



Report of the UNEG Annual General Meeting 2008

Location: Palais des Nations, Geneva

Host agency: UNCTAD

Date: 2-4 April 2008

This report, prepared by the UNEG Secretariat, encompasses the discussions and outcomes from the UNEG AGM 2008.

Report of the UNEG Annual General Meeting 2008

1. Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Acting Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD, opened the meeting by welcoming UNEG to Geneva¹. She highlighted the increasing recognition of the importance of the evaluation function in the UN system, in particular as a result of the TCPR resolution which encouraged efforts to strengthen the evaluation across the system and to promote a culture of evaluation, and emphasized UNEG's contribution to this system-wide effort through its excellent example of inter-agency collaboration. Ms Puri encouraged UNEG's continuing efforts towards both harmonizing evaluation standards and procedures, and professionalizing the evaluation function within the UN system.

2. Ms Saraswathi Menon, UNEG Chair, delivered her opening remarks and began by thanking our hosts in Geneva². She reflected on the year's ambitious agenda and congratulated the UNEG members on driving this agenda forward. Whilst members have high expectations of what UNEG can achieve, it has become increasingly clear that the expectations of others have also grown exponentially reflected by the request from the CEB and the Government of South Africa and the reference made to UNEG in the General Assembly resolution on the TCPR. She called on members to reflect on the implications and challenges presented by these increasing demands.

Adoption of the Agenda

3. The Draft Agenda was approved.

Session 1: Annual Report by the Secretariat

4. Nurul Alam, UNEG Executive Coordinator, presented a summary of the work conducted by the UNEG Task Forces and Working Groups over the work programme year 2007/08. Highlights included:

- Six Delivering as One evaluability missions were conducted between January and March, with the remaining two scheduled for April 2008.
- The scoping mission for the joint evaluation of South Africa was conducted in February 2008 and the inception phase is ongoing.
- The World Food Programme peer review was completed.
- The UNEG Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines were completed and endorsed.
- The UNEG Core Competencies of Heads and job descriptions for evaluators were finalized and presented at the AGM for endorsement.

¹ See Annex 1.

² See Annex 2.

5. In 2007/08, the UNEG Chair received three requests for UNEG membership from the Office of the Controller, OPPBA, Department of Management; Department of Peace Keeping Operations; and the Evaluation & Communications Research Unit, Department of Public Information. Eddie Yee Woo Guo, OIOS, informed UNEG members that the UN Secretariat is strengthening the evaluation function and that 15 departments have requested budget resources to establish an evaluation unit. It can be anticipated that they will approach UNEG for membership. It was stated that UNEG should be as inclusive as possible to promote evaluation in the UN.

6. Under the current Principles of Working Together decisions on membership are to be taken at the AGM. It was suggested that offices meeting the prerequisite for membership to UNEG³ participate as observers for an initial probationary period. The Coordination Committee will then make a recommendation for or against full membership at the AGM.

7. Mr. Alam presented the UNEG financial report for 2007/08. In 2007, the Secretariat received USD77K in financial contributions from UNEG members. Disbursements for 2007/08 totaled USD27670. Contributions for 2008 total USD30K meaning that for the financial year 2008/09, UNEG has a budget of USD83K.

8. UNEG's financial reporting to date has run in line with the UNEG work programme (i.e. March – April). However, this makes financial reporting difficult and Mr. Alam requested UNEG members' agreement to run the UNEG financial year from January – December, in line with the UNDP (and other agencies') financial reporting year.

9. Members were encouraged to make financial contributions to UNEG⁴ and it was proposed that some of these funds be made available to the Task Forces to assist them in the delivery of their work programme (e.g. hiring consultants). To avail of these funds, Task Forces should develop a plan and submit a financial report to the Secretariat who, with the Coordination Committee, would then be responsible for assessing the request. Task Forces were also asked to record in kind contributions which would be included in the Annual Report.

10. The UNEG Executive Coordinator also drew attention to the operational demands arising from UNEG's Evaluation of the Delivering as One Pilots, the arrangements of which were supported by the Operations Manager of the UNDP Evaluation Office and the UNEG Secretariat.

11. Michelle Weston, UNEG Secretariat, provided updates on the UNEG consultants' roster, website and design project. A small Task Force has been working on developing a UNEG consultants' roster. UNFPA offered UNEG the code for its roster and since mid-March 2008, a developer has been working on making modifications to meet UNEG's requirements.

12. Members raised concerns about the quality of the consultants in the database. Consultants will only be invited to create a profile when a UNEG member has submitted an online reference. Other

³ "UNEG membership is institutional and the unit with the main responsibility for evaluation in each UN Agency (taken here to mean the multiple organisation forms in the UN system – funds, programmes, specialised agencies and affiliated Organizations) has the right to be a member and participate in UNEG", UNEG Principles of Working Together, page 2, para 5 (2007).

⁴Details on making a financial contribution to UNEG are available on the UNEG website (UNEG members only).

members will be able to submit additional references for the same consultant. The names of referees will be indicated and members will be expected to correspond with each other if they require further information and clarification. Members will also receive a periodic update on new names in the roster and were asked to notify the Secretariat of any strong objections at the earliest possible occasion.

13. Over the past year, a number of issues have arisen with regards to the UNEG website which has led to the site being redeveloped. The new site will be more user friendly and UNEG Task Forces were encouraged to make use of the functionalities. In particular, Task Forces will be asked to identify a focal point responsible for maintaining the Task Force web page and using the calendar function to manage events.

14. The Secretariat has been developing a common look and feel for UNEG materials. A number of proofs were sent to UNEG Heads but questions were raised during email discussions (do we need it?, should UNEG use an image? etc.) which were tabled at the AGM. Overall members agreed that a look should be developed and a small Task Force⁵ was established to develop this further. It was suggested that the Task Force explore using the facilities of member agencies, including UNICEF and UNV online volunteering, to save on the costs of developing the look.

15. At the end of 2007, the Secretariat was asked to compile members' evaluation plans in an effort to improve information sharing. Only a handful of agencies replied to this request. Members were asked whether they were interested in this information sharing practice and whilst some were in favour, others indicated that they contact colleagues directly. It was agreed however that information sharing with regards to country level evaluations was of particular interest.

Session outcome:

- Applicants meeting the criteria will be invited to participate as observers for a 12 month period or until the next AGM. Observers will be welcome to participate in the UNEG Task Forces. Following recommendations from the Coordination Committee, full membership will be discussed at the subsequent AGM.
- A Task Team⁶ was asked to develop the UNEG membership application form for presentation on the last day of the AGM⁷.
- To improve UNEG's financial reporting, it was agreed that the UNEG financial year would run from January to December.
- Development of the UNEG consultant roster will proceed. UNIFEM, FAO and UNV indicated interest in participating in the roster development Task Force.
- Members agreed that a common look should be developed for UNEG materials. In particular, this look should incorporate the UN logo and that there should be some relation to the UNEG website.

⁵ ICAO, OIOS, UNCTAD, UNICEF, UNIFEM and the UNEG Secretariat.

⁶ FAO, OIOS and WFP.

⁷ See Annex 3.

Session 2: UN Reform and Evaluation

System Wide Evaluation Mechanism

16. The UNEG Chair provided an overview of the status in setting up of the UN System-Wide Evaluation mechanism. A number of questions were asked and issues raised for the further process.

17. In response to one participants comment to clearly define the problem that the mechanism would address, the UNEG Chair underlined that the objectives of the mechanism were coherently articulated in the background documentation prepared and discussed in the HLCM and HLCP. In this regard, among other issues, the mechanism would undertake evaluations of systemic issues of importance to the UN at large. It could also, for example provide overall guidance and framework for undertaking peer reviews of individual evaluation outfits within the system, as well as conduct evaluation on specific topics, for example the MDGs, of interest to the broader UN system.

18. Participants and the panelists emphasized the importance of seeing individual evaluation outfits and UNEG as an integral part of the planned system-wide mechanism. That is, the quality and work of an independent evaluation unit responsible for system-wide evaluations would be enhanced with strengthened capacity of individual evaluation units and UNEG. It was agreed that any further discussions within the HLCM/ HLCP should underline this characteristic of the planned system-wide mechanism even more forcefully.

Session outcome:

- It was agreed that the current UNEG Task Force would continue to engage on the topic and further refine the proposal as required for presentation at the HLCM meeting in September 2008.

Evaluation of the One UN Pilots

19. The session presented the experience and progress of the Delivering as One evaluability assessment exercise and the challenges encountered. Six pilot assessments had been conducted prior to the AGM, with a further two scheduled for mid-April 2008. The presenters highlighted the difficulty at the start-up of the exercise (ad hoc arrangements and the lack of resources) varied understanding of the evaluability, time pressure, uneven participation by UNEG members and responding to the UNCT expectations. Despite these issues, the HLCP were satisfied with the report given to them at the meeting in March.

20. It was agreed that it may not be appropriate to adhere to the original plan of conducting first a process (2009) and then an outcome evaluation (2010), but to conduct a single evaluation in 2009-2010. It was also recommended that the evaluation might consider non-pilot cases which are proceeding with the UN reform as these can establish important design comparisons. It was, however, noted that the HLCP, in its meeting in April 2008, suspended the evaluation commissioned by the CEB, as long as there was no clarity concerning the “independent” evaluation to be commissioned by the General Assembly in line with paragraph 139 of resolution A/62/208 (TCPR 2007).

21. There is no clarity yet how such an independent evaluation would be conducted and to what extent and in what ways UNEG might be involved. One possible scenario would be that UNEG would be requested to coordinate the evaluation. In that case, UNEG would seek to ensure that its professional standards of independence, credibility and usefulness be fully adhered to. Moreover, UNEG could not assume such a role without adequate human and financial resources. Another possible scenario would be that UNEG acts as a member of an advisory or steering committee. The UNEG Chair and the co-Chairs of the Management Group will further explore possible options with the CEB secretariat. In the meantime, the evaluability study will be made available in the public domain, where it will be accessible to Member States and internal UN stakeholders.

Session outcome:

- The synthesis report will be finalized in May 2008 and will be presented to the Management Group for review.
- The timing of the TCPR-requested independent evaluations needs to be clarified as it has implications for UNEG (and since the TCPR decision did not specify a timeframe).
- UNEG should not be over-ambitious with regards to staff commitment and resources with regards to the evaluation of the Pilots. If requested to coordinate the independent evaluation, UNEG should make sure that its professional standards can be fully adhered to.

South Africa Joint Evaluation

22. Lucien Back (UNICEF) and Oscar Garcia (UNDP) provided an overview of the progress for the South Africa joint evaluation. A number of important points were raised and suggestions were made for the further process.

23. The importance of ensuring the independence and credibility of the evaluation were underlined, especially in light of UNEG's involvement. The Task Force was informed that the NEPAD review of South Africa conducted in 2003 could provide some useful background information.

24. With regards to the Management Group for the joint evaluation, it was noted that time and effort will be required and needs to be budgeted by all concerned. In this regard, the possibilities for DPKO (or OIOS), WFP, UNEP and others joining the Task Force would be explored.

25. The usefulness of documenting and learning from this joint evaluation process was emphasized, as a basis for similar further joint evaluations between Government's and UNEG.

Discussion outcomes:

- Given the joint nature of this initiative between UNEG and the South African Government, risk mitigation measures are important and should be factored into the evaluation process.

- The Task Force would invite DPKO, OIOS, UNEP and WFP to participate in the evaluation.

Session 2: The Evaluation Function

26. The session was chaired by Luciano Lavizzari (IFAD). Presentations were given by the co-Chairs of the three Task Forces: Evaluation Quality Enhancement, Distinctiveness of the Evaluation Function and Evaluation Guidance – Human Rights and Gender Equality.

Peer Review

27. Mr Rob D. van den Berg, GEF, and Mr Ted Kliet, The Netherlands, provided members with an update on the peer review process which started in the DAC Evaluation Network to tackle issues raised by multi-donor evaluations of multilaterals. UNDP agreed to be the first pilot, followed by UNICEF and aimed at assess how the organizations met the UNEG Norms & Standards. Experience and lessons learned through these two exercises informed the PR framework, used to guide WFP's PR. In absence of a support structure, a temporary agreement was made with DAC through a joint Task Force. OIOS and GEF will be next whilst UNIDO, UNESCO, ILO and UNIFEM have volunteered in principle.

28. There was wide agreement that the PR process should continue to adjust to meet UNEG's requirements for it to be a tool (among others) for quality control and professionalizing evaluation. The WFP experience seems to be rich for lessons learning and improvement of the framework and of the process. Collaboration on PR with other evaluation networks/bodies should also be fostered. The TF should work in this sense, while maintaining for the time being, close collaboration with DAC.

Conclusions

29. Peer Review aims at enhancing the quality of the evaluation functions and as such, it should be continued and institutionalized in the broader framework of tools available for this purpose.

30. The Peer Review approach and method as it currently stands should continue to be revised to address better and be more responsive to UNEG's needs and requirements, taking into account lessons learned progressively during its application; this would include identifying concrete alternatives for its institutional location.

Discussion outcomes:

- Peer Review aims at enhancing the quality of the evaluation functions and as such, it should be continued and institutionalized in the broader framework of tools available for this purpose.
- The Peer Review approach and method as it currently stands should continue to be revised to address better and be more responsive to UNEG's needs and requirements, taking into account lessons learned progressively during its application; this would include identifying concrete alternatives for its institutional location.

- Peer Reviews will be an area where cooperation with other entities and agencies, such as the DAC and IFIs, will continue to be pursued and possibly expanded.

UNEG Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines

31. Simon Lawry-White, UNICEF, presented the UNEG Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines. The rationale for adopting both lies in their ethical nature and in good management practice. Discussions focused on how members would adopt them (e.g. whether staff and consultants should sign them); legal implications; and the timeframe by which they should be adopted. It was also agreed that each agency should comply flexibly with the request for adoption. It was acknowledged that UNEG does not have the legal mandate to enforce their adoption.

Discussion outcomes:

- Agencies were invited to follow and adopt the Code of Conduct and the Ethical Guidelines within their modalities. The Job Descriptions will be revised accordingly.

Network of Networks on Impact Evaluations (NONIE)

32. Rob D. van den Berg, GEF, gave a presentation on the background and to date achievements of NONIE and highlighted the current wave of interest for impact evaluation. It was proposed that UNEG's participation in NONIE should, in line with recent developments within NONIE, become more formal. Two questions in particular were discussed – how should UNEG participate in NONIE and should UNEG have its own impact evaluation Task Force?

33. The discussions included the definition of impact, the relevance of impact evaluation for purely normative UN entities and UNEG agencies contribution to achieving the MDGs. There was overall agreement that impact evaluation should be an area of UNEG's work programme for 2008/09.

Discussion outcomes:

- UNEG should discuss and elaborate on how to evaluate impact and how to include both development and normative work in this.
- UNEG would not be formally represented in NONIE. UNEG members in NONIE would represent their individual agencies and coordinate through the Task Force.

Distinctiveness of the evaluation function

34. The presentation was given by the Task Force co-Chairs Maya Bachner, WMO and Chandi Kadirgamar, UNCDF. They were also joined by Task Force member Silvia Alamo, CTBTO. The discussion aimed at giving a short overview of the contents of the document submitted to the AGM and to get suggestions and feedback from member on the way forward. The document aimed at clarifying the distinctiveness of the evaluation function vis-à-vis other similar functions, such as oversight and audit.

35. A number of suggestions were formulated, including showing sources of information, widening the scope of the consultation with other stakeholders including operations staff and adding an introduction defining evaluation.

Discussion outcomes:

- UNEG members expressed their appreciation for the work done so far. It was suggested that a wider consultation with stakeholders, including operations staff, should be carried out before finalizing the document.
- UNEG members were invited to provide comments and suggestions on the report by email by 1st May 2008.

Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality Perspectives in UN Evaluations

36. Elena Marcelino and Belen Sanz, UNIFEM, gave a short overview of the contents of the documents circulated for the AGM in order to get suggestions and feedback from members on the way forward. Their presentation described the framework, opportunities and challenges, objectives, target audience, scope, format, and dissemination strategy for a proposed guidance document on integrating a human rights and gender equality perspective in UN evaluations. The proposal was based on a wide mapping exercise of existing guidelines. The document is intended to be user friendly employing case studies and tools, and is meant for wide dissemination.

37. Members suggested that the Task Force clearly articulate a strong rationale for the guidance in the document itself and take into consideration any reservations held by some agencies regarding human rights based approaches. The document should also be widely distributed for consultation via electronic means and the Task Force was encouraged to develop links with the other UNEG Task Forces.

Discussion outcomes:

- Members agreed with the concept and the approach taken by the Task Force with adjustment for suggestions in terms of the process for the actual development of the guidance document, i.e., engaging the participation of other UNEG colleagues outside of the Task Force, increased linkage with other groups working on guidance, and tapping the expertise of external evaluators outside the UN.

Session 4 – Professionalizing evaluation

38. The session was chaired by Backson Sibanda, UNODC and presentations were given by the Evaluation Capacity Task Force, the UNEG Training Working Group and the Evaluation Practice Exchange 2008 Task Force.

Core competencies and job descriptions, and Evaluation Training Advisory Panel

39. Demetra Arapakos, OIOS, presented the finalized core competencies for Heads of evaluation and the job descriptions (P1-P5) for members' endorsement. Members will have to consider their own specific contexts when employing the core competencies and the job descriptions but it was agreed that they are meant for guidance only.

40. The Evaluation Capacity Development Task Force also developed the TOR for an Evaluation Training Advisory Panel. The purpose of this panel would be to quality assure the direction, contents and processes of the UNEG introductory training course (see further discussions on the training programme below).

41. In the broader context, discussions then focused on the whole area of capacity development and UNEG's role in supporting national evaluation capacity development. Members highlighted that whilst there are countries and regions where training occurs and where networks exist, there is no real evaluation capacity.

Discussion outcomes:

- The Core Competencies for Evaluation Heads and the generic job descriptions (P1-P5) were endorsed.
- Members agreed that an advisory panel be established as a quality control mechanism for the introductory course. The TOR would be finalized and the advisory panel would eventually be open to external members (e.g. someone from an academic institution).
- Issues of national evaluation capacity development, and UNEG's role, would be discussed in the work planning session (session 5) on the last day of the AGM.

UNEG Training – Introductory course and Diploma Programme

42. Jean Quesnel, Chair of the UNEG Training Working Group, presented an overview of developments with regards the introductory course. Over the last year the course has been piloted in different languages in a number of regions and has been refined following feedback from participants and facilitators. The introductory course itself presents all the core concepts and processes that an evaluator should know and the materials have been developed as such that any UNEG member agency can use it.

43. Feedback from the introductory course participants has been positive and participants have indicated expectations that a diploma programme eventually be developed to cover on areas not in the introductory course. Mr. Quesnel highlighted UNEG's role to support capacity building and promote harmonization both in and outside the UN, and in particular the great demand for evaluation and evaluators in the context of good governance, accountability and participation.

44. Particular issues of concern about the diploma programme raised by UNEG members included financing, planning and sustainability. It was recognized that the Diploma would be issued by the UNSSC as UNEG is not in a position to do so. Members highlighted the need for UNEG to establish a clear path

with regards next steps for the diploma programme in particular with regards the partnership with the UNSSC.

Discussion outcomes:

- Overall members praised the initiative and agreed that the introductory course be continued under the guidance of the advisory panel.
- The UNEG Secretariat will explore the issue of copyright vis-a-vis the introductory course and the accompanying materials.
- A small Task Team (ILO, UNCTAD, UNDP and UNICEF) will continue working on the partnership agreement between UNSSC and UNEG. The draft will be reviewed by all UNEG members before being shared with UNSSC.
- The incoming Training Task Force will develop a full financial report on the costs of running the introductory course.

Evaluation Practice Exchange Seminar 2008

45. Mike Spilsbury, UNEP, presented feedback on the EPE08. The seminar was an opportunity for UNEG members to share best practices in evaluation. The Task Force worked towards developing a strategic EPE agenda which focused on issues of generic interest.

46. Feedback to the EPE08 was positive and suggestions for improvement included: developing a more strategic agenda with fewer topics and more time for discussions; breakout groups; improving documentation; and holding a separate event (e.g. workshops) for more detailed discussions. One issue of particular interest for the next EPE is knowledge sharing and communications.

47. The suggestion was also made to invite opening up participation in the EPE and even holding an event which runs concurrently with another major evaluation event (e.g. AFREA, IDEAS, Malaysian Evaluation Group). The African Development Bank indicated an interest to work with UNEG in preparing the next EPE in Nairobi. There is also the potential to work jointly with the ECG.

Session outcomes:

- It was agreed that an EPE Seminar would be held in 2009.

Session 5 – Work Planning 2008/09

48. This session was Chaired by Saraswathi Menon, UNEG Chair. The session focused on developing UNEG's work plan and modalities of working for the forthcoming year (2008/09) in light of discussions held over the previous two days.

49. The EPE and AGM 2009 will be held in Nairobi (exact dates to be confirmed).

ANNEX 1

Opening statement by Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Acting Deputy Secretary- General of UNCTAD

Madame Chair, Dear colleagues,

Let me first express my welcome to all of you. I welcome you all to Geneva, and to UNCTAD. We are happy to be hosting this meeting of the United Nations Evaluation Group – the Group which brings together such a broad range of agencies within the UN system, as well as other associated agencies.

We are seeing an increasing recognition of the importance of the evaluation function within the UN system. Member states at ECOSOC, in the most recent TCPR resolution, encouraged the UN system to further continue its efforts to strengthen evaluation across the system, and to promote a culture of evaluation. The importance of evaluation is evident also from the viewpoint of us – the managers of the UN agencies. Evaluation helps us determine the needs of our stakeholders, assess how well we are meeting their expectations and take measures to improve where we are falling short. It is a means that, at the end, allows us to show how the work of the United Nations is making a difference, and to take pride in the work we are doing.

Evaluation also provides a platform on which member States and the Secretariat can play their proper respective roles. As the former Secretary-General Kofi Anan stated in this “Investing in the United Nations” report, for the UN to be effective, there must be a right balance between the control by member States and the managerial freedom of the Secretariat. To achieve this, however, the Secretariat has to gain credibility, by providing member States performance information in an objective and transparent manner. Only then that member States could be asked to provide direction and guidance at the right strategic level. He concluded, therefore, providing credible evaluation of programmatic performance is essential.

Your Group is an excellent example of how inter-agency collaboration can work for the benefit of all. You have made a significant contribution to the system-wide effort through years of collaborative work. ECOSOC, in the aforementioned TCPR resolution, reaffirmed its endorsement of the Norms and Standards of Evaluation for the UN system that your Group has established. It also encouraged the promotion of collaborative approaches to evaluation, including joint evaluations. It has sought the enhancement of national evaluation capacities so that the countries could take ownership and leadership of development assistance. These are the areas where UNEG is expected to play a central role. At the last meeting of HLCP, UNEG made a significant contribution concerning the evaluation of the Delivering as One pilots. HLCP members unanimously praised UNEG for the professional conduct of the exercise, which provided valuable insights on how the UN system can make an impact at the country level. These examples are a testament to the contributions that UNEG has made, and can continue to make, to the UN system through its collaborative method of work.

I understand that you are making strides towards harmonizing standards and procedures for evaluation within the UN system, and towards the enhancement of evaluation competencies of the evaluation staff and the professionalization of their functions. I encourage you to continue this important effort that will make the United Nations a better organisation, and I wish you all a successful meeting.

ANNEX 2

Opening Remarks by Saraswathi Menon, UNEG Chair

It is wonderful to be back in Geneva with all of you. I would like to begin by thanking our Geneva based agencies for stepping into the breach and enabling us to meet on the planned dates despite unplanned events. The readiness of our Vienna colleagues to host is also very much appreciated. I would also like to thank our colleagues in Nairobi, who put a lot of effort into planning both the EPE and the AGM and I do hope we can meet in Nairobi next year. And on everyone's behalf I would like thank the representatives of the DAC Network on Evaluation and the Evaluation Cooperation Group for joining us this week.

As your chair, when I look back on the last year I feel that we have established ourselves organizationally. It is impressive how all the task forces have set ambitious agendas and moved forward on so many fronts. The coordination committee has met regularly and tried to build synergies across our programme of work. I think it would be appropriate to begin by congratulating ourselves for what we have been able to do together.

We have had an exciting year. We have done a lot that is central to our mandate to professionalise and advocate for evaluation in the UN system. We have moved ahead on defining competencies and job descriptions; on a code of conduct and ethics; and on developing and piloting a common training programme which has touched evaluators beyond the UN system in governments, academia and in the profession at large. We have enhanced the evaluation function by defining what evaluation is; establishing linkages with RBM; conducting peer reviews; and charting new methodological frontiers in human rights, gender and impact evaluation. We have tried to operationalise what the UN needs in terms of a system wide evaluation mechanism.

We are also working in areas where we did not expect to work a few years ago. At the request of the CEB, we have initiated the process of evaluating the Delivering as One UN Pilots. At the request of the Government of South Africa we are conducting the country-led joint evaluation of the UN's Contribution to South Africa. Both these initiatives are innovative for evaluation in the UN in terms of scope and partnership and will certainly enrich our body of experience.

We have high expectations of what UNEG can achieve as we said in our Principles for Working Together which we adopted only a year ago in a room very close to this one. But what is increasingly becoming clear is that expectations of UNEG by others have also grown exponentially. The requests from the CEB and the Government of South Africa reflect this trend. For the second time the General Assembly resolution on the TCPER refers to UNEG. In 2004, the GA asked us to work on evaluation norms and standards, methodologies, cycles etc. And last year the GA asked us, among other things, to work with national governments on evaluating the DOU pilots.

How do we manage these expectations? How do we prioritise? As evaluators I believe the experience of the past year should encourage us to ask a few critical questions to which I am sure we can find answers together over the next few days.

First, are we doing the right things? As we look at the outcome of our fairly extensive work programme and we endorse the outputs and direction of work that the task forces have generated, are we confident that each of these strands of work contribute to furthering the quality and use of evaluation in the UN and beyond? Can we clearly articulate the contribution that we have made?

Second, posing the same question in a slightly different way, are all the things we are doing the right things? How relevant are the issues that we have addressed? Can a professional network conduct evaluation? How will the DOU or South Africa evaluation contribute to advancing the quality and use of evaluation in the UN and beyond?

Third, are we doing all that we need to in order to make a difference? Where are the emerging gaps and critical challenges for evaluation? What are other emerging issues in the landscape within which the UN operates – development, humanitarian and normative? Is UNEG falling short in the sphere of humanitarian evaluation? Can we go beyond the DOU and South Africa evaluations to a joint evaluation framework for the UNDAF? How can we contribute to capacity development with national partners?

Fourth and finally, are we doing things in the right way? Let us, for instance, take a hard look at our proposal for the system wide evaluation mechanism. Why was there insufficient buy in? As each task force shares their achievements and experience with us, can we draw common lessons across task forces? Can we find more effective ways of doing things together? In particular, can we find ways of working that will involve the full spectrum of UNEG members – small and large offices, new and longstanding members?

Looking at the collective professional experience in this room, only superlatives and no doubts come to mind. I am confident that together we can answer these and other challenges that we may face. I look forward to an intensive and enjoyable three days together that will set the stage for an even more productive year.

Thank you.