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Agenda item 7

Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-first session

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Igor **Krasnov** (Belarus)

Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

(Item 3 (b))

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives

1. At its 6th meeting, on 8 June 2011, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives (A/66/71).
2. The representative of OIOS introduced the report and responded to questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the report.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed appreciation for the report, which enabled them to understand how programmes of the United Nations Secretariat had been implemented and evaluated. They also observed that the report was comprehensive and would go a long way towards energizing evaluation processes in the Secretariat. Delegations also expressed their support for the evaluation function, noting its importance for reflection and improvement of work. The role of evaluation is a very substantive management function for any organization — the United Nations is no exception. Delegations thanked OIOS and line units in departments for the evaluation activities conducted.



4. Delegations observed that evaluations provide input for wiser decision-making on programme planning and design, and increased effectiveness and efficiency. They expressed appreciation for the active role of OIOS in strengthening accountability and welcomed the measures OIOS had taken to improve its own evaluation activities.

5. Delegations noted that the quality of the 2008-2009 self-evaluations was “satisfactory” overall, but varied widely. Concern was expressed regarding nine reports on six programmes that were rated “poor”. Further clarification was sought as to the reasons for the ratings and corrective measures taken.

6. Several delegations expressed concern about the removal of the expected accomplishment “effective self-evaluation of all programmes and subprogrammes on a regular basis” from the 2010 senior managers’ compacts with the Secretary-General and sought clarification for this action. Delegations emphasized that self-evaluation should be fully accepted as a management function.

7. Delegations noted in particular the observation contained in the report that management staff frequently did not seem to be aware of their duties with regard to self-evaluation. The view was expressed that the Committee needed to insist on a firm commitment by all staff to evaluation. Delegations also emphasized that it was important to have well-trained evaluators, and sought clarification on the use of consultants for evaluations.

8. Further concern was expressed by some delegations at the reduction in the proportion of resources envisaged for monitoring and evaluation activities in programme resources in 2010-2011 compared with the biennium 2008-2009. This would affect the quality of evaluation activities. The view was expressed that the Secretariat should attach great importance to evaluation and come up with recommendations accordingly. At the same time, other delegations noted that the lack of resources, as referred to in the OIOS report, seemed to be an arbitrary statement and did not appear to be the main obstacle to conducting evaluations in the Secretariat.

9. Further, concern was expressed that elements of evaluation culture were mentioned by focal points as being among the three biggest obstacles that programmes faced in managing and conducting self-evaluations in 2008-2009 (A/66/71, para. 51), and it was noted that a lack of sufficient financial resources was reported by 56 per cent of focal points as the biggest obstacle their programmes faced (A/66/71, para. 45).

10. In reference to paragraphs 6 and 71 (e) of the report, which stated that OIOS had engaged outside expertise to undertake respectively the quality assessment of a sample of departmental evaluations and of its own evaluation and inspection reports in 2008-2009, some delegations expressed concern as to why OIOS needed to hire external consultants for this kind of work. Further clarification was sought as to whether this was typical practice for evaluation units of programmes to assess their work when the Joint Inspection Unit or the Board of Auditors could undertake that task.

11. Noting in particular paragraph 43 of the report, the Committee stressed the importance of sufficient financial and staffing resources, as well as sufficient competencies and leadership support to ensure adequate evaluation capacities at the central, programme and subprogramme levels throughout the Secretariat.

Conclusions and recommendations

12. The Committee emphasized that evaluation was a key function for the adoption of budgetary decisions, since not only did it help to improve programme design and execution, as well as the formulation of policy directives, but also contributed to transparency, effective implementation of intergovernmental mandates and maximization of the use of resources. At the same time, it allowed Member States to follow up on programme outcomes in a systematic way.

13. Although it recognized its primary responsibilities for the coordination and programming functions, the Committee underlined the importance of the role it could and should play in evaluation.

14. The Committee noted that the effectiveness of evaluation depended, among other factors, on the quality of management indicators. It thus reiterated the need to improve the formulation of the desired outcomes, as well as the qualitative aspects of indicators, bearing in mind that they must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

15. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to take concrete measures in the competent bodies and at the appropriate levels in order to ensure that evaluation had the greatest possible impact on the medium- and long-term strategic planning of the United Nations system.

16. The Committee also recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to ensure that OIOS evaluation reports also focus on programme impact and results achieved, by improving the methodology for conducting assessments and, in particular, ensuring regular follow-up on the progress made and more comprehensive conclusions.

17. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to ensure that a more systematic approach to evaluating activities is adopted by OIOS, also in terms of the better exploitation of complementarities and synergies among all activities and of the strengthening of coordination among all relevant departments, in order to achieve more effective evaluation results and a more efficient use of available resources.

18. The Committee stressed that appropriately balanced competencies and strong commitment from staff at all managerial levels, including senior leadership support, as well as sufficient financial and staffing resources, are among the main elements required to ensure adequate conduct of evaluation activities in the Secretariat.

19. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to make better use of in-house expertise to carry out evaluations in the different entities of the Secretariat, in particular the experience accumulated by the internal and external oversight bodies.

20. The Committee selected the programme evaluations of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for consideration at its fifty-third session in 2013 and the thematic evaluation of the internal justice system of the Secretariat for consideration by the relevant intergovernmental body.
