



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
28 February 2024

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination

Sixty-fourth session

Organizational session, 1 April 2024

Substantive session, 13 May–14 June 2024

Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Programme questions: evaluation

Triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee at its sixty-first session on the evaluation of United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development provided by programme 9 through the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Department of Global Communications

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The present review is in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) at its twenty-second session ([A/37/38 \(Supp\)](#), para. 362) to review the implementation of the recommendations of the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services three years after taking decisions on the evaluation submitted to the Committee. The objective of the review was to determine the extent to which the four recommendations emanating from the Inspection and Evaluation Division programme evaluation of United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa, through its NEPAD Unit, and the Department of Global Communications, through its Africa Section ([E/AC.51/2021/4](#)), had been implemented.

The recommendations issued by the Inspection and Evaluation Division in its evaluation of programme 9 addressed various aspects of the relevance and effectiveness in implementing its mandate. At the conclusion of its sixty-first session (see [A/76/16](#)), CPC recommended that the General Assembly endorse the four recommendations contained in the OIOS evaluation report.

* [E/AC.51/2024/1](#).



The triennial review was conducted through: (a) a review and analysis of progress reports on the status of OIOS recommendations; (b) an analysis of relevant information, documents and reports; and (c) interviews with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Department of Global Communications and external stakeholders.

Based on the review of the information provided by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and interviews with select staff members, OIOS determined that all four recommendations had been fully implemented. Some evidence of immediate results was noted in relation to the implemented recommendations. It is important to note that the OIOS evaluation was carried out at a time of significant reform at both the African Union and the United Nations and that it was in that framework of ongoing reforms that recommendations were addressed. That had a direct bearing on the implementation of some of the recommendations, in particular recommendation 3, calling for strengthening of the regional coordination mechanism.

In recommendation 1, OIOS requested programme 9 to resolve programme coherence and internal accountability issues and management practices. In response to this recommendation, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa embarked on a functional realignment and restructuring of the Office. Among the different decisions taken was the establishment of the executive direction and management component, which, according to the evidence gathered, consolidated the implementation of a common strategic direction for the programme, streamlined administrative processes and programme support and promoted the joint planning, monitoring and evaluation of subprogrammes, increasing coherence and cross-fertilization across subprogrammes.

In recommendation 2, OIOS advised programme 9 to engage stakeholders more systematically in strategic planning and workplan development as a mechanism to ensure that strategic workplans better reflect the priorities of stakeholders. Documentary evidence and testimonies gathered confirmed that a new programmatic and partnership approach was adopted, and that the Office decisively and regularly engaged key stakeholders such as the African Group of Ambassadors, inter alia, in strategic conversations. This ensured that their expectations about the role of the Office were reflected in the new programmatic approach and workplans.

In recommendation 3, OIOS requested the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the NEPAD Unit at ECA to strengthen the interdepartmental task force on African affairs and the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, the global and regional coordination mechanisms to which they are the secretariats, to more deliberately inform and actively involve all three subprogrammes in the delivery of the programme's mandate. The task force underwent substantial revitalization, with a formally endorsed concept note delineating the task force's purpose, priorities, working arrangements and configurations. Notably, external stakeholder participation was expanded to include African Union Commissioners or ministerial representatives of African Member States. Concurrently, the regional coordination mechanism, now the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, underwent structural changes owing to United Nations reforms, impacting the programme's ability to implement OIOS recommendations. Nevertheless, most agree that the changes in the new regional architecture and the establishment of issue-based coalitions within the Platform effectively addressed the spirit of OIOS recommendations. The Office obtained observer status in the revamped Platform.

In recommendation 4, OIOS urged the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to operationalize the United Nations monitoring mechanism to review commitments made towards Africa's development, ensuring systematic tracking of commitments over time for effective advocacy and follow-up. A new methodology aligned with the

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and a cluster-based approach such as that used in the Office's new strategic agenda, facilitated more comprehensive assessments of commitments in biennial reviews. A new platform and dashboard leveraging existing databases and monitoring systems were also developed and are fully operational. The Office significantly enhanced data and programme capacity for data-driven advisory, advocacy, coordination, communication and monitoring functions. The now fully operational monitoring mechanism system, with its refined methodology, contributed to the fifth mandated biennial report of the Secretary-General on Africa's development commitments ([A/77/908](#)), submitted to the General Assembly in June 2023. Responding to the request of the General Assembly in General Assembly resolution [76/297](#), an inaugural interactive multi-stakeholder dialogue on the findings and recommendations in the report took place in July 2023.

I. Introduction

1. At its sixty-first session in June 2021, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) provided by programme 9 through the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Department of Global Communications (E/AC.51/2021/4).¹
2. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the evaluation report and recommended that the General Assembly endorse the recommendations contained in paragraphs 63 to 70 of the report.
3. In the triennial review, OIOS examined the status of implementation of the four recommendations contained in the evaluation report. All four were assessed to have been implemented. OIOS also assessed whether, and if so, to what extent, implementation of the recommendations had contributed to programme changes.
4. The methodology for the triennial review included:
 - (a) Review and analysis of progress reports on the status of recommendations, which were monitored through the OIOS recommendations database;
 - (b) Analysis of documents, reports and evidence obtained from the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, ECA and the Department of Global Communications on the implementation of recommendations;
 - (c) Remote interviews with a purposive sample of key staff from the three offices.
5. The report incorporates comments received from the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, ECA and the Department of Global Communications. A final draft was shared with all three for formal comments, which are contained in the annex. The Inspection and Evaluation Division expresses its appreciation for the cooperation extended by programme 9 in the preparation of the present report.

II. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Address programme coherence and internal management practices

6. Recommendation 1 reads as follows:

To resolve programme coherence and internal accountability issues, and ensure the programme delivers as one, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in collaboration with ECA and the Department of Global Communications should put in place a formal process of regular consultation to internally align and coordinate the activities of the three subprogrammes at all stages of the delivery process. This should include:

- (a) Terms of reference articulating roles and responsibilities, including regular consultation and reporting lines that facilitate delivery of a programme strategy for which the Special Adviser has overall accountability (revised Secretary-General's bulletin);

¹ A programme manager evaluation report (IED-19-018) was issued by OIOS in March 2020 prior to processing as a Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) report. At that time, programme 9 accepted the recommendations and began their implementation.

(b) Joint planning, monitoring and performance review with all three subprogrammes;

(c) Clear identification of the linkages between activities of the subprogrammes to ensure coordination and collaboration on relevant aspects of each other's workplan;

(d) Regular structured strategic discussions at least, but not limited to, annually at the principals' level, and quarterly at the level of subprogramme leads;

(e) A technical-level coordination arrangement that communicates on an ongoing basis, and meets as necessary, including to prepare the principals-level discussions.

Indicators of achievement: joint programme 9 strategic planning; regular meetings and structured engagement across programme 9, both at the principals and technical levels for work planning, monitoring and performance review; revised Secretary-General's bulletin and/or terms of reference on programme 9 roles and responsibilities.

7. In response to this recommendation, programme 9 promptly initiated² a participatory process to address the strategic, management, structure, capacity and work culture issues as identified in the OIOS evaluation. At the same time, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, as lead entity of programme 9, led a process of reforms based on three pillars: strategic planning; functional and structural reforms; and human resources management.

(a) Strategic planning (including the adoption and implementation of the strategic agenda, the adoption of planning tools such as integrated planning, monitoring and reporting and an annual planning workshop, a business process and value chain approach, etc.);

(b) Functional and structural reform (including the establishment of the Executive Direction and Management and the Strategic Management Unit, the establishment of the Subprogramme 1 Division and reprofiling of positions and the adoption of four interlinked functions – monitoring, coordination, advisory and advocacy);

(c) Human resources policy (linking individual workplans with the Office's programme of work, implementing a new performance evaluation approach, mainstreaming capacity development as a means to develop critical skills and enhancing the recruitment process).

8. Stakeholders interviewed unanimously noted that the evaluation gave the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa the opportunity to revisit the structure of the programme and introduce the programmatic and structural changes that the Office needed to maximize complementarities and create added value.

9. The first decision was to develop a new strategic agenda that could underpin the whole process of reforms, articulate the strategic role of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and foster integration among the different subprogrammes. The new strategic agenda was developed in the months following the endorsement of

² The process of reforms triggered by the evaluation was initiated before the final evaluation was issued to the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa.

OIOS recommendations and was finally adopted in December 2020.³ The strategic agenda is further discussed under recommendation 2. In line with the new vision and guidance provided by the strategy, the Office undertook important organizational reforms and functional restructuring aimed at increasing integration among the three subprogrammes, redefining the Office's relationships with key African and non-African stakeholders and streamlining its structure and functions.

10. At the programme level, a new organizational structure of the programme was included in the 2022 budget proposal (A/76/6 (Sect. 11)) as a second pillar of the reform process. Previously, the programme structure consisted of three main components (see A/75/6 (Sect. 11)), one for each subprogramme, with the office of the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser incorporated into subprogramme 1. This resulted in ineffective oversight and executive direction and management at the programme level. To address this, a new executive direction and management component was established, following the structure of other regular budget sections, consisting of the Office of the Special Adviser and a Strategic Management Unit that houses three cross-programmatic functions (data; strategic communications; and planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation).

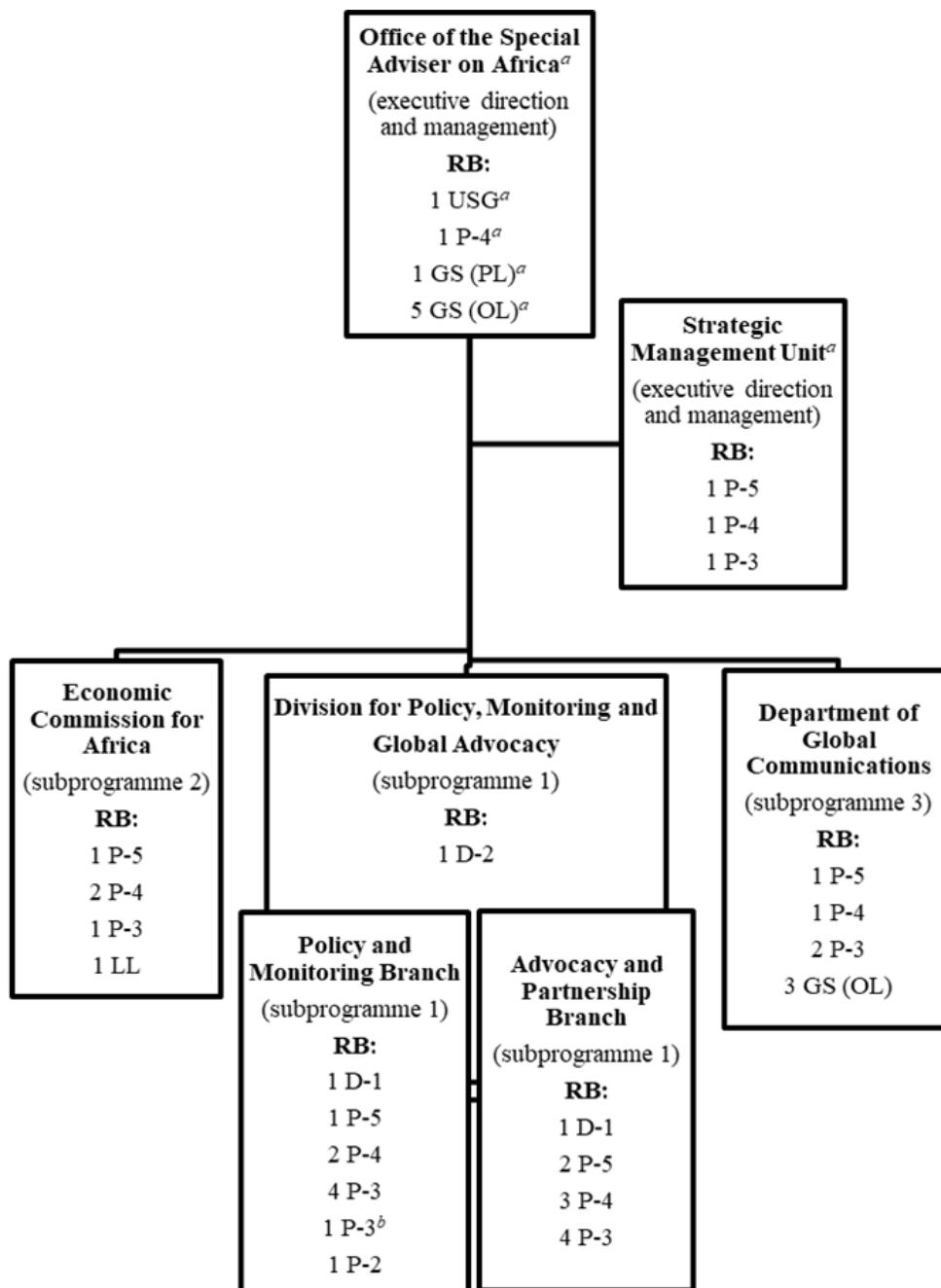
11. In addition, a new Division for Policy, Monitoring and Global Advocacy was established to house the two branches that constitute subprogramme 1. The restructuring was accompanied by the reprofiling and functional realignment of subprogramme 1, to optimize subprogramme delivery across four key functions: monitoring; coordination; advisory; and advocacy. The figure⁴ illustrates the new structure and programme narrative as formally endorsed by the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly in December 2021.⁵

³ The strategic agenda was structured around six clusters: (a) financing for development; (b) achieving sustainable development to deliver durable peace; (c) governance, resilience and human capital; (d) science, technology and innovation; (e) industrialization, the demographic dividend and trade, with a focus on the African Continental Free Trade Area; and (f) sustainable energy and climate change.

⁴ A/76/6 (Sect. 11), annex I.B.

⁵ A/76/615; General Assembly resolution 76/236.

Organizational structure and post distribution, programme 9



Source: A/76/6 (Sect. 11), annex B.

Abbreviations: GS (OL), General Service (Other level); GS (PL), General Service (Principal level); LL, local level.

^a Redeployment from subprogramme 1.

^b New.

12. According to budget documents reviewed, and in line with OIOS recommendation, these changes were aimed at clarifying the dual role of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in programme 9 and mitigating possible confusion between administrative and substantive management, contributing to reducing duplication, promoting complementarities and enhancing overall impact. Stakeholders interviewed agreed that the structural changes introduced have allowed

the Special Adviser to better execute her responsibility as head of programme 9, by providing oversight and strategic direction at the programme level, supported by the Strategic Management Unit. Meanwhile, the reprofiling and functional realignment within subprogramme 1 have led to optimized delivery of the subprogramme.

13. The new programme structure was later elaborated in the terms of reference for the institutionalization of regular planning, monitoring and coordination meetings to reinforce coherence, coordination and collaboration within programme 9 and formally endorsed by programme 9 principals in March 2023.⁶ Although OIOS also called on the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in the recommendation to consider revisions to the Secretary General's bulletin, the Office staff interviewed explained that they prioritized the development of internal procedures to allow reforms to take hold before updating the bulletin.

14. According to the terms of reference, the mechanisms for coordinating the work of the newly created executive direction and management component and the three subprogrammes comprised:

(a) A Leadership Committee, composed of the Heads of the three entities (the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, ECA and the Department of Global Communications), entrusted with providing strategic guidance and overall oversight, promoting partnerships with relevant internal and external stakeholders and fostering collaboration across the three subprogrammes. This Committee meets annually and is chaired by the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa to the Secretary-General as the Head of programme 9;

(b) A Programme Implementation Committee, mandated to coordinate the execution of the work programme; chaired by the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa. Working-level meetings for this Committee are held quarterly, or as the need arises, and regularly bring together subprogramme directors or heads to streamline collaborative programme budget planning, identify shared work priorities, conduct monitoring and reviews, foster communication and coordination with internal and external stakeholders and address other operational tasks.

15. Since the official endorsement of the terms of reference in March 2023, meetings at both the principal and director level have been held regularly at the programme level. Staff interviewed and meeting reports confirmed that these sessions served as vital forums for the three subprogrammes to have open discussions on coordination challenges, address future activities and administrative milestones and share information regarding planned activities and budget implementation progress. They also served to reflect on progress, challenges and deliberate on the strategic orientation of the programme while identifying cross-programmatic opportunities. As a result, staff from the three subprogrammes agreed that joint programming had gradually but significantly improved.

16. Staff interviewed frequently cited positive examples of more coherent and integrated programme implementation resulting from the new programme structure, notably:

- The executive direction and management component successfully aligned budget results across all three subprogrammes in the 2024 budget proposal for the first time.
- In 2022 and 2023, ECA and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa began to coordinate their work more closely in support of Member State voluntary national reviews by ensuring increased alignment between the voluntary

⁶ Presentation to the Principals meeting held on 22 March 2023, item 1.

national review workshop organized on the sidelines of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by ECA, and the Africa Day at the high-level political forum, organized by the Office. This included cross-allocation of roles for officials at both events.

- The Strategic Management Unit promoted closer collaboration between the energy and climate cluster of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Department of Global Communications, whereby the Department was responsible for regularly disseminating the analytical products of the Office. This arrangement enabled the Office to broaden its outreach and enhance the impact of publications.
- The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa was revising specific indicators that would allow them to measure the uptake of the Office's knowledge products and narratives more robustly in the future.
- A proposal to launch an electronic newsletter to enhance information-sharing and coordination among the three subprogrammes was being discussed in the executive direction and management component.

17. At the subprogramme level, the new strategy gave the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa a useful framework to promote internal changes that affected its functional structure, work culture and business model. Specifically, the new strategy:

- Separated management and substantive responsibilities in a more rational way. This facilitated a reconfiguration of work units of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to better focus on the four interlinked functions (monitoring, coordination, advisory and advocacy).
- Facilitated the adoption of a new approach to human resources management that underscored the criticality of attracting and promoting profiles adequate for mandate delivery, in line with the third pillar of the reform.
- Introduced changes to the business workflow by translating the new strategy into a logframe with concrete outcomes, outputs and deliverables updated every year and linked to individual workplans. The new approach included a thorough capacity-development programme to support the adaptation to the new functional responsibilities. Key stakeholders interviewed confirmed that it further enhanced accountability and ensured clarity on how the different portfolios and activities contributed to the strategic framework.
- Introduced critical planning and data management tools to support the new strategic approach, such as the Umoja integrated planning, monitoring and reporting solution.⁷
- Enhanced data analysis and data management skills in the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa through a new data management system.

18. The staff of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa interviewed unanimously welcomed the new strategy and the reforms introduced, stating that these had provided a clearer thematic perspective and focus for their work, fostered clearer and more forward-looking planning processes and facilitated more regular assessment of progress. Stakeholders interviewed were also eager to emphasize that not only had the new structure and changes been effective in terms of strengthening internal accountability but they had also had a direct positive impact in the quality of the

⁷ The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa was selected as one of the three pilot entities to use the Umoja integrated planning, monitoring and reporting solution for the planning and monitoring of its regular budget implementation being the only entity to integrate both regular budget and extrabudgetary resources in the integrated planning, monitoring and reporting.

Office's overall advisory and advocacy services to Member States and the Secretary-General and significantly enhanced knowledge production within the Office.

19. Budget documents reviewed confirmed a substantial increase in the delivery of technical materials for subprogramme 1, increasing from 16 outputs in 2021 to 30 in 2023. Furthermore, the general perception was that, because of the reconfiguration of the Office and the new capacities, the quality of reports and knowledge products had also increased. Stakeholders noted that policy papers and knowledge products were being more frequently quoted and had more traction on social media. Analytic data from the Office's web page confirmed a heightened interest and interaction with knowledge products as illustrated by the noticeable surge in PDF downloads, which grew by 80 per cent from 2022 to 2023. Web page users and page views saw a fivefold and threefold increase, respectively, during the same period.

20. Based on the above actions, OIOS assessed this recommendation to be fully implemented, with evidence of positive impact.

Recommendation 2

Systematically engage stakeholders in strategic planning and workplan development

21. Recommendation 2 reads as follows:

Programme 9, led by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa with close collaboration from ECA and the Department of Global Communications, should engage in a strategic planning process with key stakeholders to ensure that a comprehensive, participatory and integrated plan, including an advocacy strategy, is developed in support of its mandates. This should be:

(a) Informed by analysis and advice on current priorities and needs, prepared with input from key stakeholders (e.g., Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, African Union Commission, African Union Development Agency, African Peer Review Mechanism, regional economic communities and United Nations agencies working in Africa) and regularly updated;

(b) Focused on developing an outcome framework identifying key priorities, with clear objectives and strategies to realize them, including the synergies and coordination arrangements within its subprogrammes;

(c) Guided by clear measures of success (connecting activities to intended outcomes and impacts) with follow-up measurement and stocktaking;

(d) Informed by the content, focus and recommendations made through its consultations.

Indicators of achievement: a revised programme 9 logframe articulating the logic of programme interventions and their relationship to desired impacts; programme 9 workplans aligned to specific stakeholder priorities and needs; evidence of stakeholder consultations; evidence of analytical work and advice informing workplans; detailed strategic workplan issued and informing the preparation of the 2021/2022 budget process; and an issued advocacy strategy.

22. In response to recommendation 2, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa began by actively involving the African Group of Ambassadors in the development of the new strategic agenda as a key instrument underpinning the whole process of reforms triggered by the OIOS evaluation. The goal was to ensure that the new strategy and vision for programme 9 was the result of extensive consultations with the African Group and other regional stakeholders and that it included a new shared narrative and more balanced perspective on Africa's development. The new strategic

agenda was formally approved in December 2020 and endorsed by the African Group in 2021 and was the first clear attempt to promote a more systematic engagement of key stakeholders in strategic planning processes.

23. To help the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in delivering its mandate and implement the new strategy, a new approach to partnerships and technical cooperation was also defined and included in the Office's first strategic agenda partnership and technical cooperation framework. The document provided the foundations for a revised programmatic narrative, an updated structure proposal and a new approach to partnerships that were included, and approved, in the 2022 budget, as indicated above in the discussion of recommendation 1. All stakeholders interviewed believed that the changes introduced in the past three years had been instrumental for the Office in scaling up its engagement with the African Group of Ambassadors and experts, resulting in a more visible alignment of the Office's support with the agenda and priorities of the region.

24. The development of the strategic agenda provided a key opportunity to redefine the relationships of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa with key stakeholders. Engagements with the African Group of Ambassadors were duly documented, and staff interviewed noted that, because of the extensive consultations with the African Group and other stakeholders, the strategic agenda and Partnership Framework were firmly underpinned by a new narrative for Africa's development. Staff interviewed also confirmed that, as a result of the new partnership approach, consultations with Member States had gradually evolved from being mostly informative sessions to provide briefings about the reform process or programmatic updates to facilitating more structured consultations in which Member States posed questions and/or requested support from the Office, in line with the mandate of the Office to serve as an advisory body to African Member States in New York.

25. In addition, stakeholders interviewed agreed that these regular engagements had also allowed the Office to better align its services to their actual needs. For example, reportedly, Member States had been more frequently requesting data analysis and policy support to help them arrive at common positions on issues of continental interest, such as the global digital compact or the African Common Position on Energy Access and Just Energy Transition, as discussed further under recommendation 3.

26. In response to the call in the recommendation to ensure that strategic processes included input from key stakeholders, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa made an effort to go beyond the African Group of Ambassadors in New York and reinforced its engagement with a broader group of regional stakeholders, including African Union Commissioners (as will be discussed under recommendation 3), institutions such as the African Capacity-Building Foundation⁸ and African experts and think tanks.⁹ Interviewees agreed that the new partnership approach and wider engagement with relevant stakeholders in the region were pivotal to gain better access

⁸ A representative of the African Capacity-Building Foundation interviewed for the triennial review confirmed that there had been active and bidirectional collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and that the number of joint capacity-building activities had grown exponentially in recent years. This interviewee believed that this collaboration was instrumental in amplifying their voices and messages at the global level and provided them with invaluable technical expertise, resources and thought leadership.

⁹ For example, in December 2023 the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa launched the United Nations Academic Conference on Africa to annually bring African scholars, thought leaders and policymakers to deliberate on sociocultural and economic challenges hindering Africa's development. Interviewees considered these kinds of initiatives instrumental in bringing African voices to the fore and in helping the Office to be more up to date and informed about regional needs, priorities and emerging trends.

to national perspectives that can feed into the Office's knowledge production and to enhance the Office's response and ability to identify emerging issues and trends.

27. Based on the above actions, OIOS assessed this recommendation to be fully implemented, with evidence of the positive impact of more consultative strategic planning and workplanning processes with stakeholders.

Recommendation 3

Strengthen United Nations global and regional coordination mechanisms

28. Recommendation 3 reads as follows:

The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the ECA-NEPAD Unit should strengthen the global and regional coordination mechanisms to which they are secretariat to more deliberately inform, actively involve all three subprogrammes, with clear leadership and involvement roles for each, and coordinate action in support to African Union goals articulated in Agenda 2063 and in supporting regional strategies:

Strengthening the interdepartmental task force on African affairs should include:

- (a) A dedicated secretariat function to guide the mechanism, provide analysis and provide two-way coordination with the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa;
- (b) Convening of the mechanism regularly at the technical and principal levels;
- (c) Based on analysis and consultation with stakeholders, convening around agendas to achieve specific goals for supporting Africa;
- (d) Encouragement of agencies to promulgate decisions to work together throughout their organizations;
- (e) Active involvement of the ECA-NEPAD Unit in the task force.

Strengthening the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa (in whichever format it ultimately takes under the reforms of the United Nations development system) should include:

- (a) Increasing secretariat capacity for analysis on alignment of activities to African Union strategies and follow-up on agreed workplans and ensure that the ECA-NEPAD Unit is positioned to leverage technical assistance from ECA as required in its mandate;
- (b) Embedding stronger accountability for follow-through on commitments from both the African Union and United Nations partners, including coordination with the interdepartmental task force on African affairs and reporting on progress to the African Union;
- (c) Revisiting the cluster system to ensure optimal alignment and efficient support to African Union Commission and African Union Development Agency priorities;
- (d) Actively involving the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and Africa Section of the Department of Global Communications in the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa clusters.

Indicators of achievement: revised interdepartmental task force on African affairs terms of reference, regularly occurring meetings and agendas; revised

Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa terms of reference; active participation of subprogrammes in the interdepartmental task force on African affairs and the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa.

29. In response to the first part of recommendation 3, a draft concept note on the revitalization of the interdepartmental task force on African affairs was discussed at the principal and director levels of member entities of the task force with a significant footprint and engagement in Africa. The note was endorsed by task force members on 15 December 2020, soon after the OIOS recommendation was endorsed by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in March 2020 and following the request of the Secretary-General¹⁰ to the task force principals to revitalize the global coordination mechanism during their meeting in August 2020.

30. The concept note was aimed at bringing further clarity on the purpose and role of the interdepartmental task force on African affairs, its priorities, working arrangements and configuration. In the concept note, in line with the different aspects highlighted in the OIOS recommendation, the task force:

(a) Established regular consultations of the interdepartmental task force on African affairs at both the technical and principal levels. Principal-level meetings were to be held on a quarterly basis and preceded by technical level meetings to be convened as necessary;

(b) Confirmed the partnerships and technical cooperation team of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa as the new secretariat for the interdepartmental task force on African affairs;

(c) Emphasized that the work of the interdepartmental task force on African affairs “should be driven by Africa’s priorities and the needs of its member entities”¹¹ and the need to align the activities of the task force with the work of other regional and subregional institutions and United Nations coordination mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels, including the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams;

(d) Ensured that ad hoc working groups were established to discuss cross-sectoral and region-specific issues in line with African Union-United Nations partnership frameworks;

(e) Ensured that a United Nations theme of the year were to be formed as necessary.

31. Records reviewed confirmed that the interdepartmental task force on African affairs had been meeting as agreed in the past three years. Furthermore, in June 2021, a novel meeting organization approach for the task force was implemented. This involved inviting key United Nations entities to co-chair and present individual agenda items and inviting non-United Nations entities to participate in meetings to enhance broader coordination between the United Nations system and external stakeholders. Minutes of principal-level meetings reviewed confirmed that, since 2021, African Union Commissioners had frequently participated in these meetings.¹²

32. From 2022, Member States were also invited to participate and share their experiences.¹³ The decision to open the interdepartmental task force on African affairs to stakeholders outside the United Nations system was taken to ensure that the Office

¹⁰ Reflected in the concept note (para. 3).

¹¹ Concept note (para. 9).

¹² Meeting reports indicated that African Union Commissioners were present in five out of the six meetings held during 2022 and 2023.

¹³ Documents reviewed report the presence of representatives of Member States such as Morocco, Rwanda and Senegal, inter alia, in different meetings.

of the Special Adviser on Africa effectively acted as a knowledge broker and that the task force became a platform that leveraged knowledge from within the United Nations and expanded it to other partners. Feedback from key stakeholders included that “the task force had become not only a platform for internal United Nations coordination, but also promoted alignment with external stakeholders”.¹⁴ Staff interviewed of both the Office and the Department of Global Communications believed that, as result of these changes, the task force had gained greater credibility. Further evidence of a revitalized task force included the drafting of compendium reports that, since 2021, had been perceived as galvanizing contributions from partners of the task force, including external stakeholders such as the African Union and Member States, *inter alia*.

33. Beginning in 2021, the strategic content of the meetings of the interdepartmental task force on African affairs was also further aligned with Africa’s development priorities. For example, the task force secretariat conducted a strength, weakness, opportunity and threat analysis exercise with the aim of assessing the effectiveness of the United Nations system response to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Africa to guide strategic-level discussions on the United Nations response to the pandemic in Africa. During 2022, the members of the task force agreed to focus on the interrelation between energy and development as the path towards achieving structural transformations in the continent. The subsequent thematic focus for 2023 and 2024 included: “Africa food systems transition: addressing environmental sustainability, climate, energy, and water systems nexus” (2023) and “Digital transformation as an enabler of sustainable development in Africa” (2024). All these themes were identified as relevant and in line with regional priorities.

34. Several stakeholders interviewed noted that positive outcomes related to the above changes had already begun to emerge. For example, the decision to focus the discussions of the interdepartmental task force on African affairs on the interrelation of energy and sustainable development in Africa in 2022 had provided significant inputs for the development of the African Common Position on Energy Access and Just Energy Transition. Those consulted believed that, by focusing meetings on that theme, the task force had indirectly but substantially contributed to clarifying the African Union position on energy access and just transition, demonstrating the potential of the new role of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa as a knowledge broker.

35. In its recommendation, OIOS called for the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to establish a dedicated secretariat function to guide the interdepartmental task force on African affairs mechanism and provide two-way coordination with the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa. Documents reviewed confirmed that the coordination between the task force and the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa had been included as a standing agenda item, notably during 2021 and 2022. Nevertheless,¹⁵ no further progress on this point could be verified.

¹⁴ Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Policy in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Guy Ryder, at the principal meeting of the interdepartmental task force on African affairs, held on 16 December 2022.

¹⁵ It was acknowledged in observations in meetings reports that synergies and better alignment between the interdepartmental task force on African affairs and the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa “would be conducive to setting up a channel for the priorities and narratives of African regional institutions to the United Nations system decision-making processes and promote coherence of United Nations system support to Africa that is fit for purpose, solution mindset and cross-functional”. The task force also declared its intention to collaborate with the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa to provide a space to elevate the African Union-United Nations partnership framework, peace security and development pillars to a global level.

36. In the second part of recommendation 3, OIOS called for ECA to strengthen the Regional Collaboration Mechanism for Africa, served by the ECA-NEPAD Unit, and actively involve the other subprogrammes in the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa clusters. At the time of the evaluation, the process of reforms of the United Nations system for sustainable development was still under way and the impacts of those reforms on the Mechanism were uncertain. The process of reforms concluded in 2020 with the establishment of a new regional architecture that limited the ability of programme 9 to influence the actual performance of the new mechanism and, therefore, the implementation of the recommendation.¹⁶

37. Although not a direct result of the implementation of OIOS recommendations, staff interviewed noted that the changes introduced in the regional architecture effectively tackled some of the shortcomings identified in the evaluation and had, overall, strengthened the existing mechanisms of collaboration between the African Union and the United Nations.

38. There were two specific aspects of relevance to the implementation of the recommendation that resulted from the reform. First, the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa was reinforced with the establishment of opportunity- and issue-based coalitions. In 2022, the number of such coalitions was streamlined from eight to six.¹⁷ ECA was tasked with co-convening coalitions 1 and 2. Second, in line with the request of OIOS to promote more active involvement of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Department of Global Communications, through its Africa Section, in the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa clusters and to strengthen coordination of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the interdepartmental task force on African affairs, the Office was given observer status in the Platform and, as previously noted, ECA regularly participated in the meetings of the task force.

39. Stakeholders interviewed also believed that the changes described offered a promising arena for strengthening the relationship between the United Nations regional system and the African Union and promoting further synergies and collaboration within the system. However, considering that the process of reforms was not fully finalized at the time of the review, it was too soon to identify further immediate results of the reforms.

40. Based on the above actions, OIOS considered this recommendation to be implemented.

Recommendation 4

Operationalize the United Nations monitoring mechanism to review commitments made towards Africa's development

41. Recommendation 4 reads as follows:

The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa should fully operationalize the United Nations monitoring mechanism to review commitments made towards Africa's development in line with goals articulated by the General Assembly so

¹⁶ Whereas ECA was the main convener of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa, after the reforms the new Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa now has a joint secretariat shared by the Development Coordination Office for Africa, ECA and UNDP.

¹⁷ Opportunity- and issue-based coalitions 1: Strengthened integrated data and statistical systems for sustainable development and the Africa we want; 2: Ensuring effective and efficient macroeconomic management and accelerated inclusive, economic transformation and diversification; 3: Education, innovation, digitalization, and youth; 4: Fostering climate action and resilience; 5: Towards peace, security, the respect of human rights, and forced displacement; 6: Subregional initiatives and strategies.

that the mechanism reliably and systematically tracks commitments overtime and provides a basis for advocacy and follow-up.

A fully operational United Nations monitoring mechanism to review commitments made towards Africa's development should include:

(a) Systematic data analysis of key commitments in line with General Assembly resolution [66/293](#) (para. 6) that can monitor and track progress over time, as well as be used for advice, rather than be exclusively reported in reports of the Secretary-General (i.e. system or database for tracking commitments that can inform, but not be limited to, reports of the Secretary-General);

(b) A clearly articulated methodology and replicable process for collecting data;

(c) Full utilization of resources already provided to the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa for this purpose;

(d) Full accountability for commitments made by proposing a dedicated intergovernmental mechanism for periodic review of analyses from the United Nations monitoring mechanism to hold stakeholders accountable.

Indicators of achievement: revised United Nations monitoring mechanism to review commitments made towards Africa's development process, system for tracking and monitoring commitments, technical reports on gaps and challenges; list of existing mechanisms used as sources; proposal for a dedicated periodic review mechanism submitted to Member States.

42. In response to the recommendation, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa finalized the process of refining the United Nations monitoring mechanism methodology in 2021. The development of the methodology had already begun before the OIOS evaluation but the implementation of the four items under this recommendation provided a strategic opportunity to ensure coherence between the monitoring mechanism and the overall work of the programme and to strengthen the data capabilities needed to operationalize it.

43. For example, adding to the decision to connect the monitoring mechanism to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063, taken in 2020, in 2021 the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa decided to incorporate a cluster-based approach to the methodology and organize multilateral development commitments towards Africa made by development partners and African countries in six cluster areas,¹⁸ aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Office's new strategic agenda (discussed under recommendation 2). This was considered instrumental as, instead of generating new data, the data platform of the monitoring mechanism could build on and link to already existing databases and monitoring systems, including the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division and the ECA Sustainable Development Goal portal, inter alia, in line with the requirements included in the resolution establishing the monitoring mechanism.¹⁹

¹⁸ (a) Financing for development; (b) the peace, security and development nexus; (c) governance and human capital; (d) science, technology and innovation; (e) industrialization and free trade; and (f) energy and climate action.

¹⁹ General Assembly resolution [66/293](#). In the resolution, the Assembly expressly recognized that a wide range of different mechanisms to monitor commitments towards Africa's development were already in place and decided that the United Nations monitoring mechanism to review commitments made towards Africa's development built on existing monitoring mechanisms, in line with paragraph 39 of the political declaration adopted by the Assembly in its resolution [63/1](#) of 22 September 2008.

44. Once the monitoring mechanism methodology had been refined, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa finalized the design of a new dashboard in June 2022 and launched the new monitoring mechanism platform, a comprehensive tool that forms the foundation for the implementation of the monitoring mechanism methodology, in 2023. The platform was designed to collect and combine qualitative and quantitative data from various sources and provide access to available data about the impact of financial investments and global commitments on positive trends in service delivery, livelihood improvements, economic transformation and environmental stewardship and climate action. The data team in the Strategic Management Unit was tasked with the overall management of the platform and with providing data extraction assistance to different Office teams.

45. Leveraging existing United Nations infrastructure and resources, the platform ensured scalability, easy deployment, access control and cost-effectiveness.²⁰ At the time of the review the platform was still not public, but the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa reported that it was fully functional and covered all the Sustainable Development Goals, thus enabling the extraction and monitoring of information in accordance with the existing analytical framework. The Office further clarified that the focus of the monitoring mechanism was to provide the necessary data to further explore the reasons and factors that explained why commitments towards Africa's development are not being met, effectively connecting the monitoring mechanism monitoring efforts with the analytical functions of the Office. In practical terms, this implied that the dashboard was designed as an ongoing and open-ended process.

46. In parallel to the development of the new methodology and platform, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa has, for the past three years, dedicated efforts and resources to strengthening the operationalization of its data function and its capacity to use data to underpin its advisory, advocacy, communications and monitoring functions. Human resources were specifically strengthened with the recruitment of specialized data staff.²¹ In addition, data management and analysis capabilities were strengthened by including specific capacity-development activities already in the Office's learning plan 2021–2025 and, later, in the Office's Data Strategy 2024–2026. The plan was aimed at equipping staff with the necessary expertise to execute data-related functions, thereby improving their capacity to convey data findings to meet the Office's knowledge production requirements.²²

47. The new methodology and resources were used to prepare the fifth mandated biennial report of the Secretary-General on the review of the implementation of commitments made towards Africa's development in June 2023 (A/77/908). The report was included in the agenda of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly and further discussed during the first interactive multi-stakeholder dialogue as requested by the General Assembly.²³ As reflected in the related concept note²⁴ discussions in the forum were focused around the two focus areas – financing for development and energy access – to identify opportunities for targeted action in

²⁰ Developed with Microsoft tools and integrated with Python and R packages, the platform featured a main dashboard using Power BI for self-analytics, allowing the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to continuously monitor progress by tracking movement on Sustainable Development Goal indicators, as well as other indicators.

²¹ The data function was covered by two P-3 posts embedded in the strategic management unit (one a regular budget position and the other funded through an extrabudgetary project for two years). A data analyst (P-2) was expected to join in early 2024, funded by the extrabudgetary project.

²² The 2023 capacity-development plan, for example, included five 35-hour mandatory trainings on different aspects of data management, such as an introduction to data literacy, Excel and Power BI or about how to tell stories with data.

²³ General Assembly resolution 76/297.

²⁴ <https://www.un.org/pga/77/wp-content/uploads/sites/105/2023/07/230626-UNMM-NEPAD-CONCEPT-NOTE-1.pdf>.

addressing gaps and discuss the policy implications of the global crises on the continent's development and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

48. Presided over by the President of the General Assembly and moderated by the African Union Youth Envoy, the forum brought together Member State representatives, civil society organization, experts and other key stakeholders, including the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Union. Documents reviewed and public footage²⁵ of the meeting confirmed that the report was well received and generally praised for its high quality. The meeting was considered timely and relevant, and the new methodology was welcomed by different speakers.

49. Staff interviewed positively evaluated the organization of the forum, noting its favourable impact on report visibility. They also agreed that the improved methodology and data functions elevated the quality of mandated reports of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in general, including the monitoring mechanism report. They further noted that the new capacities, tools and resources enabled the Office to go beyond the mandated biennial report and use the data supplied by the revamped monitoring mechanism to issue analytical by-products more regularly as needed.²⁶

50. As a result of the changes introduced, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recently acknowledged that “for the first time since the Assembly’s approval of this mandate, it is being implemented according to a data-driven and evidence-based methodology, which will enhance the capacity of Member State to address the challenges hindering the implementation of commitments toward Africa’s development”.²⁷

51. Based on the above actions, OIOS considered this recommendation to be fully implemented.

III. Conclusion

52. Over the past three years, programme 9 has made notable progress towards strengthening its strategic planning process and more effectively involving a diversity of stakeholders in that process, as well as in execution of its work programme. Furthermore, the organizational restructuring of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa has enhanced its capacity to effectively deliver its mandate.

53. The progress made through those reforms has led to a more strategic, coordinated and coherent programme, as evidenced in the 2023 and 2024 budget proposal in which the three subprogrammes targeted the three expected results in a complementary way. Reforms implemented have also helped to improve outreach, advocacy and policy support to stakeholders, reinforcing the role of the Office as a knowledge-broker between the United Nations system and African stakeholders. The programme made a visible effort to stimulate further engagement with both United Nations and external stakeholders. Strengthened coordination mechanisms such as the interdepartmental task force on African affairs have also been instrumental in bringing a diversity of voices and perspectives to the work of programme 9 and to further align its work with the key needs and priorities of African institutions and Member States.

²⁵ <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1z/k1zu94yfff>.

²⁶ At the time of the review, an upcoming extended version of the biennial report and an analytical paper on Africa’s global air pollutant emissions were in line to be published in 2024.

²⁷ A/78/7, para. IV.76.

Annex

Comments received from the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa

In the annex, the Inspection and Evaluation Division presents the full text of comments received from the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa on the triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its sixty-first session on the programme evaluation of programme 9: United Nations system support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution [64/263](#), following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

Reference is made to your memorandum of 20 February (IED-2024-00338) submitting the draft triennial review report on the implementation recommendations pertaining to the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluation of programme 9: United Nations support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development, currently denominated United Nations support for Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, which is implemented by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Department of Global Communications ([E/AC.51/2021/4](#)).

In coordination with the subprogramme entities, my Office has reviewed the draft report, and I am pleased to inform you that we accept the findings of the review, which has found all four recommendations to be implemented, with evidence of positive impact for some. The review report confirms that programme 9 entities are on the right track and that the comprehensive reforms initiated by my Office have led to initial successes.

The conclusion regarding the implementation of the first recommendation is promising. It reflects that a proactive approach to addressing programme coherence and internal management practices within programme 9 has been undertaken. The establishment of mechanisms for joint planning, monitoring and performance review, along with regular strategic discussions, demonstrates a commitment to enhancing coordination and collaboration across subprogrammes. These efforts have put in place a solid foundation for improved effectiveness and accountability within programme 9 going forward.

The conclusion of the second recommendation reflects the proactive approach undertaken to engage stakeholders, including the African Group of Ambassadors, and establishes a systematic approach to partnerships and cooperation. These actions have led to a more consultative and inclusive planning and implementation process, resulting in better alignment of programme 9 activities with the priorities and needs of stakeholders. In this regard, I am pleased that the OIOS review has validated this approach with an observation of positive impacts in terms of more consultative and informed decision-making processes.

The assessment of work undertaken by the programme in response to recommendation 3 highlights significant efforts to strengthen global and regional coordination mechanisms through the interdepartmental task force on African affairs and the Regional Collaboration Mechanism for Africa. The steps taken include establishing a clear structure for the task force, involving key stakeholders and aligning discussions with Africa's development priorities. The revitalization of the task force, with regular consultations and thematic focus, demonstrates a commitment to enhancing collaboration and addressing regional challenges. While the reforms to the United Nations system influenced the implementation of the recommendation,

overall progress indicates successful efforts to strengthen coordination mechanisms and promote alignment with African Union goals.

As regards recommendation 4, the OIOS review demonstrates the progress achieved in operationalizing the United Nations monitoring mechanism, which resulted in the application, for the first time, of a data-driven analysis approach to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of commitments towards Africa's development, issued in 2023. The refinement of the monitoring mechanism methodology focused on Sustainable Development Goal data, the development of a comprehensive data platform and the strengthening of data analysis capabilities are all significant achievements and demonstrate initial successes in creating a new data function within the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. These efforts align with the goals articulated by the General Assembly and reflect the Office's engagement to providing evidence-based monitoring of commitments towards Africa's development in a way that contributes to the overall Goal monitoring process. The positive reception of the fifth mandated biennial report of the Secretary-General and its impact on informed discussions through the first multi-stakeholder dialogues underscore the effectiveness of the implemented measures. Overall, the commitment of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to a data-driven approach is evident, laying a strong foundation for monitoring and advocating for progress in Africa's development agenda.

In conclusion, I am pleased to see that the triennial review process has affirmed the significant progress and positive outcomes in programme 9 activities over the past three years. I would like to underscore that the evaluation and review process has been an extremely useful tool in guiding the Office's reform agenda. The organizational restructuring within the Office has evidently bolstered its capacity to deliver on its mandates, resulting in a more cohesive and coordinated approach across subprogrammes. This alignment is clearly reflected in our budget proposals, indicating a strategic focus on addressing key priorities in collaboration with stakeholders, most recently evident in the 2025 budget submission.

The OIOS review report's emphasis on improved outreach, advocacy and policy support underscores the importance of the programme's role as a knowledge broker between the United Nations system and African stakeholders in pursuit of enhanced collaboration. The success of strengthened coordination mechanisms such as the revitalized approach of the interdepartmental task force on African affairs highlights the importance of fostering diverse perspectives for enriched exchanges and aligning our activities with the needs and priorities of African Union institutions and Member States.

Moving forward, we will continue to build on these achievements, leveraging the lessons learned through the evaluation and review process to further enhance our impact and effectiveness. Our focus will remain on fostering collaboration, driving innovation and ensuring that our activities are guided by the evolving needs of our stakeholders and the broader African development agenda. In particular, we will be guided by the Secretary-General's priorities in fostering and supporting skills development to make programme 9 fit for the future by investing in critical capacities as outlined in the UN 2.0 Quintet of Change approach. To guide this objective, my Office has developed a three-year data strategy to establish critical infrastructure, processes and skills that will further strengthen the capacity of the programme to execute its four functions: monitoring, coordination, advocacy and advisory.

I extend my gratitude to OIOS, in particular the Inspection and Evaluation Division, Mr. Juan Carlos Pena, and Ms. Maria Delgado, for their dedication and teamwork throughout the review process, and welcome continued collaboration with OIOS in the future.