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Programme planning

**Report on the activities of the Office of Internal
Oversight Services**

Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The present report provides an assessment of the state of evaluation in 75 Secretariat entities during the biennium 2018–2019 and identifies key organizational performance as assessed in the evaluations, as well as the challenges for strengthening evaluation.

Evaluation practice remained highly uneven across the Secretariat, with meaningful practice limited to just a handful of entities with established functions and dedicated resources, mostly under the development and human rights pillars, and largely project-focused and donor-driven. There was marginal or non-existent evaluation practice in most entities in the peace and security pillar and management and support areas. Subprogramme evaluation by programme managers, as provided in ST/SGB/2018/3, was limited across the Organization.

The quality of evaluation reports was good and improved slightly from the previous biennium. The demonstration of evaluation use was also enhanced, although past weaknesses regarding evaluation use and tracking systems persisted. The overemphasis on project-based evaluations also limited the transferability and broader use of evaluation findings and recommendations. In addition, most staff respondents were not aware of whether evaluations generated positive changes in their entities.

Evaluation reports assessed the overall performance of the Secretariat programmes as satisfactory in achieving their immediate objectives and delivering benefits for target groups, but their capacity to deliver broader systemic change remained limited.

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Increased leadership priority and the related 2017 reform initiatives of the Secretary-General were yet to permeate as a means of effectively addressing the perennial challenges that affect the evaluation functions. Inadequate resources, a lack of staff capacity and expertise, an absence of formal evaluation activity or policy, organizational culture, competing management priorities and weak central evaluation capacity-building and support were the key challenges for stronger evaluation practices across the Secretariat.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) makes the following four important recommendations:

(a)   Establish the evaluation function and terms of reference in entities that do not have them and adopt or update evaluation policies;

(b)   Strengthen evaluation practices in entities with capacity gaps;

(c)   Improve evaluation planning and follow-up to recommendations;

(d)   Enhance the quality of evaluation-related submissions in budgets and track workplans, resource allocation and expenditure in Umoja.

Contents

I. Introduction

1.   Evaluation is an integral component of the United Nations programme management cycle, as provided in ST/SGB/2018/3, to enhance accountability and learning for stronger performance and results.[1] Pursuant to regulation 7.4 of ST/SGB/2018/3, the present review has been conducted biennially since 1988, focusing on the main programmes of the Secretariat. In line with the Secretary General's 2017 reform initiatives, including the delegation of authority to heads of entity, the current review covers all 75 Secretariat entities, including field missions.[2]

2.   The review provides a systematic overview of the state of evaluation across the 75 Secretariat entities for the biennium 2018–2019. It includes an assessment of the structure, capacity and practice of the evaluation functions, identifies key trends in performance as assessed in evaluations and provides recommendations to further strengthen evaluation in the Organization.

3.   Comments from entities on the draft report (annex II) were considered in the final report.

II. Methodology

4.   The present review contains a description of the overall state of Secretariat evaluation in the biennium 2018–2019,[3] by answering the following questions:

  (a) How was evaluation established and practised in the Secretariat?

  (b) What was the overall quality of evaluations?

  (c) How were evaluations used?

  (d) What were the key trends in performance identified in the evaluations?

  (e) What was needed to strengthen evaluation?

5.   The review included a mixed-methods approach and triangulated information collected from July to November 2020 through the following:

  (a) Review of 448 reports submitted by 54 entities, of which 261 from 31 entities met the screening criteria for evaluation reports;

  (b) Quality assessment and meta-analysis of 111 randomly selected evaluation reports using United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards;

  (c) Synthesis of 66 reports (see figure I) rated as high-quality across various aspects of programme performance[4] and analysis of their recommendations;

  (d) Review of good practices of high-quality evaluation reports;

  (e) Document review;

  (f) Survey of 75 entities (96 per cent response rate);

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[1] In ST/SGB/2018/3, evaluation is defined as a process that seeks to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness and impact of an activity in the light of its goals, objectives and accomplishments.

[2] Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluation work was excluded.

[3] Based on the United Nations Evaluation Dashboard issued as a companion report available on the OIOS website.
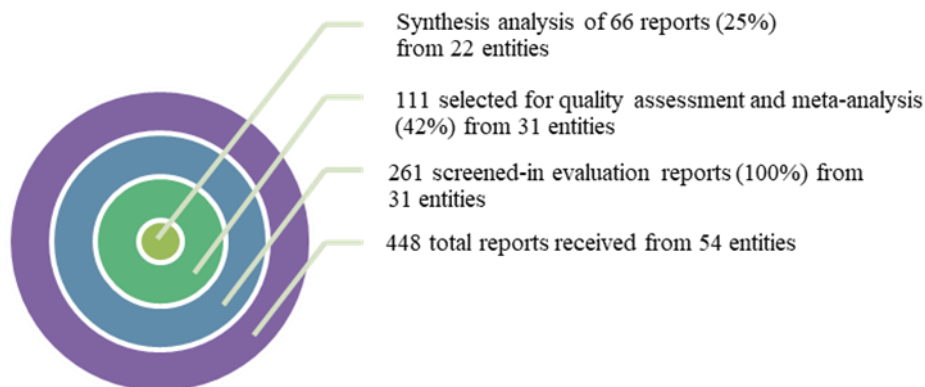
[4] Criteria adapted from the 2012 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) guidance on assessing multilateral organizational effectiveness.

(g)   Survey of a random sample of 715 Secretariat staff at the Professional and higher categories (including national professional officers);[5]

(h)   Financial resource analysis based on budget fascicles and data provided by the entities;

(i)   Semi-structured interviews with 58 programme managers (45 per cent female, 55 per cent male).

Figure I
Summary of report analyses

Synthesis analysis of 66 reports (25%) from 22 entities

111 selected for quality assessment and meta-analysis (42%) from 31 entities

261 screened-in evaluation reports (100%) from 31 entities

448 total reports received from 54 entities

6.   The review was limited by its reliance on self-reported data and the examination of a sample of evaluation reports due to resource limitations. As a mitigating strategy, analyses were triangulated from multiple sources. Aggregated self-reported financial data was not independently verified, nor audited, providing estimated expenditure figures. In total, 45 newly included entities did not produce estimated figures for monitoring and evaluation expenditure as part of their proposed budgets for the biennium 2018–2019, as this was not a requirement for those entities. This limited the review's ability to calculate the Organization's overall monitoring and evaluation cost.

III.   Results

7.   The results are structured in line with the review's key questions regarding: (a) the state of the evaluation function and practice; (b) the quality of evaluation reports; (c) the use of evaluation; (d) the key trends in performance; and (e) the strengthening of evaluation.

8.   For the purpose of analysis and presentation, the 75 entities were classified in five groups on the basis of their mandate and size, as follows:[6]

- Group A – large operational (14 entities)[7]

- Group B – small operational (14 entities)

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[5] Statistically representative sample of staff across all entities: 95 per cent confidence level, 3.57 per cent margin of error, composed of 38 per cent female, 60 per cent male and 2 per cent undisclosed.

[6] Annex I includes detailed group lists.

[7] Large operational entities, on average, had a biennium budget of $330 million and were included in past reviews, except for the newly established Development Coordination Office.

- Group C – peacekeeping operations (15 entities)

- Group D – political affairs (23 entities)

- Group E – predominantly management and support (9 entities)

A. Evaluation practice was highly uneven across the Secretariat, with less than half of entities conducting most evaluations and little or no evaluation activity in others

9.   Out of the 75 entities, 31 (42 per cent) produced 261 evaluation reports, while 44 entities (58 per cent) did not conduct any evaluation. Those 44 entities accounted for 48 per cent ($11.3 billion) of the total estimated Secretariat operational budget.[8] In total, 9 of the 10 entities with the most evaluation reports were large operational entities under the development pillar (see table 1).

Table 1
Entities with the most evaluation reports produced in the biennium 2018–2019

Entity	Number of reports
UNEP	58
ECE	26
UNODC	26
UN-Habitat	15
DESA	14
UNOP	13
UNCTAD	12
ESCAP	10
ESCWA	10
ECA	9

Abbreviations: DESA, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; ECA, Economic Commission for Africa; ECE, Economic Commission for Europe; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme; UN-Habitat, United Nations Human Settlements Programme; UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; UNOP, United Nations Office for Partnerships.
Source: Report review.

10.   Having a dedicated evaluation function or assigned staff appeared to be critical for the entities' ability to conduct evaluations, as 75 per cent of the reports were produced by 17 entities (23 per cent) that had dedicated evaluation functions (see table 2). In total, 51 entities (68 per cent) that did not have any dedicated evaluation function accounted for 13 per cent of the total reports.

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[8] Total of $23.4 billion budget from all sources.

Table 2
Structure of evaluation functions and evaluation reports produced

Type of Evaluation function	Entities	Reports	Reports (%)
Standalone evaluation unit	6	113	44
Dedicated evaluation unit within a multifunctional division	11	82	31
Unit not dedicated to evaluation	7	32	12
No evaluation unit but some evaluation activity	37	34	13
No evaluation activity	14	–	–
Total	**75**	**261**	**100**

Source: Focal point survey and document review.

11.   At the same time, half of the Secretariat entities did not have any leadership position or staff assigned to evaluation activities (see figure II).[9]

Figure II
Leadership of the evaluation function
(Percentage)
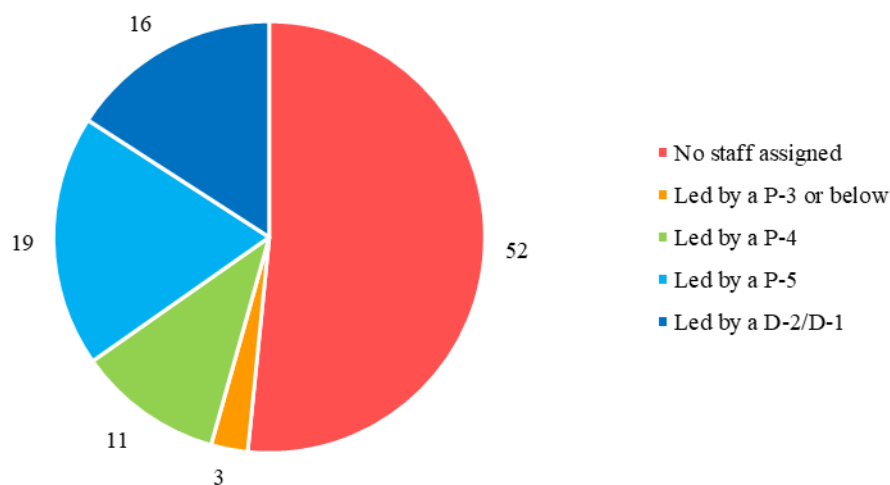
Source: Focal point survey and document review.

Evaluation was generally driven by donors and specific project requirements

12.   Evaluations were largely focused on extrabudgetary activities, as donors' requirements were a key driver of the evaluation of donor-funded projects. In total, 74 per cent of the evaluation reports completed within the biennium (193/261) were produced by the 10 entities listed in table 1, which relied on extrabudgetary funding for 75 per cent of their combined operational budgets.

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[9] As per United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards, the entity's evaluation manager should report directly to an organization's governing body and/or the executive head to ensure evaluation independence.

13. When Secretariat entities, such as the United Nations Office for Partnerships and the Peacebuilding Support Office, provided funding to non-Secretariat implementing partners, they also included a requirement for systemic evaluations, resulting in a relatively high number of evaluations conducted by their implementing partners.[10]

14. For the most part, evaluations were conducted for activities that had budgeted for dedicated evaluation resources and had a specific requirement for evaluation. In 9 of the 10 entities that implemented Development Account projects, 39 per cent of evaluations were on those projects, which, by design, included a dedicated evaluation budget. Those ranged from 4 per cent in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to 100 per cent in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (see figure III). In addition, in 138 project evaluations, evaluation resources were provided by donors as part of the project budget.[11]

Figure III
Development Account project evaluations
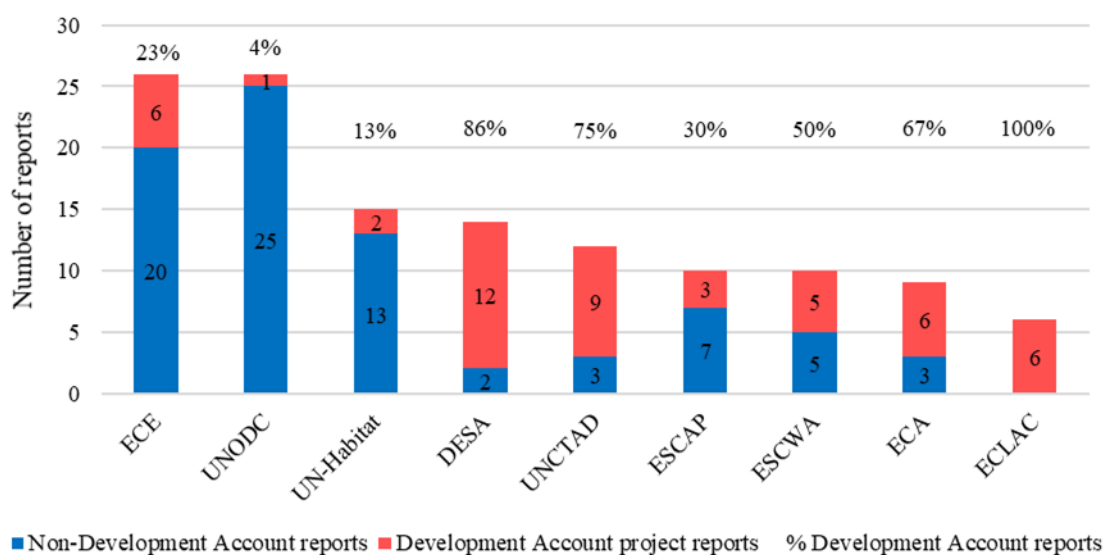
Abbreviations: DESA, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; ECA, Economic Commission for Africa; ECE, Economic Commission for Europe; ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; UN-Habitat, United Nations Human Settlements Programme; UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
Source: Document review.

15. Subprogramme evaluation by programme managers, as provided in rule 107.2 of ST/SGB/2018/3, was limited across the Organization, constituting 6 per cent of the total reports (18). In addition, programme/entity-level evaluations constituted 3 per cent (7) of the reports (see figure V).

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[10] Evaluations conducted by non-Secretariat implementing partners excluded.

[11] For example, the United Nations Office for Partnerships (United Nations Democracy Fund) allocates approximately 10 per cent of project budgets for evaluation; the Development Account evaluation framework provides for the mandatory evaluation of selected projects. Similar requirements are in place in other entities where funds are allocated for evaluations.

Evaluation activities were concentrated mostly in large operational entities under the development and human rights pillar

16.   Table 3 provides an overview of the status of evaluation across the five groups. There are significant weaknesses in all but the large operational entities group (group A).

17.   Group A entities had more established evaluation functions, including either standalone evaluation units or multifunctional divisions with evaluation functions, headed by staff at the P-4 level and above. They also had clear reporting lines: nine entities reported directly to the entity head and five to other management functions.

18.   Except for the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office, none of the entities in groups B, C or D had dedicated evaluation functions. Out of the 61 entities in groups B, C, D and E, only 15 had evaluation policies and 7 had evaluation plans.

Table 3
Evaluation functions across groups

Group	A	B	C	D	E
	Large operational	Small operational	Peacekeeping operations	Political affairs	Predominantly management and support
No. of entities	14	14	15	23	9
No. of dedicated evaluation functions	11	–	1	1	4
No. of evaluation policies	13	7	1	2	5
No. of evaluation plans	13	2	–	3	3
Percentage of total Secretariat budget	20	1	58	11	10
Extrabudgetary (%)	69	67	1	4	16
Percentage (number) of total evaluation reports	79 (206)	7 (19)	4 (11)	6 (15)	4 (10)
Percentage of budget spent on evaluation reports	0.32	0.07	0.00	0.03	0.03

Source: Focal point survey and document review.

Some entities made modest improvements in their evaluation function

19.   Overall, for those entities included in the previous report for the biennium 2016–2017 (A/74/67), the number of evaluation reports decreased by 1 to 230 for the biennium 2018–2019. However, six entities reported greater independence of their evaluation functions since the previous period (see table 4), and five (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, Department of Safety and Security, Office of Legal Affairs, Office of Counter-Terrorism and United Nations Office at Geneva) had adopted or updated their evaluation policies. In total, 20 entities had evaluation plans in place, which was same number as in the biennium 2016–2017 and, of those, only 5 met the quality standards.[12]

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[12] Quality standards developed based on United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards; applied in previous biennial reviews.

Table 4
Structure of evaluation functions of entities included in past biennial studies

Stand-alone evaluation unit	Dedicated evaluation unit within a multifunctional division	Unit not dedicated to evaluation	No evaluation unit but some evaluation activity	No evaluation unit and no evaluation activity
OLA[a]	DGACM	ECE	DOS	EOSG
UNCTAD	DPO	ECLAC	OHRLLS	ODA
UNEP	DPPA	DMSPC[a,b]	OOSA	
UNODC	DSS		OSAA	
UN-Habitat	DESA[a]		UNOG	
	ECA		UNON[a]	
	ESCAP		UNOV[a]	
	ESCWA[a]			
	ITC			
	OCHA			
	OHCHR			

Abbreviations: DESA, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; DGACM, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; DMSPC, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance; DPO, Department of Peace Operations; DPPA, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; DOS, Department of Operational Support; DSS, Department of Safety and Security; ECA, Economic Commission for Africa; ECE, Economic Commission for Europe; ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; EOSG, Executive Office of the Secretary-General; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; ITC, International Trade Centre; OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; ODA, Office for Disarmament Affairs; OHCHR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; OHRLLS, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; OLA, Office of Legal Affairs; OOSA, Office for Outer Space Affairs; OSAA, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme; UN-Habitat, United Nations Human Settlements Programme; UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva; UNON, United Nations Office at Nairobi; UNOV, United Nations Office at Vienna.

Source: Focal point survey and document review.

[a] Higher organizational independence compared with previous bienniums.

[b] Compared with predecessor entities.

20. The number of entities using one or more key evaluation procedures increased from 24 to 25 in the biennium 2018–2019. The most commonly used evaluation procedures included the feeding results into planning and implementation (57 per cent), the dissemination of reports (53 per cent) and the mainstreaming of gender in evaluations (52 per cent). Despite those self-reported updates, the evaluation reports assessed did not incorporate such elements satisfactorily.[13]

21. Using the output-based approach, spending on evaluation reports at an aggregate level during the biennium 2018–2019 was estimated at $17 million, which was lower than the 19.3 million estimated in the biennium 2016–2017.

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[13] See para. 30.

Tracking of monitoring and evaluation budget has been discontinued, further hindering the monitoring of evaluation expenditure against the established benchmark

22.   Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/269, the estimated resources required for monitoring and evaluation functions were recorded and reported separately in the proposed biennial programme budget. The monitoring and evaluation budgets of 27 entities included in the previous biennial review decreased by 6 per cent to $44.5 million in the biennium 2018–2019, from $47.2 million in 2016–2017.[14] Evaluation budgets ranged from $107,400 to $6.3 million, representing between 0.03 to 1.4 per cent of entities' biennial programme budgets.

23.   This self-reported monitoring and evaluation budget was not a reliable indicator of the resources dedicated to evaluations, in part because it included budgets for monitoring activities. Some entities reported high monitoring and evaluation budgets but produced few or no evaluation reports.[15] In addition, the methodology for its calculation was subjective and therefore applied inconsistently, and it was not used by most entities in groups B, C and D. As part of the budget process reform and the change to annual budgeting, that practice was discontinued for the 2020 annual budget. The figures created confusion and did not address a key element of the Secretary-General's budget reform on demonstrating how evaluations informed future plans and improved effectiveness.

24.   The absence of any internal mechanism, separate from the budgeting process, to monitor and report on funding for evaluation will affect the Organization's ability to measure entities' performance against the benchmarks of having 0.5 to 3 per cent of their expenditure dedicated to evaluation,[16] as proposed by the Joint Inspection Unit.[17] Two large entities noted that such discontinuation posed challenges in programming the appropriate evaluation funding.

Entities with weak or non-existent evaluation practices relied on other reviews for accountability and learning and considered evaluation a burden

25.   In terms of accountability for results, most entities with no evaluation practice felt adequately covered through audits, as well as budgeting and performance reporting processes and external assessments (e.g. Board of Auditors audits, audits and evaluations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), think tank research and press coverage). While managers and staff from those entities expressed oversight fatigue, a significant gap was acknowledged in assessing results through independent and credible evaluations that could provide useful feedback to enhance programme design or demonstrate the results achieved.

26.   Despite the reportedly high number of non-evaluation assessments (e.g. after action reviews, management and strategic reviews, end-of-assignment and progress reports, etc.), there was no indication as to how such reports contributed to improved programme design and delivery, nor how they were useful in assessing the achievement of results. Interviews indicated a weak understanding of what evaluation is and its difference from monitoring, auditing and management reporting. In addition, the learning aspect of evaluation practice was largely neither acknowledged nor understood.

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[14] Compiled from Department of Management, Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts form 12 (budgets) for 2018–2019 and 2016–2017 biennial budget submissions.
[15] The lack of accuracy of self-reported figures was also reflected in the report on the biennium 2014–2015 (A/72/72, paras. 18–21).
[16] See para. 62.
[17] See JIU/REP/2014/6, para. 77.

B. Overall quality of evaluation reports was good, but several areas need improvement

27. The increase in the number of entities in the present report did not result in a higher number of evaluations, as 44 entities did not produce evaluation reports. Of the 488 reports that 54 entities submitted, 261 (53 per cent) reports from 31 entities were assessed as evaluations, based on predefined screening criteria (see figure IV).

Figure IV
Number of entities and reports, past three bienniums
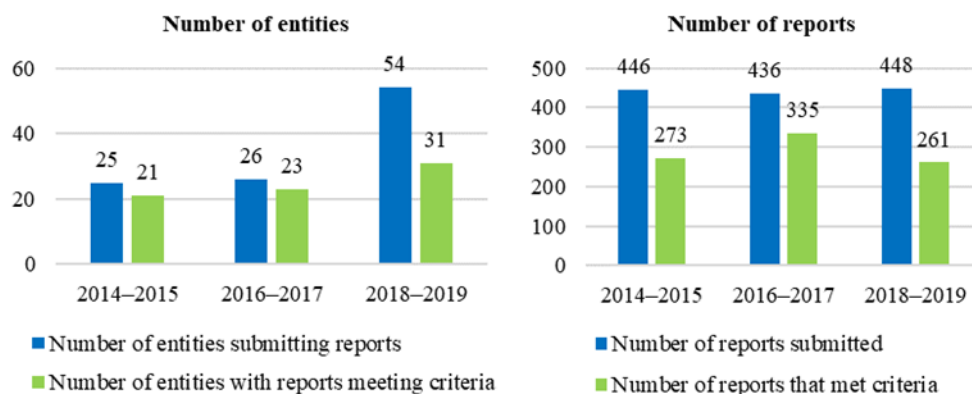
Source: Document review.

28. Most of the reports (72 per cent) were project evaluations, although there was a positive trend in the increase in thematic evaluations since the previous biennium, from 6 to 15 per cent, which was indicative of a more strategic use of evaluations (see figure V).

Figure V
Evaluation scope
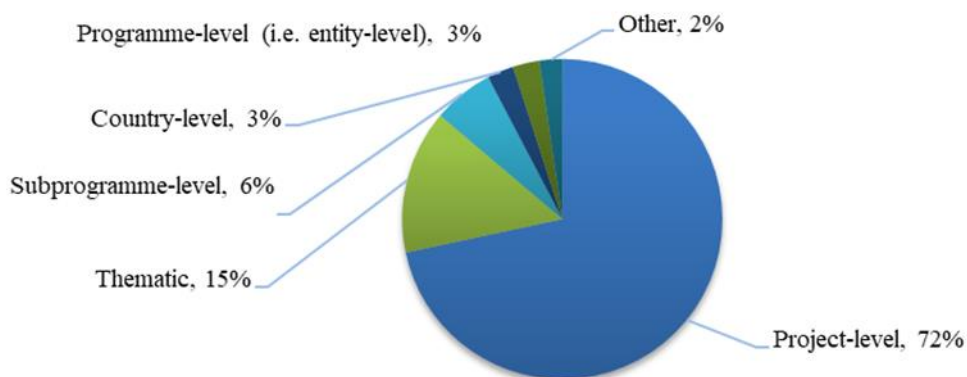
Source: Document review.

29. Most reports were of good quality. Of the sample of 111 reports assessed, 60 per cent were rated as high-quality, 37 per cent as fair and 3 per cent as poor. Reports from groups A, B and D were rated as higher-quality than those from groups C and E (see figure VI).

Figure VI
Quality of reports by entity groups
(Percentage)

Source: Quality assessment of the sample 111 reports.

30.   Across the seven quality parameters assessed, the findings, background and report structure parameters received higher quality scores, while gender and human rights were lowest (see paras. 34 and 35), followed by methodology and recommendations (see figure VII). M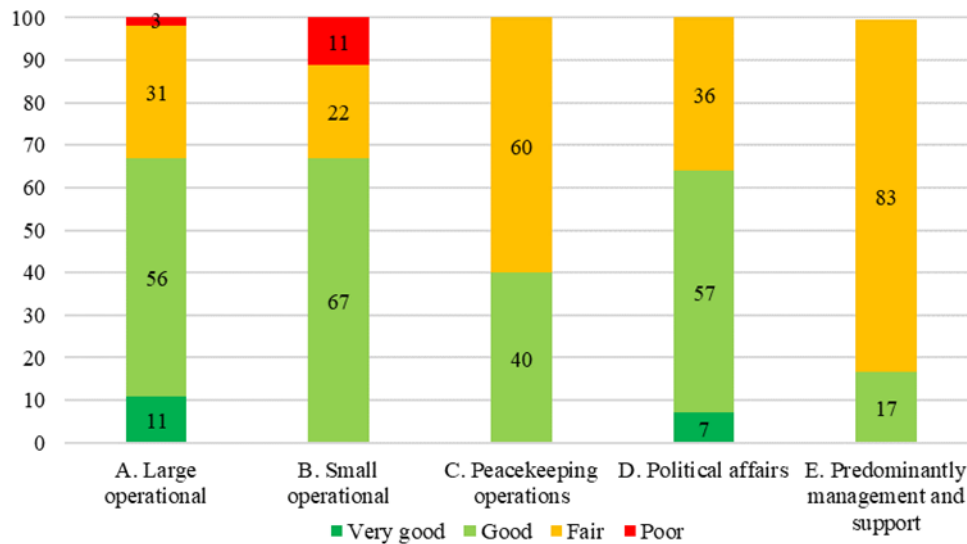ost reports included recommendations that were too vague and that did not clearly identify responsibilities for their implementation. Key weaknesses in the methodology parameter were the overall lack of clarity of the applied methodologies, data sources and the appropriateness of the selected methods.

Figure VII
Quality of evaluation reports 2018–2019
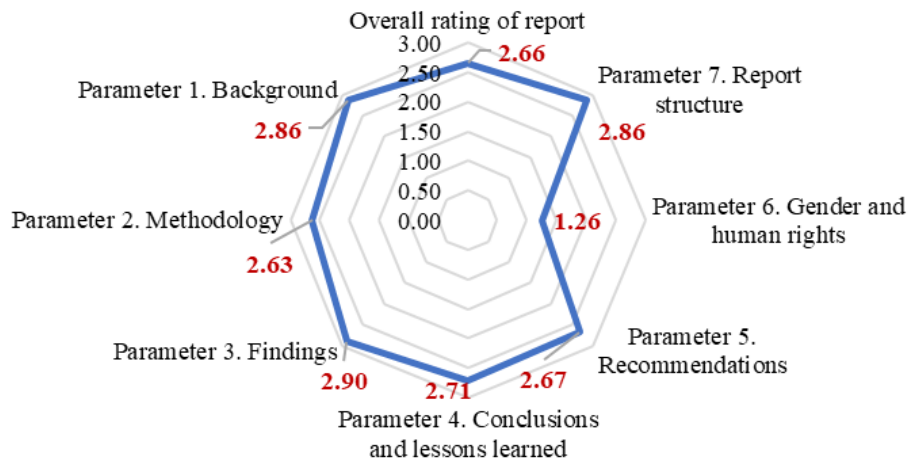
Points reflect average value: 4 = Very good, 3 = Good, 2 = Fair, 1 = Poor, 0 = Very poor

Source: Quality assessment of the sample 111 reports.

31. By thematic areas (see figure VIII), most of the reports were produced by entities in the norm-setting and development areas, whereas few reports were produced by the rest. Reports from the peace and security and management and support entities received relatively lower quality scores, with a rating of "fair" (score below 2.59). Reports in the other three areas were of "good" quality (score above 2.59). Most entities in peace and security and management and support did not have dedicated evaluation functions or expertise, and several reports from those entities were not formal evaluation reports.

Figure VIII
Average report quality per thematic area
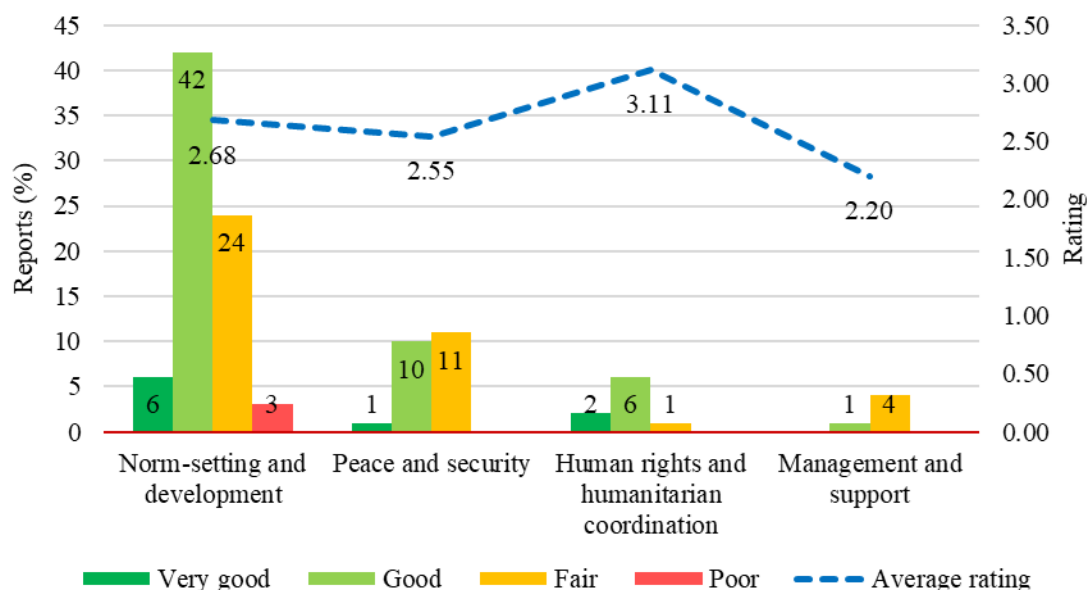
Source: Quality assessment of the sample 111 reports.

32. Overall, staff assessed the quality of evaluation reports as positive, with 56 per cent of respondents on average rating the six quality aspects as "high" or "very high". This represented a slight decrease from 60 per cent in the biennium 2016–2017, as the survey in the current review was expanded to include new entities. Most staff assessed the relevance, credibility, usefulness and independence of the evaluation reports that they were aware of as "high" or "very high", although timeliness and accessibility were assessed relatively poorly (see figure IX).

Figure IX
Staff feedback on quality of evaluation reports
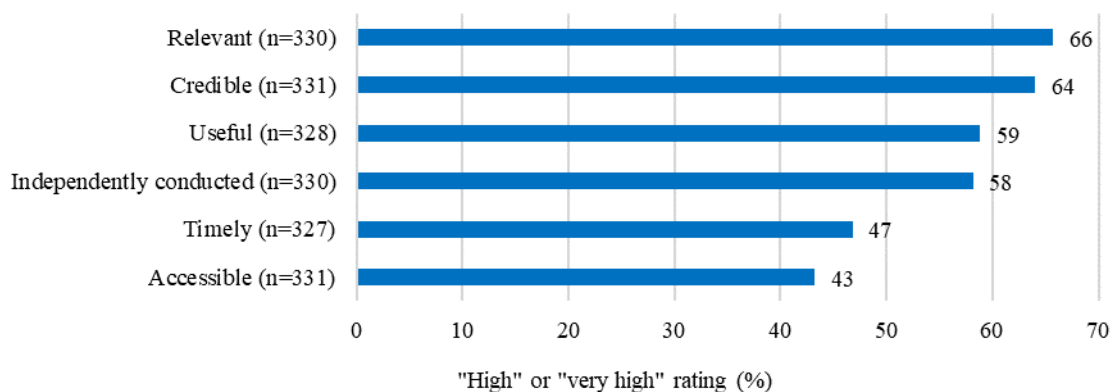
Source: Staff survey, n = respondents.

33. For the entities included in both biennial reviews, the overall quality of reports improved, with 63 per cent of the sampled reports in the biennium 2018–2019 assessed as higher quality, compared with 53 per cent in the biennium 2016–2017. The average overall quality score also increased to 2.7 in 2018–2019 from 2.61 in 2016–2017. On average, the evaluations rated quality as slightly higher in five of the seven parameters (see figure X).[18]

Figure X
Report quality rating for entities with reports in both bienniums
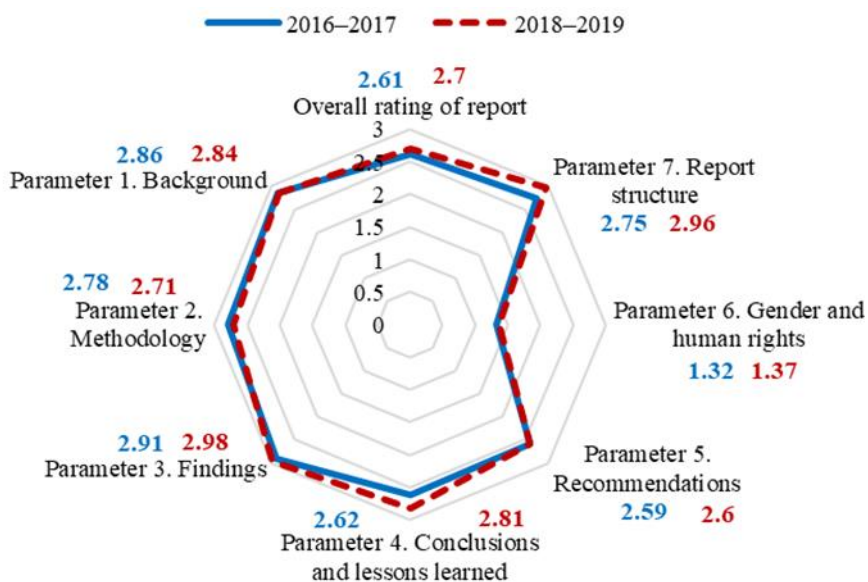
Source: Quality assessments of 83 reports.

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[18] In total, 40 reports in the previous biennium rated quality as higher, compared with 52 in the present biennium. A total of 17 entities produced reports in both bienniums.

Integration of human rights, gender and the Sustainable Development Goals into evaluation practice remained a challenge

34.   While entities continued to report an increased adoption of gender and human rights considerations into their procedures and produced some notable examples,[19] their actual integration in evaluation reports continued to be weak, which reveals the need to reinforce the process throughout the evaluation cycle. In total, 42 per cent of reports met or exceeded the standards for gender integration in the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP). Human rights considerations were also weak, with 32 per cent of reports integrating them satisfactorily (see figure XI).

Figure XI
Integration of gender, human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals into evaluation reports per group

(Percentage)
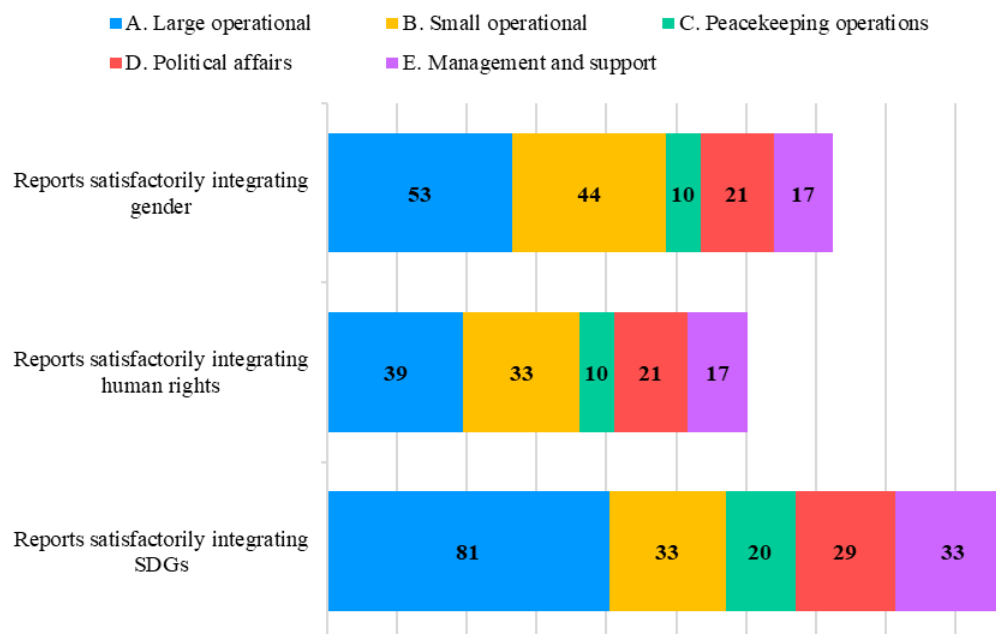
Abbreviation: SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals.
Source: Quality assessment of the sample 111 reports.

35.   In total, a gender perspective was not or was only partially integrated in 56 per cent of reports in the methodology, in 49 per cent of reports in the findings, conclusions and recommendations and in 46 per cent of reports in the scope (see figure XII). Several entities indicated that gender and human rights considerations were not applicable to the subject of their evaluations and expressed the need for training and guidance.

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[19] For example, the 2019 gender evaluation of the Department of Global Communications utilized a gender-responsive approach, including the development of gender indicators for media content and practice.

Figure XII
Integration of human rights and gender considerations into evaluation reports
(Percentage)
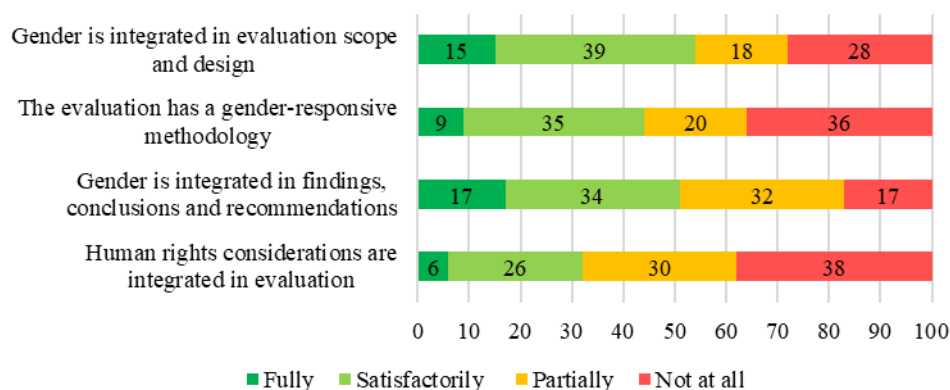
Source: Quality assessment of the sample 111 reports.

36.   In total, 62 per cent of reports (69/111) included an explicit reference to the Sustainable Development Goals, reflecting an improvement from 52 per cent in the previous cycle. Similar to the past two reviews, Goal 16 was the most cited, followed by goals 17, 5 and 13. Weakness remained in the lack of a Secretariat strategy for synthesizing evaluative evidence on the Sustainable Development Goals across evaluations, as previously reported.[20]

C.   Management reform initiatives have enhanced the demonstration of evaluation use, but weaknesses identified in past bienniums regarding evaluation use and tracking systems persisted

37.   The reformed budget process requires entities to indicate how evaluations have been used in programming (see paras. 61-62). A review of the 2020 budget documents of 75 entities showed that 21 entities provided examples of actions taken based on evaluation findings and recommendations conducted during the biennium 2018–2019. This demonstration of use was mostly among group A entities but was limited or absent in the other groups. However, aside from demonstration, the overall state of evaluation use and related weaknesses remained.[21]

38.   In the focal points survey, over half of the entities reported feeding evaluation results into planning and implementation (39/75), or into systems for learning lessons and knowledge management (38/75). Nearly two thirds of entities provided examples of evaluation use to inform programme planning and reporting, while 34 entities shared examples of changes in programme design and delivery.

39.   The most common uses of evaluations, as reported by focal points, were to inform future planning, to inform programme implementation, to report to management and to report to intergovernmental bodies (see figure XIII).

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[20] See A/74/67, para. 32.
[21] Ibid., paras. 24–32.

Figure XIII
Types of evaluation report use

(Percentage)

Horizontal bar chart showing entities reporting use (%):

Type of use	Percentage
Informing future planning	74
Informing programme implementation	72
Reporting to higher levels of management	64
Reporting to intergovernmental bodies	60
Reporting to donors	57
Informing policy development	56
Informing new strategic plan	54
External communications and outreach	53
Reporting on contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals	51

X-axis: Entities reporting use (%), from 0 to 80.

Source: Focal points survey.

40.   However, about half of staff respondents (55 per cent) were not aware of whether the evaluations generated positive changes in their entities. This could be because the majority of entities (59 per cent) did not produce any evaluation reports during the biennium but may also reflect the lack of staff awareness of evaluation use.

41.   Among those who responded (see figure XIV), less than 40 per cent considered evaluations to have generated large positive changes in learning (39 per cent); to have enhanced performance reporting, accountability, transparency and mandate delivery (38 per cent); or to have enhanced evidence-based decision-making (37 per cent).

Figure XIV
Staff rating of the extent of changes resulting from evaluations
(Percentage)

	To a very large extent	To a large extent	To a moderate extent
■ To a very large extent	■ To a large extent	■ To a moderate extent	
■ To a small extent	■ To a very small extent	■ Not at all	
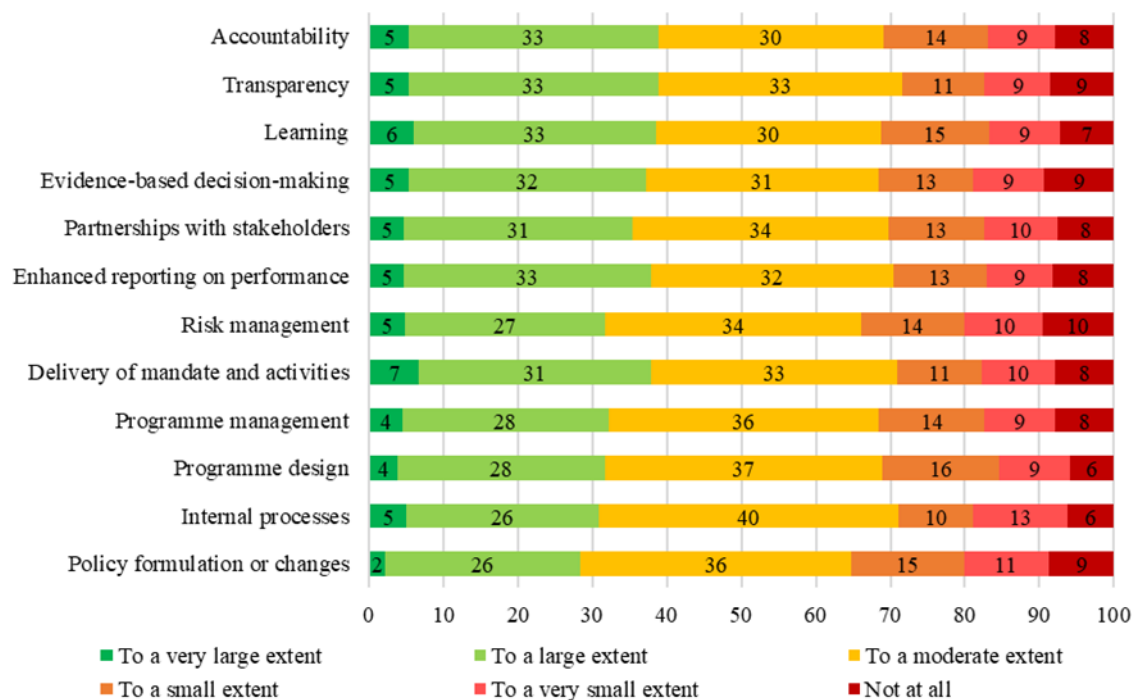
Source: Staff survey.

42.   In addition, the content analysis of 66 high-quality evaluation reports showed very little evidence regarding the intent of their use and weaknesses in terms of monitoring and reporting and results-based management (see figure XV).[22]

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[22] Ratings and assessment criteria in figure 15 adapted from 2012 OECD guidance on assessing multilateral organizational effectiveness.

Figure XV
Ratings of monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems in evaluation reports
(Percentage)

Source: Content analysis

43. Furthermore, the demonstration of evaluation use in the reports was largely lacking, as most reports did not contain management responses or action plans.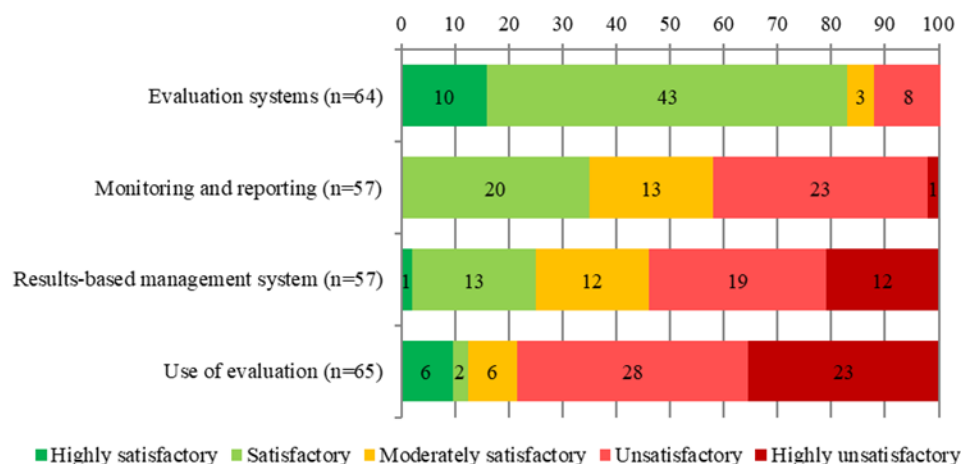 Only eight reports from three entities were rated "satisfactory" in their explicit indication of how the results had been or would be used, all of which were in group A. The overemphasis on project-based evaluations limited the transferability and use of findings and recommendations.

Quality of evaluation recommendations and progress in implementation tracking remained weak

44. Less than half (44 per cent) of the entities reported tracking and following up on recommendations from evaluation reports, and 38 per cent reported having a system for tracking the implementation of evaluation recommendations. However, the quality assessment of 111 reports showed that most recommendations were insufficiently actionable. Nearly 40 per cent of reports provided recommendations that were too vague. Overall, recommendations received the third lowest score across the seven assessment parameters. This was consistent with the findings from the previous biennium.

45. Out of the 627 recommendations included in the high-quality evaluation reports (66), 76 per cent were broadly addressed to the subject entities, instead of clearly identifying those responsible for implementation. In addition, only 11 per cent of reports (7/66) included a management response or an action plan.

46. Those recommendations indicated main areas of weakness in the Organization, with the highest numbers pertaining to monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management and learning; strategic planning; and programme and project management (see figure XVI).

Figure XVI
Evaluation recommendations by focus areas

Recommendations (%)

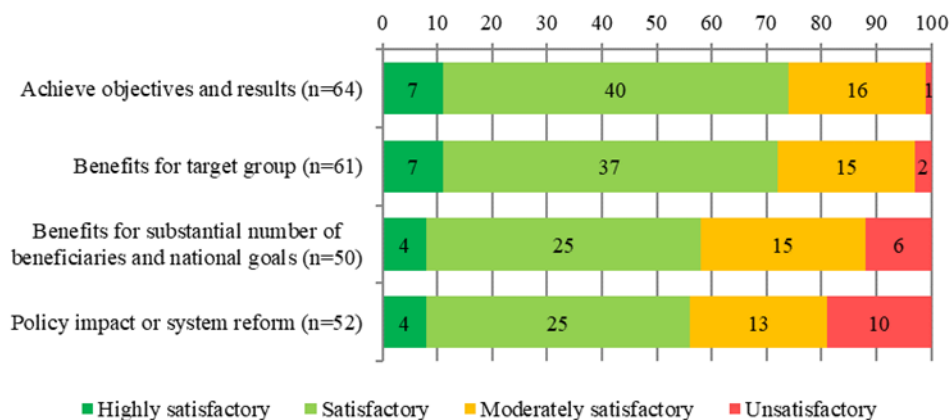| Focus area	%
Monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management and learning	17
Strategic planning and management	15
Programme and project management	15
Cooperation/collaboration and partnerships	9
Effectiveness in mandate implementation	9
Strategic communication and outreach	7
Capacity-building	7
Organizational structure and resource allocation	5
Gender	5
Management and administration (e.g., human and financial resources management)	4
Engagement with Member States	2
Accountability and reporting	2
Sustainable Development Goals	1
Implementation of policies and procedures	1
Other	1
Information technology management	0

Source: Content analysis.

D. Most programmes evaluated achieved their immediate objectives and almost half achieved broader systemic impact

Most programmes achieved their intended results

47.   In the synthesis analysis of 66 high-quality evaluation reports, over 70 per cent of evaluations found that programmes had to a satisfactory or highly satisfactory degree achieved their stated objectives and expected results and delivered benefits for the target groups. Programmes had also been successful in delivering benefits for a substantial number of beneficiaries and in contributing to national goals or in affecting policy or system reforms, although to a lesser extent (see figure XVII).

Figure XVII
Evaluation report ratings on achievement of results
(Percentage)

Category	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory	Moderately satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Achieve objectives and results (n=64)	7	40	16	1
Benefits for target group (n=61)	7	37	15	2
Benefits for substantial number of beneficiaries and national goals (n=50)	4	25	15	6
Policy impact or system reform (n=52)	4	25	13	10

■ Highly satisfactory   ■ Satisfactory   ■ Moderately satisfactory   ■ Unsatisfactory
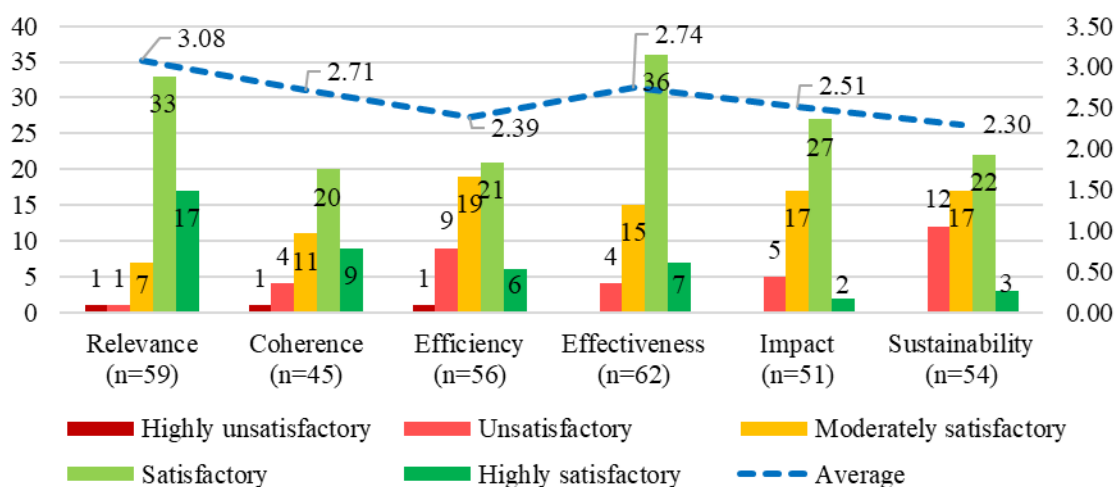
Source: Content analysis.

Evaluations found programmes to be more relevant and effective than efficient or sustainable

48.   According to the evaluation criteria used in the reports, 85 per cent of evaluations assessed the programmes as satisfactory in terms of relevance and over two-thirds as satisfactory in terms of effectiveness (see figure XVIII). Efficiency and sustainability were assessed as less satisfactory, with less than half of the programmes considered satisfactory in terms of efficiency (48 per cent) and sustainability (47 per cent).

Figure XVIII
Report ratings based on evaluation criteria

Source: Content analysis.

49.   By thematic areas, programmes from regional cooperation, human rights and humanitarian coordination, and norm-setting and development entities demonstrated a satisfactory level of effectiveness while evaluation results of peace and security entities were mixed (see figure XIX).[23]

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[23] For management and support entities, one report gave a satisfactory assessment in terms of effectiveness.

Figure XIX
Effectiveness by thematic areas
(Percentage)
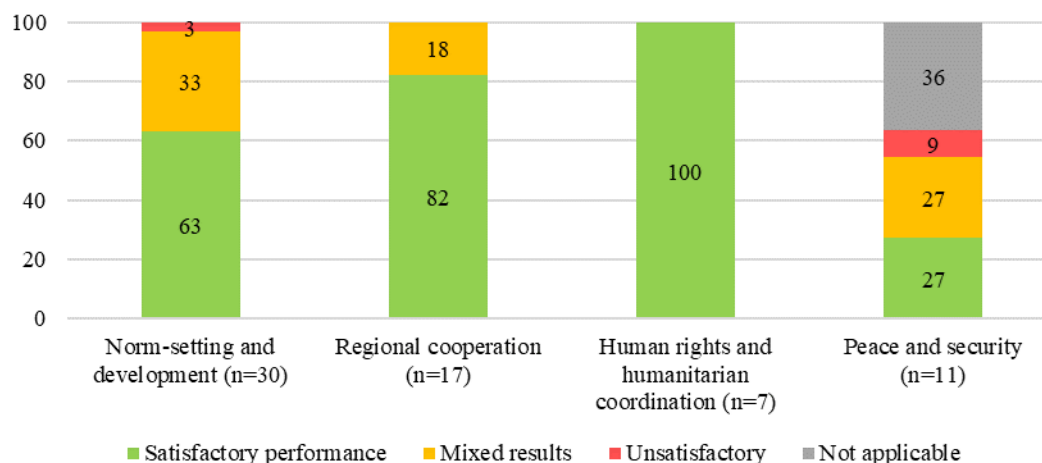
Source: Content analysis.

50. By evaluation criteria, group A entities represented the largest share of the Organization's total activities assessed as satisfactory for each of the criteria used in the evaluation reports (see figure XX).

Figure XX
Report ratings based on evaluation criteria by groups
(Percentage)

Source: Content analysis, n=66.

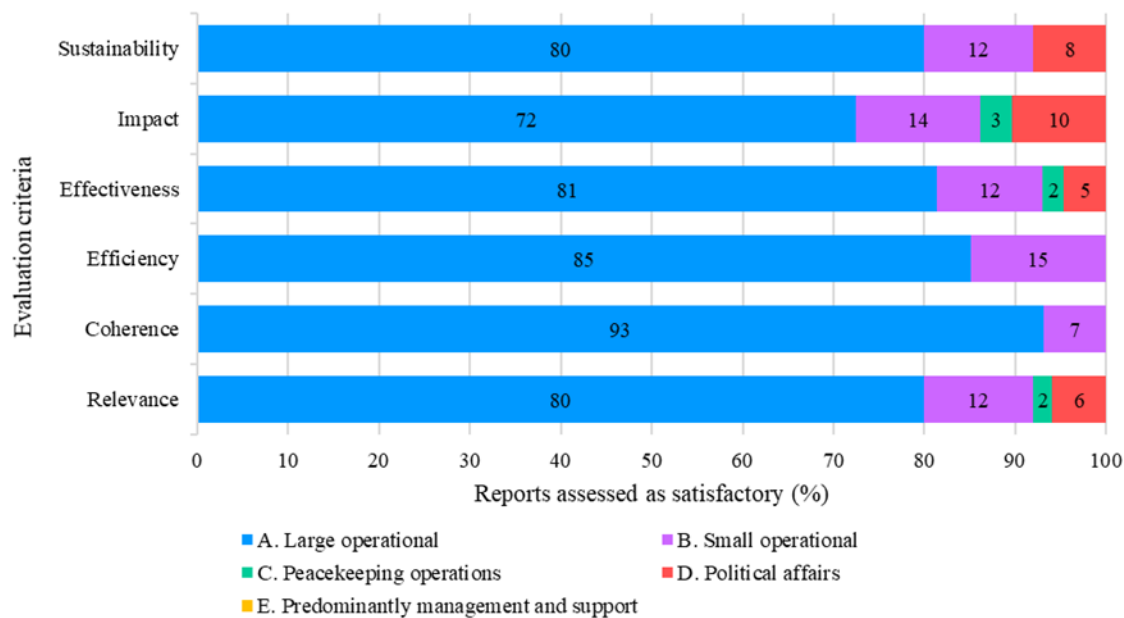**Overall, programmes' ability to capture longer-term broad changes and system reforms remained weak**

51. As in the previous biennium, evidence of there being a transformative effect or a significant contribution to broader systemic change, including policy changes and/or system reforms, remained elusive in a significant number of evaluations analysed for the present biennium. Nevertheless, almost half (44 per cent) of evaluations found clear evidence of a significant contribution to policy changes or system reforms, or signs of progress at the outcome level.

52. Only 30 per cent of reports (20) were found to have satisfactory monitoring and evaluation systems, which posed a barrier to understanding progress, allowing learning and capturing broader change. In total, 36 per cent of reports (24) also noted the lack of outcome monitoring quality, suggesting that monitoring was focused on the output and activity levels and falling short of capturing achievement at the outcome level. Sufficient time, capacity, resources and engagement, including from outside the United Nations, to build the monitoring and evaluation capacity of key stakeholders and promote efficient monitoring systems, were suggested as necessary in order to enhance analysis and learning.

Realistic programme design and timeframes were critical factors for satisfactory performance

53. Overambitious design and unrealistic time frames were frequently mentioned as barriers to effective implementation. Programmes with stronger results showed the importance of having a realistic design that considers the time and resources needed for outcomes to mature. In 33 per cent of reports (22), having a robust and detailed theory of change, a clearly defined logical output to outcome sequence and robust monitoring systems were suggested as key tools to provide a road map to achieve outcomes.

A strong partnership strategy and the ability to forge alliances with diverse stakeholders were frequently identified as key success factors

54. Several evaluations noted the importance of a careful selection of partners and of managing partnerships. Successful programmes showed that the level of efficiency was dependent on the ability to develop transformative relationships and trustful collaborations that enabled broader synergies and a good use of the comparative advantages.

55. The role of government partners and the quality of their participation in the governance and management of programmes was another aspect that was frequently highlighted. Ongoing dialogue and consultations with host government counterparts was found to be critical for kick-starting policy or system reforms. Programmes that actively involved government partners in decision-making and follow-up received greater local government support. Conversely, some programmes found that frequent institutional changes and staff turnover of key government partners undermined partnership development and weakened results.

56. At the regional level, the capacity of the United Nations to convene inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms for dialogue, exchange and peer learning was often praised as a critical factor to promote regional consensus, capacity-building and cross-country collaboration.

57. Evaluations also found that building working relationships with Governments or local partners was not enough, and that promoting inclusive participatory processes that engage and empower a wide range of stakeholders was necessary to enhance mutual trust, improve communication and effective implementation. Further

engagement of civil society organizations and the private sector and ensuring a good balance of national and local actors were found to be critical to the success of programmes.

Programme management issues were the most cited as both impeding and contributing factors

58. The effective assignment of human resources, clear administrative and programmatic procedures and efficient financial administration and reporting processes were identified as key determinants of successful implementation. Conversely, the absence of strong results-based management systems was mostly noted as a challenge. An analysis of the evaluations found that only about 21 per cent of programmes could rely on a sound results-based management system and that in over half of the programmes, the results-based management system was either missing or inadequate.

59. Other commonly cited aspects integral to an efficient implementation included a sound risk analysis, adaptive management, sufficient resources and adequate dissemination and promotion of activities, including the need to develop clear communication strategies. The quality of project management and staff was also frequently identified as main contributing factors to an effective implementation.

60. Synergies across United Nations entities and with other donors were frequently mentioned as critical to ensuring cost-effectiveness. Successful programmes were built upon previous experiences and tapped into the social capital already established. Furthermore, shared offices and the use of existing high-level events and platforms served to enhance the cost-effectiveness of programmes.

E. Increased leadership prioritizing of evaluation has yet to permeate effectively to address the perennial challenges affecting evaluation functions

Secretary-General's reform initiatives led to positive changes and awareness, but tangible improvement in evaluation capacity and activities has yet to materialize

61. Recognizing the long-standing lack of Secretariat evaluation capacity in both resources and expertise, the 2017 management reform initiatives included several measures for strengthening it.[24] This included: (a) the mandatory inclusion of information on evaluation activities in annual budgets, comprising an evaluation plan, key results and lessons from past evaluations and how they informed programme planning and budgeting; (b) the development of an evaluation policy; and (c) the creation of a dedicated evaluation section in the newly established Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance to provide methodological support and skills development to Secretariat entities, particularly those with insufficient capacity.[25] The Secretary-General's senior management compact for 2020 also included specific commitments by heads of entities to develop or align entity-specific evaluation policies with the Secretariat's new policy, undertake self-evaluations and reflect their results in planning and budgeting.

62. Regular budget entities have included information on evaluation activities in annual budgets since 2019, but peacekeeping operations and most extrabudgetary-funded entities have not yet done so. The quality of submissions in the 2020 budget

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[24] See A/72/492, para. 61; and A/72/492/Add.2, para. 156.

[25] The forthcoming evaluation policy envisages support roles for OIOS and the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance.

documents varied greatly. Out of 75 entities, 54 (72 per cent) submitted 150 evaluation-related documents in their budgets, while 21 did not. Of those 150 submissions, 88 (59 per cent) pertained to actual evaluation reports by 31 entities. The rest (41 per cent) were indirectly related (e.g. routine monitoring and performance reports, audits, reviews) or distinct from evaluation, some without any specific evaluation topic. Interviews with programme managers in several entities indicated a lack of clarity as to what evaluation was, what should be reported as evaluations and what was the adequate evaluation coverage for their entities.

63. The draft evaluation policy, prepared jointly by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and OIOS as an administrative instruction, was at the final stages of review and clearance as of March 2021. Several entities indicated that a revision of their policies was pending the issuance of the Secretariat policy. The Department also launched a roster of evaluation consultants available to Secretariat entities, held workshops with budget focal points and partnered with the United Nations System Staff College to develop a draft training on evaluation.

64. Of the 72 entities that responded to the focal point survey, 14 indicated that they had received some support from the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, although some entities expressed concern that there was not enough capacity and expertise in the Department to provide other entities with the necessary support. The Department's evaluation section was not operating with its full approved staffing (seven posts) and had limited evaluation expertise within the team.

65. Nevertheless, those efforts contributed to an increased awareness about evaluation, with 16 per cent of staff survey respondents noticing increased discussion on evaluation and 15 per cent noting higher management priority on evaluation since the reform initiatives (see figure XXI).

Figure XXI
Staff perception on changes regarding evaluation since the 2017 reform initiatives
(Percentage)
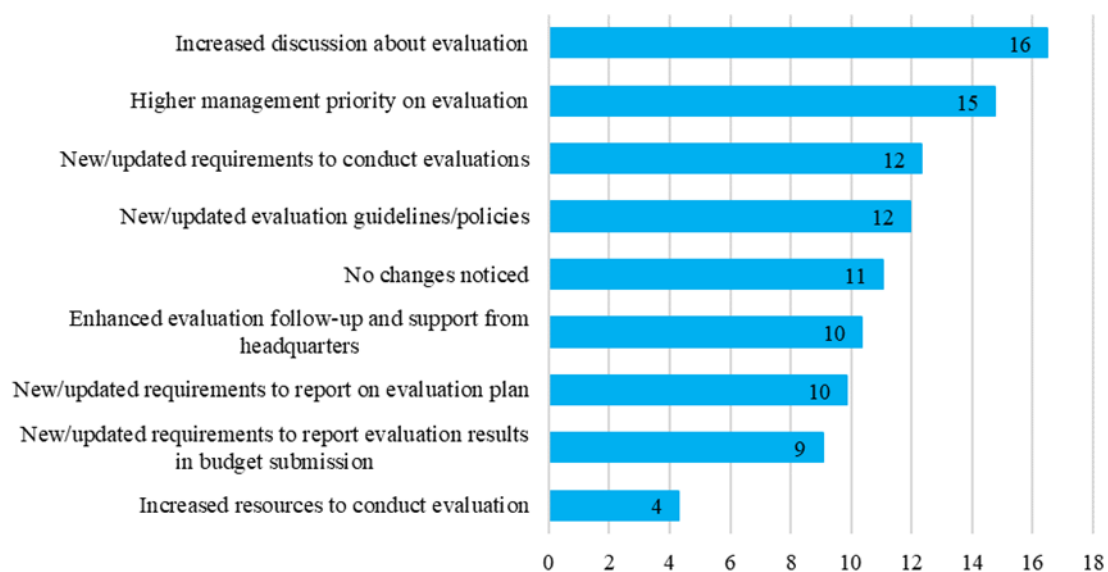
Source: Staff survey.

66. Therefore, with the reform initiatives at various stages of implementation and no change in capacity or resources for evaluation in most of the Secretariat entities,

some programme managers expressed a sense of uncertainty as to how evaluation was being strengthened.

Secretariat entities continued to face shared and unique challenges limiting the function and use of evaluation

67. The challenges that Secretariat entities face in implementing the evaluation activities provided for in ST/SGB/2018/3 are perennial and have been reported in successive biennial reports.[26] Inadequate resources continue to be the biggest obstacle for strengthening the evaluation function, which has been compounded further by the liquidity crisis, hiring freeze, budget cuts, overreliance on donors and lack of dedicated resources for evaluation.[27] Other top challenges reported included a lack of staff capacity and expertise, an absence of formal evaluation policies or activities, organizational culture and competing priorities. In addition, six entities were established during the biennium 2018–2019 that were in transition.[28] Staff survey respondents confirmed this assessment by identifying similar areas for strengthening evaluation in their respective entities (see figure XXV).

68. In particular, group A entities faced challenges with the uptake of evaluative knowledge in informing programme planning, including effective follow-up of recommendations. The use of evaluation was also limited by the lack of cross-cutting and subprogramme evaluations and an overemphasis on project-based evaluations (see paras. 12–15). Four entities reported that their units' capacity was too small and often assigned to non-evaluation assignments to address immediate management needs, which limited evaluation work.

69. Entities in group E, particularly offices away from Headquarters (the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi), reiterated the continued lack of dedicated resources for evaluation and a lack of clear understanding of how evaluations can add value to management and support operations in addition to other oversight through audits and internal performance monitoring.[29] Programme managers interviewed expressed the need for a central capacity, to define key benchmarks and develop consistent methodologies for evaluating all management and support activities across the Secretariat, including through the possibility of adopting an "evaluation as a service" model.

Resource constraints and lack of management priority resulted in little to no evaluation under the peace and security pillar and the small operational offices

70. While accounting for the highest proportion of the Organization's operational budget (57 per cent), group C entities (peacekeeping operations and the Department of Peace Operations) produced the lowest number of evaluation reports (4 per cent). This was attributable mainly to the fact that none of the 14 peacekeeping missions had any dedicated evaluation function or resources, while the only established evaluation function in the Department of Peace Operations had suspended its evaluation work in early 2018 to implement the Comprehensive Performance

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[26] See A/74/67 (paras. 43–46).

[27] Reported by 42 of the 72 entities, according to the focal point survey.

[28] United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti; Development Coordination Office; Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance; Department of Operational Support; Office of Counter-Terrorism; and Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar.

[29] During the biennium 2018–2019, OIOS audited the three offices away from Headquarters on average twice per year, which was less than or equal to the audits conducted in some group A entities with a high number of evaluation reports (e.g. United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime).

Assessment System to improve overall peacekeeping performance and impact assessment. The Department had yet to decide on resuming its evaluation work.

71. While 11 evaluations were done by 5 peacekeeping entities at the component level, none had an entity-level evaluation policy or plan. The two 2013 policies guiding peacekeeping evaluation[30] were outdated and had been superseded by changes from the peace and security and management reform initiatives.

72. Group D included the largest number of entities (23) but, excluding the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office, none of the field political entities had any evaluation capacity, resources or activities. The 2017 evaluation policy covering these entities was also outdated and had been superseded by reform initiatives. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs evaluation capacity was very limited, with only one staff managing extrabudgetary-funded evaluations.

73. In addition to resource constraints, field entities in groups C and D reported as the key obstacles for evaluation a lack of formal evaluation policy, an organization culture focused primarily on results-based budgeting rather than on measuring outcomes and impact, low management priority and inadequate Headquarters support. There was also some confusion regarding the responsibility for evaluation between the heads of entities and the respective Headquarters departments backstopping them (the Department of Peace Operations for group C and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs for group D), in view of the delegation of authority, which should be clarified in updated evaluation policies for both groups.

74. Small operational entities in group B also faced similar challenges and expressed the need for stronger Headquarters support for guidance, training and achieving economies of scale through a central service provider akin to an "evaluation as a service" model, due to their small sizes.

Building an evaluation culture remains a hurdle to strengthening evaluation

75. The focal points survey provided a mixed assessment of the evaluation culture, with about half of respondents rating it as "good" or "very good" and the other half rating it as "fair" or "poor" (see figure XXII). Focal points identified increased human and financial resources, capacity-building and leadership support as key elements needed to strengthen the evaluation culture in their entities.

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[30] Department of Operational Support Headquarters self-evaluation policy and mission evaluation policy.

Figure XXII
Focal points' rating of evaluation culture in their entities
(Percentage)
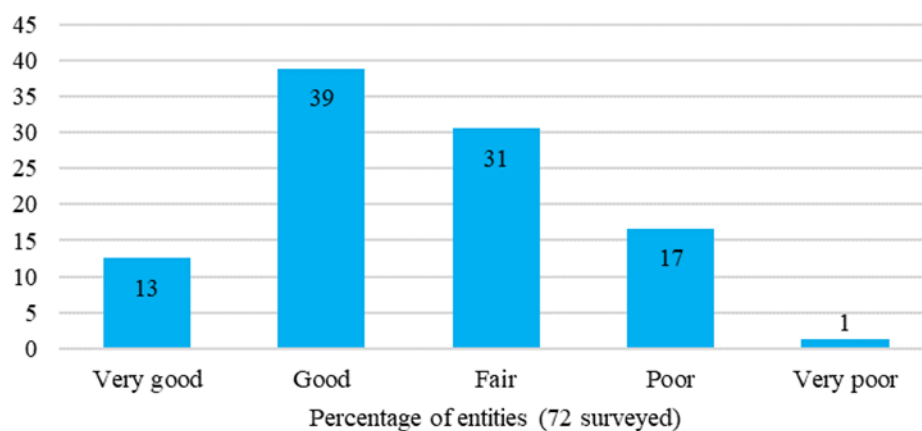
Source: Focal point survey.

76. Entities in the large operational and management and support groups had a more positive view of their entities' evaluation culture, while most entities in the peacekeeping, political affairs and the small operational groups considered it to be fair, poor or very poor (see figure XXIII).

Figure XXIII
Evaluation culture across the five groups of entities
(Percentage)
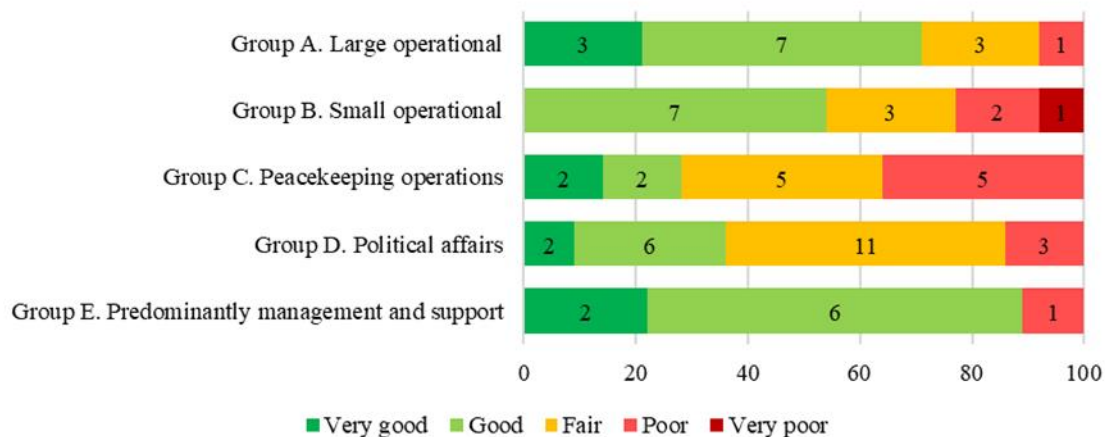
Source: Focal point survey.

77. On staff awareness of their own entities' evaluation work, 44 per cent did not know of any evaluation reports conducted and an equal number did not know of any unit, office or person dedicated to evaluation in their entities (see figure XXIV).

Figure XXIV
Staff awareness of evaluation

(Percentage)

Are you aware of any evaluation conducted by your entity during 2018–2019?

- Yes 56
- No 18
- I don't know 26

Does your entity have an evaluation unit, section, office, or focal point?

- Yes 56
- No 18
- I don't know 26

Source: Staff survey, n=715.

78.   Survey respondents identified key areas for strengthening evaluation, including strategic orientation of evaluation scope, increased resources and enhanced Headquarters support (see figure XXV). When asked how evaluation could contribute to their work, the top three areas identified included communicating planning, decisions and actions; learning what does and does not work; and accountability for results or lack thereof.
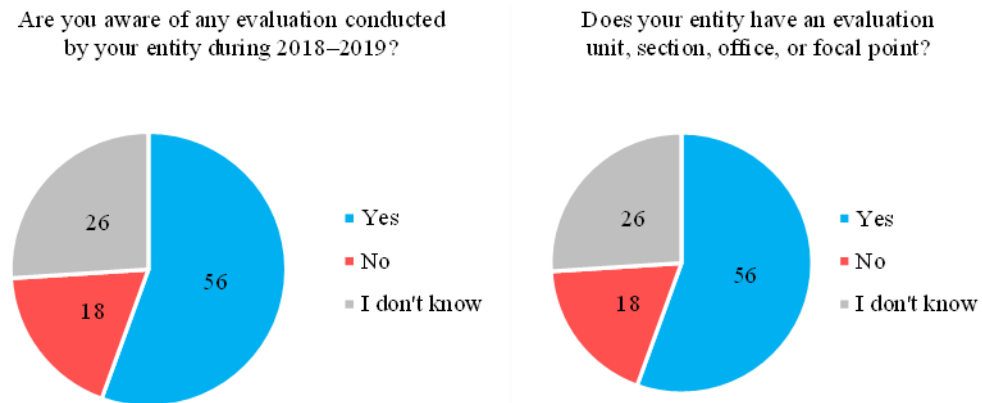
Figure XXV
Factors that could help strengthen evaluation

(Percentage)

Factor	Percentage
Strategic orientation of evaluation scope	17
Increased resources (i.e. human or financial)	16
Enhanced support, capacity building and follow-up from headquarters	13
Relevance to my institutional context	13
Links to budgeting, programming and operations	13
Support from my leadership	11
Timely delivery of evaluation results	9
Independence from undue influence on evaluation	9
Frequency of evaluation	7
Political buy-in (e.g. donor demand)	5
Other	2

Source: Staff survey.

IV. Follow-up on recommended actions of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

79.   In the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its fifty-ninth session (A/74/16), when considering the report of OIOS for the biennium 2016–2017, the Committee did not make any recommendation.

80.   In the report of the Committee at its fifty-seventh session (A/72/16), when considering the report of OIOS for the biennium 2014–2015, the Committee requested that, from the biennium 2018–2019 onward, the budgeting of evaluation resources be better aligned with evaluation plans, and evaluation outputs better reflect such plans and budgets (see A/72/72, para. 63). OIOS followed up on the implementation of that recommendation in paragraphs 23 and 24 of the present review. The practice of budgeting for monitoring and evaluation has been discontinued as part of the budget reform process.

V. Conclusions

81.   The long-standing lack of capacity and uneven quality of evaluation functions and outputs across the Secretariat have been documented in the past series of biennial reviews, and are further amplified in the present report. Against the backdrop of evaluation requirements provided in ST/SGB/2018/3 and the Secretary-General's reform initiatives, the review for the biennium 2018–2019 identified a significant mismatch between expectations and reality in the majority of Secretariat entities with regard to their capacity, resources, priority and quality of evaluations.

82.   Meaningful evaluation practice was limited to a small number of entities with established functions and dedicated resources, most of which were under the development pillar and funded by extrabudgetary resources. Most other entities failed to meet basic evaluation practices, in particular under the peace and security and management and support pillars. Overall, entities largely fell short of the minimum threshold for evaluation spending.

83.   Following the launch of the evaluation policy as a key element of the Secretary-General's reform initiatives, there is a need to further highlight the need for heads of entities to embrace evaluation and establish specific plans of action in their respective entities for strengthening evaluations.

84.   In addition, central evaluation capacity-building and technical support for the development of evaluation functions, as well as strengthening a culture of evaluation across the Organization, remained critical gaps. Key areas of such central support included: (a) the development of guidance and tools for the conduct of high-quality evaluations across all entities; (b) gender- and human rights-responsive evaluation methodologies; (c) the incorporation of essential evaluation elements (e.g. evidence, independence, learning and adapting) into existing reviews and assessments; (d) the evaluation of training for staff, programme managers and senior leadership; and (e) the implementation of the Secretariat evaluation guidelines. However, a recommendation is not made in the present review given that those support roles are envisioned for OIOS in the upcoming Secretariat evaluation policy.

VI. Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (see sect. III, results A, C and D)

85.   **To strengthen overall evaluation capacity, entities in small operational, peacekeeping, political affairs and management and support groups should:**

    (a)   **Establish an evaluation function and/or focal point with clear terms of reference;**

    (b)   **Adopt or update the existing evaluation policy.**

Indicators of achievement: **Evaluation terms of reference and policy adopted.**

Recommendation 2 (see sect. III, results A, B, C and D)

86.   **Evaluation practices should be strengthened or, where necessary, established, for each entity under the small operational, peacekeeping, political affairs and management and support entities groups. This should include internal consultation to decide on the arrangement for evaluation, including considering the options of (a) a pooled central evaluation function per group; (b) decentralized evaluation functions within each entity operating under the guidance of a centralized unit in the appropriate headquarters entity; and (c) independent evaluation functions at the entity level, taking into consideration factors including the delegation of authority, size, similarity of mandates, capacity and economies of scale. The Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance should lead those efforts, in collaboration with OIOS, the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, as appropriate.**

Indicator of achievement: **The best approaches for evaluation practices in the respective entity groups decided and the appropriate arrangements put in place.**

Recommendation 3 (see sect. III, result B)

87.   **To strengthen the use of evaluation, all entities should:**

    (a)   **Develop an evaluation plan and evaluate all subprogrammes within a six-year period;**

    (b)   **In all evaluation reports, include mandatory follow-up tools and mechanisms for evaluation recommendations, for example, the inclusion of a management response and/or an action plan for the implementation of recommendations.**

Indicators of achievement: **Increased subprogramme evaluations and improved recommendation follow-up tools.**

Recommendation 4 (see sect. III, result C and D)

88.   **To improve the tracking of evaluation activity, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance should:**

    (a)   **Work with all entities to include and enhance the quality of submissions on evaluation workplans in the budget proposals;**

    (b)   **Develop a mechanism to track evaluation workplans, resource allocation and expenditure in Umoja.**

Indicators of achievement: **Budget submissions refer to actual evaluations; corresponding resources allocated for planned evaluations; mechanism developed in Umoja.**

VII. OIOS evaluation workplan

89.   Based on OIOS evaluation workplans, the below evaluations will be available for consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination in 2022 and 2023.

Table 5
OIOS evaluation workplan for 2022 and indicative plan for 2023

Year of projected completion	Project type	Scope
Regular and extrabudgetary projects in 2022	Reviews	ODA, DGACM, UNEP, OLA, UNHCR, DGC, DM/OHR, SRSGs for CAAC, SVC and VAC
	Programme	DCO: Coherence of United Nations programming at the country level in support to countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
	Programme	ECA: Subprogramme 1 – macroeconomic policy and governance
	Programme	ECLAC: Subprogramme 3 – macroeconomic policies and growth
Peacekeeping projects in 2022	Programme	MINUSMA contribution to the rule of law
	Programme	MONUSCO support to rule of law and security institutions
	Thematic	Political affairs in peacekeeping operations
	Thematic	Women, peace and security
Regular and extrabudgetary projects in 2023	Programme	DCO: topic to be decided
	Programme	ESCWA: Subprogramme 3 – shared economic prosperity
	Programme	ECE: Subprogramme 4 – economic cooperation and integration
	Programme	OCHA: Subprogramme 2 – coordination of humanitarian action and emergency response
	Programme	ESCAP: Subprogramme 1 – macroeconomic policy, poverty reduction and financing for development
	Thematic	Topic to be decided
Peacekeeping projects in 2023	Programme-thematic	Six evaluations to be determined

Abbreviations: DCO, Development Coordination Office; DGACM, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; DGC, Department of Global Communications; DM, Department of Management; ECA, Economic Commission for Africa; ECE, Economic Commission for Europe; ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; MINUSMA, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; MONUSCO, United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; ODA, Office for Disarmament Affairs; OHR, Office of Human Resources; OLA, Office of Legal Affairs; SRSG CAAC, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; SRSG SVC, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; SRSG VAC, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme.

90. In addition, the workplan includes an evaluation of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals in accordance with Security Council resolution 2529 (2020) and another on the accountability system requested by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance in support of General Assembly resolution 74/271.

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

Annex I

Entities included in the review by group

The entities that were part of the present review are categorized into groups A, B, C, D and E, as follows: group A – large operational; group B – small operational; group C – peacekeeping operations; group D – political affairs; and group E – predominantly management and support.

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
1. DCO	1. EOSG	1. DPO	1. BINUH	1. DGACM
2. DESA	2. GCO	2. MINURSO	2. DPPA	2. DGC
3. ECA	3. OCT	3. MINUSCA	3. OSA-Cyprus	3. DMSPC
4. ECE	4. ODA	4. MINUSMA	4. OSE Burundi	4. DOS
5. ECLAC	5. OHRLLS	5. MONUSCO	5. OSE Great Lakes	5. DSS
6. ESCAP	6. OOSA	6. UNAMID	6. OSE Horn of Africa	6. OLA
7. ESCWA	7. OSAA	7. UNDOF	7. OSE Myanmar	7. UNOG
8. ITC	8. OSC SEA	8. UNFICYP	8. OSE Syria	8. UNON
9. OCHA	9. OVRA	9. UNIFIL	9. OSESGY	9. UNOV
10. ODC	10. SRSG CAAC	10. UNISFA	10. PBSO	
11. OHCHR	11. SRSG SVC	11. UNMIK	11. UNAMA	
12. UNCTAD	12. SRSG VAC	12. UNMISS	12. UNAMI	
13. UNEP	13. UNDRR	13. UNMOGIP	13. UNIOGBIS	
14. UN-Habitat	14. UNOP	14. UNSOS	14. UNOAU	
		15. UNTSO	15. UNOCA	
			16. UNOWAS	
			17. UNRCCA	
			18. UNRGID	
			19. UNSCO	
			20. UNSCOL	
			21. UNSMIL	
			22. UNSOM	
			23. UNVMC	

(Footnotes on following page)

(Footnotes to annex I)

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Abbreviations: BINUH, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti; DCO, United Nations Development Coordination Office; DESA, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; DGACM, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; DGC, Department of Global Communications; DMSPC, Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance; DOS, Department of Operational Support; DPO, Department of Peace Operations; DPPA, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; DSS, Department of Safety and Security; ECA, Economic Commission for Africa; ECE, Economic Commission for Europe; ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; EOSG, Executive Office of the Secretary-General; ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; ITC, International Trade Centre; MINURSO, United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara; MINUSCA, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; MINUSMA, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali; MONUSCO, United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; OCT, Office of Counter-Terrorism; ODA, Office for Disarmament Affairs; OHCHR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; OHRLLS, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; OLA, Office of Legal Affairs; OOSA, Office for Outer Space Affairs; OSAA, Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; OSA Cyprus, Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus; OSC SEA, Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse; OSE Burundi, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi; OSE Great Lakes, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region; OSE Horn of Africa, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa; OSE Myanmar, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar; OSE Syria, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; OSESGY, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; OVRA, Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate for the United Nations; PBSO, Peacebuilding Support Office; SRSG CAAC, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; SRSG SVC, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; SRSG VAC, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children; UNAMA, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; UNAMI, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq; UNAMID, United Nations – African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur; UNCTAD, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; UNDOF, United Nations Disengagement Observer Force; UNDRR, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction; UNEP, United Nations Environment Programme; UNFICYP, United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus; UNGCO, United Nations Global Compact; UN-Habitat, United Nations Human Settlements Programme; UNIFIL, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon; UNIOGBIS, United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau; UNISFA, United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei; UNMIK, United Nations Mission in Kosovo; UNMISS, United Nations Mission in South Sudan; UNMOGIP, United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan; UNOAU, United Nations Office to the African Union; UNOCA, United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa; UNODC, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva; UNON, United Nations Office at Nairobi; UNOP, United Nations Office for Partnerships; UNOV, United Nations Office at Vienna; UNOWAS, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel; UNRCCA, United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia; UNRGID, United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions; UNSCO, Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process; UNSCOL, Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon; UNSMIL, United Nations Support Mission in Libya; UNSOM, United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia; UNSOS, United Nations Support Office in Somalia; UNTSO, United Nations Truce Supervision Organization; UNVMC, United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

Annex II*

Comments from entities on the draft report

Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance

With reference to your memorandum dated 26 February 2021 regarding the above-subject draft report, please find below the comments of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance.

The Department welcomes the opportunity to provide comments and found the report useful. It provides meaningful information to the department on entities' evaluation capacity, which is important in its role of providing support, especially to those entities with insufficient or no capacity. Incorporating lessons learned and information from this report, the Department looks forward to working with the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), thereby reflecting that evaluation is a shared function in the Secretariat (General comments).

The Department would like to thank OIOS for incorporating many of our comments during the review process of the draft report. The Department would like to note that while the Department was indeed the only entity to have support roles as per A/72/492 and A/72/492/Add.2, rules 107.2 (b) (ii) and Rule 107.3 (a) of the ST/SGB/2018/3 also envisions OIOS support to entities in its role as the Central Evaluation Unit of the Secretariat (*paragraph 64*).

The Department accepts the recommendations and has developed its action plan for implementation. You would note that some of the actions will be in collaboration with OIOS, as envisaged in the forthcoming administrative instruction on Evaluation (*paragraphs 85–88*).

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide comments on this draft report.

Department of Peace Operations

Thank you for sharing the draft Biennial Report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives for the 2018–2019 biennium.

The Department of Peace Operations welcomes the efforts of OIOS in undertaking the exercise as a baseline for evaluation practices in all 75 entities, take careful note of the results and the recommendations.

As conveyed in the process of undertaking the Biennial Review, the Action for Peace (A4P) initiative has generated impetus to peacekeeping partnership in strengthening performance and accountability. The Department has launched a number of initiatives, including the Integrated Peacekeeping Performance and Accountability Framework and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System, and has deepened the implementation of the Action Plan on Security of United Nations Peacekeepers. The efforts have produced positive results in the field and helped build a solid base for strengthening results-based management, as well as building and improving monitoring and evaluation.

The Department is currently drafting an options paper regarding the ideal structure and resourcing of evaluation functions in peacekeeping. This options paper will take into account the OIOS report and recommendations. The Department will

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* In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services sets out the full text of comments received from entities. The practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

consult with OIOS and the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance on the options paper.

We look forward to working with the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, OIOS and other relevant offices in advancing evaluation in peacekeeping.

Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

The report on "Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives" was received with appreciation. We are grateful to OIOS colleagues for the report and for the opportunity to provide comments.

I take note that the OIOS report categorizes the Department as "Group D", along with the Peacebuilding Support Office and special political missions. Given the role of the Peacebuilding Support Office in supporting the Peacebuilding Fund and mandated evaluations, I also take note that while part of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the evaluation practices of the Peacebuilding Support Office are considered separately by this biennial study.

We fully accept recommendations 1 and 3, while acknowledging that recommendations 2 and 4 are not addressed to the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. We also attach our implementation action plan.

We particularly welcome recommendation 2 for the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance to lead efforts to strengthen evaluation practices for special political missions. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs stands ready to support the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance in that regard. We also take the opportunity to reiterate that the lack of resources from the regular budget to undertake evaluations is a significant challenge faced by us all. As such, we request the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and OIOS to consider the constraints that are often beyond the purview of entities to address. For smaller entities, we also encourage the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and OIOS to consider stepping back from heavy, resource-intensive evaluation requirements in favour of analytical, less burdensome evaluation practices that fulfil the same purpose.

Finally, I express my appreciation to you and your team for the good cooperation in conducting this biennial review. We look forward to collaborating with you to strengthen the role and impact of evaluations in the Secretariat.

Economic Commission for Europe

I refer to your memorandum dated 26 February 2021, transmitting the formal draft report of OIOS on "Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives" for the 2018–2019 biennium.

The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) appreciates the continuous efforts of OIOS to highlight the importance of evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat. ECE is committed to enhancing the role of evaluation findings to programme design, delivery and policy directives and the OIOS biennial report is a useful tool to continue improving the quality of ECE evaluations.

In 2018–2019, ECE has continued to strengthen the role of evaluation. Pursuant to request of ECE Executive Committee to increase and strengthen the evaluation function, a P-4 post was proposed in the 2018–2019 Proposed programme budget

under Executive Direction and Management to perform programme evaluation and audit. This post was approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/261.

In line with its biennial evaluation workplan approved by ECE Executive Committee in September 2016, one programme-level and three subprogramme-level evaluations were conducted during the biennium. In addition, ECE evaluated 22 projects at the end of their cycle in 2018–2019. For each evaluation, ECE issued a management response and a progress report, tracking twice a year the implementation of each recommendation. Closed recommendations are presented to ECE Executive Committee in an annual report; all evaluation reports, management responses and progress reports are publicly available on Open ECE (https://unece.org/evaluation-reports).

Despite these progresses, acknowledged in the draft biennial report, I remain concerned about the lack of adequate resources from the regular budget to evaluate regular budget activities. The continuing trend of decreasing resources under the regular budget, associated with the liquidity crisis, puts evaluation activities at risk. Independence, and the quality of evaluations are inextricably linked to dedicated resources for engaging external evaluators.

Finally, ECE takes note that the draft Secretariat evaluation policy was at the final stage of review and clearance as of March 2021. ECE is looking forward to the issuance of this document to revise its own evaluation policy released in 2014.

I take this opportunity to commend the professionalism of the OIOS evaluation team led by Juan Carlos Peña and the constructive engagement between our respective offices. We are very appreciative of the fruitful discussions and time invested to ensure a participatory approach.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) welcomes this comprehensive draft report and the opportunity to provide comments on it.

Please also find the recommendation action plan, with comments from ECLAC on each recommendation and indication whether or not the recommendation is accepted.**

ECLAC would like to take this opportunity to thank OIOS for the collaborative and participative approach throughout the elaboration of this report.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) welcomes the report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives for the 2018–2019 biennium and appreciates the opportunity to comment on the earlier informal draft and the final draft report.

ESCAP accepts recommendation 3, while acknowledging that recommendations 1, 2 and 4 are not addressed to ESCAP. For recommendation 3, ESCAP has sufficiently fulfilled the requirements of the recommendation. In accordance with its Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines, ESCAP develops an annual evaluation plan that covers both subprogramme and project evaluations. ESCAP allocates a dedicated budget for evaluation of all subprogrammes within a five-year period at the rate of two subprogramme evaluations annually.

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** On file with the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

ESCAP also commits to address the findings and recommendations of each evaluation through a management response and follow-up action plan, which is signed off by the Executive Secretary. ESCAP monitors the implementation of follow-up actions through the evaluation and audit page of the senior management dashboard.

ESCAP appreciates the participatory and consultative approach of the review and congratulates OIOS and its staff for producing a quality report.

International Trade Centre

Thank you for your memorandum dated 26 February 2021, transmitting the draft report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives.

We appreciate the opportunity you had offered to our staff on the earlier informal draft, and the extended opportunity to comment on the final draft of the report.

The International Trade Centre (ITC) management welcomes the final report, and fully accepts recommendation 3, while acknowledging that recommendations 1, 2 and 4 are not addressed to ITC.

Regarding recommendation 3, the ITC Independent Evaluation Unit will continue to develop its annual Evaluation Work Programme, which includes the evaluation of at least one ITC programme. ITC will continue to ensure the submission of management responses and action plans for each independent evaluation carried out by the Unit, and the Unit will continue its follow-up processes to determine the implementation of the recommendations from independent evaluations carried out by the Unit.

ITC appreciates the quality of the report, and thanks OIOS and its staff for the good cooperation in conducting the report.

Office for Disarmament Affairs

Reference is made to your inter-office memorandum dated 26 February 2021 on the above-captioned issue.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs has taken note of your memorandum as well as the draft Biennial Report for the 2018–2019 period. The Office also notes the recommendations and will make strong efforts to implement them.

As mentioned on many previous occasions, the implementation of evaluation activities remains quite challenging for smaller entities such as the Office for Disarmament Affairs which have limited human and funding resources. The reporting request are difficult for entities like the Office and will need to be determined based on outcomes of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance-led process mentioned in the recommendations.

Nonetheless, the Office for Disarmament Affairs fully concurs with the importance of strengthening monitoring and self-evaluation capacities. While the Office was not in a position to implement robust evaluation activities during the above reporting period, it has recently completed and launched its first Strategic Plan (2021–2025), which includes a monitoring, reporting and evaluation plan to track the performance of the Office against its 2021–2025 Strategic Plan and to support accountability, institutional learning and evidence-based decision-making within the Office.

I trust that you shall find the above information useful.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

I herewith acknowledge receipt of the draft report of OIOS on "Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives".

The report includes useful findings related to the undertaking, follow-up and use of evaluations, which my Office will take into account to further strengthen its evaluation function.

As our comments on the informal draft report have been already addressed by OIOS, we do not have any additional comments on this version of the draft report.

The template with our inputs on the action plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the report is enclosed herewith.

With many thanks for your consideration.

Office of Legal Affairs

I refer to your memorandum of 26 February 2021, by which you transmitted the Draft Biennial Report of OIOS on "Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives" for the 2018–2019 biennium, and in which you request our formal comments, our explicit acceptance (or non-acceptance) of each recommendation and our plan of action and associated timetable for implementing each recommendation.

Since the OIOS evaluation of the Office of the Legal Affairs (E/AC.51/2019/9), I have prioritized the strengthening of a transformative evaluation culture in the Office of Legal Affairs as an integral component of management and the delivery of the Office mandates.

In 2019 the Evaluation and Strategic Planning Unit of the Office of Legal Affairs was created to ensure direct reporting in the strengthening of the monitoring and self-evaluation practices, as well as the review of performance and the implementation of the workplans and efforts of the Office in this regard. In the same year, the Office started to participate, as an observer, in the work of the United Nations Evaluation Group. Similarly, that year the first self-evaluation related to technical cooperation and assistance activities regarding international trade law was finalized.

A new Evaluation Policy for the Office of Legal Affairs was adopted in 2020, while the first standard operating procedure on the Office of Legal Affairs Support to Criminal Accountability Processes at the United Nations was finalized.

In addition to the acceptance of the recommendations contained in the draft report, please find the Office of Legal Affairs Recommendation Action Plan.**

I appreciate the work undertaken by the team in OIOS to bring to fruition this draft Report, as well as for their coordination and support to my Office in the improving of the evaluation efforts during the reporting period.

United Nations Truce Supervision Organization

Reference is made to your inter-office memorandum OIOS-2021-00196 concerning the request for a formal management response on the above report.

We have reviewed the draft report shared with us. Given the scope of the application of ST/SGB/2018/3 within the current exercise, as well as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization as a non-multidimensional mission with no

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** On file with the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

formal (or budgeted) evaluation function, but which nonetheless undertakes valuable evaluation activities (such as via our Inspector General function), providing management oversight and accountability relative to our mandate and goals, please note:

i.   We have no comments further to those already provided in the course of the consultations; and

ii.   We will develop and provide an action plan as applicable for implementation of the recommendations.

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa

Thank you for sharing with my office the draft biennial report of OIOS on "Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation finding on programme design, delivery and policy directives" for the 2018–2019 biennium.

I understand that my staff have been engaging with your office during the past few months and contributing input for this report. While I do not have specific comments to the latest draft report, the more general comment – which I know my staff have also already conveyed during the consultations – is one related to capacity.

I fully support the need to evaluate programmes and to ensure that programmes are designed and delivered in the most effective way possible. However, given the size of my office, in-house evaluation capacity is severely limited. While we evaluate ourselves through, for instance, the results-based budgeting process, the reports to donors regarding the use of extrabudgetary funding, our briefings to the Security Council and biannual reports on implementation of the Comprehensive Prevention Strategy, I understand that these were not included as evaluation activities for the purposes of your report as they did not fulfil the criteria you used to determine what constituted an evaluation activity.

For any additional evaluation activity, I would, therefore, rely on outside evaluators and the support and guidance from United Nations headquarters to fulfil the obligations set forth by the General Assembly. I presume that for small offices such as mine, this kind of support could be arranged. I have attached my comments to the proposed recommendations, reiterating this point.

I look forward to continuing the cooperation between our Offices. Thank you and stay safe and healthy!

Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate for the United Nations

I refer to your memorandum dated 2 March 2021 relating to the draft biennial report of OIOS referred to above. I am very grateful for the opportunity to provide formal comments on the draft report. I also take note of the report's recommendations, in particular recommendations 1 and 2 applicable to the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate (OVRA).

As you know, OVRA is the smallest entity in the United Nations Secretariat and was established in the regular budget only from the beginning of 2019, with a staff of four regular budget positions, including the head of entity.

This places considerable limitations on the capacity of OVRA to establish a formal standing evaluation capacity and practice, although evaluations associated with specific projects and the regular assessment against indicators reflected in the annual programme budget fascicles are part of the workplan of the Office.

We count on your understanding and continued support as we consider appropriate evaluation arrangements in the future, which take account of the limited size of OVRA and its capacity constraints.

Thank you.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) would like to thank the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS for the opportunity to offer comments on its draft report on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives.

UNCTAD is committed to further strengthening its evaluation function, and we continue to build on the momentum of ongoing improvements of the UNCTAD evaluation function that were observed by the OIOS 2019 biennial study. For instance, to strengthen the evaluation function and the use of evaluations, we hope to be able to complete the update and operationalization of our Evaluation Policy this year, in line with the Secretariat policy on evaluation, which we have been anticipating for some time.

We also strive to strengthen evaluation recommendations and their related follow-up, and thirdly, are focused on better facilitating organizational learning and communication of evaluation work and findings both to internal and external stakeholders and audiences. Concretely, we are working on a communication and knowledge management strategy and exploring relevant tools aimed at ensuring that evaluation results are accessible and fully utilized throughout UNCTAD for both learning and accountability purposes.

UNCTAD notes that only Recommendation 3 is applicable to all entities and fully accepts to implement it. UNCTAD has an annual evaluation plan which includes an evaluation of one of its subprogrammes each year as well as evaluations of projects and programmes. The evaluation plan is determined by mandates from the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board, and as required by project agreements or evaluation plans established with programme managers. We have also striven to be more consistent in requesting a management response and action plan for evaluations, and tracking follow-up with an Excel database. We are currently exploring the introduction of the Unite Evaluations online platform developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to better support evaluation management and follow-up at UNCTAD.

Regarding recommendation 4, UNCTAD is ready to fully cooperate with the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance on enhancing the submission of evaluation workplans in budget proposals.

UNCTAD appreciates the insights identified through these biennial studies and expresses its thanks and appreciation to OIOS and its staff for the good cooperation in conducting the review.

Thank you.

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

We refer to your memorandum OIOS-2021-00196 dated 26 February 2021 on the above subject. Please note the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) acknowledges and accepts the recommendations of the subject draft report and has enclosed the requested action plan for those recommendations that are applicable to the mission.

Office of Counter-Terrorism

The Office of Counter-Terrorism wishes to congratulate OIOS on the draft report of the recent evaluation exercise on "Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives" for the 2018–2019 biennium.

The Office is in agreement with the recommendations that have been presented to enhance the evaluation functions across entities in the Secretariat in general and specifically for the Office. It recognizes the importance of achieving and demonstrating results of its interventions. The Office has since initiated processes to develop and enhance its results-focused culture, among which has been the development and launch of the Office of Counter-Terrorism evaluation policy. Presented below are actions that the Office of Counter-Terrorism will undertake to enhance its evaluation capabilities. The Office has no further comments on the draft report.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) welcomes the OIOS biennial report on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives. In this context, the currently ongoing United Nations reforms demand increased accountability and evaluation at all levels, with special emphasis on evaluating results at the strategic level. Investing in evaluation is essential to fulfil these demands and to ensure that the requirements for the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations reforms are met, while also continuing to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes and projects. OIOS reporting is a valuable input to this process.

UNODC has actively engaged with OIOS throughout this assessment and provided in-depth comments on various stages. Therefore, UNODC would like to acknowledge that recommendations did clearly address the maturity level of evaluation in different entities; likewise, more granular and entity-specific information would be valuable to better inform recommendation implementation and follow-up.

UNODC appreciates the findings and recommendations relating to strengthening evaluation requirements in Umoja to ensure that evaluation workplans, budgets and expenditures are appropriately tracked. Efforts to ensure that not only evaluation planning and budgeting but also evaluation management tools for use throughout the Secretariat are essential, as this would further strengthen the evaluation culture and the accountability framework in the Secretariat.

UNODC welcomes the recommendation to evaluate all subprogrammes within a six-year period, as this is in line with the new UNODC Strategy 2021–2025 as well as resolutions by the governing bodies, calling for independent evaluations to be at a more strategic level.

UNODC appreciates the recommendation on strengthening evaluation plans and the follow-up to recommendations. Considering the UNODC investments in strengthening its innovative evaluation management application, Unite Evaluations, this recommendation has already been met for the next biennial report and will be further strengthened following the experience over the past years. UNODC will also engage with the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance to identify a potential collaboration to with the aim of Unite Evaluations benefitting other Secretariat evaluation functions.

Finally, UNODC reiterates its commitment to further strengthen evaluation at UNODC – in line with the UNODC strategy for the period 2021–2025 – thereby ensuring further enhanced accountability, transparency and learning in line with key aspects of the United Nations reforms and the 2030 agenda.

United Nations Office at Geneva

The United Nations Office at Geneva accepts the recommendations subject to the allocation of necessary additional dedicated resources.

United Nations Support Office in Somalia

Further to your memorandum reference OIOS-2021-00196 of 26 February 2021, the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) agrees with the OIOS findings and recommendations and has no comments on the final report

UNSOS has already initiated some elements of monitoring in the performance management framework and will leverage this in establishing a dedicated monitoring and evaluation capacity in line with the recommendation.

We thank you for your continued support.

United Nations Mission in South Sudan

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) would like to thank OIOS for including, for the first time, peacekeeping operations in its biennial report on evaluation.

UNMISS acknowledges the findings of the report, including that programmatic evaluations are rarely conducted in peacekeeping missions, as is also the case more generally in entities in the peace and security pillar of the Secretariat, and that the evaluations that are carried out mostly focus on individual projects, rather than overall mandate delivery. UNMISS attaches great importance to measuring impact to improve evidence-based decision-making, as demonstrated by the progress the Mission has made in implementing the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System.

UNMISS accepts the recommendations, in as much as they concern peacekeeping missions, and is looking forward to working with the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and OIOS on deciding on the arrangements for the evaluation function in missions.

Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

I refer to your memorandum dated 2 March 2021 relating to the draft biennial report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services referred to above. Thank you for the opportunity to provide formal comments on the draft report. I also take note of the report's recommendations, in particular recommendations 1 and 2 applicable to the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

As you know, the Office of the Special Coordinator is one of the smallest entities in the United Nations Secretariat and was established in the extrabudgetary budget only from March 2016, with a staff of four; three of which are full-time extrabudgetary budget positions, and the head of entity which is when-as-employed.

This places considerable limitations on the capacity of the Office of the Special Coordinator to establish a formal standing evaluation capacity and practice, although evaluations associated with specific projects and the regular assessment against

indicators are reflected quarterly in the published "fact sheets" and annually in the Secretary-General's special measures reports, most recently A/75/754.

We count on your understanding and continued support as we consider appropriate evaluation arrangements in the future, which take account of the limited size and capacity constraints of the Office of the Special Coordinator.

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