

Professional peer review of the evaluation function

International Trade Centre

June 2016

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms	ii
Executive summary	iii
I. Introduction	1
A. Background	1
B. Purpose	1
C. Core assessment criteria	2
D. The peer review panel	3
E. Approach	3
F. The review process	3
G. Limitations of the peer review	4
H. Report structure	5
II. International Trade Centre general background	5
A. Mandate	5
B. ITC governance and accountability arrangements	5
C. Areas of intervention	6
D. The organizational structure	6
E. Resources	7
F. ITC strategic framework	8
III. The Evaluation Unit	9
A. Role and function	9
B. Services and products of the Evaluation Unit	10
C. Advisory services to Corporate Performance Management	12
D. Advisory services to self-evaluations and completion reports	12
E. Challenges faced by evaluation and performance management	13
F. Evaluation work programme, budget and staffing	14
IV. Independence	17
A. Independence and impartiality of the Evaluation Unit and evaluators	19
B. Independence of the Evaluation Unit	19
C. Independence of evaluators	21
D. Independence in conducting evaluations	22
V. Credibility	25
A. Credibility of the evaluation process	26
B. Credibility of evaluation reports	29
VI. Utility	31
A. Purpose of evaluations	33
B. Use of evaluations for decision-making at the policy and programme levels	33
C. Meeting the needs of different users of evaluations	34
D. Contribution to knowledge management	35
E. Management response and follow-up	35
VII. Conclusions and recommendations	36
A. Conclusions	36
B. Recommendations	39
Annexes	
I. Terms of Reference of the Peer Review	41
II. Normative Framework	47
III. Documents reviewed by the Peer Review Panel	50
IV. List of selected evaluations reviewed	51
V. Quality checklist for evaluation reports	52
VI. List of people met	58

Abbreviations and acronyms

CCITF	Consultative Committee for ITC Trust Fund
DBIS	Division of Business and Institutional Support
DCP	Division of Country Programmes
DED	Deputy Executive Director
DMD	Division of Market Development
DPS	Division of Programme Support
ED	Executive Director
EMU	Evaluation and Monitoring Unit
ICU	Independence, Credibility and Utility
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ITC	International Trade Centre
JAG	Joint Advisory Group
LDC	least-developed countries
LTA	Long Term Agreements
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
OED	Office of the Executive Director
OIOS	Office for Internal Oversight Services
PAC	Project Appraisal Committee
PPR	Programme Performance Report
RBM	results-based management
SCED	Sector Competitiveness & Export Diversification
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMC	Senior Management Committee
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SPPG	Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance
TCCEP	Trade, Climate Change, and Environment Programme
TISI	Trade Investment and Support institutions
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
WPB	Work Programme and Budget
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive summary

A. Introduction and background

1. This professional peer review provides an assessment of the evaluation function of the International Trade Centre as compared to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for conducting evaluations in the United Nations system. In particular, "the Peer Review undertakes an assessment of the independence, credibility and utility of ITC's evaluation function, focusing on quality, use and follow-up of evaluation across the ITC to promote accountability, learning, and improvement." (See terms of reference in annex I).
2. The Peer Review is expected to critically analyze and generate observations and recommendations in the following areas: (i) strengthening the strategic role of the evaluation function in providing credible and useful information for senior management decision-making; (ii) intensification of the use of robust and credible evaluation methods, including in the field of impact evaluation and its interaction with, and contribution to, strategic planning and results measurement functions; (iii) enforcement of the implementation of evaluation recommendations to facilitate new strategies and interventions to improve performance and results; (iv) deployment of the system for self-evaluations and completion reports within ITC, including the validation system managed by the Evaluation Unit; (v) leveraging evaluation to empower national partners to assess aid for trade activities.
3. The primary intended audience for the results of the Peer Review is ITC's decision-makers (senior and middle management, and evaluators) and other users of evaluation – including the Oversight Committee of ITC and other stakeholders in funding countries and partner countries, including the ones represented in the ITC Joint Advisory Group. The ITC Peer Review will also be of interest to other evaluation offices in the United Nations system and beyond, since it adopted a lighter touch in conducting this assessment, considering the low number of staff comprising the Evaluation Unit.
4. The peer review was conducted between December 2015 and June 2016, in line with the UNEG Framework for Professional Reviews of the Evaluation Function of United Nations Organizations, which was approved as a UNEG reference document at the UNEG Annual General Meeting in 2011.
5. The Peer Review Panel consisted of: Mr. Oscar A. Garcia, Director, Independent Office of Evaluation, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Chair; Dr. Jyrki Pulkkinen, Director, Development Evaluation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland; Ms. Anne-Claire Luzot, Senior Evaluation Officer, World Food Programme. The Panel was assisted by Mr. Nurul Alam, Senior Consultant Adviser in evaluation who has substantial knowledge and familiarity with multilateral organizations of the United Nations system.
6. The Peer Review Panel greatly appreciated ITC's collaboration and full support throughout the review process. The Evaluation Unit engaged in an open and constructive dialogue, sharing information, thoughts and ideas. Senior Management, division chiefs and staff at all levels facilitated the collection of data and took part in discussions of issues and findings.
7. The Peer Review Panel was limited in terms of time and technical and financial resources, which precluded an undertaking of an independent assessment of the technical credibility of the ITC evaluations. Instead, the Panel focused more on whether the evaluation processes of ITC include adequate measures to ensure the best possible technical credibility. Views of key external stakeholders, in particular representatives of national governments of partner countries, private-sector partner entrepreneurs and NGO cooperating partners, were primarily distilled from

recent secondary documentation, country source documents and some limited interactions. Despite the limitations, the Panel is optimistic that the report will serve as credible input and stimulus for ITC in its efforts to embed the evaluation function and culture as a critical component in its ongoing search for excellence in fulfilling its important mandate.

B. Overall conclusions

8. The Panel underlined the importance of complementarity among three criteria of independence, credibility and utility. The analysis of the notion of 'independence' underpinned the following considerations: independence is a basic criterion which has a natural bearing on credibility and utility, and there can be trade-offs between independence and usefulness. Sometimes evaluation functions that are closer to management are perceived to produce more relevant, useful and pertinent evaluations than independent functions that tend to be detached from and less integrated to support the organizational priorities, procedures and culture. At the same time, credibility could be jeopardized if independence is compromised. The evaluation function has a delicate task of ensuring a balance among the three criteria.
9. In assessing the independence of evaluation, the Panel had to judiciously weigh in certain organizational realities and environment. ITC's unique governance mechanism and operational model in the United Nations system provide the structural context within which the evaluation function operates in an effective cooperative manner to achieve ITC's development effectiveness. Evaluation in smaller agencies needs to collaborate and rely on cooperation with other functions to improve its effectiveness, credibility and utility.
10. The Panel found a high level of commitment from ITC Management to the evaluation function. Supported by the mandate accorded in the Evaluation Policy¹, the concept of an independent evaluation function is gaining ground within the organization and the need for its functional independence is being favourably recognized and accepted by the majority of senior professionals at ITC.
11. The Evaluation Unit enjoys a considerable degree of acceptance and recognition for its role across the organization in promoting and supporting organizational change and the function it has played in validating or changing the orientation of programmes and projects is increasingly appreciated. The ongoing reform process within ITC and increased emphasis on results and accountability is expected to further strengthen the Evaluation Unit's role and position. The strong interest and many initiatives on monitoring and evaluation, results-based management and impact measurement are an indication of the seriousness with which the results culture is being mainstreamed and intensified in ITC. Evaluation is considered an indispensable partner in these initiatives and is increasingly playing a critical role in the process.
12. The Panel's overall view is that the evaluation function in ITC has created a distinct institutional space for its role as stipulated in the Evaluation Policy. It has an earmarked operational budget and critical minimum staff to carry out the annual plan of work. The Unit has gained a profile of professionalism within the organization and with other stakeholders, and its work is generally respected by the programme and technical departments as credible and useful. The products and services it provides cater to different needs of internal stakeholders, and the demand for their services and input into various organizational processes speaks for its credibility.

¹ http://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/About_ITC/How_ITC_Works/Evaluation/ITC-Evaluation-Policy-2015-Final.pdf.

13. Based on the detailed assessment along the three criteria of independence, credibility and utility and keeping in view the positive overall assessment provided in the various chapters, the Peer Review Panel distilled several specific conclusions of critical significance.

Independence

14. ITC's unique governance, oversight and operational model presents a complex structure within which the Unit has established its space and operational effectiveness. Exercising strict independence standards in such a complex architecture and small organizational setting is fraught with constraints and risks to the effectiveness, credibility and usefulness of its evaluation function. At the same time, the Evaluation Unit needs to balance its role and contribute to the primary priorities of organizational effectiveness, substantive accountability and learning. In spite of the difficulties, they have demonstrated serious efforts and initiatives and are striving for excellence.
15. The ITC Evaluation Policy adopted in 2015 offers sufficient latitude to the evaluation function and is a leap forward in terms of alignment with UNEG Norms and Standards and strengthening the evaluation function. However, the policy does not provide clear guidance on the principles of structural and functional independence of the Unit, including the profile of the post of the chief of the Evaluation Unit. In view of the responsibilities involved, the status as chief of the Evaluation Unit does not have the appropriate managerial level within the organization to operate independently.
16. Based on UNEG Norms, the evaluation function at ITC is not yet fully independent. It falls under a separate line of responsibility within the integrated function of strategic planning, partnership and governance of the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section (SPPG) in the Office of the Executive Director. Although it is not structurally independent or distinct, it enjoys a nuanced functional independence, positively supported by the integrity of the current management. According to UNEG Norms, functional independence requires the evaluation function to have predictability of and control over its financial resources, autonomy in agenda-setting and authority of evaluation reporting without any internal clearance. The Evaluation Unit still reflects elements of deficits in all these dimensions, which limits its functional independence.
17. The Panel was satisfied with the finding that there was significant progress in the institutional set-up and functioning of the Evaluation Unit at ITC. The Executive Director's commitment to an independent evaluation function, its location in the Office of the Executive Director, the Unit's contribution to the strategic results management process, reporting on evaluations and interaction of the Evaluation Unit with the Senior Management Committee (SMC) are all proof that overall, evaluation in ITC enjoys a profile that interfaces with strategic decision-making in the organization. However, the Panel views that this current positive status and the enabling support that the Evaluation Unit enjoys from Senior Management, is discretionary and not yet institutionalized which makes it vulnerable and potentially unsustainable. Without the practices being institutionalized, there is an inherent risk that this enabling support structure for the Evaluation Unit could change under different senior management in the future.

Credibility

18. The Evaluation Unit is strongly committed to ensuring the quality of the evaluation process and evaluation reports produced were found to be of adequate or good quality. They have applied an approach and methodologies that are in line with the United Nations evaluation principles and evaluation quality standards prescribed by UNEG. The evaluation process followed is transparent and ensures stakeholder involvement, while at the same time safeguarding the credibility of the findings. A

streamlined quality assessment mechanism is lacking for quality assurance of evaluation reports.

19. Financing of evaluation is considered inadequate compared to the variety and depth of responsibilities as articulated in the Evaluation Policy. Evaluation resources are pooled from a variety of sources which, at times, creates uncertainty as regards predictability, planning and accountability issues. They make optimal use of their limited core resources for evaluations (staff and budget) including pooling of project funds to fully fund the entire work programme. Although they manage to provide critical minimum coverage, including thematic and impact evaluations, predictability and secured assessed allocation would enhance its credibility further.

Utility

20. The Panel considers that the evaluations conducted at ITC in the last three to five years have been generally useful and have contributed to inform programme and project development and, in many cases, efficiency improvements.
21. Evaluation serves accountability better when there is a close interface between it and the higher echelon of governance. Usually when demand for certain evaluation issues is generated from the governance side (e.g. the Joint Advisory Group (JAG)), evaluations can serve strategic purposes. Currently, there is a gap in the interface between evaluation results and the governing bodies, perhaps due to the complex governance structure and diffused lines of relationships between them.
22. The move towards institutionalizing the practice of a formal management response system to evaluation recommendations is still in its infancy. The trend of increasing uptake of evaluation recommendations by management is a welcome sign for evaluations assuring them to be credible and useful.
23. ITC's evaluation function is affected by the limited scope and coverage of the current evaluation programme. Current coverage is much less than ten per cent of the programme. The coverage is expected to expand with the introduction of self-evaluation. However once introduced, the uptake of self-evaluation needs to be watched carefully as it is voluntary from the line manager's perspective. Many projects and areas of strategic interest may still be excluded.
24. The understanding of the evaluation function and its importance in contributing to evidence-based programming and decision-making has been reasonably strong in ITC. The level of appreciation and willingness to support evaluations and accept their findings is on the rise and has become stronger in recent years. However, embedding the evaluation culture in the organization whereby management and staff fully accept their potential role and utility will require continuous commitment and efforts by the Evaluation Unit.
25. The current weaknesses in the results-based management (RBM) system constrains the capacity of the evaluation function to provide more credible information for learning and accountability purposes. ITC is, however, making progress in strengthening its RBM system and the Evaluation Unit is supporting this effort through advisory inputs, which should continue.

C. Recommendations

Independence

26. **Evaluation policy.** The panel recommends conducting reviews of the evaluation policy periodically to align it with the evolving international standards and gradual embedding of evaluative norms within the organization. The policy in its next iteration should consider more clarity on the independence dimension of the Evaluation Unit, as elaborated below.
27. **Structural and functional independence.** On the strengthening of evidence-based observations and analysis throughout the report, and taking note of the

organizational context and needs, the Panel strongly recommends that the Evaluation Unit should be granted a distinct functional status, ideally separate from the SPPG and located within the office of, and reporting directly to, the Executive Director. Alternatively, it could continue within SPPG but with a separate functional status and a direct reporting and communication line with the Executive Director. Given the current status and importance of the RBM in ITC, the Evaluation Unit's technical advisory role on methodology of RBM should be fully pursued. Given its technical competence, the Evaluation Unit should spearhead the ex-post impact assessment initiatives in ITC drawing on experience of other United Nations system organizations.

28. The Evaluation Unit's pursuit of methodological rigour in evaluation should be enhanced by giving its head full autonomy in managing evaluation processes, choices and applications of robust methodology and seeking and leveraging cooperation/collaboration of other units/entities.
29. The Panel considers that the current level of the Chief of the Evaluation Unit post should be upgraded to P5 to provide a level of seniority equivalence which would facilitate exercise of functional independence in managing this function.
30. **Evaluation work plan.** The finalization of the work plan should be independently vested with the Chief of the Evaluation Unit. The Panel also recommends that the current dichotomy between donor-led evaluations and Evaluation Unit managed ones should be minimized and bridged by establishing proper consultation mechanisms. This would facilitate addressing the commonly perceived issues and help generate recommendations which are relevant and mutually reinforcing.

Credibility

31. **Budget for evaluation.** Predictability of resources and autonomy for managing resources is important for the independence and credibility of the evaluation function. The ITC Management should ensure that the evaluation function has an adequate level of predictable budgetary resources at its disposal. For transparency and accountability purposes, the annual evaluation work plan should be budgeted and resources should be specifically allocated to various types of evaluations under the Evaluation Unit's control. All projects and programmes considered strategically important or above a minimal financial level (as decided by ITC Management and prescribed in the Evaluation guidelines) should have a mandatory budget for evaluations.
32. The ITC should leverage evaluation to empower national partners to assess 'Aid for Trade' activities from their own perspectives. The evaluations demonstrate a limited interface with, and offer a minimal role and participation of, national stakeholders. The participation of national stakeholders (the government, the private sector and the beneficiaries) should be more active and be strengthened in the evaluation process by involving them in agenda-setting, delineation of issues and questions and providing feedback on evaluation findings from national perspectives.
33. **Leadership and coordination.** Enhance the Evaluation Unit's technical leadership and coordination role in bringing all evaluation streams (projects, donor-led) in ITC under a coherent structure and ensure compliance with equal quality standards, although implementation may be decentralized.

Utility

34. **Evaluation coverage.** The External Independent Evaluation (2014) and the United Nations Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) review of ITC (2015) both pointed out the paucity of evidence of results of ITC initiatives as a critical issue for the organization. This would require the Evaluation Unit to do more in terms of volume and coverage to generate credible evidence of results and impact. The introduction of self-evaluation should be effected as planned and their quality compliance should be monitored by the Evaluation Unit.

35. To the extent that the project evaluations are delegated at the departmental level and donor managed evaluations are carried out in seclusion, a corporate mechanism should be instituted and managed by the Evaluation Unit that ensures that these different evaluation streams comply with an integrated set of methodological and quality standards.
36. The Evaluation Unit should be informed of the process of evaluations commissioned elsewhere within ITC and be involved with their quality assurance. Consideration should be given to identifying explicit criteria for selection of evaluations that ensure good coverage of ITC's work programme and thematic priorities and include strategic evaluations, evaluations of sub-programmes and country-level evaluations.

Management response and follow-up

37. The management response system for evaluations established and refined over years since inception seems to have gained currency. ITC should establish a clear division of responsibility between the evaluation function and the organization's line management regarding the management of the response to evaluations. While the macro data on the status of implementation of management responses is maintained and periodically reported to SMC by the Evaluation Unit, the responsibility for ensuring compliance of implementation of agreed actions remains with the line department. This accountability for implementation needs to be simultaneously enforced.

Organizational learning and knowledge management

38. The Evaluation Unit has established mechanisms to systematically harvest and share lessons from existing evaluations. An annual evaluation synthesis report has been institutionalized and has been an effective mechanism for sharing evaluation results with SMC and within the organization. However, the essence of lessons and organizational learning must percolate to the higher layers and governance to inform and enrich their perspective for decision-making. The strategic and thematic evaluations of organizational significance and annual evaluation synthesis reports should be presented to JAG in a systematic way as part of the organization's substantive accountability and evidence of ITC's commitment to development effectiveness.

Professional peer review of the evaluation function

International Trade Centre

I. Introduction

A. Background

1. A professional peer review of an evaluation function in multilateral development agencies is an independent assessment of its independence, credibility and utility. It is also an assessment of the capacity of an agency's evaluation function to produce evaluations that are credible and useful for learning and accountability purposes. Such peer reviews are conducted by professional evaluators and evaluation commissioners in other evaluation departments and based on a standard methodology and process.
2. The peer review mechanism was introduced jointly by Evaluation Network of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) in 2004. The rationale behind the peer review of the United Nations organizations' evaluation function is to establish the credibility of evaluation functions including their reports and thus potentially decreasing the need for external donor evaluations.
3. This report includes the detailed plan and approach of the ITC Peer Review, background information on the organization and its Evaluation Unit, an assessment of the evaluation function based on the three main criteria for the review: independence, credibility and utility.

B. Purpose

4. The peer review provides an assessment of the evaluation function of ITC against UNEG Norms and Standards for conducting evaluations in the United Nations system. According to the terms of reference prepared by ITC, 'the Peer Review will undertake an assessment of the independence, credibility and utility of ITC's evaluation function, focusing on quality, use and follow-up of evaluation across the ITC to promote accountability, learning, and improvement. The peer review will pay particular attention on the need to build a culture of evaluation in the organization to promote accountability and learning through integration of evaluation in project and programme cycle management'.
5. This peer review is stated to be part of 'ITC's strategy to build a stronger evaluation function'. More specifically; it is expected to critically analyze and generate observations and recommendations in the following areas:
 - (a) Strengthening of the strategic role of the evaluation function in providing credible and useful information for senior management decision-making, in particular in agenda setting, planning and preparation of its work programme and reporting; and ensuring adequacy of human and financial resources allocated to the evaluation function.
 - (b) Intensification of the use of robust and credible evaluation methods, including in the field of impact evaluation as well as its interaction with and contribution to strategic planning and results measurement functions.
 - (c) Enforcement of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations to facilitate new strategies and interventions to improve the performance and results.
 - (d) Deployment of the system for self-evaluations and completion reports within the ITC, including the validation system managed by the Evaluation Unit.

- (e) Leveraging evaluation to empower national partners to assess Aid for Trade activities, from their own perspective.
6. The primary intended audience for the results of the Peer Review is ITC's decision-makers (senior management, middle management and evaluators) and other users of evaluation – including the Oversight Committee of ITC and other stakeholders in funding countries and partner countries. The ITC Peer Review will also be of interest to other evaluation offices in the United Nations system and beyond, since the peer review adopted a lighter touch in conducting such an assessment taking into consideration the reduced number of staff comprising the Evaluation Unit.

C. Core assessment criteria

7. The peer reviews are guided by the "Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations", adopted by the DAC/UNEG Joint Task Force on Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations in 2011. The use of the normative framework helps structure the collection of data and facilitates assessments of standards across agencies.
8. Because the Professional Peer Reviews are intended to assess the evaluation function against accepted international standards in a wide range of organizations, the framework has a blend of standard and flexible elements. It recognizes that the model may be adapted in some cases, for example, to very small or highly specialized organizations and/or those with limited existing evaluation capacities. In this respect, the DAC/UNEG Task Team developed a framework for 'lighter' peer reviews, those to be conducted in small(er) organizations. This framework is based on the same core criteria.
9. However, the 'reduced' framework addresses the same 'core assessment question' which is:

"Are the agency's evaluation functions and its products: independent, credible and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed by a Panel of professional evaluation peers against international standards and the evidence base?"
10. The approach and methodology of this peer review pivots on the UNEG Framework and the treatment of the various issues are grouped under three criteria that is fundamental to high-quality evaluation functions.
11. **Independence of evaluations and evaluation systems.** The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process or entity concerned with the policymaking and the management. A requisite degree of independence of the evaluation function is an essential pre-condition for credibility, validity and usefulness. However, in practice, the appropriate guarantees of the necessary independence in ITC will be defined by the nature of its work, its governance and decision-making arrangements, and other factors. Systemic measures for ensuring the necessary objectivity and impartiality of evaluation work should receive due attention. Indicators of independence are broadly covered by UNEG Norms N 2.1-2.6 and N 6.1-6.5.
12. **Credibility of evaluations.** The credibility of evaluations depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures. Full participation of stakeholders in evaluation promote credibility and commitment. Indicators of credibility are mainly treated in UNEG Norms N2.4-2.5, N5.1-5.3, N7.1-7.2, N8.1-8.2, N9.1- 9.3 and N10.1-10.2.
13. **Utility of evaluations.** To have an impact on organizational change or development effectiveness, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful. The findings must be presented in a clear and concise way and they should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in

development cooperation. However, ensuring the utility of evaluations is only partly under the control of evaluation functions. It is also critically a function of how managers, decision-makers and governing bodies of ITC and member countries utilize evaluation findings in their decision-making process. Indicators of utility are mainly treated in UNEG Norms N1.3, N2.6, N8.2, N10.1-10.2, N12.1-12.3 and N13.

D. The peer review panel

14. A following considerations were taken into account when composing the membership of the panel:
 - (i) Relevant professional experience;
 - (ii) Independence – to avoid any potential or alleged conflict of interest or partiality, the panel members do not have any working relationship to ITC that might influence the panel’s position and deliberations; and
 - (iii) The level of seniority of panel members.
15. Three panel members were chosen from bilateral as well as multilateral evaluation functions based on the above criteria keeping in purview the voluntary nature of service on the panel and this resulted in the following composition:
 - Oscar A. Garcia, Director, Independent of Office of Evaluation of IFAD, Chair
 - Jyrki Pulkkinen, Director, Development Evaluation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland
 - Anne-Claire Luzot, Senior Evaluation Officer, World Food Programme.
16. The panel was assisted by Nurul Alam, Senior Consultant Adviser in evaluation and familiar with multilateral organizations. He was responsible for preparatory work (data collection and information gathering), preliminary assessment of the collected information, and participation in the interviews with stakeholders and contributed to drafting the peer review report.

E. Approach

17. This review was conducted according to “peer reviews for ‘small’ evaluation functions” whose methodology is similar to the past peer reviews, using similar templates and methods and consistent with the UNEG Framework. The process did not include any field visits. A copy of the Normative Framework is attached in annex II.
18. The peer panel would like to recognize the useful and informative discussions that took place among peers and with key informants, both for information collection and experience sharing. In particular, the panel has engaged with:
 - Senior management of ITC to gain an understanding of their perception, satisfaction or concerns about the evaluation function and share with them insights of good evaluation practice with the objective of enhancing their knowledge, commitment and confidence in evaluation.
 - Colleagues in the evaluation office to have an up-to-date understanding of Evaluation Unit’s practices, products and work processes and discuss additional or alternative ways to address common evaluation challenges.
 - Peers in operational management to gain an understanding of their satisfaction or concerns and discuss issues related to learning and implementing evaluation recommendations.

F. The review process

19. The following major steps and activities related to information and data collection were undertaken during the review.

20. **The review of background documentation.** The preparatory activities were conducted collaboratively by the peer panel members and the ITC's Evaluation Unit. The terms of reference (ToRs) and the work plan was finalized in December 2015. Necessary documentation was uploaded in an electronic platform for easy reference. Documentation made available described the key elements of the peer review: background, purpose, scope, general approach and methods, composition of the peer panel and the proposed time schedule. It also contained the Peer Review Normative Framework and review matrix.
21. The list of documents reviewed by the Peer Review Panel is attached in annex 4. The documents covered general information on ITC, its organizational structure and the institutional setting of the Evaluation Unit, and evaluation-specific documents. The documents also served to gain insight into the processes of governance and programming, conduct, reporting and feedback concerning evaluations commissioned by the Evaluation Unit.
22. **Review of evaluation reports.** The review is an in-depth assessment of the quality of eight randomly picked evaluation reports. The quality of the reports was analyzed based on the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports, approved at the UNEG 2010 Annual Meeting and the list of the reports selected is provided in annex 5.
23. **Interviews with stakeholders.** The Panel conducted interviews in Geneva from 20-22 January 2016 and met a wide spectrum of both internal and external stakeholders. The team consulted Senior Management (department heads, directors, advisors and unit chiefs), professional staff, and evaluation managers. The basic purpose of the interviews was to collect information on the structural aspects of the Evaluation Unit including its positioning and functioning and to assess it against the three main assessment criteria. The interviews were in semi-structured format which allowed probing with new questions on emerging issues. The meeting with a group of external consultants was carried out via questionnaire. The list of interviewees and persons met is appended in annex. 7
24. **Draft report.** The draft peer review report is the culmination of collective views of all team members. All team members were involved in meetings with management and division managers as well as with peers of the Evaluation Unit and were actively engaged in discussion and validation of insights and findings.

G. Limitations of the peer review

25. It should be noted that this peer review is not a formal evaluation. It is a less comprehensive and in-depth assessment but adheres to a set methodology applying the key principles of evaluation including triangulation. In its analytical process, it blends in the richness of evaluative content taking full advantage of the particular benefits of a peer mechanism, chiefly collective expertise and strength.
26. The peer review had limitation of time, technical and financial resources which precluded the undertaking of an independent assessment of the technical credibility of the ITC evaluations. Instead, the panel has focused more on whether the evaluation processes of ITC include adequate measures to ensure the best possible technical credibility. The views of key external stakeholders, in particular representatives of national governments of partner countries, private sector partner entrepreneurs and NGO cooperating partners were primarily distilled from secondary documentation, country source documents and some limited interactions. Despite the limitations, the panel is optimistic that the report will serve as a credible input and stimulus for ITC in its efforts to embed the evaluation function and culture as a critical component in its ongoing search for excellence in fulfilling its important mandate.

H. Report structure

27. The report starts with a brief introductory chapter on background and approach, followed by a chapter succinctly describing the evaluation function in ITC. Thereafter, the report discusses, in turn, each of the core criteria and analytical dimensions in three separate chapters. Different attributes and constituent elements pertinent to the dimensions of independence, credibility and utility, are then described under separate headings and examined in relation to corresponding UNEG Norms. Each of the three main chapters ends with brief overall conclusions. The report ends with conclusions and recommendations, organized along the main issues identified by the panel. The recommendations are directed to the organization as a whole leaving ITC management to assign any agreed follow-up actions to appropriate divisions or units.

II. International Trade Centre general background

A. Mandate

28. The International Trade Centre (ITC) was created in 1964 by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) as a subsidiary organ of the United Nations. Since 1968 ITC has operated under the joint aegis of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). ITC has an organizational status which is distinct from that of most other United Nations Secretariat entities. Within Programme 10, Trade and Development, the biennial work plan defining the UNCTAD programme of work, ITC bears responsibility for the implementation of sub programme 6, Operational aspects of trade promotion and export development. The aim of sub programme 6 is to foster sustainable economic development and contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (now Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]) in developing and transition economies through trade and international business development.
29. Since 1964, the ITC has worked to expand participation by the least-developed and developing economies in global trade in order to increase jobs, alleviate poverty and create greater economic and social empowerment. To this end, ITC provides direct assistance, training, tools, facilitation and other support to small- and medium-sized businesses, trade support institutions and policy-makers. As a joint agency of the WTO and the United Nations, ITC puts those organizations' regulatory, research and policy strategies into practice through partnership and local engagement to achieve practical development outcomes.
30. ITC's mandate aligns wholly with the Aid for Trade agenda which has become the main vehicle for enabling developing countries, particularly the least-developed countries (LDCs), to integrate better into the international rules-based trading system. ITC contributes the business perspective, offering solutions to supply-side constraints that prevent developing countries from participating more fully in world trade.

B. ITC governance and accountability arrangements

31. The main intergovernmental policy forum of ITC is the JAG, whose membership comprises representatives of UNCTAD and WTO. ITC reports to the JAG for substantive programme review and policy guidance. The JAG requires financial information focusing on the results and use of extra-budgetary contributions. Its formal role is advisory as it does not have the power to commit financing to ITC; that power resides with the UNCTAD and WTO governing bodies. The Consultative committee for ITC Trust Fund (CCITF) remains the oversight body for voluntary contributions to the ITC Trust Fund. CCITF reviews the utilization of the funds made available through the ITC Trust Fund, taking into account the objectives, strategies and priority areas of development of recipient countries, as well as recommendations made by the JAG on broad aspects of ITC's technical cooperation programme, including established priorities.

32. ITC has a mandatory reporting requirement to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly on the use of its regular budget resources. The Controller of the United Nations signs the financial statements of ITC covering both the regular budget and extra-budgetary resources. The financial statements are audited by the United Nations Board of Auditors. In practical terms, the most important fora for specialized substantive oversight of the ITC are the JAG and CCITF. Since 2006 they have emphasized a stronger results-based approach for ITC, looking towards reporting on impact.
33. The description above indicates that ITC has an elaborate and complex set of governance and accountability arrangements despite being a small organization compared to most other United Nations sister agencies. The 2014 External Independent Evaluation noted that: "while all concerned see the governance set-up as complex and sometimes duplicative and onerous, the system is not considered so dysfunctional as to justify the possible risks of trying to disassemble and re-design it." ITC's special joint institutional linkages with both the United Nations and the WTO appear to remain as valuable for the legitimacy of its mission and operations as they were at its inception. The more formal, control-oriented linkages with the United Nations in New York provide required procedural oversight and assurance, while relations with the UNCTAD are limited to special roles. The WTO, with a major stake (50 per cent) in ITC's Regular Budget, conveys a clearer sense of understanding and engagement in ITC's mission and work.
34. The independent evaluation concluded that the current situation reflects a combination of over-governance and under-governance for an institution with ITC's particular characteristics and needs. The bureaucratic burdens of duplicative reporting, heavy United Nations procedures, rules and oversight bodies being applied to a responsive, private-sector-oriented organization represent an element of over-governance. At the same time the Centre is under-governed in the sense that it lacks a unified and cohesive, representative and dedicated governing body whose members have strong commitment to its mission and work and particularly to providing strategic guidance and reliable extra-budgetary support. ITC's ability to be strategic and responsive to demand is jeopardized by insufficient and unpredictable financing, especially longer-term, un-earmarked project funds. This has led to a chain reaction of serious management challenges and often enormous pressures to adopt an opportunistic, funding supply-led approach to programming.

C. Areas of intervention

35. ITC's area of expertise is in promoting trade and export development and it serves as the United Nations specialized agency for providing technical cooperation in this area. ITC works with developing and transition economies to achieve sustainable development through exports — activating, supporting and delivering projects with an emphasis on achieving competitiveness. It does so by providing trade-related technical assistance to the private sector, trade support institutions and policy-makers, and by working with national, regional and international bodies. The Centre's trade-related technical assistance is geared to assist businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, in developing countries and economies in transition.

D. The organizational structure

36. ITC is headed by an Executive Director (ED) at the level of Assistant Secretary-General, appointed by the Secretary-General on the basis of the joint recommendation of the Director-General of WTO and the Secretary-General of UNCTAD. She is assisted by the Deputy Executive Director and the Office of the Executive Director (comprised of the Communications and Events Section and the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section). ITC is further organized into four divisions: the Division of Country Programmes (DCP), the Division of Market Development (DMD), the Division of Business and Institutional Support

(DBIS) and the Division of Programme Support (DPS). ITC currently has a total strength of 276 in all divisions (see the table below for staff breakdown)

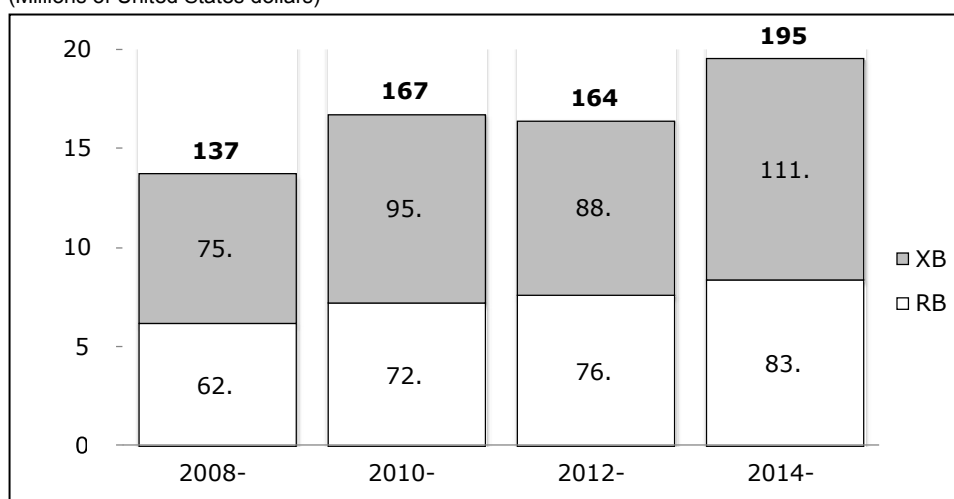
Table 1: ITC Staff (by United Nations definition)

Division	Staff	
	2005	2013
DBIS	129	49
DCP	(Dept. of Operations)	55
DMD		74
DPS	51	69
OED	25	29
Total	205	276

E. Resources

37. Financial support for the Centre's operations includes regular budget resources, underwritten equally by WTO and UNCTAD. As figure 1 indicates, the Centre's budget has been supported fairly evenly by regular budget and extra-budgetary resources in every biennium since 2008 -2009. While regular budget resources increased marginally, extra-budgetary resources have risen from 2008 to 2014. The regular budget is subject to the programme and budget review procedures of the United Nations, with final approval by the governing bodies of UNCTAD and WTO. ITC had 281 posts in 2012 -2013, including 164 regular budget, 20 extra-budgetary, 92 funded by the Global Trust Fund and five comprising Associate Experts.

Figure 1: Financial resources of the International Trade Centre, 2008-2015²
(Millions of United States dollars)



Notes: Figures cited are total expenditures, based on the audited financial statements before eliminations. For the 2014-2015 biennium, regular budget figures are based on the approved budget of 74.3 million Swiss francs, converted into US dollars using the 31 December 2013 exchange rate of 0.887. Extra-budgetary figures include the technical cooperation activities fund, programme support costs fund, revolving funds and other funds.

F. ITC strategic framework

38. ITC's strategic framework centres around the following core areas which represent a coherent set of interventions with corresponding programmes that are adapted and customized into client-focused solutions:³
- (i) **Trade and market intelligence for small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) competitiveness.** The provision of innovative, cutting-edge market information to enable improved business decisions continues to be a core area of the agency's work. ITC ensures that the trade and market intelligence it generates will inform its solutions to improve the international competitiveness of developing country SMEs.
 - (ii) **Supporting regional economic integration and South-South links.** In order to strengthen South-South business links, ITC will work with emerging economies such as Brazil, China, India, Turkey and others to promote value-added trade, investment and technology transfer among these markets and other developing countries, including LDCs.
 - (iii) **Connecting to value chains through SME competitiveness, diversification and links to export markets.** Integration into value chains enables SMEs from developing countries to benefit from participation in global trade. ITC continues to support developing countries to design trade strategies that enable the transformative change necessary for their SMEs to be more competitive internationally, facilitating growth and employment.
 - (iv) **Strengthening trade and investment support institutions.** ITC continues to work with TISIs that support business, ranging from trade promotion organizations, chambers of commerce, sector associations, enterprise development agencies, supply chain management organizations, and others.
 - (v) **Building a conducive business environment.** ITC supports developing countries in fostering policy and regulatory choices that have a significant

² OIOS Document E/AC.51/2015/8.

³ The list of client-focused solutions in the text pertains to the ITC Strategic Plan <http://www.intracen.org/itc/about/working-with-itc/corporate-documents/strategic-plan/>.

impact on SME competitiveness. The agency assists in institutionalizing a business environment that is conducive to trade growth by facilitating the inclusion of the private sector perspective into policy-making.

- (vi) **Promoting and mainstreaming inclusive and green trade.** The agency will continue specific programmes focused on the economic empowerment of women and promoting green trade. The organization will capitalise on partnerships through shared value and impact investment to combine social and environmental benefit with positive financial returns.

III. The Evaluation Unit

A. Role and function

39. Evaluation in ITC is governed by a policy approved in 2015, which succeeded the first policy of 2008. The current policy stipulates that the Evaluation Unit 'is the custodian of the evaluation function'. The Evaluation Unit, operationally located in the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section (SPPG) of the Office of the Executive Director (OED), is the central evaluation office of the ITC. Within SPPG, the Evaluation Unit is a separate line of responsibility within the integrated function of strategic planning, partnership and governance of SPPG in the Office of the ED. It is not structurally independent or distinct but it enjoys a nuanced functional independence, positively supported by the integrity of current management. Placed in the office of Executive Director, at arm's length from the other operational management functions, helps it to maintain a degree of freedom. The current Executive Director of ITC, supported by the SMC, has demonstrated strong goodwill in safeguarding the unit's impartiality and utility while at the same time overseeing and ensuring its strategic development and delivery of the evaluation function.
40. The evaluation function at ITC is distinct from, but strategically complementary to, the performance management function which oversees the monitoring and reporting at ITC. The two essential corporate-level performance reporting systems within SPPG – the development results report (managed by the Strategic Planning and Performance team) and the evaluation-based corporate-level report (presented by the Evaluation Unit) – are functionally complementary and collocated: one generates corporate-level information on performance and results based on data received from individual interventions, and the other presents independent views on corporate performance and results based on independent assessments of selected subjects.
41. The objectives of the evaluation function at ITC are to: "(i) serve decision-making of ITC Management on selected policy and strategic areas; (ii) improve the performance and results; and, (iii) promote trade development and enhance ITC's position in the Aid for Trade arena." These objectives are pursued and achieved through a series of efforts including: consultation and priority-setting with ITC management, conducting and using strategic evaluations in a timely manner, and promoting learning and consensus-building among internal and external partners.
42. The Evaluation Unit aims to deliver high-quality evaluations of ITC's operations, functions, and internal business processes and generate relevant knowledge for management decision-making, performance-improvement, and organizational learning. During the interviews with the Panel, senior management of ITC emphasized the need for the evaluation function to align its services with corporate goals and strategies. The Evaluation Unit's programme of work is seen as gradually moving from an uncoordinated and donor-driven phenomena to a more integrated approach in sync with the strategic needs of ITC and also recognizing particular donor requirements. The SMC perceives that this move is clearly improving the utility of evaluation in management decision-making.

43. It is worth noting that while proximity between the planning and monitoring and evaluation functions may improve decision-making, the overall independent accountability aspect of the evaluation function is somehow diluted by this proximity.

B. Services and products of the Evaluation Unit

44. The Evaluation Unit performs two main services: (i) Independent evaluation services to ITC stakeholders for accountability, learning and evidence-based decision-making purposes; and (ii) Advisory services to the corporate performance management system and the programme/project-level monitoring and evaluation settings. In turn, the services generate a mix of evaluation products including independent evaluations, annual evaluation synthesis report, thematic analytical reports and communication products based on evaluation, guidelines for evaluations and self-evaluations, and validation of self-evaluations. To meet the increasing demand for evaluation and expand its coverage of operations, the Evaluation Policy warranted self-evaluations and project-completion reports which are in the process of being instituted in 2016. Self-evaluations will be undertaken by delivery managers, in accordance with the practices detailed in the Guidelines for Self-evaluation (awaiting final approval from ED⁴). Validation of self-evaluation will also be a service provided by the unit to ensure the quality of the reports. Project completion reports, when instituted, would be planned and conducted by delivery managers and also be validated by the Evaluation Unit as a service to ensure the quality of completion reports.

Independent evaluation services

45. **Conducting evaluations.** Conducting and presenting independent evaluations is the core service of the Evaluation Unit. It conducts independent evaluations of ITC's operations in trade-related technical assistance, including policies, strategies, programmes and projects, and other interventions. The Evaluation Unit defines these evaluations as assessments, as systematic and as objective as possible, of ITC interventions by examining the processes and results, contextual factors and causality. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the objects being evaluated.
46. These in-depth evaluations involve rigorous preparatory and analytical work and attentive supervision of the process⁵, including customizing ToRs, consulting with the management and stakeholders, supervising external consultants on technical issues, drafting reports and integrating comments, diffusing learning and knowledge products, following up on the implementation of accepted recommendations, and synthesizing lessons emerging from these evaluations at corporate level.
47. Based on the review of the Evaluation Unit's work plan for the period 2012-2016 and interviews with the division directors, the Panel concludes that within the limits of the resources available for evaluations, the selection of evaluation subjects in the annual evaluation work programmes usually accords priority to:⁶
- (i) **High-level strategic evaluations.** In conformity with the operationalization of the Strategic Plan, the Unit is increasingly prioritizing evaluations of the thematic focus areas and programmes, to assess the results towards achieving corporate objectives. An optimistic projection for the next three years foresees an approximate demand for four evaluations a year.
 - (ii) **Evaluations of large projects/programmes.** In identifying evaluation subjects, the unit also prioritizes independent evaluations for projects and

⁴ The two sets of guidelines are yet to be finalized and approved at ITC. The PR team has had access to the draft version.

⁵ Strategic Services of the Evaluation Unit, in Enhancing Corporate Performance and Learning at ITC in 2015-2017'. Evaluation Unit/SPPG, November 2014.

⁶ Based on review of Evaluation Unit work plan 2012-2016.

programme with a budget above US\$1 million, and those programmes commissioned by external entities. The approximate demand projected for 2016-2018 period is six evaluations a year.

- (iii) **Thematic evaluations.** Within the unit's resources and capacity limits, the evaluation services gives consideration to those emerging development themes and innovative solutions which bear significant learning value for the development and results of ITC's operations, such as quality of project design, ITC's work in specific countries or regions, innovative tools and methodologies, policies and strategies and critical internal processes.

Table 2: Numbers and types of evaluations initiated in the period 2011-2015

NUMBERS AND TYPES OF EVALUATION INITIATED IN THE PERIOD 2011-2015						
Type of evaluation	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*
High-level strategic		1	1	1		
Large projects/programmes	3	4	2	2	2	6
Small projects	1	1				
Others including impact studies						1
Total	4	6	3	3	2	7

* Figures in the column 2016 are projected. Three of these evaluations started prior to 2016 and are expected to be completed in 2016.

48. In recent years the demand for evaluations of large projects has been stable. The commitment over the biennium is to conduct three evaluations of programmes or large projects. However, it is likely that the Evaluation Unit will have to deliver a higher number of these type of evaluations in the coming years due to potential increase in demand. Since, in the current situation, the Evaluation Unit could accommodate only three to six major evaluations per year, the deployment of enhanced self-evaluations is expected to fulfil the demands in this respect and expand the coverage of evaluation in the organization.
49. **Learning and follow-up.** Each evaluation report is presented to the SMC and stakeholders. The Evaluation Unit ensures the follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations and progress is reported to the SMC. In terms of supporting project design, the Evaluation Unit plans to conduct periodic evaluations of the quality of project designs and convey the lessons learned to the SMC and the Project Appraisal Committee (PAC).
50. At the corporate level, the Evaluation Unit releases an **annual evaluation synthesis report** since 2013, to present corporate-level performance and results and identified strategic issues. The Evaluation Synthesis Reports in 2014 and 2015 reflect according sufficient consideration to performance in focus area and programme levels of the Strategic Plan, and highlight related learning on selected themes. When implementation of self-evaluations commences, the Evaluation Synthesis Report is expected to gradually include findings from those self-evaluations validated by the Evaluation Unit. Since some of the practices are new propositions for enhancing evaluation coverage and are just being institutionalized, assessment of their effectiveness will have to wait until they are implemented for a few years.
51. **Pilot initiative on impact assessment.** To enhance the understanding of ITC's contribution to development results, a process was set up for developing impact assessment methods since 2013 with the Evaluation Unit as the in-house adviser.

Besides, the Evaluation Unit is planning to undertake impact assessments of the ITC in the near future. The development of impact assessment methods due to their integral links with evaluation methodologies fall appropriately within the purview of the Evaluation Unit. The results of impact surveys and related interpretation will be presented to SMC and ITC staff, and the report will be integrated into the annual evaluation synthesis report. The Evaluation Unit will conduct events with visibility and seek to partner with organizations experienced in impact evaluation to validate and enhance ITC's evolving approach. The Evaluation Unit plans to continue with its work on impact evaluation framework and present its final outcome by the end of 2016.

C. Advisory services to Corporate Performance Management

52. The Evaluation Unit also provides a host of advisory services including regular comments on monitoring, reporting and evaluation to the PAC on project ideas, project and programme plans. It also provides support to delivery managers on monitoring and reporting issues including baseline surveys, periodic reviews, impact studies, mid-term reviews, self-evaluations, project completion reports, independent evaluations, etc. The purpose of providing evaluation advisory services is to develop an evaluation-based learning culture in ITC, and, in particular, to support the use of evaluation practices and methods in project cycle management and to monitor, report and demonstrate credible evidence of results.
- (a) **Methodological guidance on monitoring and evaluation (M&E).** Within the framework of updating ITC's Evaluation Policy and developing related operational guidelines, the Evaluation Unit plans to develop a set of quality standards and quality assurance guidelines for project monitoring and evaluation, which will guide projects in building effective systems and lay the foundation for consolidation at the corporate level. This task is being carried out in coordination with the Strategic Planning and Performance team of SPPG. This is a long felt need and will be invaluable to line departments for the implementation of projects.
 - (b) **Advice to project/programme managers on evaluability issues.** The Evaluation Unit also advises project managers on the application of the above-mentioned guidelines to contribute to project development "by improving the ability to evaluate the undertaking and by building an evaluation approach into the plan"⁷ The Evaluation Unit relies on the Strategic Planning and Performance team within SPPG to provide this type of advisory services.
 - (c) **Assessment of the quality at entry (project designs).** The Evaluation Unit plans to conduct periodic assessments on trends of quality of the project designs. This assessment is designed to advise on how to enhance the quality of the designs and it will be presented to the SMC, along with other evaluations. This kind of macro trend study is welcome and helpful to the ITC management for quality enhancements of projects. However, as a matter of practice, to avoid potential conflict of interest, the Unit defined its role as providing technical comments on M&E arrangements in project plan or programme/project logframes, as an evaluation advisory service, instead of participating in project design as a member of the design team.

D. Advisory services to self-evaluations and completion reports

53. To meet the increasing demand for evaluation and expand the coverage of evaluations, self-evaluation and project completion reports will be promoted among all projects and programmes. The self-evaluation and project completion reports will be managed by the projects/programmes, and they will be quality-validated by

⁷ Norms for evaluation in the United Nations system, UNEG, page 9, April 2005.

the Evaluation Unit, and therefore integrated into the annual evaluation synthesis report. The Evaluation Unit will disseminate the Guidelines for Self-Evaluation and Project Completion Report and conduct training and related advisory services.

54. Regarding external evaluations of ITC's technical assistance operations, such as donor-commissioned evaluations, the operational teams must have timely coordination with the Evaluation Unit and partners, to ensure that the legitimate requirements of ITC and partners are well respected, the utility of evaluations are maximized, and possible duplication of efforts is avoided.
55. The Evaluation Unit participates in UNEG activities to keep abreast of the development in evaluation within the United Nations system. In close collaboration with UNEG, the Evaluation Unit may consider the possibility of conducting joint evaluations with other United Nations agencies and partners on issues of common interest. ITC is also open to opportunities to conduct joint evaluations with other development agencies and national partners.

E. Challenges faced by evaluation and performance management

56. One of the chronic challenges for ITC has been to systematically demonstrate corporate-level and project-level results and impact. Collection of relevant and reliable data on results and impact along with credible analysis at an aggregate corporate level has been a lingering concern. The recently released Independent Evaluation of ITC 2014, found that the project monitoring and evaluation systems at ITC have been weak, and rated it "poor". The OIOS Review in 2013 stated: "Despite the Centre's progress in promoting a stronger results orientation, OIOS concluded that the organization had gathered little evidence to document results achieved beyond the level of output delivery. Apart from a few examples, OIOS was unable to identify projects with strong evidence on whether or not the Centre's projects succeeded in achieving the intended outcomes".
57. In the present system, data on project/programme progress and results are assigned to a specific corporate objective according to pre-established linkages between section/department level indicators and corporate indicators. Aggregate performance data from projects are then presented as an accomplished percentage at the corporate objective level. This quantitative data is fed into the United Nations Secretariat corporate performance reporting system complemented by a narrative 'Programme Performance Report' with an assessment of performance of the organization against each of the corporate indicators.
58. The causality between project-level quantitative measurement of outputs (for example, number of trainings of SMEs in international competitiveness issues) and the desired outcome effects at corporate level (e.g. SMEs having enhanced their international competitiveness) is based more on simplistic presupposition, partial at best, than on substantiated and plausible evidence.
59. In recent project evaluations the issue of compromised quality of performance data has been a recurrent finding. Similar messages were expressed in the Annual Evaluation Synthesis Reports (2013 and 2014 editions) prepared by the Evaluation Unit. The lack of effective quality standard and assurance mechanisms combined with inadequate investment in, and arrangements for, monitoring and evaluation, especially at the project and field level, directly contribute to the endemic weaknesses and gaps in the corporate-level performance management and evaluations.
60. For quality enhancement and assurance, there is a need for harmonized principles but differentiated methodologies between independent evaluations and the self-evaluations (when introduced) decentralized at departmental level at ITC. The expectation is that this will ensure the quality, consistency, and utility of evaluations and self-evaluations across the organization. Within SPPG, the

performance monitoring section and the Evaluation Unit are working towards improving the structure of project design and the performance management system to build in elements that respond to the information and data requirements of independent evaluations. The guidelines for independent evaluation and self-evaluations (to be launched soon) have been designed keeping this objective in mind. But in an organization like ITC, where evaluation is a fairly recent institutional practice, it will require wide-spread training and capacity-building and consistent management support to achieve compliance to these guidelines and embed the culture of evaluation in programme design and implementation.

F. Evaluation work programme, budget and staffing

61. Corresponding to the UN's work programme and budget cycle and requirements, the ITC Biennium Work Programme and Budget (WPB) includes, since 2016-2017 WPB, a fuller elaborated section (compared to prior biennium) on the outline of ITC's evaluation work programme and budget, for the approval of the General Assembly.
62. Following on from the evaluation work outlined in the ITC Biennium WPB, the Evaluation Unit prepares a detailed annual WPB for the upcoming year and a prospective work programme for the second year. The draft WPB is submitted to the SMC for approval. The main evaluation items, deliverables and tasks included in the evaluation work programme are reflected in the evaluation section in ITC's Annual Operational Plan. The WPB links resource requirements to expected achievements and deliverables, and the operations of the Evaluation Unit rely on both ITC's regular budget resources and extra-budgetary resources.
63. From 2015, for the first time, the evaluation allocation is part of ITC's core budget⁸ which makes it more predictable compared to a time when the budget was negotiated every year and was vulnerable to change. Also it should be noted that the head of the Evaluation Unit still does not have full direct control over the budget and incurring expenses. Once the WPB is approved, the head controls the expenses in terms of extrabudgetary funds, although an authorization is needed from the Chief of SPPG or Deputy Executive Director for travel expenses. There are some limitations concerning the extrabudgetary funds that are used for some project evaluations, which have been, in certain cases, under the control of project managers.
64. The annual evaluation WPB is prepared based on broad consultations and a priority-setting process, and it indicates expected achievements and deliverables. The consultations are conducted with ITC Management and each operational division to capture their feedback and experiences, and promote evaluation-based learning. The criteria for identifying evaluation subjects and priority-setting take into consideration the results of a risk assessment, alignment to ITC's Strategic Plan, proportion of ITC's investments, maturity of the operations, value of innovation and learning, potential for future strategic development, rigour of theory of change, and timeliness.

⁸ This improvement was based on a Joint Inspection Unit recommendation. That was referred to in the proposed budget.

Table 3: ITC allocated budget for the Evaluation Unit (2011-2016)

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*
515,000	795,000	1,139,000	1,208,000	785,000	923,000

*Figures in the column 2016 are projected.

65. The Evaluation Unit's budget allocations mentioned above also include the project evaluation resources derived from project budgets. Those are controlled by the division directors or project managers concerned. These extra-budgetary resources are estimated to cover the bulk of project evaluation costs. Despite senior management's consistent support to include evaluation exercises and their costs into the design and budgets of all new projects and programmes, this has not been systematically put into practice. However, since the new evaluation policy, there is a positive trend towards this direction.
66. Over the years, the Unit has been strengthened considerably. Starting with one professional and one support staff in 2008, at present, the unit is staffed with two professionals (P-4 and P-3), one extrabudgetary professional (P2) and one full time consultant currently covered by the Regular Budget evaluation project. The unit had no administrative support between 2014 and 2015. During this period, the extrabudgetary P-2 was undertaking certain tasks of administrative nature. Since 2015, the unit shares a G-5 administrative support with the rest of SPPG.
67. **Evaluation Policy.** The Evaluation Policy of ITC adopted in 2015 enshrines the three fundamental values of independence, credibility and utility of evaluation function. The Evaluation Policy sets general principles, standards and process for the evaluation function of the ITC, which includes independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Unit and self-evaluations managed by the respective operation units. The Evaluation Policy provides policy guidance on the practice and use of evaluations, self-evaluations, impact surveys, impact stories, and other performance measurements to serve management decision. The analysis of the three dimensions of Independence, Credibility and Utility; and assessment of their practice is presented separately in subsequent chapters.
68. **Guidelines for independent and self-evaluations.** The Evaluation Policy is complemented by two operational guidelines, which are at the final stages of processing for issuance as organizational guidelines for conducting evaluations.
- (i) The Guidelines on Independent Evaluations and Impact Assessment set rigorous and practical methods, processes, evaluation criteria, and rating system for independent evaluations including impact assessments, managed by the Evaluation Unit, which serves as the central evaluation office of the organization; and
 - (ii) The Guidelines on Self-evaluation define and clarify a set of rigorous and practical methods, tools, processes, evaluation criteria, and rating system for self-evaluation, which are under the responsibility of delivery managers.
69. The Panel had the opportunity of an initial review of the guidelines and considers that the guidelines are well formulated, provide adequate technical and methodological guidance to conduct evaluations, and are customized to meet the particular needs of ITC. The Panel's review of both the guidelines indicate that they are generally consistent with UNEG standards in terms of results and outcome definition, application of log frames or theory of change, outcome indicators monitoring methodologies, and advocacy for impact assessment. The guidelines were formulated drawing from a review and lessons of similar guidelines of a number of multilateral organizations evaluation guidelines (FAO, IFAD, World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women) and show general conformity with core principles of similar guidelines in above agencies, as applicable.

70. **Accountability.** Supporting organizational accountability is one of the main purposes of evaluation. Accountability in the ITC context refers to the assessment of impact of technical assistance and the performance of ITC and partner governments, and their Trade Investment and Support institutions (TISI). Learning lessons from the systematic evaluation of past and ongoing programmes, projects, policies and strategies contributes to improve the future performance of ITC. Accountability requires that successes, unexpected results, shortcomings and failures are highlighted during the evaluation and be disclosed without interference. The operationalization of the accountability aspects of evaluation is exercised in ITC in the following forms:
- (i) Conduct of evaluations by the Evaluation Unit, taking into consideration the strategic importance of the evaluation subjects, in the form of corporate-level evaluation, programme evaluation, and evaluation of large project;
 - (ii) Sufficient information, data and documents are made available to the Evaluation Unit, and active participation of all related personnel in the evaluation process; and
 - (iii) Presentation of the annual evaluation synthesis report by the Unit to convey the key findings of evaluation to SMC and the JAG. This report usually present consolidated results and impact achievements, and a summary of cross-cutting issues and insights stemming from the evaluations completed in the previous year.
71. From the above it can be seen that ITC has corporately managed to introduce a mechanism and system which provides a framework for accountability of evaluations in the organization from evaluation agenda-setting to conduct and reporting and follow-up on evaluations.
72. **Learning.** It is important to ensure that evaluation lessons are shared and internalized through establishing effective feedback loops from evaluation to management, operational staff and stakeholders. The Evaluation Unit promotes common understanding of evaluation, monitoring and reporting activities, and of how to improve the utility of evaluations. The Evaluation Unit currently contributes to learning objectives through the following policies:
- (i) Following completion of every independent evaluation report, the Evaluation Unit conducts specific learning events which enable the main users of the evaluation to deepen their understanding of the findings and recommendations and make them operational;
 - (ii) The Evaluation Unit prepares easy-to-read communication products on findings and recommendations and disseminate them widely among ITC staff and ITC stakeholders;
 - (iii) The Unit contributes evaluation-generated knowledge and lessons to in-house quality assurance platforms and, upon request, it prepares written comments on selected new corporate policies, strategies, programmes and projects that have been preceded by an independent evaluation on the same topic;
 - (iv) The Evaluation Unit pursues appropriate follow-up with ITC management to ensure that evaluation recommendations are adopted at the operational, strategic and policy levels (as appropriate). The Evaluation Unit also tracks the agreed recommendations and reports regularly to the management.
73. **Partnership.** The evaluation process in ITC interacts and deals with a wide range of internal and external partners with divergent interests and perspectives. Securing constructive partnership with, and trust of, internal and external partners and understanding their diverse perceptions is essential for developing useful and relevant recommendations and consequently ensuring ownership and

implementation. In the spirit of constructive partnerships the Evaluation Unit ensures that:

- (i) The evaluation process is participatory and transparent to partners and includes mutually-agreed approaches and timetable. As a good practice, the Evaluation Unit shares the terms of reference, inception report, and draft evaluation report with management and other concerned partners to solicit comments and develop ownership;
- (ii) The Evaluation Unit follows up on the implementation status of the evaluation recommendations and update partners in a transparent and timely manner.

IV. Independence

74. In assessing the independence of ITC's evaluations and evaluation systems, the peer review panel used the following UNEG Norms as reference:

2.1 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations in the United Nations system are responsible for fostering an enabling environment for evaluation and ensuring that the role and function of evaluation are clearly stated, reflecting the principles of the UNEG Norms for Evaluation, taking into account the specificities of each organization's requirements.

2.2 The governance structures of evaluation vary. In some cases, it rests with the Governing Bodies, in others with the head of the organization. Responsibility for evaluation should be specified in an evaluation policy.

2.3 The Governing Bodies and/or the Heads of organizations are also responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to enable the evaluation function to operate effectively and independently.

2.4 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that evaluations are conducted in an impartial and independent fashion. They are also responsible for ensuring that evaluators have the freedom to conduct their work without repercussions for career development.

5.1 Impartiality is the absence of bias in due process, methodological rigour, consideration and presentation of achievements and challenges. It also implies that the views of all stakeholders are taken into account. In the event that interested parties have different views, these are to be reflected in the evaluation analysis and reporting.

5.3 The requirement for impartiality exists at all stages of the evaluation process, including the planning of evaluation and the formulation. These are not independent of each other; there are strong synergies and trade-offs between them of mandate and scope, the selection of evaluation teams, the conduct of the evaluation and the formulation of findings and recommendations.

6.1 The evaluation function has to be located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence and so that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured. It needs to have full discretion in submitting directly its reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision-making pertaining to the subject of evaluation.

6.2 The Head of evaluation must have the independence to supervise and report on evaluations as well as to track follow-up of management's response.

6.3 To avoid conflict of interest and undue pressure, evaluators need to be independent, implying that members of an evaluation team must not have been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design, or overall management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be in the near future.

6.4 Evaluators must have no vested interest and have the full freedom to impartially conduct their evaluative work, without potential negative effects on their career development. They must be able to express their opinion in a free manner.

6.5 The independence of the evaluation function should not impinge on the access that evaluators have to information on the subject of evaluation.

75. The Panel underlined the importance of complementarity among three criteria of independence, credibility and utility. The analysis of the notion of 'independence' underpinned the following considerations: independence is a basic criterion which has a natural bearing on credibility and usefulness, and that there can be trade-offs between independence and usefulness. Sometimes evaluation functions closer to management are perceived to produce more relevant, useful and pertinent evaluations than independent functions which tend to be detached from and less integrated to support the organizational priorities, procedures and culture. At the same time, credibility could be jeopardized if independence is compromised. The evaluation function has a delicate task of ensuring a balance among the three criteria.
76. The Panel found a high level of commitment of ITC Management to the evaluation function and across the board within the organization. The Evaluation Unit seemed to enjoy substantial acceptance and appreciation for its role. The concept of an independent evaluation function is gaining ground within the organization and there is a general understanding of the need for functional independence of the Evaluation Unit by most professionals.
77. The two most recent external evaluations of ITC, one by an independent team, and another by the United Nations OIOS, covering the activities of ITC since 2006, recognized that ITC was 'fit for purpose' and had strong technical expertise for which demand continued to increase. The main obstacle faced by the two evaluations was difficulty in gathering strong evidence on results. They also pointed to ways for ITC to improve both operationally and in terms of visibility. The evaluations recommended improving the organization's RBM system and in particular the functioning of its components: strategic planning, performance measurement and evaluation. The reports underlined the role of the evaluation function as an integral and essential pillar of the RBM system of ITC.
78. In its 2013 independent assessment of Secretariat evaluation functions, OIOS scored the Centre's first evaluation policy as only moderately adhering to the norms and standards of the UNEG. The adoption of the second generation Evaluation Policy in 2015 further solidified the legitimacy and organizational recognition of the evaluation function. The new policy augurs well in setting a positive trend in the evolution of the evaluation function with new agenda-setting and methodologies including impact assessment tools. There is a general agreement among those interviewed that the visibility and importance of the Evaluation Unit has increased over the years but, at the same time, the accountability and learning needs of the organization are increasing far beyond the capacity of the Evaluation Unit.
79. In assessing the independence of evaluation, the Panel had to judiciously weigh in certain organizational realities and environment. ITC's unique governance mechanism and operational model in the UN system provide the structural context within which the evaluation function operates in effective cooperation with other functions to achieve ITC's development effectiveness. Evaluation needs to collaborate and rely on cooperation with other functions to improve its effectiveness, credibility and utility. This is different from operational realities of Evaluation Units of most other United Nations entities where application of the norms can be more straightforward.

80. Based on the interviews conducted with senior managers, a review of institutional documents, evaluations and reviews of progress, the Panel was satisfied that there was significant progression in institutional set-up and functioning of the Evaluation Unit at ITC. The Executive Director's commitment to an independent evaluation function, the unit's location in the Office of the ED, its contribution in strategic results management process, the reporting on evaluation and interaction with SMC are all proofs that, overall, evaluation in ITC enjoys a profile that interfaces with strategic decision-making in the organization. However, the Panel views that this current positive status and the enabling support that the unit enjoys from senior management is discretionary, and not yet institutionalized which makes it vulnerable and potentially unsustainable. Without the practices being institutionalized, there is an inherent risk that this enabling support structure for the unit can change if management changes.

A. Independence and impartiality of the Evaluation Unit and evaluators

81. The Evaluation Policy adopted in 2015 states clearly that the Evaluation Unit, as a distinct entity, is the custodian of the evaluation function at ITC and its independence, impartiality and objectivity are strictly respected so that it is free from undue influence and unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured. ITC management oversees the strategic development and delivery of the evaluation function and ensures its independence, impartiality, quality and utility at ITC.
82. The Panel, in assessing independence of ITC evaluation function against the relevant United Nations Norms, maintained the following distinction between structural and functional independence. Structural independence refers to the organizational setting of the evaluation function within the organization, i.e. its link with the management structure and the governing bodies. Functional independence refers to the degree of independence and impartiality in planning and conducting evaluations. In structural independence the UNEG Norms allow for some variations among organizations (some reporting directly to the governing bodies, others to the head of the organization and others reporting to lower hierarchies), while functional independence is considered to be an indispensable (non-negotiable) attribute which should be universally present in all evaluation units or entities.

B. Independence of the Evaluation Unit

83. The 2013 independent assessment of Secretariat evaluation functions by OIOS stated: 'Regarding monitoring and evaluation, current structural arrangements do not afford this function sufficient operational independence for generating the credible results information ITC will require'. The same study further scored the Centre's evaluation policy as only moderately adhering to the norms and standards of the UNEG. The Panel considers that the situation is somewhat improved with promulgation of the new Evaluation policy in 2015.
84. The ITC Evaluation Policy 2015 stipulates that 'the principle of independence could be achieved only when the evaluation function is separate from the policy-making process and from managers responsible for planning, design, management and implementation'.
85. The Evaluation Unit, as the custodian of the evaluation function, enjoys a degree of independence in pushing the process of setting the agenda, issuing guidelines, designing and in managing of evaluations. All these processes have to be eventually cleared by the hierarchy at the Office of the ED. The Evaluation Unit is a separate line function co-located within the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section (SPPG) of the OED. Its location within the Office of the ED offers it a nuanced functional independence from other management and substantive operational divisions/units. This also ensures an environment for unbiased and transparent reporting. The chief of the Unit reports to the Chief of SPPG with informal consultative opportunities with the Deputy Executive Director

(DED)/ED. Presently, the ED is responsible for ensuring the structural and functional independence of the evaluation function while behavioural independence is exercised by the chief of the unit within the given limits of authority.

86. **Work programme and budget.** The practice of the Evaluation Unit developing the annual evaluation work programme in a consultative manner is considered a good one. The fact that the Evaluation Unit work programme and the budget need SMC approval could in theory compromise its functional independence. In practice, however, the Panel found no evidence of attempts to limit this independence. Furthermore, the perception within the house was that the Executive Director and Senior Management provided the best guarantee of this functional independence, i.e. the integrity of current management, which demonstrated commitment to ensure an enabling environment for evaluation, protects Evaluation Unit independence and impartiality.
87. Nevertheless, the budgetary independence needs to be clearly spelt out through an official communication from ED's office and can be formally institutionalized in the Evaluation Policy when appropriate. This is important as a different management with less integrity could, within the current structure and with the capability of approving the work programme, guide evaluations and jeopardize Evaluation Unit's independence. Although the evaluation function is structurally separated from those responsible for the design and implementation of the projects and programmes being evaluated, when it comes to evaluation of policies and strategies involving the senior management, there is a risk that under a more authoritarian management, the domain of independence can be challenged. While the functional independence is not optimal due to deficits stated above and requires some institutional safeguards, the Panel assesses that there is demonstrated behavioural independence in terms of following the UNEG Code of Conduct for evaluation and minimizing conflict of interests and ensuring impartiality.
88. The Independent Evaluation of ITC (2014) states that "there is evidence of unclear lines of authority on project-level evaluations particularly when multiple stakeholders are involved – donors, project officers, and ITC's Evaluation and Monitoring Unit (EMU). The evaluation also encountered examples where project evaluations have been initiated either without the prior knowledge of the Evaluation Unit and/or undertaken by donors or project officers with little or no advance consultation. Especially in view of ITC's own limited means, it is clear that outside evaluations – including those commissioned by sponsoring donors and especially focusing on major, longer-term projects – form very important strands of ITC's body of evaluative accountability and learning. But good coordination with the Evaluation Unit on the design, coverage and use of these products will maximize their value for all concerned".
89. **Disclosure of evaluation reports.** The policy stipulates that the head of the Evaluation Unit has the authority, in due consultation with ITC Management, to issue and disclose final evaluation reports without prior clearance from any other ITC managers and functions. There was no evidence of any efforts by the management or operational units posing any hindrance to issuance of reports by the Evaluation Unit. In practice, all evaluation reports are shared, discussed and commented upon (not cleared) by the ED/DED and SMC before being issued officially.
90. **Structural independence.** In terms of structural independence, norm 2.2 recognizes that structures might differ between organizations. In some organizations, the evaluation office operates independently by reporting to the governing body; in other cases the office reports to the governing board through the head of the organization. For ITC, the head of the Evaluation Unit is appointed by the Executive Director and reports to her through the Chief of SPPG, of which

the Unit is a part. In terms of structural independence, it is linked to the head of the organization through the DED and the Chief of SPPG, i.e. fully independent from line management. However, the Evaluation Unit is not shown as a separate corporate entity in the organogram of ITC. The Panel considers that even within the current SPPG structure, there is room to recognize and institutionalize the Evaluation Unit's functional independence through establishing a direct communication line with ED/DED. This can be done without minimizing the unit's current technical collaboration and contribution in methodological and quality assurance roles to RBM initiatives of SPPG.

91. **Level of responsibility.** The Panel considers that even within the limits of permitted variations that the position level (P-4) of the Evaluation Unit's Chief does not provide a required level of seniority equivalence to exercise functional independence and it should be placed at a higher level (P-5) given its relative independent profile and to enable the incumbent to exercise functional autonomy more effectively.
92. Moreover, the Panel reviewed the seemingly large load of advisory services (as prescribed in the Evaluation Policy) and the extent of time that the unit's staff presently dedicates to supporting the RBM streams including project designs, monitoring and evaluation requirements, quality assurance monitoring activities. Considering that the management as well as the Evaluation Policy state that the two essential corporate-level performance reporting systems of ITC within SPPG – development results report (managed by the Strategic Planning and Performance team) and the evaluation-based corporate-level report (presented by the Evaluation Unit) – are functionally complementary and co-located but operationally distinct, the panel supports this in the spirit of organizational effectiveness. The Panel considers that the Unit, as part of SPPG, is making substantial contributions to ITC's development effectiveness by its methodological support to RBM. The Panel also considers that in the context of a small organization like ITC and being the only technically equipped unit, playing this role enhances its organizational profile and leveraging capacity which eventually helps to mainstream evaluation culture in the organization. However, the Evaluation Unit ought to be sufficiently conscious to exercise and retain evaluation function's distinctive functional identity in terms of its independence in agenda setting, budget administration, evaluation planning, execution and evaluation reporting.

C. Independence of evaluators

93. The Panel observed that there are number of rules put in place as safeguards to conform to the neutrality and impartiality of staff of the Evaluation Unit and evaluation consultants:
 - ITC follows a competitive recruitment process for selection of evaluation staff. The process includes advertising the post externally, screening the candidates and interviews. The final decision is made by the ED, not by the head of the Evaluation Unit.
 - An established shortlist of recommended candidates. Recruitment procedures are fully compliant with United Nations Secretariat Rules and Regulations. There was no reported case of management exerting pressure on evaluation staff.
 - Consultants who undertake evaluations for the organization do not sign the 'Code of Conduct for Professional Evaluators' as stipulated in the UNEG instrument. ITC HR Section indicated that the standard contract provisions in the United Nations Secretariat are designed to safeguard integrity and confidentiality.
 - There is strict adherence to the general rule of conduct that its staff may not evaluate a project or programme if they have been responsible for its design,

implementation or supervision. The panel found no evidence of staff acting as task managers or being assigned to manage or conduct evaluations of projects or policies in which they had been previously involved⁹. However, the panel did not come across any cases where the principles of impartiality were not adhered to in large-scale evaluations managed by the technical branches. Staff and consultants reported receiving good support from the chief of the Evaluation Unit in order to safeguard their independence.

- With regard to conflict of interest with respect to the external evaluators, the ToRs contain standard provisions to prevent conflict of interest and full disclosure is required by consultants of any previous or current association or relationship with the stakeholders involved in the evaluation issue or with the project or programme being evaluated. In some cases, consultants were selected outside the Evaluation Unit by programme divisions or decentralized functions when an evaluation was entirely conducted by the section. But this has not anymore been the case for some years.
94. The Evaluation Unit gives due attention to the issue of impartiality when reviewing the tender and recruitment procedures for consultants. Consultants are selected on a competitive basis based on competencies detailed in the ToRs for the evaluation. United Nations Secretariat Rules and Guidelines for recruiting individual consultants are strictly followed. Evaluation consultants are identified by the Evaluation Unit based on a consultant roster established by human resources and through tender processes of evaluation service providers. Whenever consultants have been identified and contracted by the donor, the process was monitored to ensure that the independent character of the evaluation process is not compromised. In exercising quality control of the consultants' work and their reports the unit continues to pay attention to the issue of independence and impartiality.

D. Independence in conducting evaluations

95. The findings presented in this sub-section apply, principally, to Evaluation Unit-managed evaluations.
96. The evaluations managed by the Evaluation Unit are conducted by external evaluators and it gives due attention to ensuring that evaluations are free from bias and impartiality is exercised at all stages of the process. In conducting evaluations, the unit oversees the application of a transparent process, due methodological rigour and the involvement of professional evaluators (most often external). Evaluation reports reviewed appeared to be impartial, generally presenting a balanced assessment of both achievements and challenges, including views of various stakeholders.
97. There was a general affirmation by the evaluation staff and consultants interviewed by the panel that they were able to accomplish their task without interference from Evaluation unit staff or ITC Management. The consultants appreciated the opportunities built into the process to discuss the findings and recommendations with staff and management and with other stakeholders without undue interference. Any deficiency in available information was attributed to the absence of reliable monitoring data and baselines. The perceived independence of the Evaluation Unit in no way came to be a cause of restricting access to information.
98. There is a system that all draft reports, including key evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations, are shared with key stakeholders and the Evaluation Unit consolidates all of the feedback provided by the stakeholders. The

⁹ There has been a force majeure exception: The first NTF II programme evaluation (Nov 2013) was managed by the Head Evaluation Unit (who had designed it during a one-year secondment period to the NTF II (Oct. 2009 - Oct. 2010)). This was due to the unexpected departure of the only other evaluation officer in the Evaluation Unit at the time, who had been previously assigned to evaluate it. This evaluation was conducted by an external independent consultant. Since then, there has been no other occurrence of this sort.

trend has been that comments of stakeholders are generally taken into consideration by the evaluation teams, to the extent that they do not compromise the independence and impartiality of the evaluation process. The Evaluation Unit maintains a management response system and tracks the follow-up of evaluation and periodic reports are provided to SMC. A case was cited by one manager where the Evaluation Unit substantially changed the findings of an independent consultant. There was a lack of clarity as to whether the accountability of views expressed in the report was that of the Evaluation Unit or of the consultant. There is a need to clarify the final clearance responsibility for evaluation reports.

Independence in reporting on evaluations

99. The Evaluation Unit has full discretion in submitting directly its reports for comments at the appropriate level of internal decision-making, i.e. the Executive Director or SMC. According to the ITC Evaluation Policy 39 (ii), "The Head of the Evaluation Unit has the authority, in due consultation with the ITC Management, to issue and disclose final evaluation reports without prior clearance from any other ITC managers and functions." In current practice, the unit sends draft reports to ED/DED for review and comments, not for clearance; the presentation of an evaluation report to SMC is also for information, not for clearance. Presentations to SMC on findings and recommendations of evaluation are usually done by the head of the unit. In the same SMC session, the presentation of Management Response by delivery manager is for SMC approval.
100. These procedures for clearing reports are generally in line with United Nations good practices. Moreover, the evaluation reports are disseminated internally with a forwarding memo from the head of Evaluation Unit, which highlights pertinent issues. This is a new practice and the unit is trying to promote it as a vehicle to enhance evaluation-based learning.
101. Reporting to the governing bodies takes place through the Office of the ED and not directly by the Evaluation Unit, thus the results of evaluations are not communicated directly by the Chief of the Evaluation Unit to the governing bodies. It is often the Executive Director or the Deputy Executive Director who presents evaluation findings to the JAG.
102. Each evaluation produced by a consultant or an evaluation service provider is formally reviewed at both draft and final stages by the unit. Evaluations are only accepted and a final payment made if the quality of the report is rated as satisfactory. All evaluation reports are fully disclosed and are made publicly available on the ITC website.

Main findings on independence

103. Regarding the independence and impartiality of the Evaluation Unit, evaluation managers, evaluators, processes and evaluation outputs it is concluded that:
 - The Evaluation Unit plays a key complementary advisory role in ITC's programme quality assurance processes and in its RBM system. The Unit's technical guidance and methodological advice, as part of SPPG, is considered essential input for the RBM system quality improvement and mainstreaming. This collaboration has not compromised its functional independence in evaluation but seems to have helped the Evaluation Unit gain more credibility within the organization.
 - Evaluations are conducted in an independent manner. The head of the Evaluation Unit exercised the independence in a prudent manner, when necessary. Unit staff or consultants conducted their work in an independent and impartial manner. No case of any hindrance or obstruction was indicated.
 - Regarding the independence and impartiality in the programming, implementation and reporting of evaluations it is concluded that a system is in place whereby the Evaluation Unit ensures the independence of evaluations

by means of transparency in the conduct of evaluations, methodological rigour and full disclosure of evaluation reports.

- Due attention is being paid to precluding conflict of interest, both when the evaluators are selected as well as during the evaluation by controlling the impartiality of the evaluation process and of the reports. The panel found no cases of conflict of interest.
- The Evaluation Unit has no direct reporting line to, nor interface with, governing bodies. ITC reports on evaluation to the JAG which is, de facto, a governing body. ITC governing bodies are the United Nations General Assembly and WTO General Council. Evaluation findings and lessons of the biennium are subsumed in the Programme Performance Report (PPR) submitted every two years to the United Nations General Assembly.
- No structural obstacles preventing access to available information have been reported. In interactions with the panel, Evaluation Unit staff demonstrated a high degree of intellectual independence and freedom to express different views.
- The evaluation function at ITC is not strictly fully independent. The Evaluation Unit is considered to have functional independence, safeguarded by the discretion of current management. Although it enjoys a distinct line existence within SPPG and the Office of the ED, its functional independence is somewhat compromised due to limited predictability of its financial resources,¹⁰ its limited autonomy in financial management, and agenda setting. The status of the chief compared to his responsibilities does not give him an equivalence within the organization to operate independently.
- ITC's Evaluation Policy adopted in 2015 is a right leap forward considering the size and resources of ITC. It offers sufficient latitude to the evaluation function and consistent with UNEG Norms and Standards. It needs to offer clearer guidance on the principles of structural and functional independence of Evaluation Unit including the required profile of the post of the Chief of the Unit.
- Financing of evaluation seemed inadequate compared to the aspirations embodied in the evaluation policy.
- There is little transparency in the way total resources for evaluation are allocated, used and accounted for. The Evaluation Unit makes ingenious use of its limited core resources for evaluations (staff and budget) including project funds to fully fund its entire work programme, providing adequate coverage and including thematic and impact evaluations despite. There is substantial evaluation activity at project level (and donor initiated) in which the Unit has no direct involvement.

104. All professional staff are recruited following open, transparent and competitive process and all existing staff are considered competent as evaluation professionals.

- Due attention is being paid to precluding conflict of interest, both when the evaluators are selected as well as during the evaluation by controlling the impartiality of the evaluation process and of the reports. The panel found no cases of conflict of interest.
- No structural obstacles preventing access to available information have been reported. In interactions with the panel, Evaluation Unit staff demonstrated a

¹⁰ There is predictability in terms of regular budget resources allocated to the Unit directly on a biennial basis. There is some degree of unpredictability in terms of the funds allocated by each project to undertake an evaluation, which is a case-by-case exercise.

high degree of intellectual independence and freedom to express different views.

V. Credibility

105. An independent evaluation function exudes a perception of credibility. Credibility depends to a large extent on people's perceptions of how the evaluation function and its various facets are managed including aspects such as professionalism and competency of staff, transparent and impartial evaluation processes and quality of reports. This peer review has taken note of both perceptions and available facts. Further, there is a strong link between credibility and utility which reinforce each other: evaluations when perceived by stakeholders as credible are taken seriously and considered useful. Simultaneously consistent records of producing useful and relevant evaluations also contribute to an evaluation function's credibility.
106. The Panel notes that the Evaluation Unit considers credibility a crucial prerequisite for living up to international and especially UNEG standards. It pays great attention to quality assurance all along the evaluation process. In particular, attention is given to impartiality. The unit also follows professionally recognized methods for data collection and analysis. In general, the Panel observed a high level of acceptance among staff and senior management about the ways in which the Evaluation Unit manages its evaluations and also about the quality of evaluation reports. In sections below, observations are made on the process, the quality of the evaluation reports and general conclusions on credibility.
107. The Panel assessed credibility of the evaluation function keeping in view the following UNEG Norms for Evaluation as reference points. This included assessing the processes of how evaluations are planned, managed and conducted, disclosed and followed up on.
 - 3.1 Each organization should develop an explicit policy statement on evaluation. The policy should provide a clear explanation of the concept, role and use of evaluation within the organization, including the institutional framework and definition of roles and responsibilities; an explanation of how the evaluation functions and how evaluations are planned, managed and budgeted; and a clear statement on disclosure and dissemination.
 - 2.5 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations are responsible for appointing a professionally competent Head of the evaluation, who, in turn, is responsible for ensuring that the function is staffed by professionals competent in the conduct of evaluation.
 - 4.2 The evaluation plan can be the result of a cyclical or purposive selection of evaluation topics. The purpose, nature and scope of evaluation must be clear to evaluators and stakeholders. The plan for conducting each evaluation must ensure due process to ascertain the timely completion of the mandate, and consideration of the most cost-effective way to obtain and analyze the necessary information.
 - 5.2 Impartiality increases the credibility of evaluation and reduces the bias in the data gathering, analysis, findings, conclusions and recommendations. Impartiality provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflict of interest.
 - 8.1 Each evaluation should employ design, planning and implementation processes that are inherently quality oriented, covering appropriate methodologies for data collection, analysis and interpretation.
 - 8.2 Evaluation reports must present in a complete and balanced way the evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations. They must be brief and to the point and easy to understand. They must explain the methodology followed, highlight the methodological limitations of the evaluation, key concerns and

evidenced-based findings, dissident views and consequent conclusions, recommendations and lessons. They must have an executive summary that encapsulates the essence of the information contained in the report, and facilitates dissemination and distillation of lessons.

9.1 Each organization of the United Nations system should have formal job descriptions and selection criteria that state the basic professional requirements necessary for an evaluator and evaluation manager.

9.2 The Head of the evaluation function must have proven competencies in the management of an evaluation function and in the conduct of evaluation studies.

9.3 Evaluators must have the basic skill set for conducting evaluation studies and managing externally hired evaluators.

10.1 Transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders are essential features in all stages of the evaluation process. This improves the credibility and quality of the evaluation. It can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

10.2 Evaluation Terms of Reference and reports should be available to major stakeholders and be public documents. Documentation on evaluations in easily consultable and readable forms should also contribute to both transparency and legitimacy.

A. Credibility of the evaluation process

Evaluation Policy and function

108. ITC's Evaluation Policy was issued in 2015 and was disseminated within the organization as a policy circular by the Executive Director. The policy includes sections dealing with purpose and context of evaluation, definition of roles and responsibilities, evaluation principles, management, and follow-up of evaluations. In analysing its present status and understanding within the organization, its relatively short life span needs to be considered. The Unit initiated discussions with different operational divisions and disseminate communication products on the Evaluation Policy.
109. The Evaluation Policy sets general principles, standards and process for the evaluation function of the ITC. It constitutes one key pillar of the institutional framework for RBM, corporate accountability, learning and partnership. The primary objectives of evaluation function are to serve decision-making of ITC Management on selected policy and strategic areas, improve the performance and results, and therefore, enhance ITC's position in the Aid for Trade arena. These objectives shall be achieved through consultation and priority-setting with ITC Management, conducting strategic evaluations in a timely manner, and promoting learning and consensus building.
110. The policy clearly articulates the different types of evaluation, the roles and responsibilities in evaluation, products and services, evaluation principles and management as well as follow-up to evaluations.
111. While describing different types of evaluation, including self-evaluations, independent evaluations and policy/thematic evaluations, the policy also stressed: "In close collaboration with UNEG, the Evaluation Unit will assess the possibility of conducting joint-evaluations with other United Nations agencies and partners on issues of common interest".
112. The Evaluation Policy provides policy guidance on the practice and use of evaluations, self-evaluations, impact surveys, impact stories, and other performance measurements to serve management decision and policy-making. For

donor-sponsored evaluations related to ITC operations, ITC coordinates with donors in planning and provides customized technical support and collaboration.

113. The Evaluation Policy is complemented by two operational guidelines, which are at the final stages of being issued as directives. The Guidelines on Independent Evaluations and Impact Assessment set rigorous and practical methods, processes, evaluation criteria, and rating system for independent evaluations including impact assessments, managed by the Evaluation Unit; and the Guidelines on Self-evaluation define and clarify a set of rigorous and practical methods, tools, processes, evaluation criteria, and rating system for self-evaluation, which are under the responsibility of delivery managers.

Competency and capacity of staff and consultants

114. Interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including ITC staff and external evaluators confirmed that the Evaluation Unit staff are considered competent in their functions. Evaluation Unit has four professional staff with different degrees of seniority and two of them have experience of managing evaluations and together with good process knowledge of evaluation. The posts of the current head and of other evaluation professionals were established based on competency criteria comparable to evaluation units of other United Nations agencies. The formal qualifications for the Evaluation Unit head and other professional evaluation staff include criteria for appropriate technical and managerial competencies and experience. These criteria are applied during the selection process, which follows standard recruitment procedures. Evaluation skills of the Unit staff are enhanced through peer support within the Unit and participation in UNEG events. Job descriptions exist for all Unit staff members. Competence and performance are assessed during the annual performance review following ITC staff management practices.
115. Competence of the evaluation team leaders and their team members also is a determinant of the credibility of evaluations. In ITC most evaluations are carried out by external consultants, although there is a recent move for Unit staff to participate in evaluations as team members. The Unit should however be selective and be watchful of the reputational risk involved in the Evaluation Unit being directly involved in conducting evaluations. Although ITC does not have a consultant's database or roster, the selection process of consultants has been transparent and credible. The Evaluation Unit issues formal job descriptions and establish selection criteria for the necessary professional requirements, skills and competences for hiring evaluation team leaders and evaluators, as well as contracting evaluation experts. Recruitment takes place according to ITC recruitment and procurement rules and regulations.
116. Both the selection process of evaluation teams and their actual competence have been generally satisfactory and no major issues were identified. The skillsets prioritized for recruitment of consultants include knowledge of evaluation topic, evaluation methodology, familiarity with trade and development issues and related technical cooperation mechanisms, and the United Nations system. The quality of evaluation reports have been vetted as satisfactory by the peer panel and interviewees, which confirm that the evaluators selected have the competence, experience and skillsets to carry out credible evaluations.
117. A system is in place to ensure impartiality and evaluators are required to comply with the UNEG Code of Conduct for evaluation. The fact that two evaluations of the organization one externally commissioned and another by OIOS, a separate independent United Nations oversight entity, came to the same conclusions on credibility of evaluations and the evaluation function, confirm the professionalism and rigour in conducting and managing evaluations at ITC.
118. Finally, the Evaluation Unit faces three lingering concerns: first is the present staffing level and the uncertainty as to whether the future staffing and funding will

be adequate for the Evaluation Unit to carry out its function in a credible manner. The second challenge is the difficulty of ensuring the right balance, role and mix of Evaluation Unit staff and consultants in evaluation teams, and using Evaluation Unit staff for the tasks where they are more competent and add most value. However, this should be viewed in the context of different types of evaluations that Evaluation Unit carries out and Evaluation Unit could develop different degrees and types of involvement and support for three types of evaluations: Self-evaluation, independent evaluation managed by operational departments with Evaluation Unit quality assurance, and Independent (strategic/policy) evaluations. The third challenge is to ensure a thematic harmony and coordination among Evaluation Unit-managed evaluations and the ones carried out by donors.

Preparation and implementation of evaluations

119. The Chief of the Evaluation Unit develops the biannual evaluation plan in consultation with managers and in conjunction with the organization's work programme. It includes a firm plan for the current year and an indicative plan for the next year. In recent years the evaluation is allocated from ITCs core budget which ensures the predictability. The evaluation work plan is developed based on the amount of funding made available and the interest (and funding) of management and donors.
120. The Unit prepares a balanced and impartial evaluation design following the ToRs for evaluations. The Evaluation Unit highlighted that absence of reliable monitoring data, lack of base line information and gaps in logical framework analysis or theory of change which severely and consistently constrains the evaluability. Evaluation exercises get inadequate information and data support from the RBM systems. The Evaluation Unit in recent years have been providing advisory support to the institutional monitoring system and in refining the RBM system of the organization. It should be noted, however, that there has been progress lately in the ITC project portal which aligns projects log frames and monitoring data.
121. The Unit consults the stakeholders, principally at the headquarters, in the design of the evaluation. Stakeholders are consulted, from the formulation of the ToR, in order for them to contribute to the design of the evaluations and highlight any important consideration. By and large, the evaluation managers, follow a transparent and consultative process including the conduct and reporting, The chronic problem encountered, of course, were the constraints of budget s (time and funds) for field missions; which sometimes impinge on the adequacy of data collection and downstream field work. Based on interviews with various departments and evaluators, the panel agrees with the dominant perception that the evaluations are conducted with professionalism and the reports were assessed to be of adequate quality or better. Also there is an overall positive perception among the stakeholders on the independent and impartial nature of the evaluations and that evaluations are adequately evidence.
122. The fact that some evaluations are managed outside the Evaluation Unit and directly by programme departments may raise an independence issue and their credibility may be questioned. However, Evaluation policy allows for decentralized evaluations carried out by different operational divisions. Evaluation Unit's oversight role in agenda setting and, more importantly stronger quality assurance need to be strengthened to ensure transparency and credibility of those evaluations.
123. For learning and dissemination, workshops or presentations are built into the process at appropriate points to foster discussion on the evaluation's findings and to promote their dissemination. All reports are circulated to stakeholders for factual validation and comments.
124. However, from the interactions, the Panel was unable to assess the extent of the Evaluation Unit's engagement with partner country stakeholders regarding the

programming of evaluations, their design and findings. There is a perception that the decision to undertake an evaluation is mainly driven by the ITC headquarters. The stakeholders in partner countries are involved mainly as informants or to disseminate results. Their participation in the design, the ToR or even in commenting on evaluation reports is minimal or insubstantial.

Quality assurance

125. In terms of quality assurance, the unit deals adequately with comments, suggestions and disagreements voiced by the stakeholders. The evaluation teams are briefed at the outset to handle feedback and comments in an appropriate manner with due recognition of the independent nature of the exercise. Valid and well-substantiated comments and points of dissent from the line management and other stakeholders are usually objectively and carefully addressed when finalizing reports. The Panel has the impression that conflicting views and disagreements whenever they occurred in the past were managed through consultations and interactions appropriately. There is no system of reviews of draft reports by internal or external reader panels or reference groups. This may be due to budgetary constraints or limited availability of peer professionals in headquarters. The evaluation policy has a clear policy on disclosure and dissemination. The ED or DED presents all the themes in the agenda in JAG meetings, including evaluation. All evaluation reports are made publicly available on the ITC website.

B. Credibility of evaluation reports

126. The Peer Review Panel assessed the quality of evaluations based on interviews but also through a review of a sample of evaluation reports, which were assessed by means of a checklist based on the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports (2010). The checklist consists of two parts. First, it lists the general characteristics of the evaluation concerned: the subject evaluated, the evaluation conducted, the actors concerned, and the final report. Subsequently, the quality of the evaluation is examined by applying three quality criteria: validity, reliability, and usability. Interviews were conducted with ITC line department staff as well as selected external consultants, including team leaders and some government representatives.
127. Due to limited information on the background of the policies, programmes and projects or institutions evaluated, or of their context, it was difficult to reach definite conclusions about the quality of the evaluation reports on the basis of a review of their content. The assessment below is qualitative in general and where possible, was triangulated with information from interviews with evaluation team members and ITC staff.
128. Based on the evaluations completed in 2014-2015, the relevance of the ITC's operations has been found satisfactory, and the effectiveness and impact considered moderately satisfactory, as evidenced by the Trade, Climate Change, and Environment Programme (TCCEP) evaluation, the midterm evaluation of The Sector Competitiveness & Export Diversification (SCED) in The Gambia, and the midterm evaluation of The Horticulture Productivity and Trade Development Project in Lesotho in Lesotho. These major findings on relevance, effectiveness and efficiency have also been echoed by the external Independent Evaluation of ITC 2014 and the OIOS Programme Evaluation of ITC 2015.
129. The evaluation found that the TCCEP programme was largely effective in achieving results for SMEs. Based on interviews with the project-supported SMEs, the TCCEP was regarded very effective in providing knowledge on how to promote products internationally, an area of ITC's comparative advantage, followed by useful information on environmental market opportunities and policies.
130. Based on a review of select sample of evaluations the Panel has the following observations regarding the overall quality of the evaluation reports:

- Generally, the executive summaries of reports provided good overview of the information contained in the report and ToRs are included in the annexes.
 - The introductory chapters were generally of acceptable quality delineating the evaluation purpose, and scope of work and description of evaluation methodology. The criteria of assessment were described in the respective ToRs. In all cases the 'traditional' evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact were clearly spelt out and applied.
 - There was adequate elaboration of evaluation's design, methodology and data collection tools. In many evaluations greater attention to analysis of outcomes and to the relevance of ITC interventions to national context and to target groups (discussing what their real needs are) was desirable.
 - Gender issues were not systematically mainstreamed in evaluation reports.
 - Most reports made mention of limitations and challenges confronting the conduct of the evaluation which enabled nuanced understanding of the evaluation's findings and conclusions. More specifically, the reports sometimes indicated time and manpower constraints which prevented evaluators from crosschecking (or triangulating) different sources of information.
 - The reports, in most cases, presented findings which were factual, clear and easy to understand, and generally presented a balanced view of both positive and negative elements.
131. In consideration of above points, the quality of the analysis and formulation of conclusions and recommendations were found to be generally logical, adequate defensible. The majority of the evaluation reports provided findings and conclusions which were substantiated and supported by a reasonable evidence and level of analysis.
132. Weakness in monitoring and evaluation: This issue is repetitive across the evaluated projects (2012-14). Evaluations often could collect data on numbers of workshop or training organized by the project, or numbers of meetings and participants, but there is rare information on results at outcome or impact level, such as results of trade growth of enterprises, or economic and social progress of target groups in the field.
133. ITC conducted impact-oriented surveys in 2014 and 2015. It should be noted that this was a joint effort between the Evaluation Unit and MAR. These studies focused only on the first ITC corporate goal of directly targeting enterprises. The first category of survey targeted enterprises having participated in ITC's technical assistance projects to examine their perception of the impact generated by ITC operations. The effects were more pronounced for smaller companies than for larger companies. About 80 per cent of SMEs declared seeing a positive impact in their exports as opposed to only 30 per cent of the large companies. Of the 36 companies that shared details on their export values and the share attributable to ITC, was an average of around 30 per cent. Responding companies also found that working with ITC contributed to the creation of jobs for both men and women.
- Main findings on credibility**
134. The latest ITC evaluation policy adopted in 2015, is generally consistent with UNEG Norms and Standards. Considering its adoption not so long ago, the Panel found that the policy was well disseminated within the organization and there was an appreciable degree of awareness among senior managers and mid-level professionals about the policy and its provisions. For a small organization, the policy seemed adequate for the present supplemented by a number of guidelines on evaluation.

135. Overall, the Evaluation Unit staff are competent and demonstrate high-quality professionalism and commitment to evaluation ideals.
136. The selection process of internal and external evaluators is credible and transparent. A system is in place to ensure that the evaluation teams have the professional competence and impartiality to guarantee the credibility of evaluation reports. However, in recruiting consultants, attention should be paid to maintain balance in gender and between international and national consultants from partner countries in evaluation teams.
137. The evaluation process is transparent and ensures stakeholder involvement in all stages of the evaluation. The Evaluation Unit does pay attention to and promote active stakeholder involvement. Adequate arrangements are made for handling stakeholders' factual validation, comments and conflicting views regarding findings, while at the same time safeguarding the credibility of the findings.
138. The Evaluation Unit is strongly committed to ensuring the quality of the evaluation process and reports were found to be of adequate or good quality and in line with existing benchmarks. Reports are logically structured, containing evidence-based findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations reports. However an institutional system of quality assurance of evaluation reports is lacking which should be rectified.
139. The credibility of ITC evaluation function is constrained by the funding levels of the evaluation function compared to the variety and depth of responsibilities. The predictability and secured assessed allocation would enhance its credibility better.
140. ITC evaluation function is affected by the limited scope and coverage of the current evaluation programme. The coverage is expected to expand with the introduction of self-evaluation. However the uptake of self-evaluation needs to be watched carefully as self-evaluation is voluntary from the line manager's perspective. Many projects and areas of strategic interest are excluded.
141. The Evaluation Unit has based its approach and methodologies in line with United Nations evaluation principles and evaluation quality standards prescribed by UNEG. A streamlined quality assessment mechanism is lacking for quality assurance of Independent evaluations.

VI. Utility

142. Evaluations which are credible, relevant and useful contribute to informed decision-making, accountability and learning. Organizational accountability and learning needs are best served when quality evaluations are produced in time catering for senior management needs. The actual utility of evaluations also depends on their wider use by ITC staff, senior management and other stakeholders and their willingness to learn from them.
143. As mentioned earlier, there are synergies and trade-offs between the different criteria. For example, evaluations seen as useful will also often be seen as credible. Likewise, often there is a perception that if evaluation functions are too remote from operations, utility suffers, but if they are too close, independence is jeopardized. The Evaluation Unit is responsible for striking this critical balance between the three criteria in conducting its evaluation function.
144. In assessing the utility of evaluation, the following UNEG Norms for Evaluation were the reference points for the Panel.
 - 1.3 Evaluation feeds into management and decision-making processes, and makes an essential contribution to managing for results. Evaluation informs the planning, programme, budgeting, implementation and reporting cycle. It aims at improving the institutional relevance and the achievement of results, optimizing

the use of resources, providing client satisfaction and maximizing the impact of the contribution of the United Nations system.

2.6 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that evaluation contributes to decision-making and management. They should ensure that a system is in place for explicit planning for evaluation and for systematic consideration of the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained in evaluations. They should ensure appropriate follow-up measures including an action plan, or equivalent appropriate tools, with clear accountability for the implementation of the approved recommendations.

2.7 The Governing Bodies and/or Heads of organizations and of the evaluation functions are responsible for ensuring that there is a repository of evaluations and a mechanism for distilling and disseminating lessons to improve organizational learning and systemic improvement. They should also make evaluation findings available to stake-holders and other organizations of the United Nations system as well as to the public.

4.1 Proper application of the evaluation function implies that there is a clear intent to use findings. In the context of limited resources, the planning and selection of evaluation work has to be carefully done. Evaluations must be chosen and undertaken in a timely manner so that they can and do inform decision-making with relevant and timely information. Planning for evaluation must be an explicit part of planning and budgeting of the evaluation function and/or the organization as a whole. Annual or multi-year evaluation work programmes should be made public.

4.2 The evaluation plan can be the result of a cyclical or purposive selection of evaluation topics. The purpose, nature and scope of evaluation must be clear to evaluators and stakeholders. The plan for conducting each evaluation must ensure due process to ascertain the timely completion of the mandate, and consideration of the most cost-effective way to obtain and analyze the necessary information.

10.1 Transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders are essential features in all stages of the evaluation process to improve credibility and quality. It can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

10.2 Evaluation Terms of Reference and reports should be available to major stakeholders and be public documents. Documentation on evaluations in easily consultable and readable form should also contribute to both transparency and legitimacy.

12.1 Evaluation requires an explicit response by the governing authorities and management addressed by its recommendations. This may take the form of a management response, action plan and/or agreement clearly stating responsibilities and accountabilities.

12.2 There should be a systematic follow-up on the implementation of the evaluation recommendations that have been accepted by management and/or the governing bodies.

12.3 There should be a periodic report on the status of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. This report should be presented to the governing bodies and/or the head of the organization.

13.1 Evaluation contributes to knowledge-building and organizational improvement. Evaluations should be conducted and evaluation findings and recommendations presented in a manner that is easily understood by target audiences.

145. Evaluation findings and lessons should be accessible to target audiences in a user-friendly way. A repository of evaluation could be used to distil lessons that contribute to peer learning and the development of structured briefing material for the training of staff. This should be done in a way that facilitates the sharing of learning among stakeholders, including the organizations of the United Nations system, through a clear dissemination policy and contribution to knowledge networks.
146. Generally, the panel found that ITC Management has taken an active interest by accepting the implications of evaluation results for management and accountability. The management, by actively engaging in the follow-up to evaluations, has supported the fostering of a culture conducive to using evaluation results.

A. Purpose of evaluations

147. The Evaluation Policy along with the Guidelines of Evaluations and Guidelines for Self-evaluations clarifies the purpose of evaluation within ITC. It provides information on the objective(s) of evaluation and its potential use, its guiding principles, the evaluation process, detailed methodologies, and the different steps and the processes for follow-up of recommendations. The majority of ITC staff and managers seem familiar with the purpose of evaluation and its potential contributions. However, they would need to familiarize better with the new guidelines to get clarity on specific purpose, objectives, methodologies, the learning and accountability functions of evaluation. They would also need to be apprised of the distinction between self-evaluations and independent evaluations and their respective purpose and methodologies. Also, there needs to be further clarity among the staff on the distinction between the accountability and learning functions of the evaluation.
148. All ToRs of evaluations including the independent evaluations are finalized after consultation with key stakeholders. The consideration and inclusion of the feedback ensures that the intent of evaluations is clear and that pertinent questions, issues and strategic areas are being addressed. The line departments appreciated this transparent process of consultations which facilitated enormously the ownership of findings, conclusions and recommendations by the stakeholders. This in turn enhanced the utility of evaluations.

B. Use of evaluations for decision-making at the policy and programme levels

149. The Evaluation Unit with support from senior management instituted a system for following up on evaluations. The system is functioning for the independent evaluations as well as at the project and programme levels. From interviews with staff and management, as well as from the analysis of the management responses to the different evaluations, it is apparent that the evaluation conclusions and recommendations are gaining some interface with decision-making at policy level but its actual influence is still somewhat limited. However, the evaluation findings at programme or project level very often feed into the design of new phases of programmes projects. It is understood that the potential for project evaluations to feed into the normative work of the organization is yet to be optimized.
150. Two external organizational evaluations of ITC were carried out in the last ten years. They tend to have much greater traction with the management and contribute positively in shaping organizational strategies and policies.
151. There were substantial efforts by the Evaluation Unit to make evaluations widely accessible within the organization. Serious efforts were made by the Evaluation Unit in engaging different stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. The senior management has demonstrated an empathy and positive view of the evaluations role in the organization and they have a proactive disposition to promote the use of evaluations for learning and to enable results to be fed into the

corporate knowledge and management system. Extensive efforts will be needed to further embed the culture of evaluation in management thinking and promote evaluation as a key tool for accountability for assessing performance of the organization's work.

152. The evidence suggests that the senior management and the line department professionals are appreciative of the work of the Evaluation Unit and they value the information generated by past evaluations. The limited evaluation coverage is considered as a deterrent to tap the full potential of evaluation. A number of senior managers pointed to the need for an increased coverage of the evaluation work plan and indicated that a more systematic alignment of evaluation to strategic learning needs would make evaluation more valuable to the organization.
153. The Evaluation Unit organizes presentations to discuss evaluation findings and makes the reports available on the web and as printed copies. Their annual evaluation synthesis report has a wide readership and have been well appreciated by the managers and staff at large, much more than individual evaluation reports. What is missing in their dissemination strategy is producing more succinct products like 'evaluation brief' or 'evaluation precis' which could attract wide readership with key messages.
154. Limited staff resources and budgetary constraints has limited the unit's ability to distil and disseminate lessons learned and to produce higher-end synthesis and knowledge products, which could feed into policy discussion and strategic development. As a result, the Evaluation Unit agenda could not yet prioritize the task of distilling the lessons, synthesizing them and using them for corporate knowledge management and for organizational learning. A well-articulated dissemination and communication strategy can go a long way to foster more ownership of evaluation and learning from evaluations among internal and external stakeholders.
155. The Evaluation Unit has started an initiative to support impact level work. The evaluations make efforts to assess results at outcome and impact levels, however it has often not been possible to do proper impact evaluations due to resource and methodological limitations like availability of baselines and counterfactuals. The capacity of the evaluation function to produce evidence-based impact information is currently hampered by the weaknesses of ITC's RBM system. ITC shares the same difficulties faced by many development cooperation agencies (and others) in putting in place effective systems to manage for results. The panel strongly endorses ITCs current efforts to transform the current system into a more robust RBM system. The Evaluation Unit plays a constructive supportive role in promoting RBM within the organization and the advisory support from them in this regard should continue. This will provide an enabling support to evaluation function to be more impact-oriented.

C. Meeting the needs of different users of evaluations

156. The potential users of evaluations cut across the organization, ranging from senior management to lower-level professional staff, both at headquarters and in the field including the government and business community stakeholders in member states.
157. The panel found that within ITC there was a high level of recognition of the utility of evaluations and that evaluations are generally considered useful and influential. The line managers valued evaluation's contribution in helping them make informed decisions in project formulation and implementation processes. The fact that all independent evaluation reports are discussed at the SMC, for assessing the implications on the management and the organization is a testimony of the perceived utility of evaluation in ITC.
158. However, the small number of thematic and strategic evaluations limits the influence of evaluation on policy and strategy and thus the utility at the level of

higher management. The utility of the evaluation function could be enhanced by a more purposive selection of evaluation topics in order to cover themes of strategic importance to the organization. Also, the absence of country-level trade-related thematic evaluations was noticed. The country-level themes or dimensions could be better addressed through upfront consultations with the client member states.

159. Considering the engagement level of different groups of stakeholders and the scope of the ToRs, the evaluations tend to primarily cater to internal stakeholders and less so to the needs of others such as the governing bodies, the wider public, national counterparts or other partner country institutions. Major donor-driven evaluations satisfy their own accountability and information needs. Some views were expressed that the evaluations at times give a sense of top-down approaches and that the engagement of stakeholders in the planning/design stages and in the follow-up to recommendations has been variable. The peer review team did not have the opportunity to assess in-depth the utility of evaluations as perceived by the national governments and other national stakeholders.

D. Contribution to knowledge management

160. Evaluations, by nature, are considered as objective analysis of phenomena generating new insights through analysis of perceptions, behaviour, facts, evidence and data. Hence they generate new knowledge or empirically validate hypothetical knowledge. Organizational knowledge management is defined as a system or practice of creation, validation, codification, dissemination and access of knowledge within the organization by the practitioners. In order for the evaluation function to contribute to knowledge management, the information generated by evaluations needs to be credible, digestible, usable and accessible.
161. There is a system of dissemination of evaluation findings by the Evaluation Unit. But that is still very basic and mechanisms are needed to be put in place to enhance knowledge management and use evaluation findings and good practices to improve organizational performance and feed into a system-wide RBM.
162. While all evaluation reports managed by the Evaluation Unit are posted on the Intranet and Internet and are thus publicly available, there is no overall knowledge repository for evaluation and decentralized evaluations which could perform as a live platform to access evaluation reports, findings and recommendations. More customized knowledge products for differentiated clientele such as evaluation briefs, evaluation synthesis have not yet been introduced.
163. Generally, the panel found a strong appreciation of evaluation lessons and findings. Independent strategic/thematic evaluations and project evaluations are seen as useful for accountability and for learning. There seemed to be a good demand among managers for the annual evaluation synthesis reports.

E. Management response and follow-up

164. The utility of the evaluation function and the use of evaluations by the different stakeholders can also be assessed by how governing bodies, senior management and programme/project managers react to findings, conclusions and recommendations. A high percentage of evaluation recommendations (about 80 per cent) are accepted which speaks about their utility. The current evaluation management response mechanism articulated in the evaluation policy is as follows:
- The responsible divisions and teams prepare a management response detailing whether the evaluation recommendations are accepted and why, and develop an action plan for each accepted recommendation. The SMC guides and supervises the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. The managers responsible for the implementation of the action plan provide periodic status reports to the Evaluation Unit. The Unit reviews on a six-month basis the implementation status reports provided by delivery managers, and presents the consolidated implementation status

report to the SMC, twice per year, for review. The Evaluation Unit reports yearly on the Implementation Status of the Evaluation Recommendations through the annual evaluation synthesis report to ITC Management. To promote broader learning, the unit also presents the implementation status to the Oversight Committee of the ITC, composed of representatives of UNCTAD and WTO. Given the relative newness of the system, it was too early to assess the effectiveness of the evaluation management response system.

Main findings on utility

165. The panel's findings on utility can be summarized as follows:

- The Panel considers that the evaluations conducted at ITC in the past three to five years have been generally useful and have contributed to informed programme and project development, and in many cases, efficiency improvements.
- The understanding of the evaluation function and its importance in contributing to evidence-based programming and decision-making has been reasonably strong in ITC. The level of appreciation and willingness to support evaluations and accepting evaluation findings has been on the rise and getting stronger in recent years. However, embedding the evaluation culture in the organization whereby management and staff fully accept the full potential role and utility of evaluations will require continuous commitment and efforts by Evaluation Unit for its excellence.
- The current evaluation programming process lacks a systematic approach and predictable resources, which is detrimental to ensuring evaluation coverage in line with strategic priorities and learning needs.
- The utility of the evaluation function is affected by its small resource base and limited coverage. The utility of evaluation can be enhanced by a more representative coverage of the ITC programme of work.
- The capacity of the evaluation function to provide credible information for learning and accountability purposes remains a challenge in view of the current weaknesses in RBM. ITC is, however, making progress in strengthening its RBM system and the Evaluation Unit is supporting this effort through advisory inputs which should continue.
- Evaluation's contribution to organizational knowledge management needs more attention and resources. The evaluation products need to be diversified through developing synthesis reports and lessons learned documents for different groups.
- Access to evaluation reports through ITC website works well. Evaluation Unit's approach of dissemination of evaluation findings through learning events is a good one but needs to be regular and sustained.
- The steps towards institutionalizing the practice of a formal management response system to evaluation recommendations is in its infancy but should continue with due diligence. The trend of increasing uptake of evaluation recommendations by management is a welcome sign for evaluations assuring them to be credible and useful.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

166. The evaluation function in ITC has been institutionally in place for less than a decade. From an embryonic formation in 2007 to becoming an adolescent in 2015, the Evaluation Unit performed its role with professional competence and quality within this short span of time with enabling support from the ITC Executive Director and the senior management. The Panel found a high level of commitment of the

ITC management to the evaluation function. The Evaluation Unit enjoys an appreciable degree of acceptance and recognition for its role across the organization. Supported by the mandate accorded in the Evaluation Policy, the concept of an independent evaluation function is gaining ground within the organization and the need for its functional independence is also being favourably recognized and accepted by a majority of senior professionals of ITC.

167. Evaluation's role in promoting and supporting organizational change and in validating or changing orientations of programmes and projects is increasingly being appreciated. The ongoing reform process within ITC and increased emphasis on results and accountability is expected to further strengthen Evaluation Unit's role and position. The strong interest and many initiatives on monitoring and evaluation, RBM, impact measurement are indicative of the seriousness with which the results culture is being mainstreamed and intensified in ITC and evaluation is seen as playing a critical role in the process.
168. The Panel's overall view is that the evaluation function in ITC has created a distinct institutional space for its role as stipulated in the Evaluation Policy. It has an earmarked operational budget and critical minimum staff to carry out its annual plan of work. It gained a profile of professionalism within the organization and other stakeholders, and its work is generally respected by the programme and technical departments as credible and useful. The products and services provided by the Evaluation Unit offer a variety to cater to different needs of internal stakeholders. There is a demand for Evaluation Unit's services and input into various organizational processes, which speaks of its credibility.
169. Based on the detailed assessment along the three criteria of Independence, Credibility and Utility (ICU) and conclusions presented in the previous chapters and keeping in view the positive overall assessment provided in the paragraphs above, the Peer review Panel distilled below some overarching conclusions of critical significance.

Independence

170. ITC's unique governance, oversight and operational model offer a complex structure within which Evaluation Unit has to find its space and operational effectiveness. Exercising strict independence standards in such a complex architecture and small organizational setting is fraught with rigidities and threats to the effectiveness, credibility and utility of evaluation function. At the same time, the Evaluation Unit needs to balance its role and contribute to the primary priorities of organizational effectiveness, substantive accountability and learning. The unit demonstrated serious efforts and initiatives and is striving for excellence despite its constraints.
171. ITC's Evaluation Policy adopted in 2015 offers sufficient latitude to the evaluation function and it is a leap forward in terms of alignment with UNEG Norms and Standards and strengthening the evaluation function. However, the policy does not offer clear guidance on the principles on the structural and functional independence of Evaluation Unit including the required profile of the post of the Chief of Evaluation Unit. The status of the Chief of Evaluation Unit, compared to his responsibilities, does not give him an equivalence in the managerial level within the organization to operate independently.
172. Based on the norms of UNEG, the evaluation function at ITC is not yet strictly fully independent. It is a separate line of responsibility within the integrated function of strategic planning, partnership and governance of SPPG in the Office of the ED. Although it is not structurally independent or distinct but it enjoys a nuanced functional independence, positively supported by the integrity of current management. According to UNEG norm, functional independence requires the evaluation function to have predictability of and control over its financial resources, autonomy in agenda setting and authority of evaluation reporting directly without

any internal clearance. Evaluation Unit still reflect some deficits in all these dimensions which limits its functional independence.

Credibility

173. The Evaluation Unit is strongly committed to ensuring the quality of the evaluation process and evaluation reports were found to be of adequate or good quality. The Unit has based its approach and methodologies in line with United Nations evaluation principles and evaluation quality standards prescribed by UNEG. The evaluation process followed is transparent and ensures stakeholder involvement in all stages of the evaluation, while at the same time safeguarding the credibility of the evaluation findings. A streamlined quality assessment mechanism is lacking for quality assurance of evaluation reports.
174. Financing of evaluation is considered inadequate compared to the variety and depth of responsibilities as articulated in the Evaluation Policy. The evaluation resources are pooled from a variety of sources which create certain uncertainty in the predictability, planning and accountability issues at times. Evaluation Unit makes optimal use of its limited core resources for evaluations (staff and budget) including pooling of project funds to fully fund its entire work programme. Although Evaluation Unit managed to provide critical minimum coverage including thematic and impact evaluations, predictability and secured assessed allocation would enhance its credibility further.

Utility

175. The Panel considers that the evaluations conducted at ITC in the recent past (3-5 years) have been generally useful and have contributed to informed programme and project development and in many cases efficiency improvements.
176. Evaluation serves accountability better when there is a close interface between evaluation and the higher echelon of governance. Usually when demand for certain evaluation issues are generated from governance side (e.g. JAG), evaluations can serve strategic purposes. Currently, there is a gap in the interface between evaluation results and the governing bodies, perhaps due to the complex governance structure and diffused lines of relationships between them.
177. The steps towards institutionalizing the practice of a formal management response system to evaluation recommendations is in its infancy. The trend of increasing uptake of evaluation recommendations by management is a welcome sign for evaluations assuring them to be credible and useful.
178. ITC evaluation function is affected by the limited scope and coverage of the current evaluation programme. Current coverage is much less than ten per cent of the programme. The coverage is expected to expand with the introduction of self-evaluation. However, when introduced, the uptake of self-evaluation needs to be watched carefully as it is voluntary from the line manager's perspective. Many projects and areas of strategic interest may still be excluded.
179. The understanding of evaluation function and its importance in contributing to evidence-based programming and decision-making, has been reasonably strong in ITC. The level of appreciation and willingness to support evaluations and accepting evaluation findings has been in the rise and getting stronger in recent years. However, embedding the evaluation culture in the organization whereby management and staff fully accept the potential role and utility of evaluations will require continuous commitment and efforts by the Evaluation Unit for this excellence.
180. The current weaknesses in RBM system constrains the capacity of the evaluation function to provide credible information for learning and accountability purposes. ITC is, however, making progress in strengthening its RBM system and the Evaluation Unit is supporting this effort through advisory inputs which should continue.

181. The ITC should leverage evaluation to empower national partners to assess 'Aid for Trade' activities from their own perspectives. The evaluations demonstrate a limited interface with and offer minimal role and participation of national stakeholders. The participation of national stakeholders (the government, the private sector and the beneficiaries) should be more active and be strengthened in the evaluation process by involving them in agenda setting, delineation of issues and questions and providing feedback on evaluation findings from national perspectives.

B. Recommendations

Independence

182. **Evaluation Policy.** It would be prudent to conduct reviews of the evaluation policy periodically to align it with the evolving international standards and gradual embedding of evaluative norms within the organization. The evaluation policy in its next iteration should consider more clarity on the independence dimension of the Evaluation Unit, as elaborated below.

Structural and functional independence

183. On the strength of the evidence-based observations and arguments made in paras 79 and 89, and taking note of the organizational context and needs, the Panel strongly recommends that the Evaluation Unit should be granted a distinct functional status, ideally separate from SPPG and located within the office of and reporting directly to the Executive Director. Alternatively, at a minimum, continue within SPPG but with a separate functional status with direct reporting/communication line with ED/DED. Given the current state and importance of results-based management in ITC, the Evaluation Unit's technical advisory role on methodology of RBM should be pursued in full strength. Given its technical competence Evaluation Unit should spearhead the impact assessment initiatives in ITC drawing from experience of other United Nations system organizations.
184. Evaluation Unit's pursuit of methodological rigour in evaluation should be enhanced by allowing its head to exercise his/her full autonomy (without interference) in managing evaluation process, choice and application of robust methodology, seeking and leveraging cooperation/collaboration of other units/entities.
185. The Panel considers that the position level of the head of the Evaluation Unit should be upgraded to P-5 to provide a level of seniority equivalence which would facilitate exercise of functional independence in managing this function.

Evaluation Work Plan

186. The finalization of the work plan should be independently vested with the Chief of Evaluation Unit. The Panel also recommends that the current dichotomy between donor-led evaluation and Evaluation Unit-managed ones should be minimized and bridged through establishing proper consultation mechanisms. This would facilitate addressing the commonly perceived issues and help generate recommendations which are relevant and mutually reinforcing.

Budget for evaluation

187. Predictability of resources and autonomy for managing it is important for the independence and credibility of the evaluation function. The ITC management should ensure that the evaluation function has an adequate level of predictable budgetary resources at its disposal. For transparency and accountability purposes, the annual evaluation work plan should be budgeted and resources should be specifically allocated to various types of evaluations under Evaluation Unit's control. All projects and programmes considered strategically important or above a minimal financial level (as decided by ITC management and prescribed in the Evaluation guidelines) should have a mandatory budget for evaluations.

188. Enhance Evaluation Unit's technical leadership and coordination role in bringing all evaluation streams (projects, donor-led) in ITC under a coherent structure and ensure compliance with same quality standards, although implementation may be decentralized.

Utility

189. **Evaluation coverage.** The External Independent Evaluation (2014) and the OIOS Review of ITC (2015) both pointed out the paucity of evidence of results of ITC initiatives as a critical issue for the organization. This would require the Evaluation Unit to do more in terms of volume and coverage to generate credible evidence of results and impact. The introduction of self-evaluation should be effected as planned and their quality compliance should be monitored by Evaluation Unit.
190. To the extent that the project evaluations are delegated at the departmental level and donor managed evaluations are carried out in seclusion, a corporate mechanism should be instituted and managed by Evaluation Unit that ensures that these different evaluation streams comply with an integrated set of methodological and quality standards.
191. The Evaluation Unit should be informed of the process of evaluations commissioned elsewhere within ITC and be involved with their quality assurance. Consideration should be given to identifying explicit criteria for selection of evaluations that ensure good coverage of ITC's work programme and thematic priorities and include strategic evaluations, evaluations of sub-programmes and country-level evaluations.

Management response and follow-up

192. The management response system for evaluations established and refined over years since inception seems to have gained currency. ITC should establish a clear division of responsibility between the evaluation function and the organization's line management regarding the management of the response to evaluations. While the macro data on status of implementation of management responses is maintained and periodically reported to SMC by Evaluation Unit, the responsibility for ensuring compliance of implementation of agreed actions remains with the line department. This accountability for implementation needs to be enforced at the same time.

Organizational learning and knowledge management

193. The Evaluation Unit should establish mechanisms to systematically harvest and sharing lessons from existing evaluations. Annual evaluation synthesis report has been institutionalized and has been an effective mechanism for sharing evaluation results with SMC and within the organization. However the essence of lessons and organizational learning must percolate to the higher layers and governance for informing and enriching their perspective for decision-making. The strategic and thematic evaluations of organizational significance and annual evaluation synthesis reports should be presented to JAG in a systematic way as part of organization's substantive accountability and evidence of ITC's commitment to development effectiveness.

Terms of Reference of the Peer Review

PROFESSIONAL PEER REVIEW OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE

Introduction

1. This Professional Peer Review (hereafter Peer Review) of the evaluation function of International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO) will be carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of United Nations organizations.¹ It will be the first Peer Review of the International Trade Centre's (ITC) evaluation function.
2. This document identifies the primary elements of the Peer Review of the evaluation function of the ITC. It describes the background of the evaluation function of the ITC, the purpose, the scope, the general approach, the method and the composition of the Peer Review Panel.

Background

3. The evaluation function of ITC was first established in 2008 with the adoption of the first edition of the Evaluation Policy and the creation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. Since its establishment, the evaluation function has undergone significant changes, including being moved in 2013 to its current location within the Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance Section (SPPG) located with the Office of the Executive Director (OED). Over the past five years the evaluation function has been strengthened gradually and is approaching a level of maturity that will benefit from a peer review. The Peer Review for ITC has been included in the evaluation annual work programme for 2015.
4. Over the past two years, ITC has gone through two evaluations, one by an independent evaluation team, and one by the United Nations Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). The scope of these two evaluations covered the activities of ITC since 2006: The first evaluation concluded in June 2014. Even though it was conducted by an external evaluation provider, it was managed by the ITC Evaluation Unit. The first evaluation started just before the transition period between two Executive Directors and was financially supported by donors, who insisted on an independent, high-quality evaluation. The second one was concluded in March 2015, and it validated the findings and the quality of the first one.
5. Both of these evaluations recognized that ITC was 'fit for purpose' and had strong technical expertise for which demand continued to increase. They also pointed to ways for ITC to improve both operationally and in terms of visibility. The main obstacle faced by the evaluations was difficulty in gathering strong evidence on results. The evaluations recommended improving the organization's results-based management (RBM) system and in particular the functioning of its components: strategic planning, performance measurement and evaluation. As common understanding was built during the evaluation process, all recommendations were accepted and an action plan developed to address them.
6. A new Evaluation Policy was adopted in June 2015. This Evaluation Policy aims to create an enabling institutional environment for enhancing the strategic alignment of the evaluation function to ITC's development goals, upgrading the quality and utility of evaluation services, and expanding the evaluation coverage of ITC's operations. It also tries to address the recommendations of the two corporate evaluations by enhancing the evaluation function, revising the evaluation policy, supporting evaluation capacity building, and conducting risk assessment for evaluation planning.

¹ UNEG, 2011. UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of United Nations organizations. http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=945.

7. It also emphasizes evaluation advisory services to support monitoring and reporting and clarifies the roles in RBM by renaming the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit as Evaluation Unit and having it focusing on evaluation while the strategic planning function within SPPG will concentrate on strategic planning and performance measurement. According to this new model, the Evaluation Unit will focus on strategic and thematic evaluations and evaluation advisory services. To meet the increasing demand for evaluation and expand the evaluation coverage of operations, self-evaluations and project completion reports will be instituted. Self-evaluations are undertaken by delivery managers. Validation of self-evaluation is a service provided by the Evaluation Unit to ensure the quality of the reports.
8. Concerning strategic planning and performance measurement, ITC has set up a Programme Development Task Force and is re-aligning the numerous programmes and projects with each of the six focus areas as defined in ITC's Strategic Plan for 2015-2017. With a corporate-level programme framework, each of the programmes and projects are associated to coherent theory of change, with explicit and consistent objectives and intermediary results. This provides for a clear focus on results across all programmes and projects. This new programmatic approach should be understood as a whole since it incorporates the entire project cycle with the objective to improve the organization's ability to plan for results, track implementation progress, and evaluate results based on credible data.

Purpose of the Peer Review

9. The objective is to provide impartial assessment on the evaluation function, its strategic fit in the organization, good practices and areas for improvement to better support achieving the strategic objectives of the organization. It is to be conducted through a professional peer assessment against the UNEG Norms and Standards, thus respecting the necessary degree of independence of the ITC evaluation function from direct assessment by management.
10. This Peer Review is taking place at a time of programmatic change within ITC, with significant implications for the evaluation function. The independent Peer Review will help ITC to ensure that its evaluation function is fully fit for purpose and positioned to make the best contribution to the work of the organization. In accordance with the UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of United Nations organizations, the Peer Review will undertake an assessment of the independence, credibility and utility of ITC's evaluation function, focusing on quality, use and follow-up of evaluation across the ITC to promote accountability, learning, and improvement. The Peer Review will pay particular attention on the need to build a culture of evaluation in the organization to promote accountability and learning through integration of evaluation in project and programme cycle management.
11. This Peer Review is part of ITC's strategy to build a stronger evaluation function, more specifically; it will centre its recommendations in the following areas:
 - Strengthening of the strategic role of the evaluation function in providing credible and useful information for senior management decision-making, in particular in the planning and preparation of its work programme and reporting;
 - Enhancement of the evaluation function role and its interaction with strategic planning and results measurement functions;
 - Adequacy of human and financial resources allocated to the evaluation function;
 - Deployment of the system for self-evaluations and completion reports within the ITC, including the validation system managed by the Evaluation Unit;

- Enforcement of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations to facilitate new strategies and interventions to improve the performance and results;
 - Intensification of the use of robust and credible evaluation methods, including in the field of impact evaluation;
 - Leveraging evaluation to empower national partners to assess Aid for Trade activities, from their own perspective.
12. The primary intended audience for the results of the Peer Review is ITC's decision-makers (senior management, middle management and evaluators) and other users of evaluation – including the Oversight Committee of ITC and other stakeholders in funding countries and partner countries.

Subject, scope and limitations

13. The Peer Review will use a 'reduced' framework to acknowledge the fact that ITC is a smaller agency with a specific mandate.² The framework allows for review of ITC's current evaluation arrangements according to the core assessment question, "Are the Agency's evaluation function and its products: independent; credible; and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed by a Panel of professional evaluation peers against the United Nations Norms and Standards (2005) and the evidence base?"³ The aspects of these criteria to be focused on are detailed in the annexed Normative Framework.
14. The scope of the Peer Review is limited to the evaluation activities carried out from 2008 until 2015. It will include an assessment of the:
- Normative framework for evaluation: The impact of existing policies and procedures of the evaluation function, including the extent to which they conform to norms and standards;
 - Management of the Evaluation Unit: The effectiveness of management arrangement, working procedures and the internal organization of the Evaluation Unit in fulfilling the Evaluation Policy commitments and the achievement of strategic evaluation objectives;
 - Evaluation planning: The methods and criteria used for strategic planning of evaluation activities and the extent they reflect the strategic priorities and directions of the ITC;
 - Evaluation quality: This includes the quality and credibility of the evaluations undertaken under the auspices of the Evaluation Unit, taking into account of the planning process, the conduct of the evaluations, the quality of the evaluation reports, the independence of evaluation teams, and ways in which the credibility and utility of reports is enhanced;
 - Evaluation follow-up and use: The Management Responses to evaluation reports and action plans for the implementation of the recommendations, including the follow up of the implementation of the recommendation. The use of evaluation evidence in the development of new policies, programmes and projects and in decision-making;
 - External relations of the Evaluation Unit: with external stakeholders including national partners, donors, other partners, and the global development/ Aid for Trade evaluation community, including UNEG.
15. By necessity, a professional Peer Review of the evaluation function is not a full-fledge evaluation that can comprehensively evaluate practices, processes, and outcomes in-depth, The Panel will report on the limitations of its work.

² UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of United Nations organizations (2011).

³ UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of United Nations organizations (2011).

Approach

16. The Peer Review will pilot the approach developed in the UNEG Peer Review group, including the 'Stages of Peer Reviews' chart currently under discussion. The panel will test a light version of the UNEG Peer Review, entailing a shorter period for the peer review, the use of existing PR instruments such as a list of meta evaluation criteria developed for prior peer reviews, and the use of the two corporate evaluations of the ITC mentioned above, OIOS scorecards for 2010-2011 and 2012-2013, and the 2013/14 and Joint Inspection Unit review of ITC's evaluation function. In conducting its work, the Peer Review Panel will utilize the peer exchange in order to enrich its independent assessment and to promote learning through discussions on ways to meet common challenges related to evaluation practice.

Core assessment criteria

17. The Peer Review will use the following criteria for review of the evaluation function, based on UNEG Norms and Standards:
 - Independence of evaluations and evaluation systems: The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy-making and programme management. The planning and selection of evaluation subjects should be an impartial and independent process.
 - Credibility of evaluations: Credibility requires evaluations to report successes and failures, as well as sufficient participation of stakeholders. This depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators, as well as the degree of transparency of the evaluation process.
 - Utility of evaluations: To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a timely, clear and concise way, fully reflecting the different interests and needs of parties involved.

Panel Composition and Responsibilities

18. A number of important considerations were taken into account when composing the Panel membership: (i) relevant professional experience; (ii) independence – to avoid any potential or alleged conflict of interest or partiality, the peer review members do not have any close working relationships with ITC that might influence the review panel's position and deliberations.
19. The composition of the panel also took into consideration ITC's mandate and structure as well as the purpose of this Peer Review. The combination of these criteria together with the voluntary nature of serving on the Peer Review Panel resulted in the following composition:
 - Oscar A. Garcia, Director of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD;
 - Jyrki Pulkkinen, Director Development Evaluation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland;
 - Anne Claire Luzot, Senior Evaluation Officer, World Food Programme;
 - Independent consultant (to be recruited).
20. The Peer Review Panel will be chaired by Oscar A. Garcia, Director of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD. The Chair will be responsible for managing the peer review process and the contribution of other members in addition to overseeing the preparation of the peer review report and ensuring that lessons from the Review are communicated to UNEG. The Chair will also be the main interface between the panel and ITC including senior management of ITC, the

Chief SPPG and the Head of the Evaluation Unit as well as the Oversight Committee of ITC.

21. The panel as a whole will be responsible for finalizing and adopting the ToR of the Peer Review including those of the consultant, review relevant key documents as provided by ITC, review, comment on and approve the inception report prepared by the consultant, participate in a visit to ITC Headquarters in DATE, review/comment and approve the key issues report drafted by the consultant and provide contributions to the final report as agreed within the panel. The panel is fully responsible for the quality and contents of the final report. A consultant will be engaged, who will report to the review panel and work within the agreed ToR (see attachment).

Reporting

22. The Peer Review Panel will share an inception paper prior to the visit to ITC Headquarters as well as a draft report with stakeholders for comments no later than four weeks after the visit. The Panel will conduct a factual review of the comments before submitting the final report to ITC. ITC will be able to submit the report with a Management Response to the Oversight Committee of the ITC. The final report will be made public. In addition, the report will be shared with the Peer Review group for dissemination to interested cooperating partners and will be posted on the United Nations Evaluation Group Website.
23. The Peer Review Panel will provide feedback on the process and outcome of the Peer Review in the form of a 'Lessons Learned' document (due by DATE), to facilitate strengthening of the peer review mechanism and enable others to learn from ITC's experience.

Responsibility of ITC

24. ITC's Evaluation Unit will be the internal initiator, principal organizer, and substantive collaborator on the review within ITC. The Evaluation Unit will be responsible for submitting a draft ToR and Normative framework for the Peer Review as well as assisting the Peer Review Panel including providing relevant documents and data, facilitating the panel's visit to ITC Headquarters; interacting with the Panel on preliminary findings (inception paper, key issues report, draft final report) and contributing feedback on the peer review process to UNEG. ITC management is expected to allocate appropriate time for meeting and discussing with the Panel and to provide a management response to the final report and to ensure implementation of the agreed to recommendations

Review process and schedule

25. The Peer Review process has four main phases (indicative timing is shown in brackets):
 1. **Preparation (15.09.15):** Mobilization of the Panel and agreement on ToR;
 2. **Fact-finding (01.10.15 to 02.11.15):** The consultant and the panel will undertake extensive document review and consultations with ITC staff and share an inception paper/ preliminary assessment with ITC (at the latest upon arrival at ITC Headquarters);
 3. **Visit by the Panel to ITC HQ (09-13.11.15):** Interviews with selected ITC staff in Divisions and Sections; representatives of the funding community and other relevant key stakeholders/partners;
 4. Preparation of the Key Issues Report (15.12.15);
 5. Presentation of the draft report (15.02.16);

6. Presentation of Final Report (31.03.16);
7. Preparation of Management Response (April-May 2016); and
8. Presentation of Final Report with Management Response to Joint Advisory Group (June 2016).

Resources

26. The participation costs of the Peer Review Panel members (excluding the Panel Chair) will be covered by in-kind contributions from their respective organizations.
27. The budget for the Peer Review consultancy costs will be covered by UNEG. ITC's contribution to the Peer Review will also be in-kind, in terms of the staff time in organizing and facilitating the process.

Normative Framework

When assessing ITC's evaluation function, the Peer Review Panel will use the Normative Framework below, which is based on an interpretation of UNEG Norms and Standards as relevant to the evaluation function of ITC.

	Questions	Norms
Independence	What criteria determine the funding of evaluations?	1.2, 2.3
	Does the planning and selection of evaluation subjects result in a work plan that contributes to learning and accountability?	1.1, 4.1, 4.2
	Are evaluation processes (planning and conduct) independent and impartial?	1.2, 7.1
	Who is finally responsible for ensuring the independence of the ITC evaluation function?	2.1
	How is the Evaluation Unit organized and staffed?	2.3
	What is the basis for the ITC evaluation budget (is it in function of ITC evaluation programming or does funding drive what will be evaluated)?	2.3
	Who decides the Evaluation Unit's evaluation work programme (including the selection of subjects for evaluation)?	2.6
	Does the ITC Evaluation Policy provide a clear explanation of the concept, institutional framework, roles/responsibilities and use of the evaluation function within ITC?	3.1
	Does the ITC Evaluation Policy conform to international standards?	3.1
	Where is ITC's Evaluation Unit located with respect to ITC's Management and governing Body?	6.1
	To whom does the head of the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit report?	7.1
	Are evaluations publicly available?	10.2
Credibility	Does the normative framework provide good practice for evaluation processes, both centralized and decentralized?	3.1
	Is a system in place to ensure the professional competence of the evaluation team that is necessary for arriving at credible and accurate evaluation reports?	2.5, 9.1-9.3, 11.1-11.5
	Does the evaluation function provide an advisory role during the planning stage of undertakings to improve their evaluability?	7.1

	Questions	Norms
	Is a system in place to ensure the quality of evaluations in their design, methodology, conduct of evaluation and reporting?	1.2, 8.1
	Are evaluations conducted transparently and impartially?	5.1, 10.1
	Are the criteria for selection of subjects of evaluation set in a way that ensures an impartial choice?	5.3
	Is a system in place to ensure conflict of interest is avoided in the identification and selection of consultants or evaluation services providers?	5.3
	How does ITC ensure/enable the quality of evaluations in the design, methodology, implementation and reporting?	8.1
	Do evaluation terms of reference/approach papers spell out the evaluation methodology to be used, and if so does it ensure impartiality?	8.1
	Are evaluation findings communicated in an impartial way with adequate levels of technical and political credibility?	8.2
	Are there provisions that ensure evaluation staff have the right technical competencies?	9
	Is a system in place to ensure that the evaluation process is clear and transparent to stakeholders?	10.1
	Are evaluation terms of reference shared with stakeholders once finalized?	10.2
	Is a system in place to ensure transparency in the reporting of evaluation findings and how comments are dealt with?	10.2
Utility	Is the purpose that evaluation fulfils for ITC clear at senior management and operational levels?	1.1, 1.3
	Is the ITC evaluation function linked to the ITC's RBM system and, if so, in which way?	1.1, 1.3, 2.6
	How are evaluation recommendations used at the various ITC management levels?	1.1, 1.3, 2.6
	Does evaluation feed into management and decision-making processes?	1.2, 1.3, 4.1
	Is the selected sample of evaluation objects representative enough to enable comparative analysis and to draw lessons across the portfolio of ITC?	1.3, 1.5, 2.6, 4.2
	Are evaluation reports easily accessible, e.g. through a searchable website?	2.7, 13.2

	Questions	Norms
	Does ITC have an active policy/practice of disseminating evaluation findings and reports?	2.7, 13.2
	Is the Evaluation Unit work programme made public?	4.1
	Does the evaluation process engage stakeholders in ways that make evaluations useful, while maintaining independence and credibility?	4.2, 5.1, 10.2
	Are evaluation reports easy to understand, to the point and do they present evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations in a complete and balanced way?	8.2
	Are recommendations concrete and action-oriented?	8.2, 10.2, 13.2
	Are evaluation findings communicated in a useful, constructive and timely manner?	10.2
	Is there a system in place to ensure appropriate follow-up action?	12.1-12.3, 4.1
	Is there a management response system that ensures formal, corporate, substantive and timely management responses are given to evaluation recommendations?	12
	Is there a management response system that ensures that follow-up actions are taken, recorded/tracked, and reported on?	12
	How is evaluation knowledge shared? How does it contribute to ITC's knowledge management system?	13.1

Documents reviewed by the Peer Review Panel

- ITC Strategic Plan 2015-17 and previous plans if applicable
- ITC Biannual work plan 2016-17, 2014-15, 2012-13, 2010-11, 2008-09
- ITC annual operational plans 2015
- ITC Organizational Charts, 2008 to present
- ITC Annual Report, all editions 2008 - 2015
- External independent evaluations reports of ITC, 2006, 2014
- OIOS Evaluation of ITC, 2015
- ITC's management response to the 2014 and 2015 external independent evaluations, and updates
- Other relevant ITC documentation including the Executive Director's Bulletin on Accountability Policy and associated Operational Principles and Internal Control Policy, Strategic Plans (2008 to present)
- ITC Evaluation Policy, 2015 edition and 2008 edition
- ITC Evaluation Annual Synthesis Report, all editions, 2012 – 2015
- ITC annual evaluation work plan/programme and budget, all editions, 2008 - 2015
- Guidelines for independent evaluations and self-evaluations, 2015 (drafts, if completed in time)
- Evaluation reports, related management responses and action plans, 2008 – 2015
- Communications on advising the PAC on monitoring and evaluation planning
- Paper 2014 on Strategic Services of the Evaluation Function
- Paper 2015 on Impact assessment at agency level
- Study on stock checking ITC measurement tools, 2015 (draft, if completed in time)
- Long Term Agreements (LTAs) and related documents
- Other relevant evaluation guidelines, templates 2008 -2015

List of selected evaluations reviewed

1. Midterm Evaluation of Horticulture Productivity and Trade Development Project in Lesotho 2015.
2. Evaluation of the Trade, Climate Change and Environment Programme 2015.
3. Midterm Evaluation of Sector Competitiveness and Export Diversification in The Gambia 2014.
4. Evaluation of Sector Competitiveness and Export Diversification in The Gambia 2014.
5. Midterm Evaluation of Enhancing Arab Capacity for Trade 2013.
6. Midterm Evaluation of Poor Communities and Trade Programme 2013.
7. Evaluation of the ITC's Export Strategy Function 2013.
8. Evaluation of the Netherlands' Trust Fund II Programme 2013.
9. Evaluation of the World Export Development Forum 2012.

Quality checklist for evaluation reports

UNEG Quality checklist for evaluation reports	
This checklist is intended to help evaluation managers and evaluators to ensure the final evaluation report meets the expected quality. It can also be shared as part of the ToR prior to the conduct of the evaluation or after the report is finalized to assess its quality.	
Evaluation title:	
Commissioning office:	
1. The report structure	
	The report is well structured, logical, clear and complete.
	Report is logically structured with clarity and coherence (e.g. background and objectives are presented before findings, and findings are presented before conclusions and recommendations).
	<p>The title page and opening pages provide key basic information.</p> <p>Name of the evaluation object</p> <p>Timeframe of the evaluation and date of the report</p> <p>Location (country, region, etc.) of the evaluation object</p> <p>Names and/or organizations of evaluators</p> <p>Name of the organization commissioning the evaluation</p> <p>Table of contents which also lists Tables, Graphs, Figures and Annexes</p> <p>List of acronyms.</p>

	<p>The Executive Summary is a stand-alone section of 2-3 pages that include¹⁴:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An overview of the evaluation object Evaluation objectives and intended audience Evaluation methodology Most important findings and conclusions Main recommendations 	
	<p>Annexes increase the credibility of the evaluation report. They may include, inter alia¹⁵:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ToRs List of persons interviewed and sites visited. List of documents consulted More details on the methodology, such as data collection instruments, including details of their reliability and validity Evaluators biodata and/or justification of team composition Evaluation matrix Results framework 	
2. Object of evaluation		
	<p>The report presents a clear and full description of the 'object' of the evaluation¹⁶.</p>	
	<p>The logic model and/or the expected results chain (inputs, outputs and outcomes) of the object is clearly described.</p>	
	<p>The context of key social, political, economic, demographic, and institutional factors that have a direct bearing on the object is described. For example, the partner government's strategies and priorities, international, regional or country development goals, strategies and frameworks, the concerned agency's corporate goals and priorities, as appropriate.</p>	

¹⁴ Executive Summary: Critical elements are listed in [UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations System](#) (UNEG/FN/Standards[2005]), page 18, Standard 4.2, Number 3.

¹⁵ Content of Annexes is described in [UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations System](#) (UNEG/FN/Standards[2005]), page 20, Standard 4.9 and page 23, Standard 4.18.

¹⁶ The "object" of the evaluation is the intervention (outcome, programme, project, group of projects, themes, soft assistance) that is (are) the focus of the evaluation and evaluation results presented in the report.

	<p>The scale and complexity of the object of the evaluation are clearly described, for example:</p> <p>The number of components, if more than one, and the size of the population each component is intended to serve, either directly and indirectly.</p> <p>The geographic context and boundaries (such as the region, country, and/or landscape and challenges where relevant).</p> <p>The purpose and goal, and organization/management of the object</p> <p>The total resources from all sources, including human resources and budget(s) (e.g. concerned agency, partner government and other donor contributions).</p>	
	The key stakeholders involved in the object implementation, including the implementing agency(s) and partners, other key stakeholders and their roles.	
	The report identifies the implementation status of the object, including its phase of implementation and any significant changes (e.g. plans, strategies, logical frameworks) that have occurred over time and explains the implications of those changes for the evaluation.	
3. Evaluation purpose, objective(s) and scope		
	The evaluation's purpose, objectives and scope are fully explained.	
	The purpose of the evaluation is clearly defined, including why the evaluation was needed at that point in time, who needed the information, what information was needed, how the information will be used.	
	The report should provide a clear explanation of the evaluation objectives and scope including main evaluation questions and describes and justifies what the evaluation did and did not cover.	
	The report describes and provides an explanation of the chosen evaluation criteria, performance standards, or other criteria used by the evaluators ¹⁷ .	
	As appropriate, evaluation objectives and scope include questions that address issues of gender and human rights.	

¹⁷ The most commonly applied evaluation criteria are the following: the five [OECD/DAC](#) criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Each evaluation may have a different focus (not all criteria are addressed in every evaluation). Each agency may wish to add an indicator in this instrument, in order to assess the extent to which each criterion is addressed in the evaluation.

4. Evaluation methodology		
	The report presents a transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation that clearly explains how it was specifically designed to address the evaluation criteria, yield answers to the evaluation questions and achieve evaluation purposes.	
	The report describes the data collection methods and analysis, the rationale for selecting them, and their limitations. Reference indicators and benchmarks are included where relevant.	
	The report describes the data sources, the rationale for their selection, and their limitations. The report includes discussion of how the mix of data sources was used to obtain a diversity of perspectives, ensure data accuracy and overcome data limits.	
	The report describes the sampling frame – area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, and limitations of the sample.	
	The evaluation report gives a complete description of stakeholder’s consultation process in the evaluation, including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities for consultation.	
	The methods employed are appropriate for the evaluation and to answer its questions.	
	The methods employed are appropriate for analyzing gender and rights issues identified in the evaluation scope.	
	The report presents evidence that adequate measures were taken to ensure data quality, including evidence supporting the reliability and validity of data collection tools (e.g. interview protocols, observation tools, etc.)	
5. Findings		
	Findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report and are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report.	
	Reported findings reflect systematic and appropriate analysis and interpretation of the data.	
	Reported findings address the evaluation criteria (such as efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and relevance) and questions defined in the evaluation scope.	
	Findings are objectively reported based on the evidence.	
	Gaps and limitations in the data and/or unanticipated findings are reported and discussed.	

	Reasons for accomplishments and failures, especially continuing constraints, were identified as much as possible	
	Overall findings are presented with clarity, logic, and coherence.	
6. Conclusions		
	Conclusions present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence, and provide insights pertinent to the object and purpose of the evaluation.	
	The conclusions reflect reasonable evaluative judgments relating to key evaluation questions.	
	Conclusions are well substantiated by the evidence presented and are logically connected to evaluation findings.	
	Stated conclusions provide insights into the identification and/or solutions of important problems or issues pertinent to the prospective decisions and actions of evaluation users.	
	Conclusions present strengths and weaknesses of the object (policy, programmes, project's or other intervention) being evaluated, based on the evidence presented and taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders.	
7. Recommendations		
	Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, are supported by evidence and conclusions, and were developed with the involvement of relevant stakeholders.	
	The report describes the process followed in developing the recommendations including consultation with stakeholders	
	Recommendations are firmly based on evidence and conclusions.	
	Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation.	
	Recommendations clearly identify the target group for each recommendation.	
	Recommendations are clearly stated with priorities for action made clear.	
	Recommendations are actionable and reflect an understanding of the commissioning organization and potential constraints to follow-up.	

8. Gender and human rights		
	The report illustrates the extent to which the design and implementation of the object, the assessment of results and the evaluation process incorporate a gender equality perspective and human rights-based approach	
	The report uses gender sensitive and human rights-based language throughout, including data disaggregated by sex, age, disability, etc.	
	The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods are gender equality and human rights responsive and appropriate for analyzing the gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope.	
	The report assesses if the design of the object was based on a sound gender analysis and human rights analysis and implementation for results was monitored through gender and human rights frameworks, as well as the actual results on gender equality and human rights.	
	Reported findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons provide adequate information on gender equality and human rights aspects.	

List of people met

Ms. Arancha Gonzalez, Executive Director

Ms. Dorothy Tembo, Deputy Executive Director

Ms. Simone Cipriani, Chief Technical Adviser, Ethical Fashion, DMD

Mr. Ashish Shah, Director, Division of Country Programmes (DCP)

Mr. Ruben Phoolchund, Chief, Office of Africa

Ms. Christiane Kraus, Chief Coordinator

Mr. James Edwin, Coordinator, Monitoring and Evaluation

Mr. Mondher Mimouni, Chief, Market Analysis and Research

Ms. Sophie Hecht, OIC, Chief, Central Support Services, DPS/CSS

Mr. Anton Said, Chief, Export Strategy, DCP

Ms. Aicha Pouye, Director, Division of Business and Institutional Support (DBIS)

Mr. Jose Prunello, Chief, Section, Trade Support Institution Strengthening, DBIS

Ms. Vanessa Erogbogbo, Programme Officer, Women and Trade Programme, DBIS

Mr. Rob Skidmore, Chief, Sector Competitiveness, DMD

Mr. Anders Aeroe, Director, Division of Market Development (DMD)

Mr. Alexandre Kasterine, Programme Officer, Trade and Environment Programme, DMD

Mr. Rob Skidmore, Chief, Sector Competitiveness, DMD

Ms. Raphaelle Lancey, Central Support Services, DPS/CSS

Ms. Iris Hauswirth, Acting Chief, Section, Strategic Planning, Performance and Governance (SPPG)

Mr. Miguel Jimenez-Pont, Chief, Evaluation Unit/SPPG

Mr. Jicheng Zhang, Evaluation Officer

Ms. Marianne Schmitt, Associate Evaluation Officer