

## CONCLUDING PLENARY, The Global Evaluation Agenda 2016-2020 to support the Global Development Agenda post-2015

UNDP – Mr. Nicholas Rosellini, UNDP Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific

### Context of NEC

This event has been an important opportunity to engage in global advocacy around evaluation. Governments and key evaluation networks and their leaders are present and over 100 countries are represented, with 42 new countries attending this year. This indicates the important role evaluation will play in shaping and contributing to the SDGs during the upcoming 15 years.

NEC is a wonderful opportunity for South-South and South-North Cooperation. The message is that we should find solutions together as there are no pre-made solutions. As Rob van den Berg, IDEAS President summed up: “We are all developing countries” in the context of the SDGs.

Marc Segone in his keynote address this morning told us how unlike the MDGs, which were strong on monitoring and tracking but without an evaluation component, the SDGs have an explicit follow-up and review mechanism clearly stated in the 2030 agenda. This means that 192 states have committed to having a national evaluation system in their countries. This is a big opportunity. So to repeat Marco’s question from this morning, ‘What can we do to make evaluation the agent of change for the world we want’ in the new SDGs era?’

### NEC Priorities

Based on the NEC and EvalPartners Global survey, the following were identified as key NEC priorities:

1. Strengthen credible national data systems to monitor performance of policies and programmes.
2. Develop clear national level mechanism for independent evaluation to track/monitor and evaluate the progress of the SDGs.
3. Assign resources (a percentage of the initiatives’ costs) for the conduct of evaluations when designing/approving projects/programmes/policies.
4. Formally build the capacity of evaluators to improve the quality of evaluations.
5. Develop systems to promote transparent follow up of evaluations recommendations.

### Issues emerging in last 3 days

Based on consultations that took place during these last three days, four priorities have come to the fore:

1. Importance of country-owned, country-led evaluations with an emphasis on their USE in influencing policies

2. Importance of evaluation methods that get at the issues at the heart of the SDGs and new ways of collecting data using technology and innovation
3. Importance of partnerships and an inclusive, open and transparent evaluation process
4. Institutional structures for promoting the evaluation of the SDGs

## **1. Promoting country-owned, country-led evaluations with an emphasis on their USE in influencing policies**

This priority is about supporting existing national systems, avoiding duplication and responding to national circumstances. Doing this, entails a shift from donor driven evaluations to country owned evaluations, and building local capacity. Penny Hawkins from DfID in UK made a similar point when she said that if evaluation is to be developed in-country and be sustainable, it is about working together with countries. She said that donors have done enough demanding of evaluative information from countries and “We need to work with, not demand from”. “Working with” means learning, and that learning is 2 way.

The Session on Small Island Developing States built on this point and also concluded that the evaluation process for SDGs should not be donor-driven but rather localized, contextualized, and culturally-sensitized. This is so that countries ‘own’ their SDG targets and have an integral system for the ‘whole government’ approach to drive the SDGs.

Critical when talking about the issue of evaluations being nationally owned is the need to raise demand for evaluations and not just focus on supply. We have heard examples over the past 3 days on how countries are successfully using evaluations to influence policies and programmes. For example, yesterday, Felipe Castro from Colombia described how an impact evaluation on a conditional cash transfer program showed a good impact on student attendance. The evaluation resulted in the scaling up of the program. Another evaluation on agricultural program showed that the government subsidy favored big land owners instead of small farmers as planned, which led to the prosecution of the Minister of Agriculture and the suspension of the program. We need more such examples of the successful use of evaluations to inform policy to promote a mindset change in the organisations and governments where we work so that evaluation is seen as important for learning and ultimately, improvement in people’s lives.

## **2. Defining and strengthening evaluation process and methods;**

A second set of issues that has come up relates to the methods for assessing the SDGs. How do we assess the equity and sustainability of development outcomes? How do we measure and evaluate new areas of the SDGs such as social cohesion and governance? This has been notoriously difficult and sensitive, including for the organization where I work, UNDP.

As Marco Segone mentioned this morning in his opening address, ‘How do evaluators assess the equitability of outcomes for marginalized populations?’ This is a key question for the SDGs with its agenda of leaving no-one behind.

Similarly, how do we measure sustainability? We learnt yesterday from Vinod Thomas from ADB, that the SDGs require us to see economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection as mutually reinforcing. We have to find methods for assessing and evaluating sustainability that capture social inclusion and environmental protection.

What do we have to offer to inform on these issues?

In Asia-Pacific region, there has been increasing interest by governments in using innovative techniques to get better feedback from citizens on the effectiveness of their policies and programmes and to improve transparency and accountability. UNDP through its Innovation Fund has implemented a number of prototypes with partners that harness technology to that improve sustainability and accountability.

Give examples from e-waste, Make My Island in Maldives and Phones Against Corruption in PNG.

The challenge is now to bring these innovations in citizen consultation to scale and mainstream them within Government to ensure that SDG monitoring and evaluation is timely and relevant to people's interests.

### **3. Engaging existing and new stakeholders in exchanges and collaboration;**

Another issue raised this week has been the importance of promoting better partnership and greater cooperation between Governments, civil society, Parliaments and private sector to increase awareness and use of evaluations.

We heard a lot this week about the importance of citizens as stakeholders and the importance of raising awareness among citizens on the SDGs and role of evaluation. As Winston Nyasulu from Malawi's Ministry of Finance mentioned, evaluation is a way to verify progress towards the SDGs. Citizens have to be made aware of the SDGs so they can better take to task their governments. Kemelo Nophuting from Botswana also stressed the pivotal role of citizens in demanding accountability and pressuring the Government to set up a better M&E system in Botswana.

Another important new partner is the private sector. So far, there has been little dialogue with the private sector. There is a need for more such dialogue to explain what the SDGs are and close the gap between public and private sector. There was a fascinating session chaired by Caroline Heider from the World Bank on Day 1 exploring new frontiers in evaluation, which asked how we are to evaluate market-oriented initiatives that see development as investment. These initiatives that see development as both profitable and for social good remind us that as development and evaluation practitioners, we need to look beyond aid projects in today's fast changing landscape if we are to remain relevant.

Another important constituency that we heard from this week is the parliamentarians. Asela Kalugampitiya, EvalPartners Executive Coordinator from Sri Lanka stressed the role of parliamentarians in demanding and using evaluations.

To harness the power of these partnerships, it is important to create networks and platforms for information and knowledge sharing, involving local people, private sector, parliamentarians, policy makers and legislators.

### **4. Institutional structures for the evaluation of the SDGs**

We still have a long way to go to understand how we integrate the evaluation of the SDGs into institutional structures.

Tamar Razmadze described how in Georgia the Government is actively looking at how to develop an M&E system that is oriented to the SDGs. Almost every SDG is covered by national policy, so the question they

now face is how to monitor and evaluate all these policies and SDGs without duplicating and wasting resources.

In Colombia, the timing of the planning for the National Development Plan meant that they were able to incorporate the SDG agenda. More than 150 SDG targets are included allowing for evaluation of SDGs in the longer run. The country's Commission to implement SDGs are now working to localize SDGs at the national and sub-national levels.

Just as Georgia and Colombia have shown, we all need to start thinking of evaluation of the SDGs now so that it is not an afterthought. Evaluation of the SDGs is important because it helps understand whether our SDGs strategy is the best way to get the change we want. As we go home and begin strategizing on the SDGs, let's also think about their evaluation

We have responded to the challenge posed by the theme of this conference; which obliged us all to work in partnership and blend our strengths for the purpose of achieving a new world through the SDGs. The rich diversity of participants and their valued perspectives has made this global milestone event one that shall be characterized by collective action for the common good of humanity. Evaluation is the bridge between meeting the obligations of the SDGs –which can only happen if people's voice are heard and responded to as we collectively go through this journey. Evaluation is about ensuring the linkages are made for evidence to be collected and considered, and action taken.

I would like to finish by taking this opportunity to thank:

The IEO, IDEAS, all Governments present, networks, volunteers and my UNDP colleagues who worked closely with IEO to make this event a great success.