

Deputy Secretary-General, Ambassador Haak, ambassadors, deputy permanent representatives, senior management and staff of the Council of Europe.

It is with great pleasure that I am here today in my role as **chair of the UN Evaluation Group** to speak about the importance of the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation and then to speak to you in my role as **director of the internal oversight service of UNESCO** to explain how UNESCO has responded to them.

Allow me to start by briefly explaining the UNEG. UNEG is a unique interagency professional network of some 50 evaluation offices in the UN system set up some 30 years ago. I have been a member of this network for the past 20 years and am currently its chair.

### **[Mission]**

UNEG's mission is to promote the independence, credibility and usefulness of the evaluation function and evaluation across the UN system, to advocate for the importance of evaluation for learning, decision-making and accountability, and to support the evaluation community in the UN system and beyond.

It is this last part of the mission mission that brings me here today to engage in the important discussions you are having regarding building a new evaluation culture and a new policy.

UNEG has been the key driver for promoting evaluation as a profession in the UN system. The development in 2005 of the Norms and Standards for Evaluation set out for the first time a clear set of principles for how evaluation functions should be designed and implemented throughout the UN system. The Norms & Standards were partially modelled on best practices in the international evaluation community and the existing guidance by the OECD Development Assistance Committee but also with a view of the inter-governmental nature of the UN.

The Norms & Standards have been successful in strengthening and harmonizing evaluation practice and have served as a key reference for evaluators around the world, not just in the UN system.

In 2016, we updated the Norms & Standards to reflect the evolving context – for instance the adoption of the 2030 Agenda - and the increasing demands for accountability and national ownership in evaluation.

**What are the key ingredients of a robust and professional evaluation function?** UNEG lists 10 but today I wish to highlight three of those, as they are the most basic and essential.

We call it the I C U principles:

- **Independence**
- **Credibility**
- **Utility**

Let me first speak about the **“I for Independence”**.

Independence is crucially important for any evaluation function and, apart from certain professional standards, is what differentiates “self-evaluation” from “evaluation”. Self-evaluation is something we all do – either individually or within our functions. We may even produce reports reflecting on our performance. However - **if** these reports are written or influenced by those responsible for designing and managing the programmes they are not “objective” nor are they fully credible. For UNEG, independence is also a necessary ingredient for credibility. Independence comprises two key aspects – **behavioral** independence and **organizational** independence. **Behavioral** means the ability to evaluate without influence by any party while **organizational** independence requires that the central evaluation function is positioned independently from management and has direct access to the governing bodies of the organizations concerned. This means that that the head of the evaluation function has the full authority to issue the reports and that these are made public without exception.

### **“C” for Credibility**

I already spoke about the link between credibility and independence. So where the function sits and how independent it is matters for credibility. What also matters is that the evaluation work is grounded on impartiality and rigorous methods. Key elements include transparent evaluation processes, inclusive approaches, robust quality assurance systems and last but not least transparency on the results even if they are not what one expected.

And finally,

### **“U” for Utility but also “U” for Use.**

We need to know why and for what we evaluate and need to need ensure that evaluation is used. This requires, on the one hand, a clear use by management via a management response and action plan to any evaluation, and on the other hand use by the governing body who needs take into account evaluation results for decision-making.

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Allow me to now to move to the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of my presentation – which relates to the experience of UNESCO. As you know, UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Established in 1945 on the heels of a devastating second world war, UNESCO’s creation embodied hope in a better future: Building peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture. Today UNESCO has an annual budget of about \$ 500 million and a staff of over 2,400 staff with half based in Paris while the rest is based in over 50 locations globally.

I joined UNESCO four years ago. In UNESCO, evaluation – like in the Council of Europe – is part of a combined oversight function. As an evaluator, I quickly saw that the evaluation function was reasonably robust. It was quite independent, reporting to the executive head but also

issuing its reports publically & directly to the Board. It was also credible and respected within the Secretariat and with the Board alike. When it came to utility and the evaluation culture of the Organization, it was a more mixed picture.

The evaluation policy had been in place since 2008 but important changes had taken place and the Board expected more from the Organization regarding transparency, accountability and effectiveness. This was an excellent starting point for reviewing the policy and jointly defining how this could be achieved from an evaluation perspective.

The development of our policy, which is on line, was done in an inclusive process, involving secretariat staff and member states. We based the new policy on four key principles:

1. An emphasis on knowledge generation, organizational improvement and organizational learning so evaluation can serve the needs and priorities of member states
2. A strong corporate culture of accountability
3. A comprehensive, integrated and coherent evaluation system
4. A renewed commitment by all – The secretariat and the governing bodies – to support and use evaluation

These four principles are in turn key performance indicators for a strong evaluation culture. The policy fully subscribes to the already explained ICU principles as the foundation of an effective evaluation function.

A new evaluation culture is not built over night. It's a process. The only way for this process to work well is a strong tone at the top – by both senior management and the Board - in your case the Committee of Ministers. In UNESCO, we were lucky that the tone at the top was very strong. Management understood that evaluation provides credible independent performance information and helps management credibility with the Board, while the Board saw evaluations as a credible input into their work and enabled the Board to better hold the organization accountable.

Therefore, as our policy also clearly articulates, the responsibilities for an effective evaluation function and building an appropriate evaluation culture are a shared responsibility: Shared between the Board – or your equivalent of the Committee of Ministers - and management.

- Therefore, on the one hand, there are the member states who collectively safeguard the independence and who are committed to using evaluation to inform organizational policy and strategy setting;
- On the other hand, there is the Director General who ensures the integrity and independence of the evaluation function and creates an enabling environment.

Another important innovation in our policy was the setting of a three percent target for funding evaluation in UNESCO. Without appropriate funding, you cannot build a robust function. We therefore looked outside of the box on - how to fund the evaluation function but also - how to

create incentives for management to plan for evaluations as well. This target applies for both regular budget and extra-budgetary funding and is derived from the activity budget.

While we have not reached the target at this point, setting a target has been one of the most important drivers to enhancing the role of evaluation in UNESCO.

Finally, the policy introduces an evaluation system for UNESCO that goes beyond the corporate function but that also includes a decentralized function – within sectors and at the field level. Again, here the focus was also on use and making sure that decentralized evaluation meet certain quality standards.

The policy was approved by our Board in 2015. Since then we have worked hard to make it work: We have set up an evaluation focal point system in every large office and field presence of the organization and have trained over 100 staff. We have also developed online training modules for all interested staff and set up an on-line evaluation forum.

The policy has strengthened our dialogue with our member states and the support for evaluation. The IOS evaluation office used to report twice a year to the Executive Board: once in the Spring Board as part of the IOS Annual report and once in the Fall Board presenting all evaluations done in the prior year. Both member states and ourselves found this to be insufficient. There was little time to discuss evaluation results and bundling reports together overwhelmed the intended audience. Our executive board therefore decided in 2017 to have each evaluation report discussed separately at each relevant Board session. While it is more work for us, we believe this is the right direction. This has in turn allowed us to recast our fall report into a stand-alone annual report by the Evaluation Office. The report focuses now on a higher level, producing strategic results information to inform whether or not the organization its meeting its strategic objectives.

While we are not yet fully there, I take pride in having been rated as one of the UN's top 10 evaluation offices by the UN Joint Inspection Unit.

Coming back to the Council of Europe, my key advice to you, today, is that not only should you expect top quality and credible evaluations from your evaluation office - as now incorporated into the revised UNEG Norms and Standards - but also that the evaluations speak to the key strategic issues for the Council of Europe and demonstrate a clear impact on the work of the organization.

I will close by saying that I am naturally an ardent believer in the need for an independent, credible and useful evaluation function for any public sector institution. Evaluation must speak truth to “power”. And “power” - whether senior management or the Committee of Ministers - needs to answer by ensuring evaluations are used to improve the work and impact of the organization.

Thank you and I would be delighted to later on answer any questions you may have.