



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Independent Evaluation Section



United Nations Office
on Drugs and Crime

EVALUATION POLICY



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME
Vienna

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present document sets out the evaluation policy of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The policy comprises the set of principles and rules that guide the decisions and actions of UNODC when planning, conducting, disseminating and using evaluations. In accordance with the administrative instruction on evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat (ST/AI/2021/3), the principles and rules established by this policy adhere to, and are aligned with, the instructions, procedures and operational guidelines prescribed for the management, conduct and use of evaluations within the United Nations Secretariat. In addition, the policy has been informed by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines on the administrative instruction on evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat and the most recent versions of the evaluation policies of the United Nations Development Programme (2019), the United Nations Population Fund (2019), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (2018), the International Organization for Migration (2018), the International Labour Organization (2017), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2016) and the United Nations Environment Programme (2016). In line with the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines and the recommendations of the professional peer review of the evaluation function of UNODC (2016), the Executive Director and senior management of UNODC and Member States were consulted during the drafting of the present policy. To ensure full alignment with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3 and the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group, the document has undergone a quality assessment carried out by an external provider.

2. This policy fully replaces the previous evaluation policy of UNODC, which was last revised in 2015. Since then, the context in which evaluations are carried out and the way in which evaluation results are used have been shaped by new developments, within UNODC, the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations system at large and globally. Such developments include the impact of the global crisis wrought by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that was declared in 2020.

3. Evaluation at UNODC directly contributes to the implementation of the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025 by advancing the transformation of the Office’s culture, so that it becomes a learning organization in which decisions are built on evidence and where critical self-reflection and innovation are promoted. In response to the recommendations of the independent evaluation of UNODC carried out by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), the Strategy includes the mandate to strengthen the independent evaluation function so that it can fulfil its roles of oversight and accountability while increasing the effectiveness and relevance of future programmes. Evaluation and oversight results will be used to provide information at various levels, including strategic and aggregate evaluation results.

4. The policy is aligned with the Charter of the United Nations, humanitarian principles, a commitment to human rights and gender equality, and the principle of leaving no one behind. It is also aligned with the requirements of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and those of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

5. The context in which evaluations are planned and carried out and in which their findings are applied has also been shaped by wide-ranging global accords, including those on sustainable development (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development); climate change (Paris Agreement); and financing for development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development). The policy responds to the call for high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable evaluative evidence to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. By contributing to strengthened direction, oversight and accountability, evaluation at UNODC supports the management reforms of the United Nations launched in 2017 by the Secretary-General to enhance the Organization's work and make it more effective, responsive, transparent and accountable. The policy also supports the Organization's efforts relating to national evaluation capacity development, in line with General Assembly resolution 69/237, on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level, and to strengthening independent system-wide evaluation, in line with General Assembly resolution 72/279, on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

6. Pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 52/14 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 18/6, the Independent Evaluation Unit led the evaluation function in UNODC and reported on evaluation results to both the Executive Director and Member States. In November 2018, the Independent Evaluation Unit was renamed the Independent Evaluation Section, in recognition of the important role of evaluation in UNODC and the increased attention afforded to evaluation within the United Nations Secretariat, and in order to enable the evaluation function to meet the increased demand of the role.

7. UNODC is a member of the United Nations Evaluation Group, the inter-agency professional network that brings together evaluation units across the United Nations system. Evaluation norms and standards and related methods and approaches are enhanced on a continual basis to address emerging needs. The present evaluation policy reflects the standards and norms for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group, which serve as a guide for the conduct and management of evaluations. In addition, it is aligned with the latest evaluation policies of other United Nations agencies and incorporates the updated definitions, principles and criteria for evaluation developed in 2019 by the Development Assistance Committee Network on Development Evaluation.



II. POLICY STATEMENT

8. The purpose of evaluation at UNODC is to promote accountability, evidence-based decision-making and learning to contribute, in line with the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025, to the transformation of the Office’s culture into that of a learning organization that also promotes critical self-reflection and innovation. The Independent Evaluation Section is responsible for carrying out the evaluation function at UNODC. As mandated by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in its resolution 52/14 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in its resolution 18/6, the Independent Evaluation Section is functionally and operationally independent, and the Head of the Independent Evaluation Section reports directly to the Executive Director and presents evaluation results directly to Member States. The Executive Director ensures that the evaluation function at UNODC is functionally and operationally independent and adequately resourced; that evaluations are

adequately budgeted for, planned and undertaken; and that evaluation results, lessons learned and recommendations are incorporated and reflected in planning and budget documents in order to inform strategic and transparent project and programme delivery. Evaluation at UNODC is fully aligned with the regulations and rules set out in the administrative instruction on evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat (ST/AI/2021/3) and Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines; conforms to the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group and adheres to the principles of independence, impartiality, transparency, participation, utility, innovation, professionalism, integrity, and ethics. Evaluation at UNODC mainstreams and contributes to gender equality, human rights, the principle of leaving no one behind, disability inclusion and environmental and social sustainability.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

9. UNODC subscribes to the definition of evaluation contained in the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group:

An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as

relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders.

10. According to the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group, evaluation is to be differentiated from other oversight functions, namely appraisal, monitoring, review, inspection, investigation, audit,

research and internal management consulting. There should be a clear delineation of these roles, in line with the administrative instruction on evaluation in the United Nations (ST/AI/2021/3), and clarity on the resources (financial and human) provided for each. In programme design and implementation, UNODC will take into consideration the possible linkages and opportunities for collaboration between research and evaluation.

11. The purpose of evaluation at UNODC is to promote accountability, evidence-based decision-making and learning. In line with the regulations and rules governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and the methods of ST/SGB/2018/3, evaluation at UNODC is aimed at: (a) determining as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Office's activities in relation to their objectives and accomplishments; and (b) enabling UNODC and Member States to engage in systematic reflection, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the Office by altering its content and, if necessary, reviewing its objectives. Evaluation can inform planning, programming, budgeting, design, implementation and reporting, and can contribute to evidence-based policymaking, and development and organizational effectiveness.

12. In line with the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025, evaluation at UNODC will actively contribute to evidence-based decision-making and to strengthening the interrelationship between monitoring, research and evaluation to contribute to an organizational culture that promotes critical self-reflection, innovation and learning. Evaluation is a key enabler of drivers of efficiency, as it helps

to unlock the potential of data and foster innovation in the Office and beyond, including in Member States and partner organizations.

13. Evaluation also contributes to the enterprise risk management and internal control framework of UNODC by generating objective evidence for effectively addressing strategic and operational risks through enhanced accountability and improved learning.

14. Evaluations at UNODC are focused on key aspects, such as the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the Office's work and contributions, as well as its institutional performance in the fulfilment of its specific mandates. Furthermore, evaluations are aimed at assessing other critical dimensions, including partnership-building and management, the mainstreaming of gender equality, human rights and disability inclusion and the application, to all operational aspects, of the principle of leaving no one behind and the guiding principles and objectives of the United Nations Secretariat's environmental policy. The evaluation criteria should be applied thoughtfully to support high-quality, useful evaluation. They should not be applied mechanistically but rather selected according to the needs of the relevant stakeholders and the context of the evaluation.

15. Under the regulations and rules governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and the methods of evaluation, UNODC evaluations have an internal scope relating to the Office's processes, activities, functions and subprogrammes, and to Office-wide topics such as gender equality and partnerships.



IV. EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

16. **Evaluation is independent and impartial.**

Pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 52/14 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 18/6, the independent evaluation function at UNODC should be functionally and operationally independent and should be part of the Office of the Executive Director. The Executive Director ensures that the conduct of evaluation is functionally independent within UNODC, in line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3. Management must not impose any type of restriction, including on the scope, content or recommendations of evaluation reports. As stated in the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group:

Evaluators must have the full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially, without the risk of negative effects on their career development, and must be able to freely express their assessment. The independence of the evaluation function underpins the free access to information that evaluators should have on the evaluation subject.

17. **Evaluation is transparent and participatory.**

The evaluation process at UNODC should be transparent and involve relevant stakeholders at key stages, starting with the drafting of the terms of reference. Information on the evaluation approach, design and methodology must be shared throughout the process. This is essential for the credibility, quality and utility of the evaluation and facilitates consensus-building and ownership of the findings and recommendations. In line with the United Nations Evaluation Group standard on disclosure policy, UNODC makes key evaluation products publicly accessible to bolster its public

accountability. Final evaluation reports are disseminated in accordance with United Nations Secretariat principles on, and provisions for, information sensitivity, classification and handling.

18. **Evaluation is utilization-focused.** The utility of evaluation is shown through relevant and timely contributions to organizational learning, informed decision-making and accountability for results, and to generating knowledge and empowering stakeholders within UNODC and beyond. When planning and undertaking evaluations, there should be a clear intention to use evaluation results to inform decisions and actions, and evaluation topics should be chosen on the basis of their potential use for strategic decision-making. Evaluation products should be timely and tailored to the needs of the intended users, so evaluators should consider the realities of the programme or country context, and it should be possible to implement any suggested recommendations. In line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, evaluation results, lessons learned and recommendations should be incorporated into and reflected in planning and budget documents, so as to inform strategic and transparent programme delivery.

19. **Evaluation is innovative.** Evaluations should contribute to innovating and modernizing the Office's business model and practices, so that it remains responsive to evolving challenges and to its mandates; and to fostering innovation in the United Nations system by drawing lessons and sharing good practices in adapting and taking advantage of new working methods and modern technologies, so that UNODC can better serve its beneficiaries, deliver its mandates more efficiently and effectively, and scale up its collective impact.

The use of innovative evaluation approaches and data-collection methods is encouraged to assess UNODC within the complex circumstances in which it provides support, particularly within crisis contexts. Evaluation should support an organizational culture that promotes critical self-reflection and innovation, in line with the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025.

20. Evaluation conforms to internationally accepted standards. UNODC is a member of the United Nations Evaluation Group and has adopted its norms and standards for evaluation. These norms reflect the singularity of the United Nations system, which is characterized by its focus on people and respect for their rights, the importance of international values and the principles of universality and neutrality; its multiple stakeholders; its needs for global governance; and its multidisciplinary and complex accountability system. Each evaluation should employ design, planning and implementation processes that are inherently quality-oriented, covering appropriate methodologies for data collection and analysis. All evaluations should be designed, conducted and managed in line with the regulations and rules set out in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, the administrative instruction on evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat, and Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines; and should follow the norms and standards for evaluation.

21. Evaluation is professionally conducted and credible. Evaluations should be conducted with professionalism and integrity. Professionalism should contribute towards the credibility of evaluators, evaluation managers and heads of evaluation, as well as the evaluation function itself. According to the norms and standards for

evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group, this should be supported by an enabling environment, institutional structures and adequate resources, including access to knowledge, education and training, utilization of evaluation competencies and recognition of knowledge, skills and experience.

22. Evaluation mainstreams and contributes to gender equality, human rights and the principle of leaving no one behind. In line with the norms and standards for evaluation:

The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated into all stages of an evaluation. It is the responsibility of evaluators and evaluation managers to ensure that these values are respected, addressed and promoted, underpinning the commitment to the principle of no one left behind.

23. Evaluation stakeholders should be mapped and consulted throughout the evaluation process (including during the inception, design and implementation of evaluations, and the reporting and dissemination of evaluation results) with a view to gender, disability and human rights considerations. Disability inclusion is mainstreamed into the evaluation guidelines and processes of UNODC, in accordance with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

24. Evaluation is environmentally and socially sustainable. UNODC aims to strengthen environmental and social sustainability in evaluation activities, including when gathering evidence and generating knowledge of its contribution to environmental and social sustainability, in alignment with the guiding principles and objectives of the environmental policy for the United Nations Secretariat and with the Framework for Advancing Environmental and Social Sustainability in the United Nations system.



25. **Evaluation is ethical.** Evaluation at UNODC should adhere to high standards of ethics and integrity, in line with the ethical guidelines for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group and code of conduct for

evaluation in the United Nations system. Staff responsible for designing, managing and conducting evaluations should follow the ethical guidelines and ensure that evaluation staff and consultants are aware of and follow those guidelines.

V. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND EVALUATION GOVERNANCE

26. The Independent Evaluation Section is responsible for carrying out the evaluation function of UNODC. Pursuant to Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 52/14 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 18/6, in order to comply with the independence and impartiality inherent in the evaluation function in the United Nations, the Section should operate on an independent and predictable budget and should be adequately staffed by evaluation experts, as defined by the United Nations Evaluation Group standards; and the Head of the Section should report directly to the Executive Director and to Member States on evaluation results, thus enabling the Section to conduct its work with impartiality and independence. In line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, the Executive Director delegates authority to the Head of the Independent Evaluation Section for: (a) ensuring that the quality of evaluation meets agreed professional standards; (b) managing the budget of the Section and appointing its staff; and (c) monitoring the implementation of evaluation recommendations.

27. The Independent Evaluation Section aims to contribute to the improved accountability, evaluation-based decision-making and organizational learning of UNODC in response to

drugs, crime and terrorism. The work of the Section comprises four pillars:

- (a) evaluation capacity development, including national evaluation capacity development, in line with General Assembly resolution 69/237;
- (b) evaluation reports, namely developing participatory, independent, gender-responsive evaluations, in line with the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group and Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines;
- (c) knowledge management, communication and innovation; and
- (d) management and cross-cutting activities.

28. In line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, both OIOS and the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance provide guidance on evaluation planning to ensure coordination and adequate evaluation coverage by the United Nations Secretariat. The Independent Evaluation Section represents UNODC in the United Nations Evaluation Group and other evaluation networks, events and forums, as appropriate; and coordinates and complements the efforts of oversight functions, both at UNODC headquarters and in the field. In line

with Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines, the Section is the focal point in UNODC for external evaluation exercises and studies carried out by OIOS and its Inspection and Evaluation Division, as well as by the system-wide evaluation unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Joint Inspection Unit.

29. The Executive Director ensures the independence of the evaluation function of UNODC and promotes an evaluation culture of accountability, transparency, critical self-reflection, evidence-based decision-making, knowledge-sharing and learning within the Office. Pursuant to administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, the Executive Director has a duty to:

- (a) ensure the establishment of the Office's evaluation policy and an adequately resourced evaluation capacity;
- (b) ensure that the conduct of evaluation is functionally independent;
- (c) ensure the integration of respect for gender equality and disability inclusion in evaluation procedures and practices;
- (d) use qualified external and internal evaluators with relevant professional competencies and experience;
- (e) ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place for management to monitor and respond to evaluation recommendations; and
- (f) conduct joint evaluations with other Secretariat entities on cross-cutting areas, including those that contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

30. The Governing bodies of UNODC, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice are key

stakeholders in matters of accountability. In their resolutions, the Commissions establish the legal and operational conditions for the independence of the evaluation function.

31. In line with Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 52/14 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 18/6, the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of UNODC, as the major permanent representation of the governing bodies, may check that operational conditions ensuring the full independence of the Independent Evaluation Section are in place, thereby contributing to creating an enabling environment for a culture of evaluation for UNODC.

Evaluation is a standing agenda item of the working group, and Member States are provided with briefings on the implementation of annual evaluation plans, in-depth evaluation results, and evaluation and oversight-related matters.

32. Evaluation is part of the programme and project cycle and is therefore an institutional responsibility of all managers within UNODC. Senior management ensures that adequate resources are reserved for evaluation and draws on evaluation results to guide strategic decision-making on future programming through the development and implementation of management responses and follow-up plans to evaluation recommendations.

33. Programme documents and substantial revisions of global, regional and country programmes are submitted for review and endorsement to the Programme Review Committee, of which the Independent Evaluation Section is a member. Mandatory clearance is required from the Section for prior submission of programme documents and substantial revisions to the Committee, as well as through the Integrated Planning, Monitoring and Reporting solution in



Umoja (the global tool for efficient and transparent management of the financial, human and physical resources of the United Nations) to help ensure that programme development in UNODC is based on relevant evidence, research and oversight results.

34. Managers of services, branches, sections and field offices are responsible for supporting evaluation processes, ensuring that management responses to evaluations are duly prepared, and that recommendations and lessons learned are followed up in a timely manner in the appropriate area of responsibility. Management responses to evaluation recommendations should include specific, time-bound actions, in line with the Independent Evaluation Section's evaluation guidance and templates.

35. Programme and project managers are immediate clients of evaluations and are actively involved in the evaluation processes that are undertaken at the programme or project level. They contribute to the planning, preparation, implementation and follow-up of evaluations, in line with the Independent Evaluation Section's evaluation guidance and templates.

36. The Independent Evaluation Section presents evaluation findings, recommendation implementation rates, compliance with evaluation standards within UNODC and other evaluation-related information to Member States on a regular basis. The reporting takes place through the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of UNODC, as well as at bilateral and multilateral meetings with Member States.

VI. EVALUATION TYPES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

37. UNODC undertakes various types of evaluation, including programme-based, thematic and cross-cutting. In line with its role, mandate and evaluation capacity, UNODC most commonly conducts independent project evaluations, in-depth evaluations and strategic evaluations. Decisions about the type of evaluation to be conducted, including the possibility of grouping several related project or programme evaluations together into a single cluster evaluation, are made by the Independent Evaluation Section, in consultation with the relevant UNODC unit and stakeholders.

38. Regardless of the type of evaluation undertaken, all evaluations at UNODC must be planned and conducted and the results applied in

accordance with the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group, the regulations and rules governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation and the methods of evaluation (ST/SGB/2018/3), administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, and the principles and dispositions stated in the present evaluation policy. The Independent Evaluation Section provides the normative tools, guidelines and templates that need be used for independent evaluations.

39. In-depth evaluations are independent evaluations commissioned and managed by the Independent Evaluation Section but conducted by external independent evaluators with the Section's

full engagement and oversight, in collaboration with UNODC management at headquarters and field offices. They are used to assess various aspects of highly complex programmes or topics, and projects or programmes with strong potential for improving the effectiveness of UNODC and contributing to the fulfilment of its mandate and the achievement of United Nations purposes and goals. In-depth evaluations typically focus on the Office's country, regional, thematic, and global programmes and on cross-cutting issues. In order to ensure that the norms and standards for evaluation and Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines for evaluation are met, the Independent Evaluation Section has full access to the data collected and to analyses produced throughout the evaluation process.

40. Independent strategic evaluations are evaluations commissioned and managed by the Independent Evaluation Section that assess issues of key strategic significance or relevance for UNODC at the programme or subprogramme level. In line with Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 28/4 and Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 62/9, the evaluations focus on the institutional dimension of the policies, operations, work streams, processes and results of UNODC, rather than on programmatic or project-level aspects. In common with in-depth evaluations, independent strategic evaluations are conducted by external independent evaluators with the full engagement and oversight of the Section, in collaboration with UNODC management at headquarters and field offices, and the Section has full access to the data collected and to analyses produced throughout the evaluation process.

41. Independent project evaluations are commissioned and supported by project or programme managers of UNODC and are

conducted by independent external evaluators, with the Independent Evaluation Section's oversight, supervision and guidance. The role of the Section is to support the process, review and clear all deliverables, and provide quality assurance and guidance to managers and evaluators throughout the process. Independent project evaluations are key inputs for programme and subprogramme evaluations and other in-depth evaluations.

42. Joint evaluations are undertaken by UNODC with other international organizations, including United Nations Secretariat entities, on cross-cutting areas, including those that contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, with coordination by OIOS as required, in line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3.

43. System-wide evaluations are undertaken by the system-wide evaluation unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, to which UNODC contributes, in line with General Assembly resolution 72/279.

44. The Independent Evaluation Section may also undertake other types of evaluative activities aimed at fostering innovation and learning, including evaluability assessments and qualitative reviews. In addition, it may provide guidance to project and programme teams within UNODC regarding the design and implementation of pilot evaluative activities.

45. The Independent Evaluation Section carries out meta-syntheses aimed at increasing knowledge and awareness of recurring recommendations and lessons learned from evaluations and other oversight results, as well as at increasing the utility of evaluation results on topics relating to drugs, crime and terrorism, both within UNODC and beyond.



VII. PLANNING, BUDGETING AND CARRYING OUT EVALUATIONS

46. In compliance with the evaluation planning and coverage norms set out in administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, UNODC should develop an annual evaluation plan and ensure adequate allocation of funds for evaluation capacity to deliver the plan. In line with Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines, the annual evaluation plans should be prepared by the Independent Evaluation Section in consultation with the Executive Director, senior management and Member States, with input from UNODC divisions and relevant branches, sections and field offices, as needed.

47. In the preparation of annual evaluation plans, consideration should be given to: (a) the need to undertake at least one evaluation of each UNODC subprogramme thematic area every six years, irrespective of the source of funding, in line with the evaluation coverage norms set out in administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3; (b) the usefulness of evaluations for senior management decision-making and information needs, in line with Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines; and (c) the resources, time and capacity available for evaluation.

48. While maintaining independence, in line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3 and norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group, the Independent Evaluation Section should coordinate with internal and external oversight bodies, such as OIOS, the Joint Inspection Unit and the Board of Auditors.

49. Evaluation is mandatory. In line with the evaluation coverage norms established in administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, all projects and programmes in UNODC should be evaluated as necessary, based on risk assessment, specific donor requirements or entity-specific evaluation policy. Evaluations of projects, programmes, thematic areas and regional or country operations should be undertaken individually or as part of clusters of projects or operations. As evaluation is an integral part of UNODC planning and budgeting mechanisms, and of project and programme management, UNODC project and programme managers are responsible for timely planning and budgeting and for supporting the timely delivery of evaluations.

50. In the design and conduct of independent evaluations and other evaluation-related activities, opportunities for collaboration between evaluation and research should be sought, taking into consideration relevance and usefulness, the resources available and the specific context and features of each evaluation or activity.

51. Evaluation planning should encompass all stages of the evaluation process, from resource allocation to the use of evaluation results, in line with the Independent Evaluation Section's evaluation guidelines and templates. In order to ensure that evaluation funds have been secured as required, the project or programme manager must consult the Section before the approval or revision of any project or programme at UNODC and use the Section's evaluation budget matrix tool for independent evaluations.

52. Before starting an independent evaluation, the manager must consult the Independent Evaluation Section and obtain clearance from it. Once the evaluation has been cleared, the responsibility for initiating the evaluation process, allowing sufficient time to complete the process, rests with the project or programme manager, in line with the evaluation guidance and templates of the Section.

53. The Independent Evaluation Section provides oversight and quality assurance throughout the evaluation process for all independent evaluations undertaken within UNODC. All independent evaluations must be carried out using the Section's evaluation guidance, templates and tools (including its website and evaluation web-based tool), in line with the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group and Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines. All key evaluation deliverables, including terms of reference, inception reports, evaluation reports and follow-up plans for evaluation recommendations, must be cleared by the Section, which may adjust or cancel the evaluation process at any point if the evaluation does not meet the stipulations of this policy, the United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards and Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance quality standards and guidelines for the conduct of evaluation.

54. Gender equality, human rights, the principle of leaving no one behind and disability inclusion should be effectively mainstreamed throughout the evaluation cycle, from planning and preparation to implementation and the dissemination of results. The aspects of UNODC projects and programmes covering gender equality, human rights and disability inclusion will be reflected in evaluation terms of reference, evaluation reports and meta-synthesis reports.

55. Following best practices within the United Nations system, a quality rating of independent evaluations may be carried out through an independent external service provider, thereby disclosing to the public the overall quality of the evaluation report following a distinct set of criteria. The external evaluation quality assessment may cover the quality of evaluation reports in areas such as report structure; clarity of the evaluation's subject, purpose, objectives and scope; clarity and justification of the evaluation methodology; clarity, relevance, evidence base and analytical soundness of the findings; clarity, evidence base and utility of the conclusions and lessons learned; clarity, evidence base, feasibility and utility of the recommendations; and integration of gender equality, human rights and disability inclusion considerations, in line with Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines.



VIII. USING EVALUATION RESULTS AND FOLLOWING UP RECOMMENDATIONS

56. **Using evaluation results.** The Executive Director is accountable for the use of evaluation results at UNODC, by promoting the use of evaluation data findings and ensuring follow-up through an interactive process that involves programme managers, end users and other relevant officials, and by ensuring that lessons learned are considered in planning and in the preparation of budgets for future cycles, and are integrated into policies and programmes. Under the leadership of the Executive Director, UNODC management is accountable for providing responses to evaluation recommendations, and for ensuring that evaluation recommendations are reported, discussed and implemented. Member States are invited to participate actively in evaluations, for example as core learning partners, in order to widen the ownership and use of evaluation results.

57. **Following up recommendations.** Evaluations require an explicit response and commitment to act upon any subsequent recommendations from the respective authorities and managers. The management of UNODC systematically plans for and monitors the implementation of evaluation recommendations. Upon completion of each evaluation, the manager responsible should develop the response and follow-up plan to evaluation recommendations. In order to ensure the development of evaluation management responses and to track and update the implementation status of recommendations, the Independent Evaluation Section should provide templates, guidelines and tools, in line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3 and Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines.

58. **Evaluation-based knowledge management.** In line with the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025, the Independent Evaluation Section contributes to the transformation of the Office's culture into that of a learning organization by developing processes, guidance, tools, activities and evaluation-based knowledge products aimed at improving the access, availability and spread of new knowledge gained from evaluation results, including web-based tools, meta-synthesis reports and evaluation capacity-development activities. In line with Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 52/14 and Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 18/6, the Independent Evaluation Section should report on the results of meta-syntheses to the Executive Director and to Member States, including through bilateral meetings and presentations at the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of UNODC.

59. Effective evaluation communication should be presented in simple and easily understandable formats tailored to the specific needs of different audiences, in line with Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines. To ensure transparency and facilitate access to evaluation-based knowledge, all UNODC independent evaluation reports, including the management response and meta-synthesis reports on evaluation recommendations, should be published on the Independent Evaluation Section website. Evaluation results may also be disseminated through innovative ways, including social media, videos, dashboards and other type of data-visualization techniques.

60. Evaluation contributes to the implementation of the enterprise risk management and internal control framework of UNODC by generating objective evidence that

may be used through enhanced accountability and improved learning for effectively addressing the Office's strategic and operational risks.

IX. RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR EVALUATION

61. As set out in Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 28/4 and Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 62/9, UNODC should allocate human and financial resources to ensure adequate provision for the sustainable, effective and operationally independent evaluation function. In line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3 and the general view of the Joint Inspection Unit presented in the analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2014/6), UNODC should take into consideration that funding for evaluation activities should fall within the range of 2 to 3 per cent of total expenditure, with consideration for economies of scale and the complexity and quality of each type of evaluation. In line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, the Executive Director should ensure adequate capacity and resources for the Independent Evaluation Section to manage and conduct evaluations and provide effective quality assurance. Project and programme managers must ensure that the necessary evaluation funds are properly allocated and that evaluations are included in the project structure.

62. **Independent Evaluation Section team.** The Head of the Independent Evaluation Section is supported in the implementation of the Section's work pillars by a deputy, evaluation officers and associate evaluation officers,

in addition to an adequate number of general service staff and consultants and analysts who report directly to the Head or to the deputy.

63. **Evaluators.** In line with the provisions on roles and responsibilities of United Nations Secretariat entities set out in administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, the independent evaluation function should use qualified external and internal evaluators with relevant professional competencies and experience, including professionals with substantive knowledge of thematic topics or cross-cutting areas, such as gender equality, human rights and disability inclusion, as deemed appropriate by the Independent Evaluation Section.

64. To safeguard independence and minimize the risk of conflict of interest and undue pressure, independent evaluations at UNODC should be carried out by professionals who have not previously benefited from the project under evaluation and who have not been involved with the topic under evaluation at UNODC within the five years prior to the period covered by the evaluation, other than in the capacity of independent evaluators or equivalent (for example, as an auditor).

65. Evaluation in UNODC must be conducted in compliance with the United Nations Evaluation



Group ethical standards. As set out in the norms and standards for evaluation:

Evaluation must be conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment; for human rights and gender equality; and for the “do no harm” principle for humanitarian assistance. Evaluators must respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence, must ensure that sensitive data is protected and that it cannot be traced to its source and must validate statements made in the report with those who provided the relevant information. Evaluators should obtain informed consent for the use of private information from those who provide it.

66. In line with the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations Evaluation Group, and in compliance with the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and other relevant guidance, if an evaluation reveals evidence or sufficient suspicion of wrongdoing (including fraud, corruption, conflict of interest, harassment or abuse, such as allegations of sexual harassment or sexual abuse or exploitation), evaluators should bring this discreetly to the attention of the Head of the Independent Evaluation Section, or to the responsible official or entity, to ensure that the situation is duly addressed and mitigated.

67. The composition of evaluation teams should be diverse and gender-balanced to the extent possible, in line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3 and Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance guidelines.

68. Financial resources for evaluation.

UNODC secures regular budget and programme support cost funding for the Independent Evaluation Section to ensure that annual evaluation plans can be implemented, as required,

in response to the level of activities and evaluation needs at the strategic programme or subprogramme level. The pillars of work of the Independent Evaluation Section are supported through stable sources of funding and by Member State contributions to the Independent Evaluation Section’s Global Programme.

69. Evaluation guidance, templates and tools.

The Independent Evaluation Section, through its website, grants access to the Office’s evaluation guidance and templates, as well as to other tools and resources for evaluation developed by the Section, including the UNODC evaluation handbook and the Section’s evaluation web-based tool to facilitate tracking of recommendations and aggregation of evaluation results.

70. System-wide evaluation and partnerships.

The evaluation function of UNODC is fully committed to the principles of working better together to step up joint efforts to achieve sustainable development, and, in line with General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, is aimed at enhancing coherence in the evaluation function in the United Nations system by:

- (a) actively participating in the United Nations Evaluation Group and in the United Nations Development Account evaluation focal point network;
- (b) contributing to United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts and coalitions;
- (c) contributing to joint evaluations with other international organizations and United Nations entities, including with other United Nations Secretariat entities on cross-cutting areas, with OIOS coordination as required, in line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3; and

(d) seeking opportunities for collaboration with other United Nations entities in multi-stakeholder partnerships for continuing contributing to national evaluation capacity in Member States,

in line with the General Assembly resolution 69/237 on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level.

X. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVISION OF THE POLICY

71. The evaluation policy set out in the present document comes into force once endorsed by the Executive Director of UNODC. It will be presented to Member States at the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of UNODC, being the major permanent representation of the governing bodies of UNODC.

72. The policy will be put into operation through several instruments, activities and tools developed by the Independent Evaluation Section, including the Office's annual evaluation plans, the Section's evaluation web-based tool and the Office's evaluation handbook, templates and guidance notes, meta-synthesis reports, training materials and presentations. Evaluation tools and guidelines should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they remain appropriate and are adapted to emerging evaluation needs and changes in the environment in which UNODC operates.

73. The Head of the Independent Evaluation Section should report to the Executive Director of UNODC and Member States on the status of implementation of the evaluation policy. In line

with Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution 28/4 and Commission on Narcotic Drugs resolution 62/9, the Head of the Section should provide regular briefings to the Executive Director and Member States (at the standing open-ended intergovernmental working group on improving the governance and financial situation of UNODC or through bilateral and multilateral meetings) on the findings, recommendations and lessons learned from UNODC evaluations.

74. Given the dynamic and complex nature of drugs, crime and terrorism, and the focus on utilization of evaluation at UNODC, this policy is conceived as a living document, to be updated as needed over the policy cycle. As recommended in the professional peer review of the evaluation function of UNODC (2016), a full revision of the evaluation policy should be carried out every five or six years. The revision of the policy may be informed by a professional peer review of the evaluation function of UNODC, to be undertaken before the next policy cycle within the United Nations Evaluation Group Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of United Nations Organizations.

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