



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNDP, UNFPA AND UNOPS ANNUAL SESSION: EVALUATION (New York, 5 June 2015)**

Mr President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, the Group of 77 and China would like to compliment you for your able leadership as President of the Executive Board. Indeed, through your stewardship we would be in a better position to unlock some of the bottlenecks, which would enable all of us to agree on the language to be utilized in finalizing the revised UNDP evaluation policy.

The Group of 77 and China, greatly values the work of UNDP and its ability to respond to the development needs of programme countries in a flexible manner, and to ensure that the United Nations Development System assistance is carried out for the benefit of programme countries, at their request and in accordance with their own priorities.

As you are aware, Mr President, the Group has forwarded written submissions in an attempt to address a number of concerns pertaining to the UNDP's systems. Amongst these, we wrote to the President of the Executive Board of the UNDP on 13 March 2015, to seek clarity on the recently proposed zero draft of the New Evaluation Policy, presently under consideration. We have also expressed these in our statement at the opening session of the recently concluded Executive Board in January 2015. Following the UNDP's further request for such written comments, the Group raised the following issues:

- We have consistently underscored the importance of Evaluation Reports as a useful tool for course correction, and therefore would recommend that the new Evaluation Policy must ensure that recommendations of Evaluation Reports are complied with in a time-bound manner and their compliance be reported to the members of the Executive Board.
- With regard to the operational independence of the Evaluation Office and the process of the appointment of its Director, we have in that regard consistently emphasized the importance of ensuring the operational independence of the Office as being critical to its credibility. In this regard, we support the recommendations of the Evaluation Policy Review, as contained in Para-25 of DP/2015/5 and would request for its incorporation in the new draft Evaluation Policy. The recommendation clearly specifies the lead role of the Executive Board in the recruitment procedure for the Director of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), and that its duration, renewal and reporting be brought under the purview of the Executive Board, with the President of the Executive Board having a final say in the approval concerning the appointment of the afore-said Director position.

We have also emphasized that expenditure being incurred on evaluation processes should be capped under a reasonable percentage of the overall programme cost, so as to bring it in line with existing international practices of around five to seven percent (5-7 %) of the total programme/project cost. In no case, should expenditure incurred on evaluation alone be more than the total project/programme expenditure. A prudent analysis of this issue in this regard would assist

the United Nations Development System in channeling funds in developmental programmes and projects in host countries, in line with its mandate

Mr President,

As members of the Group of 77 and China are primary partners in the UNDP's project assistance as programming countries, the Group profoundly values and attaches the highest importance to the excellent work being done by the UNDP in programme countries. To date we have not received any formal response on the questions pertaining to the Evaluation Office. However, we continue to remain open to negotiations on this matter. A solution is therefore sought on this issue in order for it to be closed in earnest.

Mr President,

The Group of 77 and China would like to put it on record that the new draft Evaluation Policy must be finalized as a matter of urgency, with inputs from Member States being incorporated. As of now, the draft in its present form does not take into account even one of the three concerns that were raised by the Group on the Evaluation Policy. We have reached a situation whereby Member States are being forced to negotiate with the UNDP Secretariat instead of negotiating amongst members of the Executive Board. The final decision should guarantee all the necessary checks and balances befitting this important aspect.

We request the UNDP to continue further consultations amongst Member States with a view of arriving at a final draft by end of June 2015, for approval of the Executive Board at its Second Regular Session in September 2015.

For the UNDP to persist to continue with a clear-cut case of conflict of interest in the appointment of its Evaluation Director is not only undesirable but simply untenable. It is our understanding that the decisions on this matter rest with the Board, and should be undertaken only when there is an agreement on the contents of the new Evaluation policy, based on the available best practices from other international organizations worldwide while handling the terms of reference of the Independent Evaluation Offices.

It is a concern expressed by the Group of 77 and China that the UNDP Management has seemingly not taken on board proposals of the policy review as well as the Board Statements about the review of the UNDP evaluation policy.

Mr President,

The Group of 77 and China would therefore request a decision on the evaluation policy to be deferred until the next session of the Executive Board, when there is an agreement amongst Member States on the contents of the new policy.

We thus call upon the Executive Board to make recommendations on this issue during this current Annual Session, and therefore a decision on this subject can be made in the second period of Sessions considering the agreement amongst Member States on the contents of the new Evaluation Policy.

Mr President,

We urge the UNDP and all Board Members to respect the decisions that have been taken by the Board and to ensure their implementation to the fullest extent. If requests for audit reports persists

and disclosures continue to be made, not in compliance with Executive Board decisions, then it is the duty of the Board to take further measures to address the issue.

Please rest assured Mr President, of the Group's commitment to ensuring an amicable solution on the evaluation policy under discussion in order to assist in engendering the ethos of transparency and openness on these issues, going forward. This would be critical in truly making the UNDP stronger in implementing its transformative programmes, post 2015.

I thank you!