

Professional Peer Review of the Independent Evaluation Function of the Global Environment Facility Terms or Reference

Unedited

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1. INTRODUCTION

1. The Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function is conducted in line with the Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations, and the Good Practice Standards of the Evaluation Co-operation Group.

2. This document sets out the key elements of the Third Professional Peer Review (“the Review”) of the independent evaluation function of the GEF. It describes the background of the Peer Review, the objective, the scope and general approach and methods, the composition of the Peer Review Panel (“the Panel”) and the timing. This document, approved by the Panel members, and presented to the GEF Council members for approval, serves as the Terms of Reference for the Review.

2. BACKGROUND

3. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) operates in 183 countries in partnership with international institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. Since 1992, the GEF has provided over \$17 billion in grants and mobilized an additional \$88 billion in financing for more than 4000 projects in 170 countries. An independently operating financial organization, the GEF provides grants for projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), mercury, sustainable forest management, food security, and sustainable cities. Projects and programs are implemented by 18 Agencies comprising UN organizations, Multilateral Development Banks, National Agencies and International CSOs.

4. The GEF also serves as the financial mechanism for the following conventions:

- (a) CBD Convention on Biological Diversity
- (b) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- (c) UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
- (d) Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
- (e) Minamata Convention on Mercury

5. The GEF, although not linked formally to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (MP), supports implementation of the Protocol in countries with economies in transition.

3. EVALUATION IN THE GEF

6. Evaluation in the GEF is intended to enhance accountability, to learn what works and in what context, and to inform the formulation of GEF’s programming directions, policies and procedures, and focal area strategies. GEF Agencies are responsible for monitoring, mid-term reviews and terminal evaluations of projects and programs. Evaluation offices in the Agencies review the terminal evaluations and submit these to the IEO. The IEO is an independent unit

within the GEF. IEO's mandate is to independently assess the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of GEF programs and activities, and their contribution to Global Environment Benefits. The IEO validates terminal evaluations of projects and programs and conducts performance, corporate, thematic and country evaluations. The IEO reports directly to the GEF Council ('the Council'), which decides on the IEO work program and budget and oversees IEO's work. The peer review of the IEO provides the Council with information on issues core to the effective performance of the independent evaluation function within the GEF, and on findings that may apply more broadly to the evaluation function of the GEF. The last such peer review of the IEO was conducted in 2014.

7. At the December 2018 Council meeting, the IEO proposed to the Council to undertake the Third Peer Review of the IEO as part of its regular work program. The Council approved the decision and recommended that the IEO plan and conduct the review and present the findings to the Council in June 2020. A panel has been set up to conduct the Review.

4. PURPOSE AND USE OF THE REVIEW

8. The main objective of the proposed Review is to enhance IEO's impact and strengthen its role as an independent evaluator of the GEF's work by providing suggestions and recommendations to the GEF Council. The Review should clearly identify IEO's main strengths and areas where improvement is necessary. The Review will be submitted for the Council's consideration for any changes in the mandate, direction or structure of the IEO. Operational improvements emanating from the Review will be the responsibility of the IEO.

9. The findings of the Review will be presented at the GEF Council meeting in June 2020. The findings of the Review will also be discussed with the evaluation units of the GEF Agencies to improve quality of evaluations across the partnership and presented to the ECG and UNEG members as feedback on the quality of evaluation in one of the multilateral organizations.

5. SUBJECT AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

10. The Review will build on the findings of the 2014 Review of the IEO, including an assessment of the implementation of the recommendations of that review. It will also provide a snapshot of IEO's performance against evaluation good practice standards, drawing on the Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations and the ECG Review Framework for the Evaluation Function in Multilateral Development Banks and other relevant assessment frameworks as appropriate.

11. Consistent with these frameworks for peer reviews, the Review will examine and comment on:

Independence

12. Independence of the IEO with special attention to: The independence from GEF management; impartiality/absence of bias and conflict of interest.

Relevance

13. Strategic direction of the IEO, with special attention to the alignment and relevance of IEO's work to the GEF's vision and strategic priorities and engagement across the partnership

and other key stakeholders (including GEF Agencies, Political Focal Points, Operational Focal Points, clients and other stakeholders); IEO's contribution to the field of environmental evaluation and whether it applies state-of-the-art approaches.

Policy

14. The recently re-designed evaluation policy of the GEF, as well as other policies and procedures which have a bearing on IEO and its work and in particular, the extent to which the evaluation policy is consistent with international good practice standards.

IEO Role and Contribution

15. Structural aspects of how the evaluation function operates in the GEF, including whether the current arrangements are effective in ensuring that IEO can contribute to the learning and accountability within the GEF.

16. The relationship between the IEO and:

- (a) The GEF Secretariat
- (b) The GEF coordination units of the Agencies with attention to the sharing and learning process and to their adherence to IEO guidelines
- (c) The evaluation units of GEF Agencies
- (d) The Science and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP)

Efficiency and Effectiveness

17. Efficiency and value for money, with special attention to the internal structure of the IEO; the cost of IEO evaluations relative to impact, robustness and quality and the cost of IEO evaluations as compared to other UNEG and ECG members;

18. Effectiveness, with special attention to organizational effectiveness in the ability to influence and bring about change, taking into account the quality of interaction across the partnership and the degree of follow-up of IEG recommendations through the Management Action Records (MAR);

19. Quality of evaluations with special emphasis on: adequacy of evidence and technical validity of evaluations; coherence, consistency and relevance of evaluation methodologies with good practice standards and innovative approaches among UNEG and ECG members, and state-of-the-art practices in the evaluation community, and resultant quality of evaluations; the scope of evaluations, including whether they are conducted within IEO's mandate; technical competence, objectivity and credibility of evaluation teams, and quality assurance systems; the transparency of evaluation process and criteria for assessing results and performance.

20. Usefulness of evaluations: with special attention to timeliness and relevance in the planning and completion of evaluations, as well as the actual utility of the various IEO evaluations/products to end-users (stakeholder satisfaction); dissemination and accessibility of evaluation reports, findings and lessons in terms of their reach, physical ease of access and understandability to key audiences and the extent to which IEO fosters learning from evaluations and contributes to a learning culture within the GEF.

6. CORE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

21. Consistent with good practice standards, the core assessment criteria, which will be applied to all dimensions of the Review presented above, include:

- (a) **Independence** of evaluations and the evaluation system(s). The evaluation process should be impartial and independent in its function from the process concerned with the policy making, the delivery, and the management of assistance. A requisite measure of independence of the evaluation function is a recognized pre-condition for credibility, validity and usefulness. At the same time, the Review should bear in mind that the appropriate guarantees of the necessary independence of IEO are defined according to the nature of its work, its governance and decision-making arrangements, and other factors. Moreover, like most organizations IEO's aim is to encourage the active application and use of evaluations at all levels of management, meaning that systemic measures for ensuring the necessary objectivity and impartiality of this work should receive due attention.
- (b) **Credibility** of evaluations. The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency and inclusiveness of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment. Whether and how the organization's approach to evaluation fosters partnership and helps builds ownership and capacity in developing countries merits attention as a major theme.
- (c) **Utility** of evaluations. To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the various stakeholders. Importantly, each review should bear in mind that ensuring the utility of evaluations is only partly under the control of evaluators. It is also critically a function of the interest of managers, and member countries through their participation on governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving and using evaluations.

7. PROCESS

Selection of the Panel

22. The Review will be conducted by a Panel of four independent members, supported by an Adviser, who have been selected by the IEO with adherence to the criteria outlined below. The Panel members will be chosen for their high international professional stature, evaluation expertise, and deep knowledge of environmental issues.

23. The selection criteria for the Panel are based on the following:

- (a) High international professional stature and deep knowledge of environmental issues and challenges on the ground;
- (b) Knowledge of the context and use of independent evaluation in multilateral organizations, particularly in partnerships;

- (c) Professional evaluation expertise and standing in the evaluation community, or high-level experience and expertise in an oversight discipline;
- (d) Senior-level expertise in the management and conduct of evaluations in peer organizations.

Panel Composition

24. A number of important considerations are taken into account when composing the Panel membership: (i) relevant professional experience; (ii) independence – to avoid any potential or alleged conflict of interest or partiality, the panel members don't have any close working relationship to GEF that might influence the Panel's position and deliberations; and (iii) balanced regional and gender representation. The selected Panel members will have no financial or other relationships with the GEF or IEO over the last five years that might influence their assessments, deliberations and conclusions.

25. The combination of the criteria and considerations above, together with the voluntary nature of serving on the Panel resulted in the following composition:

- Mrs. Saraswathi Menon, former Director of UNDP Independent Evaluation Office and past-Chair of UNEG (panel Chair)
- Mr. Marvin Taylor-Dormond, Director General, Independent Evaluation, Asian Development Bank
- Mr. Michael Spilsbury, Director of Evaluation, UNEP.

26. The Panel will be assisted by a lead Adviser, Ms. Tullia Aiazzi, who is responsible for data collection and information gathering; preliminary assessment of the collected information which is to form the basis for more detailed information gathering through structured and semi-structured interviews. The Adviser will provide the Panel with a consolidated information base, specifying the sources. With the benefit of the information assembled by the Adviser, its examination by the members of the Panel, and observations provided by GEF on the information gathered, the Panel will conduct interviews with IEO staff, senior Secretariat staff, other senior staff in the Agencies and partner organizations, and a selection of Council Members. The Adviser will also be responsible for drafting the Review, addressing the comments of the Panel members and finalizing the report.

Responsibility of IEO

27. IEO serves as the main contact point within GEF for the Panel and its Adviser. IEO will provide requested information and data, including:

- (a) the names and details of contact persons whom the Panel or its Adviser wish to contact, including contact points in GEF Agencies,
- (b) the complete list of IEO's evaluations,
- (c) an e-library accessible via internet

28. IEO will provide periodic updates to the Council (through an Informal Meeting) about the Review. IEO will also be responsible for submitting the Panel's report and recommendations to the Council and for reporting on follow-up action.

29. The Panel and the IEO will provide the UNEG and ECG with feedback on the experience of the Peer Review to enable the members of both groups to learn from IEO's experience.

8. REPORTING

30. The Panel will submit its report to IEO for discussion. The Panel will discuss its draft report with the IEO, the Secretariat the Council and present the final report at the June 2020 Council meeting. The Panel will be fully responsible for the content of the report.

Review Process and Schedule

Recruitment of Adviser to the Panel and provision of documents from IEO	April 2019
Initial meeting of the Panel to discuss details of the task and to familiarise itself with the GEF evaluation work, agree on the approach paper and work plan and finalize the terms of reference for the Adviser to the Panel.	June 2019
Desk review undertaken by the Adviser: During this phase the Adviser will analyse documentation and produce a draft factual report to the Panel containing, next to the analysis, an identification of issues for further in-depth discussion and follow-up by the Panel.	End-August 2019
Meeting of the Panel with the Adviser to discuss the factual report and issues raised by the desk study phase. Work plan from Panel and Adviser.	September 2019
Production of interview guides by the Adviser and Panel.	September 2019
Panel and Adviser visit to GEF and World Bank headquarters in Washington, and to UNDP headquarters in New York to conduct interviews.	September/October 2019
Panel Chair + one or two Members to meet with GEF Council Members: update of Review process.	December 2019
Country visits as determined by Panel.	January 2020
Meeting of the Panel with the Adviser. During the two days meeting the Panel and the Adviser will share notes, agree on the answers to the normative framework for judgement, consider evidence and findings in order to arrive at draft conclusions and recommendations, and agree on an outline for the draft report.	March 2020
Draft Report.	March 2020
Review by the Panel of the draft report.	March 2020
Production of the final version of the Review.	April 2020
Presentation of the final report to the Council by Panel Chair.	June 2020