



**UNEG**  
United Nations Evaluation Group

# UNEG Strategy 2014–2019

November 2013

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## Foreword

I want to thank the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Strategy Group, UNEG Heads, consultants and stakeholders who helped craft this Strategy in a remarkably efficient and constructive manner over a period of six months. What follows is the result of a genuinely successful collaborative effort of all members of UNEG.

UNEG has grown significantly in the past decade as a professional network. The common norms and standards and peer-review mechanism have been much appreciated by our members and beyond. Reflecting the exciting times our members find themselves in as the demand for evaluation continues to grow at all levels and in all entities and sectors of the UN, UNEG's new action-oriented, outward-looking Strategy provides fresh opportunities to enhance the impact of our collective evaluation efforts on the policy, programmes and, ultimately, the effectiveness of the UN.

Drawing on the proposition that “Knowing is not enough; we must apply: Willing is not enough; we must do” (Goethe), this Strategy demonstrates UNEG's bold ambitions for evaluation and UNEG members' commitment to work together to enable the full benefits of evaluation in the UN to be realized. Evidence of the growing support and enthusiasm is reflected in the remarks of the Secretary-General who, in his landmark address during UNEG Evaluation Week 2013, stated, “Evaluation ... is essential [and] the current constrained budgetary climate makes it more important than ever”.

Evaluation is a critical function whose time has come in the UN. By building on our previous collective efforts, UNEG's new Strategy for 2014-2019 positions its members to help fulfill the expectations of the international community for evaluation in the UN.

With appreciation to all who have contributed and looking forward to our mutual collaboration in attaining the goals contained herein.



Deborah Rugg  
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# 1. Introduction

The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) is a voluntary network that brings together units responsible for evaluation in the UN system. UNEG helps advance the effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the UN system's work by promoting and strengthening evaluation. The Group's central role has been to develop and advocate for common norms and standards for all UN evaluations. The UNEG Norms and Standards underpin professionalization of UN evaluation functions that enables UN organizations to continuously learn and improve organizational effectiveness and responsiveness.

The demand for evaluation is growing. In the context of declining resources, UN entities are being challenged by Member States and donors to provide evidence that they are achieving results and that they are becoming more efficient. Moreover, as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) draw to a close and the new Sustainable Development Goals are developed, the UN is being challenged to assess and report on its contribution to improving the lives of people. By assessing the results that the UN has achieved and by making recommendations that feed into policy and programme development, evaluation plays an integral role in helping the UN system become more effective overall.

Evaluation is emerging as a mature profession. This is demonstrated by the increasing formalization of evaluation core competencies in recruitment, training and higher education, the establishment and strengthening of international, national and regional associations and the establishment and use of internationally recognized norms and standards. Furthermore, national governments increasingly recognize that evaluation is an important professional function to enhance the effectiveness of interventions and transparent governance in its own right.

Acknowledging these demands and the changing global landscape, UNEG's role and priorities have evolved to acquire enhanced relevance and provide support for UN reform. This Strategy and its associated Impact Pathway set the course for UNEG's future work, building on its past achievements. It is based on an independent assessment of UNEG, conducted between November 2012 and April 2013, which recommended that UNEG increase its partnerships with other professional evaluation networks and organizations, revise its governance and decision-making structures, and define a strategy.

The Strategy sets out an ambitious agenda for concerted action and priority areas for 2014-2019. It is based on the normative values of the United Nations and supersedes the Principles of Working Together. It outlines how the Group will continue to support its members and partners as they strengthen the independence, credibility and use of evaluation and it outlines how UNEG will inform UN reform processes and cooperate with the global evaluation community. The Group has assessed the options available for moving forward. It recognizes that continuing the past approach risks not being able to provide the leadership on evaluation, while becoming more ambitious risks stretching thin the resources of a voluntary organization.

UNEG is at an exciting crossroads regarding its strategic direction and operational modalities. In acknowledging the progress made to date, the different demands on UNEG in the future, the increasing diversity of the agenda, and the growing interest from various partners to participate in its activities, this Strategy articulates what the Group intends to achieve. In so doing, it intends to shape the architecture for strengthening evaluation and enhancing accountability in the UN system.

## **2. Vision and Mission**

### **Vision**

UNEG envisions that evaluation is fully realized in every entity of the UN system through appropriate evaluation policies, resources, skills and activities. Thereby, evidence produced by evaluation informs a more relevant, efficient and effective UN system with greater impact on the lives of the people it serves.

### **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.

### **3. Strategic Objectives 2014–2019**

To achieve its mission, UNEG’s work is focused on four strategic objectives: 1) Evaluation functions and products of UN entities meet the UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation; 2) UN entities and partners use evaluation in support of accountability and programme learning; 3) Evaluation informs UN system-wide initiatives and emerging demands; and 4) UNEG benefits from and contributes to an enhanced global evaluation profession.

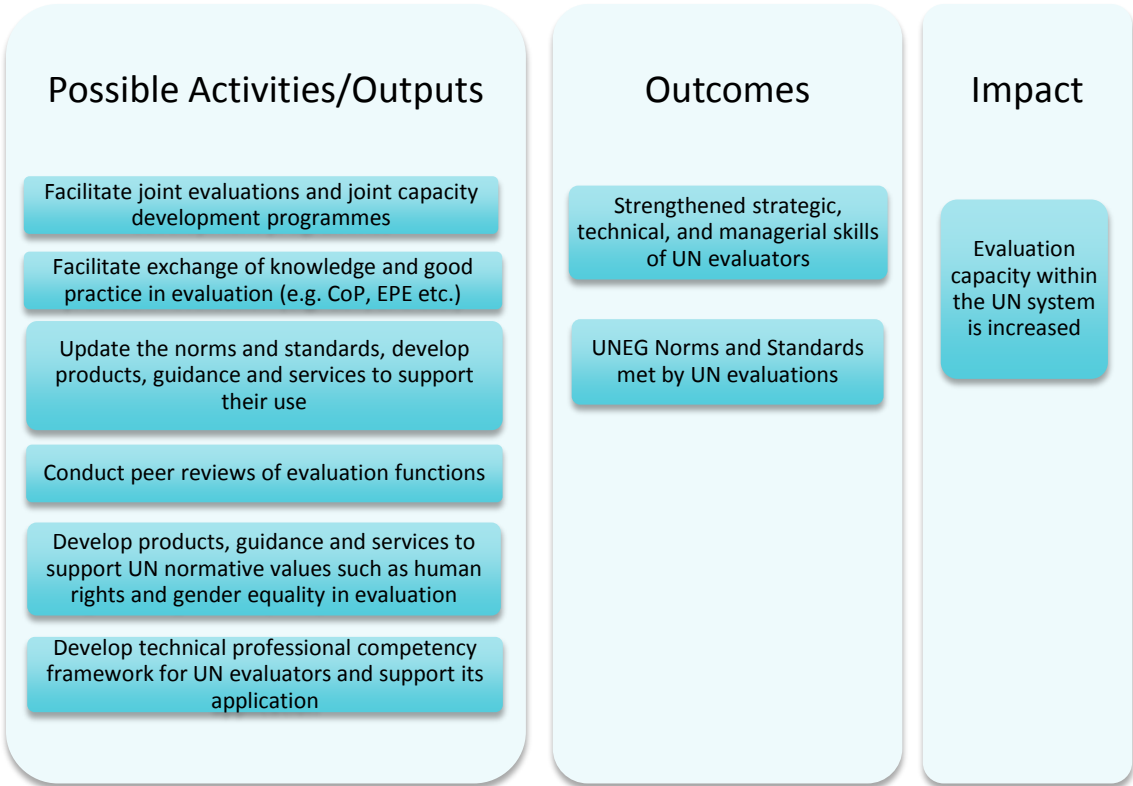
This Strategy is a framework to guide UNEG’s work. Each strategic objective has a series of associated activities and outcomes that are intended to lead to an impact, as depicted in the UNEG Impact Pathway at the end of this document. With the oversight and support of the Chair, the Vice Chairs and their associated task forces articulate how each objective is to be achieved by specifying the priority activities, outputs and outcomes.

# Strategic Objective 1 - Evaluation functions and products of UN entities meet the UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation

Building evaluation capacity within the UN has always been a core area of work for UNEG, and it continues to be UNEG’s priority. UNEG advances the professionalization of evaluation within the UN system and promotes adherence to the norms and standards through the external review processes of evaluation functions, the development of relevant guidance materials, as well as the development of a professional competency framework for UN evaluators.

Work under this strategic objective strengthens the strategic, technical and managerial skills of UN evaluators by facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences. In addition to the Evaluation Practice Exchange seminars, UNEG uses innovative capacity development methods such as communities of practice, webinars and other knowledge management tools.

The following diagram outlines possible activities, outputs and outcomes associated with this strategic objective. The Vice Chair of this strategic area, working with associated task forces, is encouraged to develop a results framework to articulate precisely how this objective will be achieved.

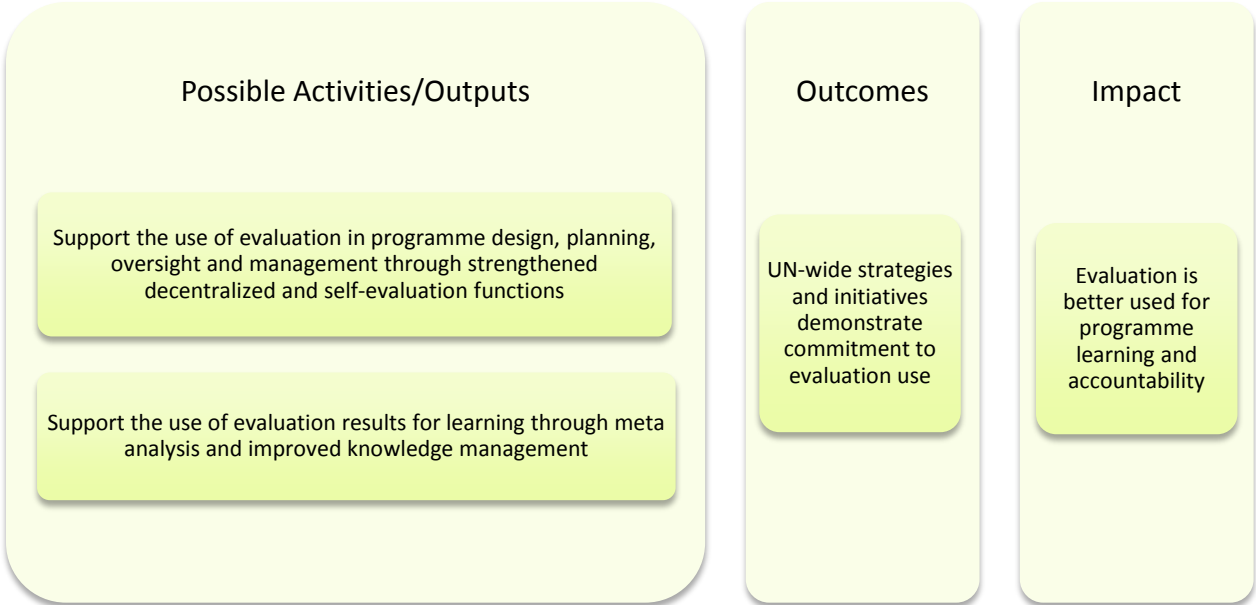


## Strategic Objective 2 - UN entities and partners use evaluation in support of accountability and programme learning

Since the Millennium Declaration in 2000, there has been a renewed focus on development effectiveness and country ownership. This implies a key role for evaluation as part of more integrated planning, programming management, and learning, recognizing that the primary responsibility rests with management.

UNEG works to support the improved utilization of evaluation by UN entities and partners by promoting the use of evaluation approaches and principles into planning and management systems, as well as strengthening the follow-up mechanisms where evaluation results are used in strategic decision-making and learning. UNEG facilitates capacity development of its partners and promotes exchange of knowledge and good practices so that evaluations are better used in their policy- and decision-making.

The following diagram outlines possible activities, outputs and outcomes associated with this strategic objective. The Vice Chair of this strategic area, working with associated task forces, is encouraged to develop a results framework to articulate precisely how this objective will be achieved.





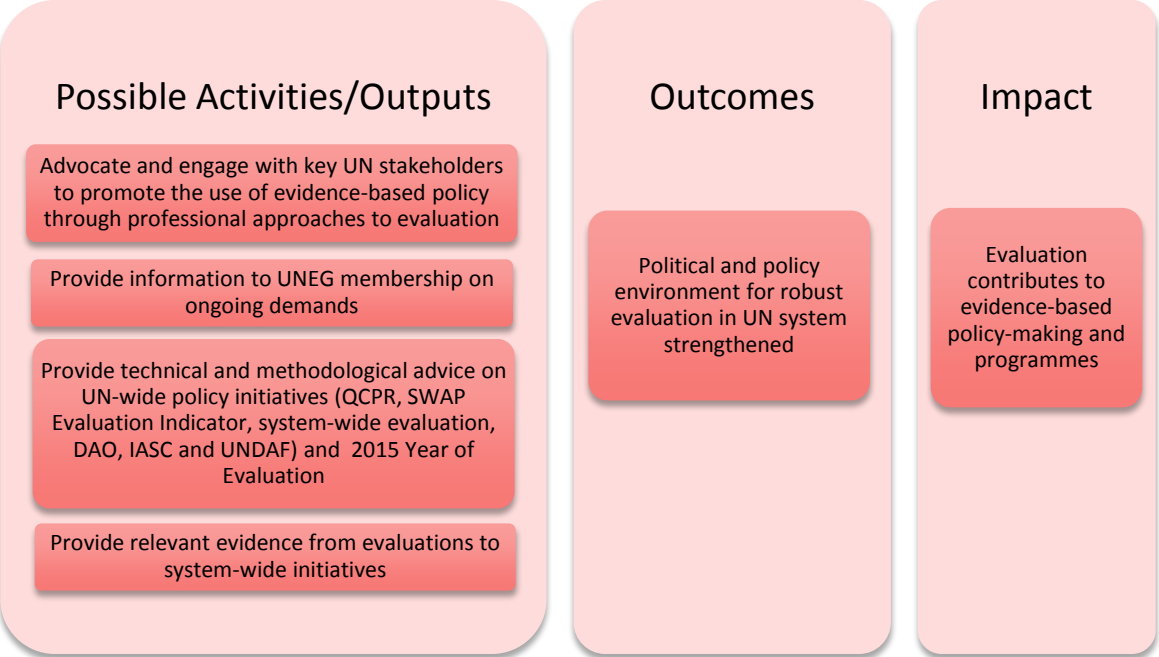
### Strategic Objective 3 - Evaluation informs UN system-wide initiatives and emerging demands

Since 2007, UNEG’s mission has been to promote the visibility and importance of evaluation for learning, decision-making and accountability within the UN system. This vision is increasingly shared by key UN stakeholders, as confirmed by the Secretary-General in his recent intervention at UNEG Evaluation Week that evaluation “has a key role to play in UN reform, accountability and effectiveness”.

This strategic objective is to better position UNEG to support decisions around UN reform processes. UNEG works to build on its profile by reaching out more directly to Member States and UN senior management, communicating what UNEG does and continuing to advocate for evaluation as a key element of the UN’s work.

The activities under this strategic objective enable UNEG to offer technical and methodological inputs to key UN initiatives (see Box 1) as well as work together with key stakeholders to create a political and policy environment that increasingly values evaluation as a key element of UN relevance and effectiveness.

The following diagram outlines possible activities, outputs and outcomes associated with this strategic objective. The Vice Chair of this strategic area, working with associated task forces, is encouraged to develop a results framework to articulate precisely how this objective will be achieved.



## Box 1. UNEG and Independent System-Wide Evaluation

UNEG participates in, fully supports, and provides normative guidance for independent system-wide evaluation (ISWE), as a member of the ISWE Coordination Secretariat housed in the Joint Inspection Unit. Below is a text from the draft Policy for Independent System-Wide Evaluation of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System.

*The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)...will contribute to the broader independent system-wide evaluation policy framework by developing support tools and approaches for undertaking joint evaluations, as well as coordinating evaluations where possible. Specific tools foreseen in this context include a Resource Pack and Tool Kit to help guide the design and implementation of joint evaluation work in cross-agency settings.<sup>1</sup> UNEG, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office (UNDOCO), will provide support for the further development and improvement of UNDAF evaluations through the provision of methodological support and advice.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Other support tools foreseen include, among others, “Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations”, and “The Role of Impact Evaluation in UN Agency Evaluation Systems: Guidance on Selecting, Planning and Managing Impact Evaluations”.

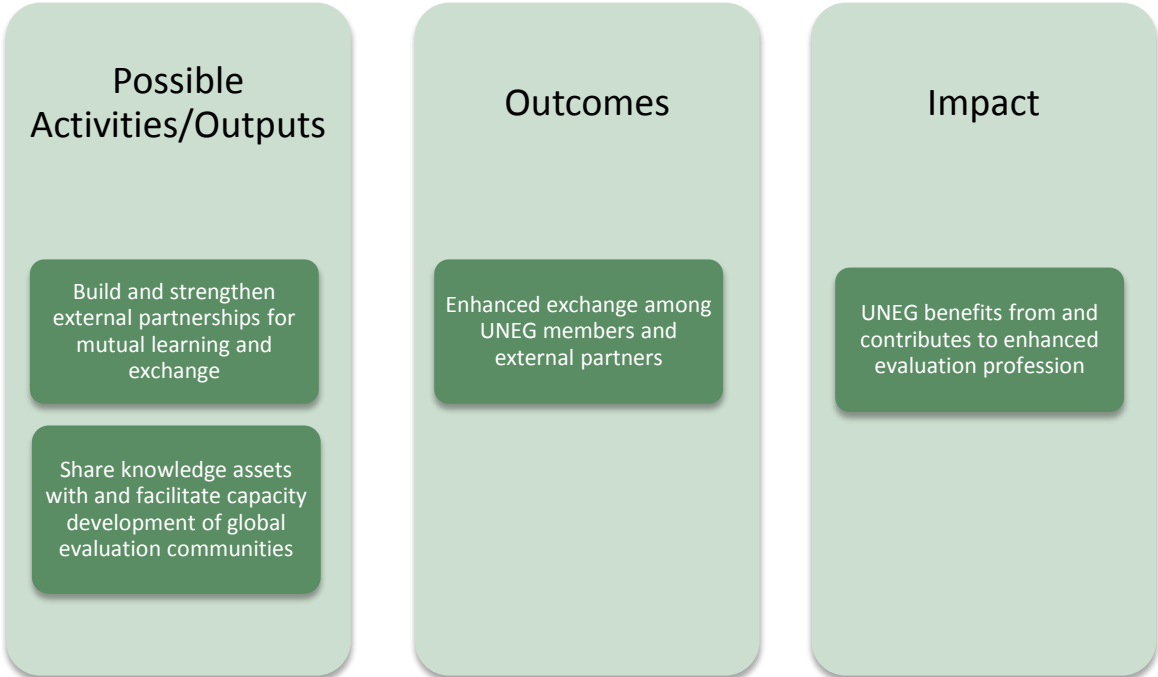
<sup>2</sup> In collaboration with UNDOCO, UNEG has prepared some useful guidance on planning and using UNDAF evaluations, including: “UNEG Guidance on Preparing Terms of Reference for UNDAF Evaluations” (2012); and “UNEG Guidance on Preparing Management Responses to UNDAF Evaluations”. The guidance has been endorsed by UNDG: <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=1532>.

# Strategic Objective 4 - UNEG benefits from and contributes to an enhanced global evaluation profession

One of the key findings of the independent assessment was that UNEG’s work has been predominantly focused on supporting internal capacity development of UN entities and, as a result, UNEG has had a limited external profile. UNEG members increasingly learn new approaches and methodologies from other groups and networks.

UNEG works to collaborate with national, regional and international evaluation networks and associations. UNEG will contribute to the international community of evaluation practice by sharing its knowledge, engaging in norm setting, and providing a venue for exchange among experts and practitioners. By working with other entities UNEG can contribute to international efforts to increase the importance of evaluation in public policy and planning.

The following diagram outlines possible activities, outputs and outcomes associated with this strategic objective. The Vice Chair of this strategic area, working with associated task forces, is encouraged to develop a results framework to articulate precisely how this objective will be achieved.



## 4. How We Will Work Together

### UNEG Membership<sup>3</sup>

A **UNEG member**<sup>4</sup> is primarily an evaluation unit<sup>5</sup> or a unit in charge of evaluation within a UN system entity (which could be a programme or a fund, a specialized agency, a department or an office of the Secretariat, or the secretariat of a commission). Membership could also be granted to an evaluation unit of an entity which works primarily through the UN system. Each entity can have one evaluation unit which represents its evaluation function as a UNEG member. The UNEG member should achieve, or strive to achieve, the UNEG Norms and Standards and should be committed to UNEG work.

Each UNEG member is represented by an individual who is normally the head of the unit. This individual is referred to as a **UNEG Head**. The UNEG Head is obliged to update regularly the UNEG Secretariat on the list of staff members in his or her unit. Where decentralized evaluation functions exist, the UNEG Head may choose to include evaluation staff from those functions.

A **UNEG observer** is an evaluation unit or a unit in charge of evaluation that is invited to participate in UNEG activities, including task forces or working groups. A UNEG observer should agree with and contribute to UNEG's mission. The mission of an observer entity should not contradict the normative values that UN espouses. A commercial entity cannot be a UNEG observer. An entity with a partisan mission that aims to benefit one party at the cost of another cannot be a UNEG observer. There is no expectation that an observer will become a member.

Those units wishing to become members or observers should contact the UNEG Secretariat for an application. Completed applications will be reviewed by UNEG Heads. If there are any objections to membership or observer status, the application will be voted upon electronically.

### Governance Bodies

The supreme decision-making body of UNEG is its **Annual General Meeting (AGM)**, where UNEG members present<sup>6</sup> will make decisions in principle by consensus. Decisions, apart from elections, are only put to a vote if requested by a minimum of five members present. Between AGMs, an **Executive Group** is established to make decisions concerning UNEG's ongoing work mandated by the AGM. For other non-trivial matters, the UNEG Chair consults all UNEG Heads.

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<sup>3</sup> The criteria for membership and observer status described herein will be applied to new applications from 2013, and the existing membership will not be revoked.

<sup>4</sup> In some cases, the staff members of a UNEG member are casually referred to as UNEG members without any implication on the definition herein.

<sup>5</sup> The word 'unit' here does not imply it must be defined as a 'Unit' under the organization's nomenclature. It could be defined as an Office, a Department, a Unit or a part of an organizational unit responsible for evaluation.

<sup>6</sup> The decisions at the AGM are taken by UNEG members, each represented by a UNEG Head or someone deputizing for the Head. Such decision-making process is normally set apart in a session within the AGM to facilitate observers and invitees to participate in other parts of the AGM.

For 2014-2019, the Executive Group is composed of the Chair, the Vice Chairs and the Executive Coordinator, and serviced by the UNEG Secretariat. The Executive Group is responsible for guiding UNEG work in line with this Strategy, and monitoring the progress towards the expected results defined for each strategic objective.

## Chair

The **UNEG Chair** is responsible for chairing the AGM, coordinating and facilitating UNEG's work to meet the strategic objectives defined in this document, and representing UNEG in external engagement.<sup>7</sup> The Chair must be a UNEG Head. He or she is elected in his or her personal (not organizational) capacity. The term of office for the Chair is in principle two years.

## Vice Chairs

The Chair is supported by several Vice Chairs. For 2014-2019, there are four Vice Chairs, each taking the lead in UNEG work towards one strategic objective. Each Vice Chair works with task forces to deliver the activities associated within his or her strategic objective and is encouraged to develop a results framework to achieve them. Annually, each Vice Chair leads the review of the progress achieved under his or her strategic objective and reports to the AGM, and suggests the way forward. Vice Chairs are elected in their personal (not organizational) capacities. The term of office for the Vice Chairs is in principle two years.

## Working methods

**Task forces** are the primary working modality of UNEG, defined by time-bound delivery of products or services. The length of a task force's work programme is not bound to one year between AGMs, as long as the multi-year work programme is clearly established. In addition, **working groups** may be established for a work programme of a continuous nature, such as knowledge management or partnership engagement. An **organizing committee** may be established for a particular event or series of events. A task force, a working group or an organizing committee is normally led by **co-chairs**, selected mutually among its members.

The **mandates** of task forces, working groups and organizing committees are established at the AGM. The co-chairs must work closely with the respective Vice Chair to ensure their work aligns with the Strategy and contributes to the strategic objective. For this purpose, task forces, working groups and organizing committees are encouraged to establish **a work plan**. The work plan should be formulated as a project (or a set of projects) with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, outputs, resourcing plan and timeline. The respective Vice Chair approves the work plan and activities therein. The mandate of task forces, working groups and organizing committees are reviewed at the AGM in the light of progress achieved towards the respective strategic objective.

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<sup>7</sup> The Chair may request other UNEG members to represent UNEG on his/her behalf.

Task forces, working groups and organizing committees can request funding from general UNEG funds managed by the UNEG Secretariat within the overall budget estimation made by the Secretariat for this purpose.

## **UNEG Secretariat**

The **UNEG Secretariat** is housed in and supported by the UNDP Evaluation Office. It is headed by the **UNEG Executive Coordinator**, who is designated by the Evaluation Office of UNDP. The UNEG Secretariat facilitates the work of UNEG, inter alia, by providing: a platform for communication and discussion among the members, including the UNEG website and communities of practice; a focal point for information, including on its members and activities, and for external communication; operational support as needed to facilitate UNEG activities, such as publications and meetings; financial management of funds entrusted to UNEG and contract management through UNDP; preparation of documentation regarding candidates for membership and observer status; and technical support to UNEG activities when resources are made available for such purpose. At AGMs, the Executive Coordinator reports on UNEG activities and financial situation to the members and makes proposals on the necessary staffing of the UNEG Secretariat.

## **Elections**

The Chair must be nominated by at least one other member, accept the nomination, and be elected by the majority of voters. If no candidate receives a majority, a run-off election shall be organized between the two candidates with the highest number of votes. For each strategic objective, one Vice Chair is elected. The Vice Chairs must be nominated by at least one other member, accept the nomination and be elected by the highest number of votes. The candidates for the Chair and the Vice Chair positions must provide a statement outlining their vision on how they wish to achieve their respective objectives.

All elections will be conducted electronically to facilitate voting by those who cannot be physically present at the AGM, and will be organized by the Executive Coordinator shortly after the AGM. If the Chair or a Vice Chair resigns from the position, a supplementary election will be organized within 3 months of the resignation.

In case the Chair or a Vice Chair is elected mid-term in a supplementary election, and if the remaining term is less than half a year, the candidate elected can continue in the position without another election at the next AGM and the term will be extended by two years. If the remaining term is more than half a year, the position will be subject to election when the original two-year term expires.

## **Funding**

UNEG members are expected to contribute annually to the general UNEG fund. This UNEG fund is managed by the UNEG Secretariat. The members are encouraged to regularize their contributions as much as possible, in line with the work plan and resource requirements presented by the Vice Chairs at the AGM and the resource mobilization strategy to be prepared. UNEG may accept funds from non-members, provided that the funds are to serve the interests of UNEG and not external interests.

The general UNEG fund is used to finance: the post of one UNEG programme specialist and required operational support for recruitment, procurement, travel, contractual management and payments; basic secretariat services such as websites, communications and publications; a portion of representation travel (up to 50 percent); and UNEG activities by the task forces, working groups and organizing committees. As a matter of principle, the general UNEG fund will not be used for purposes that would not benefit the membership at large, such as social functions or events with limited participation, or technical work or representation travel that would be of interest to only a few entities.

The UNEG Secretariat will advise the Executive Group of the budget available for funding activities of task forces, working groups and organizing committees and for representation travel. The Executive Group will make decisions on the allocation of the budget for these purposes.

UNEG members are also invited to make financial contributions to specific task forces, working groups, organizing committees, or to specific deliverables or events. In such a case, the contributing member is invited to make earmarked contributions to the general UNEG fund for transparency purposes and for the ease of post-delivery management of products and services (e.g. for reprints of publications).

## 5. Risks

In implementing the Strategy, it is important to monitor and manage risks. While developing results frameworks against each strategic objective, each Vice Chair also needs to identify relevant risks and mitigating actions.

More generally, several broad risks can be noted. First, the Strategy is implemented in a period when resources allocated to the UN are likely to decline and evaluation units may face budget cuts. This may limit not only contributions to UNEG from members but also curtail the time staff are able to devote to UNEG. It is important that UNEG monitor budgets for evaluation across the membership and advocate for maintaining adequate evaluation budgets. In this regard, an important rationale is that evaluation can help to identify waste and improve targeting of activities, thereby boosting value for money.

Second, UNEG relies on voluntary efforts by the membership. These inputs are vulnerable if staff are required to commit to competing priorities. This risk can be mitigated if staff in member organizations negotiate to include in their personal work plans objectives which are specifically linked to UNEG outputs. UNEG should encourage managers to give recognition to such tasks.

Third, organizing UNEG's work under four strategic objectives carries a risk that 'silos' will develop. To mitigate this tendency, the Vice Chairs need to seek to organize work in ways that minimize overlap and duplication. However, in addition, it is important for staff across the membership in the various task forces, working groups and organizational committees to keep in close touch to compare notes and identify synergies, etc. For this reason, periodically, the Vice Chairs may facilitate exchanges among staff, with a view to strengthening horizontal coordination, communication and networking.



## 6. Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation

In line with the good evaluation practice that UNEG seeks to promote, this Strategy will be monitored and evaluated.

To facilitate monitoring, the Vice Chairs are encouraged to develop a results framework for the duration of their tenure in their areas of responsibility, linked with the work plan of relevant task forces, working groups and organizing committees. The Vice Chairs regularly monitor the progress achieved in their work plans, and report the progress made against the respective strategic objectives and suggest the way forward at the AGM. The monitoring and reporting should enable UNEG Heads to assess whether the implementation of the Strategy is on track, and take corrective actions if needed. In addition, UNEG members may wish to conduct a mid-term review of the implementation of the Strategy in 2015-2016 and the evaluation of results achieved at the end of the Strategy period in 2018-2019.

## 7. UNEG's Impact Pathway

Evaluation is fully realized in every entity of the UN system through appropriate evaluation policies, resources, skills and activities.  
 Evidence produced by evaluation informs a more relevant, efficient and effective UN system with greater impact on the lives of the people it serves.

### Vision

