:* OHRLLS stakeholder survey.

36. The Inter-Agency Task Force on graduation and smooth transition is a recent positive example of the Office's coordination work, but it had limitations. Established in 2017 to provide United Nations support to countries graduating from the LDC category, the Task Force demonstrated the Office's added value in convening United Nations stakeholders to bring together their respective comparative advantages to support Member States.<sup>15</sup> United Nations staff noted its nascent potential to reduce duplication of activities and improve coordination through joint work. Task Force coordination activities included joint workshops on LDC graduation, which were generally well rated by host countries and partners. While not necessarily indicative of other Task Force activities, observation of one Task Force workshop revealed generally good cooperation among its members, but also a lack of clarity regarding the workshop agenda and expected outcomes. The presentations given at the workshop were repetitive, suggesting the opportunity for better coordination beforehand on its substantive content.

37. OHRLLS partnerships for regional coordination were particularly lacking. Interviewed stakeholders and observation indicated that, while regional preparatory meetings for programme of action midterm reviews and conferences were managed satisfactorily, institutionalized relationships with the regional economic commissions were generally lacking. Stakeholders interviewed consistently mentioned a disconnect among regional entities, such as the regional economic commissions, notwithstanding the central role that the commissions and other relevant regional organizations played in the follow-up and monitoring processes of programmes of action.

38. Lastly, interviews and survey data indicated the perception that inter-agency competition remained an impediment to more positive working partnerships with key United Nations entities. In the case of OHRLLS, the perception was particularly strong with respect to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, with which the Office shares common constituencies and mandate areas.

<sup>15</sup> The Inter-Agency Task Force on graduation and smooth transition was created in part in response to recommendations to enhance OHRLLS substantive and operational work to support graduating LDCs, which were made in the report of the Secretary-General on implementation, effectiveness and added value of smooth transition measures (A/70/292).

## D. OHRLLS met its reporting mandate for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS with timely and good-quality reports, but the utility of its publications was unclear

### The Office delivered all mandated reporting outputs on schedule

39. OHRLLS effectively met its mandate to report on implementation of the three programmes of action towards achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including through monitoring and follow-up. It did so through a robust publication portfolio with a wide range of publications between 2016 and 2019. On the basis of its budget submissions, it produced 82 recurrent and non-recurrent documents, including flagship and thematic reports, fact sheets and event summaries, which were financed by regular and extrabudgetary resources.

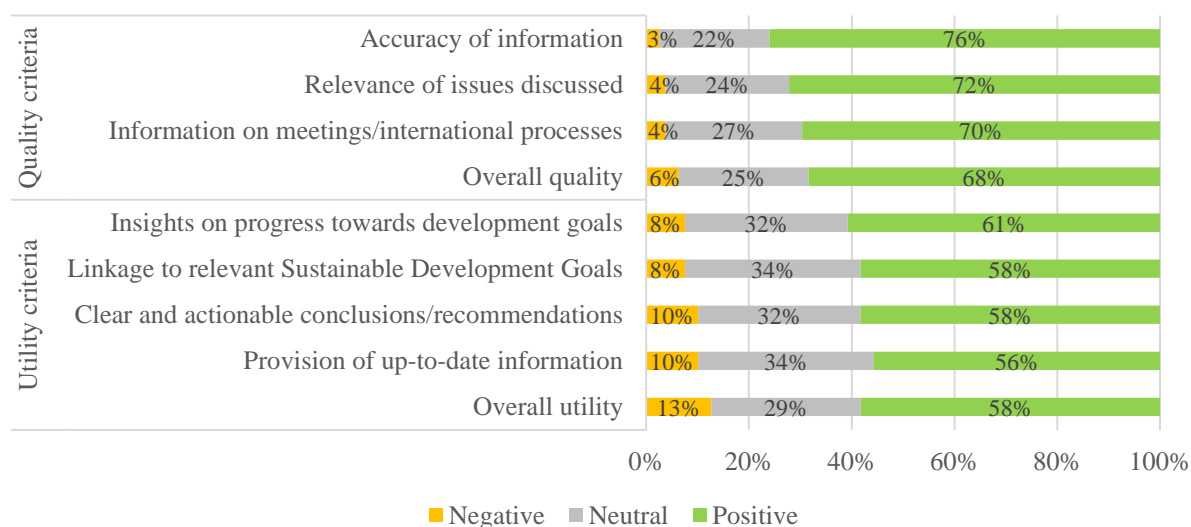
40. Within its wider portfolio, OHRLLS produced all of its mandated reports over the past three years, including annual reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the programmes of action for LDCs and LLDCs, submitting all General Assembly reports by their required slot dates. In addition, the Office provided mandated inputs in the report of the Secretary-General on the Samoa Pathway, authored by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

### While OHRLLS stakeholders and staff largely rated OHRLLS reports positively overall, ratings for quality were higher than ratings for utility

41. Stakeholders surveyed provided positive feedback overall on the quality of reports produced by the Office (see figure V). Stakeholders most frequently mentioned using OHRLLS reports as background information in preparing for meetings and speeches, drafting reports, reporting to missions and/or providing general knowledge and information. Representatives of Member States interviewed gave mixed responses when asked about OHRLLS reports. They noted that, although the reports served as useful references for intergovernmental dialogue, some were repetitive and too general and needed a more dynamic approach.

Figure V

### Stakeholders rated OHRLLS reports positively overall, but gave higher ratings for quality than utility criteria



Source: OHRLLS stakeholder survey.

42. Lastly, while OHRLLS staff interviewed generally assessed the quality of the reports produced by the Office positively, they raised questions regarding their utility. Several staff suggested that the Office could more effectively use publications for advocacy, noting specifically that it was challenging to publicize, track and demonstrate report usage. Some stated that the Office should perform more analysis in its reports and/or innovate its approach to reporting, while they acknowledged limitations regarding word limits for reports of the Secretary-General, as well as the political sensitivity of some of the topics discussed in the reports. They raised questions about the utility of producing lengthy event reports, given in particular the limited resources of the Office.

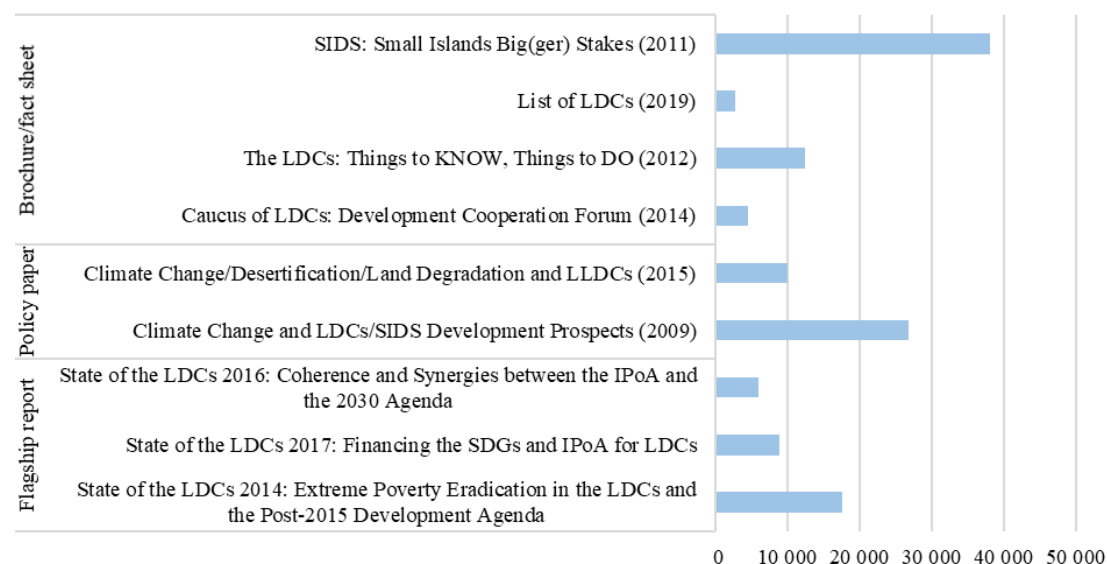
**Online citations and downloads of OHRLLS publications provided inconclusive data on utility, but indicated broader readership interest in country group background information and thematic issues**

43. While online citations of OHRLLS reporting suggested broader readership of its documents as a reference for understanding thematic and country group issues, the extent to which the citations indicated utility could not be determined without a clearly defined publications strategy with dissemination targets. Between 2016 and 2019, there were approximately 2,150 online citations of the Office in a variety of sources, including United Nations websites, government websites and newspapers.<sup>16</sup> SIDS-related issues, notably climate change, were more widely cited.

44. The most downloaded documents from the OHRLLS website reiterated wider readership interest in brochures and fact sheet-style publications, followed by the Office's flagship reports and policy papers (see figure VI). Most thematic interest, measured by downloads, was focused on climate change, which accounted for almost one third of the greatest number of downloads of OHRLLS publications. However, most downloads were of reports published before the evaluation period (86 per cent), indicating a decrease in interest in recent publications.

Figure VI

**Interest in publications was concentrated in background information and thematic issues like climate change; based on the top downloaded documents from the OHRLLS website since 2016**



Source: OHRLLS website analytics.

<sup>16</sup> Online citation estimation based on results from Google Scholar.



### **Gender and human rights were not consistently mainstreamed in OHRLLS reports**

45. A review of eight OHRLLS reports published between 2016 and 2019 indicated a lack of consistent mainstreaming of gender and human rights, principles that are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and committed to by Member States. While the perspectives of women and men on development issues were considered, at least in part, in most of the eight reports, just two had a separate section on gender, and only three presented data disaggregated by gender. None of the reports provided data specific to human rights or reported data from a human rights perspective.

### **Partners also questioned the coordination process for report production**

46. OHRLLS coordination with United Nations partners on the content of the reports of the Secretary-General on programme of action implementation for LDCs and LLDCs received mixed partner feedback with regard to the process. Most of the partners surveyed rated the Office positively on providing sufficient guidance (71 per cent) and adequate time (70 per cent), but ratings on valuing partner contributions and on reflecting those contributions in the final report fell significantly (53 per cent and 49 per cent, respectively). Some partners interviewed expressed frustration with the coordination process for report production, stating that OHRLLS ignored or minimized the inputs that they had provided. For example, in a report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020, it was stated that United Nations entities had contributed actively to such implementation individually and through a range of joint programmes and activities, but only the World Intellectual Property Organization and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs were mentioned ([A/74/69-E/2019/12](#), para. 65). In such reporting, an important opportunity to present the collective actions of the United Nations to support LDCs was also missed. The Office did note that the word limit for reports of the Secretary-General was a constraint in this regard.

47. Several OHRLLS staff interviewed identified challenges to providing inputs to the SIDS report on Samoa Pathway implementation, which the Department of Economic and Social Affairs leads, including their insufficient involvement in planning the report and the need for more guidance and information-sharing with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to finalize it.

## **E. Process gaps and limited knowledge management have prevented further efficiency gains**

### **OHRLLS has been challenged in delivering a broad mandate with a small office size**

48. OHRLLS has faced a challenge in addressing the mismatch between the broadness of its mandate and its comparatively limited resources. While it has received an increase of about \$2 million in regular budget resources since 2016, the Office has faced an expanding mandate and additional LDC, LLDC and SIDS requests. It therefore continued to rely on extrabudgetary funding and an office of 28 staff to implement mandated activities, in particular in the LLDC and SIDS subprogrammes. The capacity gaps were mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General on the assessment resulting from the evolving mandates of the SIDS units of the Secretariat, in which it was noted that, without sufficient and sustainable resources, the unit would not be able to fulfil its original and additional mandates, which had been financed predominantly from temporary provisions and extrabudgetary contributions ([A/73/345](#), para. 64). Most Member State representatives

interviewed commented on the small size of the Office and shared their perception that its limited resources had a negative impact on its capacity to deliver its mandate.

**In meeting this challenge, decision-making did not always maximize the use of limited resources**

49. To address the challenge, OHRLLS has utilized several approaches to maximizing its resources. First, it has identified thematic focus areas and instituted a focal point structure to guide its work.<sup>17</sup> This approach has provided some benefits in promoting internal collaboration and synergies in the Office among the subprogrammes, resulting in events and publications covering multiple country groups. In addition, the Office chose meetings and events as a key modality for delivering its mandate. Preparation for, and attendance of, these activities occupied the greatest proportion of staff time, estimated by staff surveyed as having consumed 36 per cent of their time on average.

50. However, choices regarding where and how to invest time and effort were often reactive and unplanned. The Office maintained a matrix to capture bilateral meetings and requests, which linked follow-up actions with responsible staff, but the matrix had limitations as a management tool. It did not specify the specific nature of the requests, the criteria that were considered in responding to them or the identification of other United Nations entities that might be better placed to respond to the requests. While the Office sought to be responsive by embedding flexibility into its work programme, it is challenging to establish priorities when needing to consistently respond to ad hoc requests for support, as noted by several staff interviewed.

51. Some OHRLLS staff raised concerns about how the Office's workplan had been developed. Approximately one third of those interviewed noted the abundance of activities undertaken without the establishment of targets and priorities. Several staff, in particular at the junior level, stated that work planning had followed a top-down approach, with insufficient input from staff at all levels. Some staff questioned whether the Office's focus on organizing events came at the detriment of monitoring the longer-term outcomes of such events or of focusing on activities that would generate more sustainable change.

52. While somewhat constrained by reliance on extrabudgetary funding to organize events, OHRLLS decision-making on where to focus the Office's limited resources resulted in travel that was skewed away from its three country groups. Most trips were made to non-constituent countries (70 per cent), while a smaller proportion thereof were taken to LDCs (15 per cent), LLDCs (12 per cent) and SIDS (12 per cent).<sup>18</sup>

53. Travel to non-constituent locations to organize intergovernmental conferences, meetings and other events benefiting country groups and to advocate resource mobilization directly with donors would be expected. However, such travel indicated a missed opportunity in the Office's advocacy approach: travel to constituent countries could provide an important venue for advocacy with development partners on the ground who were more directly knowledgeable of the issues faced by the country groups. It was also seen by several Office staff and stakeholders interviewed as a missed opportunity for advocacy and raising awareness in the field.

<sup>17</sup> OHRLLS reported having focal points for energy, climate and intergovernmental issues. Nine cross-cutting thematic issues were identified in 2018–2019 Office workplans.

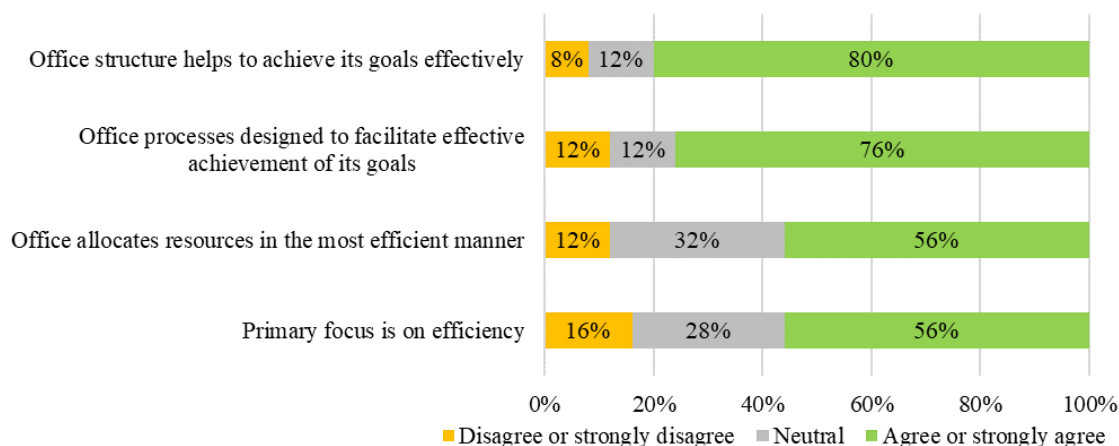
<sup>18</sup> Figures are based on Umoja travel data. Percentages total to greater than 100 owing to overlapping country group membership.

### Office work processes were not consistently streamlined for the more efficient use of resources

54. OHRLLS staff surveyed gave positive ratings of the way in which the Office structure and processes facilitated mandate achievement, as well as very high ratings of work-life balance and supportive leadership. However, ratings of overall efficiency were less positive (see figure VII). Ratings by LDC subprogramme staff of efficiency were low overall, compared with those of LLDC and SIDS subprogramme staff. An assessment of OHRLLS organizational culture identified a workplace in which staff felt valued and took pride in their work, with a strong emphasis on mandate implementation. However, staff did not feel entirely comfortable taking risks and learning from mistakes, which could be more conducive to exploring new and more efficient ways of working.

Figure VII

### OHRLLS staff rated office structure and processes higher on effectiveness than efficiency



Source: OHRLLS staff survey.

55. OHRLLS staff interviewed raised additional points regarding efficiency. Some staff suggested that work processes could be further streamlined by enhancing existing cross-cutting clusters and undertaking additional cross-cutting work. Some staff reported the potential to enhance internal information-sharing further for joint work, although the Office structure encouraged a more siloed approach with regard to specific country groups. In that regard, some Member States interviewed suggested that the Office facilitate more dialogue and exchange among the three country groups, given their overlapping membership and shared priorities. To that end, the Office had prepared a working paper on potential areas of collaboration among the three groups, which was presented at the ambassadorial level in 2019.

56. Work processes related to travel – a critical activity, given its heavy focus on events – raised questions about the level of staff who travelled and the size of the travelling team. Between 2016 and 2019, OHRLLS staff, most of them (57 per cent) at level P-5 and above, took 340 trips.<sup>19</sup> Most of the trips (222 of the 340) were taken by teams of three or more staff to attend events (47 events in total). Most of those teams (53 per cent) comprised three or more senior staff (P-5 and above). The Office reported that travel was determined by the nature and scope of events, including visibility requirements.

<sup>19</sup> Data from Umoja, October 2019.

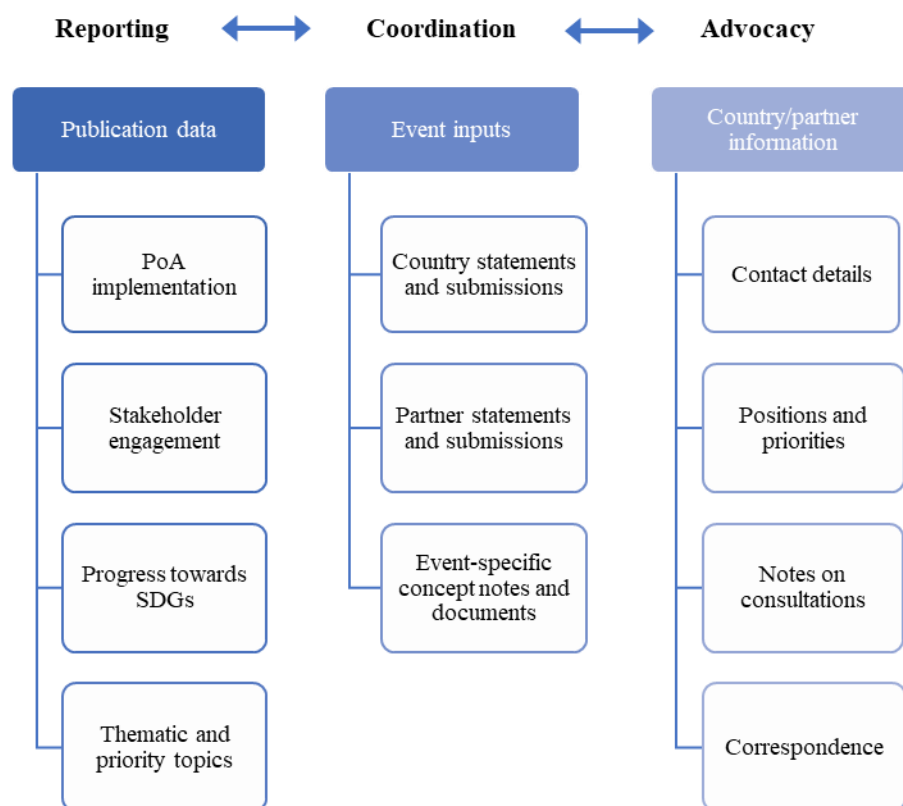
57. Based on observation of multiple events, OHRLLS team member roles and responsibilities were not always clear. According to OHRLLS management, the amount of travel undertaken was necessary, given the heavy burden of organizing and facilitating events substantively and administratively, as well as the need to represent the Office at high-level government meetings. Several Member State representatives interviewed stated that it would be useful if OHRLLS staff not only attended events but also travelled more within the countries that they visited to meet various stakeholders, thereby obtaining a better understanding of the issues facing the countries.

**Despite recent improvements to knowledge management systems, the capture and sharing of knowledge was largely informal, which contributed to the insufficient use of information across mandated functions**

58. OHRLLS collected and received a variety of knowledge inputs that corresponded to its three mandated functions (see figure VIII). To manage the inputs, the Office updated its knowledge management systems with an online shared drive, an improved website<sup>20</sup> and a robust information management strategy. The inputs overlapped across Office subprogrammes and roles, which highlighted the potential value of internal knowledge-sharing. Most OHRLLS staff surveyed were satisfied with overall communication and knowledge management: 80 per cent stated that they had the internal information needed to do their jobs well, and 72 per cent and 68 per cent, respectively, reported that the Office had tools for knowledge-sharing and that the tools were used sufficiently.

Figure VIII

**OHRLLS accessed various sources of internal and external information across its three mandated functions**



Source: OIOS based on documentation review.

<sup>20</sup> At the time of evaluation, OHRLLS was updating its website.

59. Notwithstanding the improvements noted above, knowledge management remained largely informal in practice, and valuable information was insufficiently harnessed. Knowledge management tools were used inconsistently, which did not help to alleviate the heavy workload and contributed to a sense of insufficient strategic planning. Nearly half of OHRLLS staff interviewed noted a need for a more strategic use of information across the Office, in particular to encourage office-wide planning and collaboration.

60. The Office did not consistently leverage opportunities to capture the knowledge exchange and learning that occurred during its many events. In a sample of 17 events that had explicit objectives, more than half (11) included learning and experience-sharing as objectives, and the events observed included several examples of knowledge-sharing. However, the interactions were not accompanied by the sufficient systematic capture and communication of learning outcomes. The objectives of such meetings were generally oriented towards capturing best practices and lessons, but lacked an approach to gathering and reporting data on targeted learning outcomes.

61. OHRLLS missed other opportunities for more systematic and efficient knowledge capture to support its key advocacy efforts. Only a limited portion of inputs related to stakeholder engagement and resource mobilization advocacy activities made their way into the Office's knowledge management processes. Certain aspects of meeting records, such as notes to file, that contained information on advocacy opportunities were tracked but underutilized to enhance the advocacy work of the Office.

## V. Conclusion

62. With only one decade remaining for the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which included the pledge that no one would be left behind, the United Nations must intensify its support of Member States in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. For the Organization's most vulnerable members, the urgency is even greater; LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS are at the greatest risk of being left behind. Given that the countries represent more than half of all Member States and more than one billion individuals, the repercussions of failure are grave. As the only United Nations entity dedicated exclusively to supporting these countries, OHRLLS therefore has a critical role to play.

63. The many achievements of OHRLLS over the past three years, given its limited resources, are to be commended. OHRLLS has positioned itself to support Member States effectively in intergovernmental processes and to act as a convener of United Nations entities through a diverse range of events and partnerships at the global level.

64. During this time of organizational reform, however, opportunities exist for OHRLLS to reflect and recalibrate in order to become an even stronger and more dynamic champion of the countries on whose behalf it advocates. While the Office benefits from a culture in which staff feel valued and are dedicated, room for improvement has been identified in the present evaluation with regard to innovation, continuous improvement and risk-taking. OHRLLS must continue to think beyond the production of mandated outputs and towards the achievement of desired impact; it needs to be bold, creative and proactive. That is the cultural aspiration of not only OHRLLS but the entire Organization, as urged by the Secretary-General.

65. Given its small size and limited budget, OHRLLS needs to leverage its expertise, experience and position further to enhance its knowledge management; partnerships; use of social media, events and reports for focused advocacy; and proactive leadership with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the

General Assembly. New uses for limited funds, as well as new ways of working, will yield not only efficiency gains but also more far-reaching results.

66. As an integral part of the United Nations system supporting Member State achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, OHRLLS must define its role clearly on the basis of its mandate and comparative advantage and must coordinate with its partners accordingly. The Office cannot work alone. As the world enters a decade of action, OHRLLS must ensure that the needs of its three country groups remain at the forefront of the Organization's work.

## VI. Recommendations

67. OIOS makes four important recommendations to OHRLLS and one important recommendation to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

### **Recommendation 1 (results B and D)**

68. OHRLLS should develop an overarching advocacy strategy that clearly links activities to objectives tracked through performance measures. The strategy should:

- Identify opportunities for better leveraging events and publications as advocacy tools
- Establish an iterative strategic planning process to set and refine targets for advocacy-related activities, such as campaigns
- Integrate communication efforts into a broader advocacy framework, including Office branding considerations
- Define activities to increase the Office's advocacy with senior leadership in the United Nations, such as regular communication with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General
- Explore how to better leverage social media to raise global awareness around the issues of relevance to the Office's three country groups

*Indicator of achievement:* establishment of an OHRLLS advocacy strategy covering the above-mentioned elements, including a specific plan for how to increase regular communication with senior United Nations leadership

### **Recommendation 2 (result C)**

69. OHRLLS, in consultation with inter-agency consultative group members, should strengthen the groups as a mechanism for coordination around programme of action implementation, including by:

- Identifying topics that promote coordinated work around programme of action implementation, including joint advocacy activities, such as campaigns and multi-stakeholder partnerships
- Establishing linkages with the revised coordination architecture for development activities at the global and regional levels
- Embedding stronger accountability into meeting outcomes by establishing workplans, where feasible, and assigning clear responsibilities for follow-up action

*Indicator of achievement:* documentation of inter-agency consultative group activities covering the above-mentioned points

**Recommendation 3 (result E)**

70. OHRLLS should enhance knowledge management in the Office to ensure the more systematic and regular use of the systems already in place and to create new systems or mechanisms where gaps may exist. OHRLLS may consider holding an office-wide workshop to discuss how to further enhance approaches for knowledge capture and use, such as managing advocacy-related information from notes to file.

*Indicator of achievement:* evidence of enhanced knowledge management, including documentation on related internal decisions and process changes.

**Recommendation 4 (result D)**

71. OHRLLS should consider how to more systematically integrate gender and human rights into its reports, as relevant.

*Indicator of achievement:* evidence of efforts undertaken, including staff training, to improve the integration of gender and human rights into publications.

**Recommendation 5 (result B)**

72. The Executive Office of the Secretary-General should identify opportunities for the greater engagement of OHRLLS with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and its members, particularly on issues of the most relevance to LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

*Indicator of achievement:* evidence of greater OHRLLS engagement with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group.

(Signed) Fatoumata **Ndiaye**  
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services  
March 2021

**Annex\*****Comments received from the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General****Comments received from the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States**

Reference is made to the memo of 24 January 2020 (OIOS-2020-00151) transmitting the draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for our review and formal comments.

I reviewed the draft report and welcome its findings. In particular, I welcome the conclusions that the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States: (i) provided an important voice and support in intergovernmental processes for the most vulnerable members of the United Nations membership, including in effectively supporting the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States to navigate intergovernmental machinery and to reach more informed country group positions; (ii) linked the Sustainable Development Goals to the three programmes of action in its work planning and activities; (iii) was effective in resource mobilization, as shown by the large amount of extrabudgetary resources mobilized to supplement its limited regular-budget resources and to fund the new established Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries; (iv) played a leading role in the establishment of this Bank; (v) met its reporting mandate for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States with timely and good quality reports; and (vi) effectively organized substantive events and utilized successful partnerships approaches.

I also take note of the findings of the draft report that point to uneven results, including in such areas as coordinating the support of the United Nations system to the implementation of the programme of action, raising global awareness, integrating human rights and gender into reporting, and using knowledge management systems. We will make sure that actions are taken to improve on all these important areas.

Regarding the draft report's comments on the destination of travel, we fully agree that it would be beneficial if the office travel led more to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Unfortunately, given its limited travel resources, the office could only undertake advocacy and resource mobilization-related travel.

My office welcomes the draft report and agrees to its recommendations. Also related to this, we welcome the recommendation to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to identify opportunities for greater engagement of the Office of

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\* In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services sets out the full text of comments received from the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.



the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, particularly on issues of the most relevance to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. This would enable more coherent and coordinated support of the United Nations system to the implementation of the specific programmes of action of these countries and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States will strive to implement the recommendations of the draft report on an effective and timely manner.

A recommendation action plan template with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States response to the recommendations will be sent to the Office of Internal Oversight Services in due course.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Yee Woo Guo, and Ms. Demetra Arapakos and her team – Michael Craft and Daouda Badio – for their professionalism, collegiality and teamwork.

We look forward to seeing the final report.

### **Comments received from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General**

Thank you for sharing the formal draft of the report entitled “Evaluation of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States” with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

The Executive Office of the Secretary-General is grateful for the evaluation undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and appreciates the opportunity to comment on the recommendation. Following a careful review by the Sustainable Development Unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, I wish to request the recommendation be amended as follows: the Executive Office of the Secretary-General should identify opportunities for greater engagement of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States with the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and its members, particularly on issues of the most relevance to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The indicator of achievement remains unchanged.

The rationale for the insertion “and its members” is to clarify that the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States should engage in significant partnerships with relevant members of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to leverage its analytical capabilities and networks.

With this amendment, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General accepts recommendation 5 of the draft report.