



INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION

EVALUATION REPORT

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the executive direction and management function:

“The Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ executive direction and management function has begun a robust Department-wide initiative to improve coherence and strategic focus; the degree of positive impact that the Department achieves in the future is likely to be correlated to the success of this initiative”

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INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION

FUNCTION

“The Office shall evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the programmes and legislative mandates of the Organization. It shall conduct programme evaluations with the purpose of establishing analytical and critical evaluations of the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, examining whether changes therein require review of the methods of delivery, the continued relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates as they may be reflected in the approved budgets and the medium-term plan of the Organization.”
(General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B)

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**Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation
of the executive direction and management function:**

“The Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ executive direction and management function has begun a robust Department-wide initiative to improve coherence and strategic focus; the degree of positive impact that the Department achieves in the future is likely to be correlated to the success of this initiative”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) as a priority programme for evaluation based on a strategic risk assessment carried out in 2008. This evaluation report on the executive direction and management of DESA is one of eleven detailed assessments of DESA’s ten divisions and offices, as well as its executive direction and management function. All of these evaluation reports will be issued to DESA as internal management reports. OIOS also submitted an evaluation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as a whole, to the Committee for Programme and Coordination pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/229.¹

The Department’s executive direction and management function is tasked with ensuring the implementation of the legislative mandates and management of the programme of work of one of the Secretariat’s most diverse entities. In line with the current organizational structure of DESA, for purposes of this evaluation, OIOS grouped together the following under the executive direction and management function:

- Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, including the Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development and the Assistant-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs
- Executive and Programme Support Office
- Communication and Management Information Services
- Capacity Development Office (a portion of which was formerly the Technical Cooperation and Management Office)
- Strategic Planning Unit

In undertaking the evaluation, OIOS examined the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness (including impact) of the executive management and direction function. It used a range of quantitative and qualitative methods, including a document review, staff and stakeholder interviews, staff and stakeholder surveys, field missions, direct observation of intergovernmental meetings, a bibliometric analysis of the usage of

¹ [E/AC.51/2011/2](#) (29 March 2011) Programme evaluation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Report of the OIOS, “DESA has effectively supported intergovernmental decision-making, the global statistical system and progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, but fell short in its system-wide coordination work and was challenged by low visibility and weak internal synergies.”

DESA publications and an expert panel review of the quality of a sample of key DESA publications. The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the norms and standards for evaluation established by the United Nations Evaluation Group.

The evaluation results of DESA's executive direction and management function showed that it must operate within a broad Departmental mandate that includes a diverse range of functions and activities. Faced with the challenge of bringing strategic focus to a Secretariat programme with a broad mandate, DESA's executive direction and management function has taken steps to integrate the capacities of the different organizational units of the Department with a view toward maximizing complementarities and synergies within the Department. For example, the Office of the Under-Secretary-General has sought greater inter-divisional collaboration and integrated work programme implementation by establishing DESA-wide working groups, as well as including in his Compact with the Secretary-General, a pledge to work toward "increased coordination and coherence of work across divisional lines..." These leadership actions aimed at improved DESA-wide coordination were positively acknowledged by DESA Division Director interviewees and other DESA interviewees.

Other executive management and direction functions made similar contributions. The Strategic Planning Unit had some early successes, including actions in the areas of strategic priority advancement, Department-wide collaborations and engagement with DESA stakeholders. As one example, the Unit worked with divisions to develop 10 MDG policy initiatives that were included in the draft 2010 Summit outcome document and spearheaded the initiative to prepare DESA's first-ever Department-wide action plan to follow-up on the Summit. The Capacity Development Office was instrumental in getting a capacity development strategy in place that outlined five priority areas for the Department to concentrate its capacity development work on. DESA demonstrated initial success in each of the five capacity development areas. Also, the Executive Office worked more closely with the Office of Human Resources Management to screen applicants and institute written tests in an effort to improve efficiency. And, the Communications and Information Management Unit played an important role in contributing to the improvement of DESA's visibility and messaging to external stakeholders.

The Office of the Under-Secretary-General has provided strong leadership to promote DESA-wide coordination; however, a Department-wide shared vision is still being formed. While a good degree of internal shared vision had been achieved --69 per cent of staff survey respondents reported that DESA has an internally shared vision on how to implement its mandate-- room still existed for improvement. Approximately one-third of DESA staff survey respondents (31 per cent) reported that the Department did not have an internally shared vision of how to implement its mandate and management and staff interviewees cited the need for more robust cross-divisional agreement on key priorities, work methods and approaches to inter-Departmental collaboration.

The time is ripe for DESA to increase Department-wide buy-in of the substantive strategic priorities that have recently been defined. Further progress in this direction would provide a strengthened foundation for Department-wide action on key cross-

cutting issues, and related actions to engage stakeholders and strategic partners. Related to this, important Department-wide work also remained to implement the newly agreed upon Capacity Development Strategy Statement that was finalized in the first half of 2011. While a detailed implementation plan was under development, the degree to which sufficient DESA-wide clarity and coherence will be achieved to improve DESA's results in the capacity development arena remains, to a large degree, a future prospect.

There was also evidence that DESA's vision for its work has not been fully communicated its partners. The majority of senior leaders from other United Nations entities who were interviewed reported that DESA's functions and responsibilities were not clear.

And, with regard to the Executive Office function, despite a few progressive initiatives, staff recruitment processes continued to be perceived by managers as adversely affecting the achievement of programme effectiveness. Also, while the Communications and Information Management Unit played an important role in contributing to improvements in DESA's visibility and messaging to external stakeholders, the results of the OIOS DESA-wide programme evaluation indicated that DESA's communication and information efforts could benefit from more coherent "branding."

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I. Introduction

1. The [Inspection and Evaluation Division \(IED\)](#) of the [Office of Internal Oversight Services \(OIOS\)](#) identified the [Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(DESA\)](#) as a priority programme for evaluation based on a strategic risk assessment exercise carried out in 2008. The forty-ninth session of the [Committee for Programme and Coordination \(CPC\)](#) selected that evaluation to be presented for consideration at its fifty-first session.² The selection was formally mandated by the ensuing General Assembly [resolution 64/229](#) on Programme Planning.

2. In conjunction with the DESA-wide programme evaluation, OIOS-IED prepared eleven subprogramme evaluations, one for each DESA Division or Office, as well as this report covering the executive direction and management function of the Department. The current report is based on data collection that OIOS-IED undertook from September 2010 through February 2011 and will be presented to the Office of the Under Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs. The evaluation considered DESA's Strategic Framework and budget for the 2010-2011 biennium as the primary benchmark against which to measure its performance, but also reviewed data from the past three biennia.

3. This assessment is unique; unlike other subprogramme evaluations, it combines a number of related functions. In line with the current operational structure of DESA, OIOS grouped together the following under the executive direction and management function, for purposes of evaluation:³

- Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (OUSG), including the Assistant-Secretary-General (ASG) for Economic Development and the Assistant-Secretary-General (ASG) for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs
- Executive and Programme Support Office (EO)
- Communication and Management Information Services (CIMS)
- Capacity Development Office (a portion of which was formerly the Technical Cooperation and Management Office) (CDO)
- Strategic Planning Unit (SPU)

4. At the time of data collection, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women was part of DESA's executive function; it was evaluated separately and those results were issued in a separate programme evaluation report.⁴ Furthermore, the evaluation did not include an assessment of CDO work related to Development Account management or projects. Instead the focus was on the strategic work performed by SPU and the new CDO Programme Development function that is tasked with developing and implementing an integrated capacity development strategy. Both of these functions had been operational for a relatively short period at the time of OIOS data collection.⁵ Moreover, given the complexities of the functions, the SPU and CDO results in this report are early implementation assessments, as opposed to full assessments of

² Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, July 2009, [A/64/16\(SUPP\)](#), paragraph 41.

³ See background section of this evaluation report for programme budget information on these functions.

⁴ IED-11-011 (6 June 2011).

⁵ SPU was established in February 2010. The creation of CDO, in February 2009, by the USG was a strengthening of the former Technical Cooperation Management Service through the consolidation of that long standing function and a new Programme Development function.

results achieved. Also, because of the Department-wide nature of the work performed by DESA's executive management and direction function, the results in this evaluation report are provided within the context of the OIOS DESA-wide programme evaluation report that was issued separately.⁶

5. This report incorporates revisions based on comments received through ongoing dialogue with the executive management and direction functions (as defined above) during the drafting process. Final EDM comments are appended in full, as per practice instituted further to General Assembly [resolution 64/263](#).

II. Methodology

6. In conducting this evaluation, OIOS utilised a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, drawing on data from the following twelve sources:

- i. **A document analysis** of DESA's strategic framework and other programme and project documents; service delivery records; monitoring and reporting information from [IMDIS](#) and senior management compacts; United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs); General Assembly resolutions; and prior evaluations, studies and audit reports;
- ii. **68 interviews of all DESA senior managers;**
- iii. **131 interviews of a stratified random sample of DESA staff in all divisions and offices;**⁷
- iv. **240 interviews of subprogramme and executive direction and management stakeholders** (including Member States permanent representatives, government officials, civil society organisations, academics, and staff and management from the United Nations System), conducted in New York and over the phone;
- v. **Field missions** to Thailand, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and South Africa;⁸
- vi. **A web-based survey of all DESA management and staff;**⁹
- vii. **Web-based surveys of a non-random sample of stakeholders for each of the 10 DESA subprogrammes and its Executive Direction and Management function;**¹⁰

⁶ [E/AC.51/2011/2](#) (29 March 2011).

⁷ Stratified random samples of DESA staff in all Divisions and Offices were drawn to ensure representation of staff at all levels at a 90 per cent confidence interval.

⁸ These countries were chosen for field missions based on a mapping of DESA's stakeholders, capacity development and technical assistance projects, and division-level regional and country level engagement.

⁹ The survey was sent to 540 staff members and 310 responded, yielding a 57 per cent response rate.

¹⁰ The 11 surveys were sent to a total of 1,418 individual stakeholders (encompassing all 10 DESA subprogrammes and its Executive Direction and Management), and 399 responded, yielding a 28 percent overall response rate. The same instrument was used for all 11 surveys, but administered to a different sample of stakeholders as relevant for the individual subprogrammes. Data reported are at the aggregate level.

- viii. **A web-based survey of a non-random sample of 40 United Nations entity heads;**¹¹
- ix. **A survey of all 192 Member State permanent representatives** of the United Nations;¹²
- x. **Observations of intergovernmental meetings** serviced by DESA;¹³
- xi. **An independent expert panel review** of the quality and usage of a non-random sample of 18 DESA key publications and databases;¹⁴ and
- xii. **A bibliometric analysis** on the usage of DESA publications, including citation metrics (Google Scholar), website traffic data, publication download data, and the dissemination practices of the same non-random sample of 18 DESA publications assessed by the expert panel.

7. The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the evaluation norms and standards established by the [United Nations Evaluation Group \(UNEG\)](#). The evaluation results are derived from a combination of documentary, testimonial, observational and analytical evidence. Data were triangulated to strengthen the robustness of the evaluation. Individual citations have been used as illustrative of wider testimony resulting from multiple stakeholders.

8. The evaluation had three methodological limitations. First, the relatively low response rates for the stakeholder and Member State surveys mean that the results could not be generalized to represent the views of DESA's stakeholders and Member States as a whole. Second, the expert panel review included only 18 DESA publications and databases; although these were recommended by DESA as representing its key publications, the small sample size limited the extent to which the results of the review could be generalized to the universe of all DESA publications. To address these limitations, OIOS triangulated data from multiple sources to determine the results.

¹¹ The survey was sent to 40 entities and 17 responded, yielding a 43 percent response rate.

¹² All 192 Member States received a paper-based survey to which 27 responded, a 14 percent response rate.

¹³ 32 intergovernmental meetings were observed of the Economic and Social Affairs Council, Committee of Experts on Public Administration, Commission on Sustainable Development, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the Commission on Population and Development, and the MDG summit.

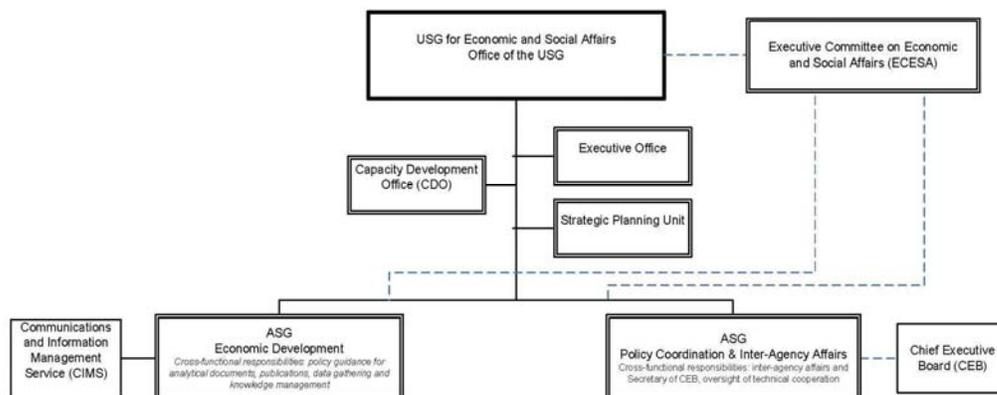
¹⁴ The panel consisted of three independent academic researchers with economic and social expertise covering a range of regional specializations and topics. The 18 publications and databases were selected in consultation with DESA as representative of DESA's key work. These were: (1) UN e-Government Survey (2010), (2) Report of the 9th Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration ([E/2010/44 – E/C.16/2010/5](#)), (3) Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the UN Development system ([A/62/73 – E/2007/52](#)), (4) Achieving Sustainable Development and Promoting Development Cooperation - Dialogues at the ECOSOC (2008), (5) The World Population Prospects 2008 Revision, (6) World Population Monitoring of 2009, (7) Building Inclusive Financial Sectors for Development (2006), (8) Report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to and implementation of the Monterrey consensus and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development (2010), (9) World Economic and Social Survey (2010), (10) World Economic Situation and Prospects (2010), (11) Report on the World Social Situation (2010), (12) World Youth Report (2007), (13) Handbook for legislation on violence against women, (14) World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, (15) System of National Accounts (2008), (16) The World's Women (2010), (17) Sustainable Development Innovation Briefs, Issue Nr. 6, (18) Progress to date and remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits in the area of sustainable development ([A/CONF.216/PC/2](#)).

III. Background

9. Promoting international economic and social cooperation was identified as a fundamental purpose of the United Nations by its founders. Chapters IX and X of the United Nations Charter provide details on the rationale for international economic and social co-operation and the functions and role of the [Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\)](#) as the central intergovernmental forum, with the power to initiate studies, convene meetings, draft conventions and make recommendations for action by Member States and the United Nations system. DESA serves as ECOSOC’s Secretariat, providing substantive support to it and the majority of its subsidiary bodies, including functional commissions and expert groups. Within this context, DESA supports policy and normative work in the General Assembly.

10. The objective of the Executive Direction and Management of DESA as set forth in the 2010-2011 Programme Budget is “To ensure full implementation of legislative mandates and compliance with United Nations policies and procedures with respect to the management of the programme of work and of staff and financial resources, including programme aspects of the programme budget and programme monitoring and evaluation.” In line with this, the Under-Secretary-General (USG) is responsible for overall executive direction, supervision and management of the Department’s mandates and approved work programme. The Department implements ten different subprogrammes, each by a different division or office managed by a Director reporting to the USG. Additionally, the USG is the programme manager of the Development Account with accountability for its effective management. As indicated para 3 of this report, the USG is assisted by the ASG for Economic Development and the ASG for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs. And, organizationally, the EO, CIMS, CDO and SPU substantive functions are serviced by staff assigned to the Department’s executive direction and management function. See Chart 1 below.

Chart 1: Executive Direction and Management Function Organigramme
(includes governing inter-governmental bodies)



11. The work of today's executive direction and management function is performed within the context of a Secretariat economic and social affairs structure that has changed over time. The most recent major restructuring of the Department occurred with organizational reforms introduced in 1997.¹⁵ These reforms also led to the establishment of four Executive Committees with coordination functions, with the responsibility as Convener of the Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs (ECESA) assigned to the USG of DESA.¹⁶

12. The mandate and work of the Department, including the executive direction and management function, has also unfolded against the backdrop of United Nations conferences and summits involving the adoption of an array of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

13. The 2010-2011 Strategic Framework for DESA articulates its overall orientation and objective as promoting and supporting international cooperation in the pursuit of sustained economic growth, the eradication of poverty and hunger, and sustainable development for all. While focused on advancing the development pillar, the programme seeks to contribute to a mutually reinforcing relationship among the three pillars of the United Nations work: peace and security, development and human rights.¹⁷ While day to day management is performed by DESA Directors, DESA's executive direction and management is responsible for coordinating the management of all key Departmental functions, which include:

- a) research and analysis on development issues and support to the global statistical system;
- b) normative and policy support to intergovernmental processes;
- c) assistance in capacity development to support implementation of global conference outcomes at country level; and,
- d) fostering collaboration and partnerships within the United Nations, civil society and private sector.

14. DESA-wide estimated expenditures for 2010-2011 were approximately USD 302 million, comprising USD 168 million in regular budget (RB) and USD 133 million of extrabudgetary (XB) resources. The DESA-wide programme of work mandated by 2010-2011 budget had a total of 2845 outputs scheduled for implementation during the biennium.¹⁸

15. Allocations for the executive direction and management and programme support functions -- the aggregate focus of this evaluation-- are listed in Table 1 below. As can be seen in Table 1, resources directly allocated for executive direction and management (as EDM is defined in the programme budget) totalled approximately USD 6.8 million. Programme support resources for the Executive Office and Information Support Unit totalled approximately USD 97 million.¹⁹

¹⁵ [A/51/950](#), "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform"; and General Assembly [resolution 52/12](#), "Renewing the United Nations".

¹⁶ Secretary-General's Bulletin on Organization of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, [ST/SGB/1997/9](#),

¹⁷ [A/63/6 \(Part One\)](#); Proposed strategic framework for the period 2010-2011: plan outline.

¹⁸ [A/64/6 \(Sect. 9\)](#), Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011, Part IV, International cooperation for development, Section 9, Economic and social affairs.

¹⁹ [A/64/6 \(Sect. 9\)](#), Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011, Part IV, International cooperation for development, Section 9, Economic and social affairs.

Component	Regular Budget (RB)	Extra-budgetary (XB)	TOTAL	Total Posts Number (RB + XB)
B. Executive direction and management	6 781.3	-	6 781.3	16
D. Programme support		85 356.4		
1. Executive Office	8 681.0			35
2. Information Support Unit	2 925.6			10
SUBTOTAL D	11 606.6	85 356.4	96 963.0	45

IV. Results

A. DESA's executive direction and management function must operate within a broad Departmental mandate that includes a diverse range of functions and activities

16. DESA's executive direction and management is faced with the challenge of bringing strategic focus to a Secretariat programme with a broad mandate by "ensuring the effective integration of the capacities of the different organizational units of the Department for normative, analytical and technical cooperation work, with a view to maximizing complementarity and synergy within the Department as a whole."²¹

17. The performance of DESA's executive direction and management function, as well as the challenges that it has faced in leading the Department forward, are best understood within a historical context. DESA was established following the 1997 call for reform of the Secretary-General, to produce a more coherent response to the needs of the General Assembly and ECOSOC. DESA's establishment consolidated functions that had been previously dispersed throughout the Secretariat.²² Subsequently, in 2002, recognising the complexity of DESA's work and the demands placed on it for servicing ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, including supporting internationally accepted development goals, the Secretary-General recommended the further strengthening of DESA.²³

18. DESA's executive direction and management function manages the work of 10 subprogrammes which, together, support and serve as Secretariat to 12 different policymaking intergovernmental bodies (see Annex I). DESA is also responsible for policy analysis and capacity development work, much of which flows from the intergovernmental mandates of these bodies.

²⁰ Component "C. Programme of work", as presented in source document, is not shown here because this evaluation report does not cover the programme of work of these sub-programmes. Also of note, based on DESA data provided to OIOS in May 2011, of the approximately 85.4 million (XB) for programme support only 4.4 million relates to funding that directly supports the cost of the DESA capacity development office operations. Most of the balance of these resources relate to operational projects which are managed centrally by the Capacity Development Office on behalf of the United Nations Secretariat. Examples include the associate expert programme and the Cambodia court.

²¹ [A/60/6 \(Sect. 9\)](#), Proposed Programme Budget for the biennium 2006-2007, para 9.41.

²² A/51/950 "Renewing the United Nations: Report of the Secretary General," 1997, para 138.

²³ A/57/387 "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change: Report of the Secretary General," September 2002 para 130. Action 16.

As a result of the Department's history and its current support of a large number of different intergovernmental bodies, DESA's executive direction and management function faces a number of challenges. First, it faces the challenge of bringing strategic focus to a Secretariat Department with a very diverse set of functions and intergovernmental mandates and an even wider group of stakeholders. Secondly, it must build a foundation for inter-divisional collaboration and joint project development among DESA subprogrammes that have historically operated within a variety of organizational arrangements different than those that form today's Department. Also, DESA's executive management must establish a framework that allows its subprogrammes to simultaneously deliver normative and policy support, to meet the needs of the intergovernmental bodies that DESA provides substantive support to, and at the same time ensure that the varied work of all divisions remains coordinated and coherent across the Department. Additionally, the executive direction and management of DESA has a coordination mandate that extends beyond DESA to other social and economic development entities in the United Nations system.

B. The Office of the Under-Secretary-General has provided strong leadership to promote DESA-wide coordination; however, a Department-wide shared vision is still being formed

19. The Office of the Under-Secretary-General (OUSG) consists of a D-1 and 6 additional professional staff, as well as 6 general service level staff.²⁴ The USG is assisted by the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs.

20. As reported in the OIOS DESA-wide evaluation report (E/AC.51/2011/2) a need exists for greater inter-divisional collaboration. To date, the OUSG has accurately assessed and taken actions to address a number of related challenges. Executive management steps to facilitate coordination of divisional work programme implementation included the following: initiating DESA-wide working groups; holding regular weekly meetings of DESA senior management, including all Division Directors, and sharing minutes with all DESA staff; sending weekly Division work status reports being to the USG and sharing these within the Department; DESA Alert; and, DESA News. Also, in his Compact with the Secretary-General, the DESA USG pledged to work toward "increased coordination and coherence of work across divisional lines, including increased number of joint research and analytical products by DESA Divisions and Offices".²⁵

21. Information sharing remains a priority of the OUSG. OUSG leadership actions aimed at improved DESA-wide coordination, such as those referenced above, were positively acknowledged by DESA Division Director interviewees, as well as many other DESA staff interviewees, with the achievement of some initial improvements in cross-divisional communication referenced by some interviewees.

22. The OUSG has also provided leadership by recognizing the need for continued work to refine DESA's strategic focus. The Office was proactive in its development of new DESA entities that support highly relevant strategic work: first, the CDO to bring greater strategic focus and impact to the operationalization of the Department's capacity development work, and second, the

²⁴ Based on information provided to OIOS in April 2011, as well as programme budget documentation.

²⁵ Senior Managers's Compact with Secretary-General, 2010, DESA, p.1.

SPU, to assist the USG in specific strategic planning processes geared toward defining substantive priorities, enabling Department-wide action on key cross-cutting issues, as well as related efforts to engage stakeholders and strategic partners. Additionally, the OUSG's leadership has played a key role in the achievement of Department-wide results, including effective support of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and related intergovernmental bodies and DESA-wide contributions to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, including the monitoring of their progress.

23. While a good degree of internal shared vision had been achieved --69 per cent of staff survey respondents reported that DESA has an internally shared vision on how to implement its mandate-- room still existed for improvement. Approximately one-third of DESA staff survey respondents (31 percent) reported that the Department did not have an internally shared vision of how to implement its mandate and management and staff interviewees cited the need for more robust cross-divisional agreement on key priorities, work methods and approaches to inter-Departmental collaboration.

24. The OUSG has also not fully communicated its vision to its partners. The majority of senior leaders from other United Nations entities who were interviewed reported that DESA's functions and responsibilities were not clear. Nine out of twelve (that volunteered relevant comments) reported problems with clarity of DESA functions and responsibilities. This indicates that DESA has additional work to do in order to effectively communicate a coherent vision of its work to its partners and stakeholders. The OUSG has taken relevant steps including: sharing outcomes of all major inter-governmental processes with ECESA members and other partners; participating in a 2010 scanning and scouting exercise that provided an opportunity for DESA and its partners to share information on areas of mutual interest; and, participating in the ECESA's 10 standing working groups organized around thematic clusters, which provided a forum for partners to share information on a regular basis.

25. As indicated in the companion DESA-wide evaluation report, an unresolved challenge facing the OUSG is the absence of a DESA strategic plan for its coordination activities; it does not have a dedicated capacity (a post or office) to focus on DESA's coordination with United Nations partners.²⁶ The current ASG for Policy Coordination and Inter-agency Affairs has responsibility for providing senior support to system-wide issues of coordination, policy development and cooperation in the economic and social fields to intergovernmental bodies, including the General Assembly, ECOSOC and Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB), thus assuming a broader coordination role for the whole Secretariat. This leaves little, if any, time to focus on DESA-specific coordination activities. Senior management in the Department has identified the need to strengthen coordination with United Nations partners as a constraint to the full effectiveness of the Department.

C. The Strategic Planning Unit began work that assisted the Under-Secretary-General in defining substantive strategic priorities for the Department; this work needs to be sustained and strengthened for higher impact

²⁶ Insert CPC report reference.

26. In February 2010, the DESA Under-Secretary-General established the Strategic Planning Unit (SPU), housed within the OUSG. In interviews DESA managers indicated that the SPU is tasked with assisting the USG in defining substantive strategic priorities for the Department, enabling Department-wide action on key cross-cutting issues and undertaking related actions to engage stakeholders and strategic partners.²⁷ Prior to the establishment of the SPU there were visible gaps in the performance of such functions. The SPU is currently comprised of two staff members, a D-1 and a P-5. While one year is a relatively short span for strategic planning to take root in a large Department such as DESA, the Unit has begun to make headway.

27. The SPU has had some early successes. These include actions in the areas of strategic priority advancement, Department-wide collaborations and engagement with stakeholders. Specifically:²⁸

- The SPU worked with divisions to develop 10 MDG policy initiatives that were included in the draft 2010 Summit outcome document and spearheaded the initiative to prepare DESA's first-ever Department-wide action plan to follow-up on the Summit.
- The Unit supported the USG in his role as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). It proposed and assisted with implementation of the establishment of a group of special advisors to the Secretary-General and organized retreats for groups of Member States on the key sustainable development issues.
- The SPU led Department-wide consultations culminating in the establishment, by the USG, of a new Task Force on Conflict, Disaster and Development, which has launched a number of initiatives, including policy briefs and a joint Development Account project.
- The Unit supported the USG in the initiation of several Department-wide reviews in the area of communications. These included the establishment of a network of focal points on International Years and a review with the OUSG and DPI on best practices for impact oriented dissemination of publications. SPU also supported the USG in devising a DESA-wide strategy on Youth and has initiated and supported new Department-wide collaboration on financing for development issues and the related establishment of a network of focal points led by FfDO.
- The SPU was also involved in actions that promoted closer, more regular cooperation among ECESA members and initiated the concept of the 'ECESA Plus' meetings on issues such as the MDGs and Rio+20 to bring ECESA and UNDG's work closer together.
- The SPU strengthened DESA engagement with stakeholders through its organization of bilateral meetings of the USG with heads of key groups of Member States to discuss strategic priorities and collaboration.

²⁷An updated ST/SGB which includes the SPU and its functions is in the process of being finalized.

²⁸ 7 January 2011 "Note to the Under Secretary-General, Strategic Planning Unit: Overview of Work in 2010, as well as interview data from SPU management/ staff.

- The SPU has taken actions to bring DESA into the United Nations System Strategic Planning Network. This has contributed to, for example, the forging of stronger ties with the United Nations Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Five areas of mutual interest have been identified for collaboration. And, this enhanced communication has produced tangible results-- OCHA revealed that while they had been purchasing old data originally generated by the Population Division from a third-party private company; they have since ceased this practice and will now receive their data directly from the Population Division.

28. SPU management has indicated that DESA's substantive priorities set in 2010 remain of strategic importance and that, through SPU's efforts, there are now comprehensive frameworks for ongoing work on the MDGs and on conflict- and disaster- sensitive development. The management has further indicated that, in 2011, the Unit has begun to take a more targeted approach on the strategic priorities; focusing especially on Rio+20 and sustainable development, global economic governance, social inclusion and the question of the post-2015 development framework.

29. This is a critical time for the SPU to increase the buy-in of its internal stakeholders and to better clarify its internal role within the Department. Internal Department stakeholders expressed a lack of understanding about the precise role and objectives of the SPU. Some said they had interacted with the Unit only to respond to isolated requests for inputs and had yet to see the impact of their contributions. Others expressed confusion as to why the SPU and the Capacity Development Office (CDO) were two separate entities. OIOS noted that the recent launch of SPU's website is an important step forward to increase DESA Divisions' understanding of the Unit's work.

30. While the SPU has worked proactively with some external stakeholders such as OCHA and the Strategic Planning Unit of the EOSG, overall, it has retained a fairly low profile with external stakeholders. When asked to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of DESA's executive direction and management, few stakeholder interviewees mentioned the SPU as a key player. Those stakeholders who did cite the SPU spoke mostly in terms of hope for future potential of the Unit rather than of accomplishments to date, and they also expressed concern over the low level of resources dedicated to the Unit.

31. SPU's mandate to assist the Under-Secretary-General in defining substantive strategic priorities for the Department and enable Department-wide action on cross-cutting issues is recognized as worthwhile and necessary. For example, in interviews, many staff from all divisions indicated that DESA has, historically, had a siloed structure, with each division acting independently verses strategically -- thereby losing opportunities for potential synergies and increased efficiencies. In addition, 74 percent of staff responding to the DESA staff survey reported that they never, or infrequently, met with staff members from other divisions. The lack of communication on strategic priorities among DESA Divisions was noted in many external stakeholder interviews as well. For example, a number of stakeholder interviewees described scenarios where they had interacted with DESA staff from one division who did not know about key relevant strategic priorities and related activities being undertaken by other parts of the Department. Furthermore, a majority of United Nations system entity heads interviewed by OIOS

indicated that DESA lacked a clear definition of its roles and responsibilities in the development context.

D. The Capacity Development Office has been instrumental in developing a capacity development strategy, but some Department-wide work remains to implement it

32. The establishment of the Capacity Development Office (CDO) in February 2009 and the existence of the Department-wide Capacity Development Steering Committee represent a significant commitment by DESA to comprehensively address its current capacity development work. DESA's need to bring additional coherence to this work is rooted in the evolution of its capacity development programme of work. While DESA's predecessor Departments²⁹ fulfilled the role of executing agencies providing technical assistance to countries, the reorganization of the Secretariat resulted in a redistribution of these responsibilities to the Regional Commissions. Additionally, based on the adoption by the General Assembly of the policy of "national execution" in operational activities for development, DESA's role was also re-oriented. By 1997, the remaining technical support to be provided by DESA was fully decentralized to the divisions and has been somewhat ad hoc rather than strategic and coherent. Furthermore, DESA has, more recently, needed to refine its operational activities towards an emphasis on capacity development (as opposed to technical cooperation) and to steer its work in closer alignment with the strategic priorities of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). Taken in total, these changes have necessitated a re-defining of DESA's capacity development work.

33. In response to this need, the CDO, in conjunction with senior managers throughout the Department, developed a Capacity Development Strategy Statement that was finalized in the first half of 2011. This statement outlines five priority areas for the Department to concentrate its capacity development work on as indicated below:

- (1) Strengthening statistical capacities including monitoring of MDGs;
- (2) Macro-economics policy advice and international tax cooperation;
- (3) Social integration and inclusion of vulnerable groups;
- (4) Sustainable development including climate change mitigation and adaptation, and forests, and;
- (5) Public administration and ICT for development, including e-government.

34. This strategy statement also seeks to define a role for DESA in advising governments on how to translate policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into strategies and programmes at the country level, as well as building national capacities to develop and implement national policies and programmes. At the time of this evaluation, the five priority areas had been made public on the DESA website and internal discussion related to further implementation of the Capacity Development Strategy Statement had progressed. For example, the DESA Capacity Development Steering Committee, made up of all DESA Directors, had endorsed the statement, it had been submitted to the Under-Secretary-General and cross-divisional discussions to develop and promote internal buy-in of the five strategic focus areas have taken place.

²⁹ Department of Technical Cooperation and Development -DTCD and then the Department of Development Support and Management Services – DDSMS.

35. Table 2 below provides examples of recent and on-going DESA capacity development work.

Table 2: Examples of DESA Capacity Development Work in Focus Areas

Strategic Focus Area:	Capacity Development Work:
Strengthening statistical capacities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support to workshops and travel of participants of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to the Statistical Commission -Statistical capacity building at the country level under the DESA development account portfolio
Macro-economics policy advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Emerging action on macroeconomic policies directly linked to and flowing from the intergovernmental debate supported by DESA -Planned launch of work supporting countries in the area of international tax cooperation
Social integration and inclusion of vulnerable groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work to improve the situation of specific social groups through assistance to governments and civil society organizations; includes mainstreaming of efforts into UNDAF process at the country level -Support to the implementation of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support of countries' work to enhance national capacities to develop, implement and monitor sustainable development action plans in areas such as: water, energy, forest management, sustainable production and responses to climate change; includes mainstreaming of efforts into UNDAF process at the country level
Public administration and ICT for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Support to Member State development agendas by enhancing public administration capacity -Support to ITC capacity in the context of e-Government projects

36. Ongoing Department-wide work remained to implement the newly agreed upon Capacity Development Strategy that was finalized in the first half of 2011. This work will take time, and while a detailed implementation plan was under development, open questions existed on some

details of how this strategy would be implemented. Based on an OIOS review, the strategy does not define how a focus on the five priority areas will be fully translated into specific activities that capitalize on DESA's strengths – its direct exposure to Member States, its policy expertise, and its credibility as a neutral convener. For example, the strategy document reviewed by OIOS contained the following statements, which leave open questions:

- **Strategy Document Text**-- "... (iii) it [DESA] advises Governments upon request, on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into strategies and programmes at the country level..."³⁰
- **Open Question** -- How does this request process work in practice? What DESA guidelines/procedures are in place to guide central and/or divisional acceptance and prioritization of DESA capacity development support to governments?
- **Strategy Document Text**-- "...thereby helping to link international policy deliberations and national policy implementation."³¹
- **Open Question** -- Within the current funding level, how can funds be maximized in a way that best positions DESA to achieve this ambitious goal?

37. The CDO has taken a number of recent steps to facilitate further implementation of the plan. These include the development and discussion of a "Roadmap for implementation of the capacity development strategy" and a "Template for capacity development strategy implementation plan."³² Both documents are useful tools to further support implementation of DESA's new Capacity Development Strategy. For example, the roadmap document identifies specific work DESA needs to undertake in five key areas to support successful implementation of its capacity development strategy. The five areas are: (1) Programming approach (e.g. need for common results framework for priority areas); (2) Human resources capacity (e.g. need for better skills in project development and management); (3) Management and operational support (e.g. policy guidance management system); (4) Partnerships and resources (e.g. need for improving cooperation within United Nations system—UNCT, UNDG, Regional Commissions and ECESA); and, (5) Outreach and communications (e.g. need for effective projection of capacity development capacities and services). The template document is also likely to be a useful tool to facilitate implementation of the DESA's strategy. It provides a straightforward format for Departmental identification and tracking of: desired results; constraints, responsible entities; expected timeframes; and, resources required.

38. The DESA ST/SGB currently being revised projects an increased prominence for capacity development activities within the DESA work plan.³³ DESA has not yet fully defined how its divisions will, in a coordinated fashion, identify, frame and implement capacity development projects. For example, at present, division-level planning documents do not consistently contain linkages between the five capacity development focus areas and the divisions' primary outputs such as research, preparation, and dissemination of reports and publications.

³⁰ Draft Capacity Development Strategy Statement provided to OIOS-IED from DESA-Page 3, para 2.

³¹ Draft Capacity Development Strategy Statement provided to OIOS-IED from DESA-Page 3, para 3.

³² Versions of documents reviewed by OIOS were those received from DESA in May 6, 2011 email.

³³ [ST/SGB/1997/9](#) of 15 September 1997, para 2.1 (d); see also revised ST/SGB draft of 2010.

39. Also, the Department must match and realign current staff skill sets and capacities with those required for its new capacity development activities. This was particularly true with regard to the job description of the Department's Inter-Regional Advisors (IRAs), who historically provided a link between DESA's centralized functions and regional/ national level capacity development work. Historically, the nature of the IRAs' work was aligned with providing technical assistance to countries. Today, however, the nature of DESA's capacity development work differs significantly.³⁴ While CDO has coordinated work to revise the job profile for IRAs in order to better align it with DESA's present day strategic framework, many DESA managers and staff interviewed by OIOS, including the IRAs themselves, did not have a common agreement regarding the most appropriate role for IRAs.

40. Department-wide agreement on the DESA IRA role is also necessary in order for DESA to effectively align its capacity building work with that of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). Namely, DESA seeks to engage at the country level by contributing to UNDG processes which emphasize complementarity of global, regional and national actions in order to maximize its contributions as a non-resident agency. However, the necessary re-orientation to achieve an effective role for IRAs, in line with this strategy, is incomplete. Some DESA staff and managers interviewed reported a shift in the role of IRAs to analytical tasks that they did not perceive to be related to capacity development. These interviewees further perceived that the operational experience of the IRAs was not being integrated into new DESA capacity development focus areas. More recently, CDO has provided evidence that some of these issues were being addressed through the endorsement by DESA senior managers and IRAs of updated generic IRA job profiles for P-5 and P-6 IRAs, as well as the inclusion of this critical topic in the framework of the "Roadmap for implementation of capacity development strategy" document referenced earlier.

E. Despite Executive Office efforts, sufficiently improved human resource management results have not yet been achieved

41. As stipulated by the Secretary-General's Bulletin, the responsibility of an Executive Office (EO) is to assist the head of the Department, and programme managers and staff members, in carrying out the financial, personnel and general administrative responsibilities.³⁵ In the context of DESA, the EO must provide these support functions to the organizational units of DESA for both RB and XB resources.³⁶

42. EO managers received mixed ratings based on interview and survey data collected as part of the 2009 OIOS Inspection of DESA Human Resource and Management Practices.³⁷ In that inspection report, OIOS concluded that an integrated and strategic approach to human resource management - one that links programme planning, human resource planning, staff development and training, performance management, and management accountability - was required to address the weaknesses identified in the inspection. DESA staff survey results from the inspection revealed

³⁴ Per March 2011 information obtained from DESA-CDO, DESA predecessor organizations had a portfolio that ranged from 100-200 million USD and the number of advisors needed to support this portfolio was higher.

³⁵ [ST/SGB/1997/5](#) section 7.

³⁶ [ST/SGB/1997/9](#) section 19.

³⁷ IED-09-007, The Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the Inspection of the DESA Human Resource and Management Practices.

that less than half of managers responding with an opinion (40 per cent) rated the EO very good or good with regard to the support they received in staff selection, while 34 per cent rated it fair, and 26 per cent poor or very poor.³⁸ Furthermore, less than half of DESA manager survey respondents rated support on clarification of human resource policies good or very good (43 per cent), while 31 per cent rated it fair, and 26 per cent rated it poor or very poor.

43. Human resource management challenges are still perceived as constraints by DESA management and staff. Specifically, the current staff selection processes were not viewed as resulting in the recruitment of top quality staff with the competencies and skills required to implement DESA's work programme.³⁹ Some stakeholder interviewees also volunteered the concern that DESA staff expertise was not always aligned with the economic and social development work in which DESA engaged.

44. While staff selection processes were not the sole responsibility of the DESA EO, the Office play an important role in facilitating the selection of staff. One EO staff member explained that the Office worked closely with the Office of Human Resource Management to screen applicants and is now instituting written tests so that the number of applicants is more manageable and candidates with the necessary skills can be more efficiently identified.

45. Vacancy rates and recruitment times have been increasing. The programme performance report for the 2008-2009 biennium indicated that the vacancy rate for the biennium increased to 7.2 per cent (as compared to 4.8 per cent for 2006-2007) and that the average selection time also increased to 180 days (as compared to 161 days in the previous biennium).⁴⁰ The improved circulation of the status of vacancies, including anticipated vacancies and those resulting from other movement of staff, to programme managers on a regular basis was identified as an additional means that will be utilized to assist in the timely planning and filling of vacancies going forward.

F. The Communications and Information Management Unit, in conjunction with the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, has contributed to improving DESA's visibility and messaging to external stakeholders

46. The Communications and Information Management Service (CIMS) reports to the Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development and is responsible for providing information technology and communications services to the Department. It had 10 posts (7 at the professional level and above and 3 general service) in the 2010-2011 biennium. As described in the programme budget for the 2010-2011 biennium, the Office has five main responsibilities:

- to formulate policies and strategies in the areas of knowledge management, electronic technical cooperation, website communications, publishing and electronic administration;
- to advance those policies and strategies through concrete information system projects;
- to acquire, manage and produce electronic information content;
- to support operations in the form of network administration, computer help desk; and,

³⁸ These percentages are based on those responding managers who had a basis for judgment to the questions asked.

³⁹ E/AC.51/2011/2, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the programme evaluation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), June 2011, para 64, p. 25.

⁴⁰ IMDIS, Actual programme performance in relation to programme budget commitments for the biennium 2008-2009, Executive direction and management [reported as of 8 February 2010].

- to provide database administration, information technology asset management and videoconferencing.

47. One key role of CIMS is to coordinate closely with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) and the United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT). In this regard CIMS participates in relevant Secretariat working groups, such as the United Nations Secretariat Task Force on Knowledge Management. CIMS also represents DESA on the ICT Management Coordination Group.

48. As indicated above, website communication and knowledge management is also among CIMS' primary responsibilities. In a March 2010 letter to DESA management from the United Nations Board of Auditors (BoA), the websites of DESA were assessed as lacking an overarching identity; BOA stated that "in view of the highly decentralised nature of DESA and the high risk of confusion in the mind of the public on the scope of this Department, a brand that is shared by all of the sites would serve as a powerful vehicle for unification and identification."⁴¹ While some recent website improvements have occurred, the results of the OIOS DESA-wide programme evaluation demonstrated that DESA's visibility was still uneven and that DESA continued to lack a common brand.

49. DESA reported that they have begun to address this by establishing a Departmental design template to which all divisions will eventually migrate.⁴² User satisfaction with DESA's websites was high and traffic has been increasing. Based on survey data, 82 per cent of DESA's subprogramme stakeholder survey respondents were satisfied with the quality of the division website with which they primarily interacted. Furthermore, 18 of 21 Member States and 6 of 10 United Nations entity heads surveyed stated that they were satisfied with the quality of DESA's website. Additionally, programme performance data illustrated that visits to several of its websites increased for the 2008-2009 biennium.

50. In order to further improve coordination between CIMS and DESA Divisions, CIMS staff reported that a meeting every two months with divisional focal points had been established. CIMS chairs this bi-monthly DESA ICT Committee, as well as the DESA New Media Task Force. However, it was noted by some DESA managers interviewed that further work may be needed to assist DESA in its efforts to communicate effectively to external stakeholders in a manner that makes the most efficient use of DESA's finite resources.

51. Related to CIMS work, an important role of the OUSG is to ensure that messages leaving DESA are consistent and clear.⁴³ This includes the coordination of responses to ad hoc information requests from the Office of the Secretary-General. These requests for substantive input for the Secretary-General and other high level Secretariat managers are received by the OUSG on a daily, sometimes even hourly basis. Primary high level stakeholder interviewees that liaise with the

⁴¹ Management letter on the audit of the communication and publishing policy of the DESA, Board of Auditors, 31 March 2010.

⁴²Based on information provided to OIOS on 6 May 2011, the departmental design template has already been adopted by CDO and DPAD, while PD, DSPD and UNFF are preparing to launch the migrated site very soon. More divisions are to follow the new design template this year. The expectation is that a more unified web presence of the Department will result.

⁴³ The DESA OUSG includes a Communications Officer at the P-5 level.

OUSG on a regular basis, all indicated that the OUSG and CIMS, in conjunction with DESA subprogramme directors, do a good job supporting the information needs of the Secretary-General. Reliability of substantive information and responsiveness were both cited as attributes. For example, one interviewee said “There’s a lot of day to day interactions—[regarding] talking points, etc. and everything under the sun in economics and development [requires] substantive [work]. Another said, “They are very responsive and reliable and timely. I’ve been very happy.” When asked what improvements they would suggest, DESA’s key high level stakeholder interviewees offered the same suggestion, saying, for example, “Overall, DESA seems to recede into the distance sometimes. They could do a better job on making their successful work more public.” Both internal and external stakeholder interviewees cited the need for DESA to prioritize among competing communication workload demands as a challenge.

V. Conclusion

52. DESA’s Executive Direction and Management is mandated to ensure effective integration of the capacities of the different organizational units of the Department for normative, analytical and technical cooperation work. In line with this, one of its primary goals is to facilitate complementarities and synergy within the Department and to hold all organizational units accountable for Departmental objectives.

53. The DESA executive direction and management function faces a number of challenges in seeking to achieve its mandate. It must bring strategic focus to a Secretariat programme which was established through the consolidation of functions previously dispersed throughout the Secretariat and which today supports and serves as Secretariat to 12 different policymaking intergovernmental bodies. In addition to the challenge of overseeing DESA’s somewhat disparate organizational divisions, DESA’s work covers a vast number of issues, its priorities change quickly and it operates in a crowded economic and social arena with a relatively small budget. All of these challenges make it critical for DESA’s leadership, to develop and implement a well thought-out, strong strategic focus.

54. Although the evaluation results indicate that DESA’s overarching strategic focus could be improved, this work has begun. Through the collaborative efforts of DESA’s executive direction and management function and the managers of DESA subprogrammes, significant progress has been made in defining a coherent Department-wide strategic focus. The SPU, in particular, is well-placed to continue work that enables the necessary level of Department-wide buy-in and action on cross-cutting issues. SPU has an opportunity to play a crucial role in the next phase of the Department’s work to bridge the gap between current discussions and Department-wide implementation of a more cohesive strategic focus. One issue that warrants attention is the perceived overlap between the work of the SPU and the CDO. A clear delineation between these two Offices was not yet apparent to many managers and staff working in the DESA Divisions. An increased understanding would positively contribute to the future effectiveness of both the SPU and the CDO.

55. A key risk that DESA’s executive direction and management function faces at this time is that of DESA, potentially, not remaining vigilant enough. While the first bricks to build a strong, coherent strategic focus have been laid securely, vigilance and perseverance will be needed on the part of many in order to finish laying a strong foundation Department-wide. In order for significant

tangible results to be achieved, the envisioned focus must be further defined and a strong on-going commitment to its implementation must continue to be invested in through senior management support, further effective collaboration, the identification of positive impacts and, possibly, additional Departmental resources. The results of this evaluation indicate that successes achieved to date are still “fragile.”

56. In particular, the Department’s current efforts to re-evaluate and re-define its role in the area of capacity development warrant on-going comprehensive attention. This should include further work to ensure that DESA’s capacity development contributions build on its strength as a Secretariat programme with significant involvement in the parliamentary processes of the United Nations at the highest level and as a Secretariat entity with global reach. Work performed by DESA in the capacity development arena will add the most value if it complements the programmes of work of regional and country-based United Nations system entities. Toward this end, DESA needs to continue its dialogues with these key system-wide partners in a manner that provides partners with sufficient knowledge of how DESA’s work is relevant to that of their own entities. And, to maximize its impact, DESA needs to continue its work to ensure complementarities and convey its value-added within the context of the United Nations system.

Annex I

Intergovernmental bodies serviced by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

<i>Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Division</i>	<i>General Assembly bodies serviced</i>	<i>Functional commissions/bodies of the Economic and Social Council serviced</i>
Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination	Second Committee	Economic and Social Council NGO Committee
Division for the Advancement of Women/Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women	Third Committee	Commission on the Status of Women
Division for Sustainable Development		Commission on Sustainable Development
Division for Social Policy and Development	Third Committee: Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Commission for Social Development Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Statistics Division	Fifth Committee (scale of assessments): Committee on Contributions	Statistical Commission United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
Population Division	Second Committee	Commission on Population and Development
Development Policy and Analysis Division	Second Committee	Committee on Development Policy
Division for Public Administration and Development Management		Committee of Experts on Public Administration
United Nations Forum on Forests		United Nations Forum on Forests
Financing for Development Office	Second Committee	Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters

Source: See A/63/6 (Prog. 7).

Annex II

In this Annex, OIOS presents the full text of comments received from EDM-DESA on the draft evaluation report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the executive direction and management function in DESA. This practice has been instituted as per General Assembly resolution 54/263 following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee (IAAC). Overall, DESA concurred with our results and conclusions. The comments from DESA on the draft OIOS report have been incorporated as appropriate into this final report.

Comments from DESA on the draft report:

Final OIOS draft report on the evaluation of the executive direction and management function of DESA

Comments

The **Executive Summary** statement on how the Capacity Development Strategy will be implemented should have mentioned that a detailed implementation plan was under development at the time the OIOS report was being finalized.

Para 24: *The OUSG has also not fully communicated its vision to DESA's partners. The majority of senior leaders from other United Nations entities who were interviewed reported that DESA's functions and responsibilities were not clear. Nine out of twelve (that volunteered relevant comments) reported problems with clarity of DESA functions and responsibilities. This indicates that DESA has additional work to do in order to effectively communicate a coherent vision of its work to its partners and other stakeholders.*

The USG has made every effort to ensure that DESA's vision on its own role and responsibilities in the area of development is clearly communicated to all its partners. For example,

- Outcomes of all major inter-governmental processes are always shared by the USG to ECESA members and its other partners.
- In 2010, ECESA conducted a scanning and scouting exercise, through which emerging issues and key priorities were identified. This provided an opportunity for DESA and its partners to share information on their respective areas of interest.
- Some of DESA's recent areas of focus include, among others, follow-up to the 2010 MDG Summit and the Rio + 20 Summit as the preparatory process leading up to it. The work being done on these important issues demands a collaborative effort from the entire UN system. An ECESA Plus mechanism was established in mid-2010 with over 40 organizations as a way to bring relevant UN system agencies, the World Bank, IMF and the Rio Convention secretariats together with the Members of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (ECESA) to prepare for Rio+20. Meetings of ECESA Plus both at the Principals and Deputies levels have been held to ensure exchange of information on the various activities being undertaken to prepare for the Summit, as well as those to be held during the Summit. DESA has participated actively in these meetings providing information, as well as collaborating with other partners on key issues.
- In addition ECESA has 10 standing working groups organized under thematic clusters. This structure allows ECESA entities to share information on a regular basis. Entities that are not part of the core ECESA membership have also become members of thematic clusters upon invitation.
- Clusters also work together on the biennial strategic framework.

Para 26: *In interviews DESA managers indicated that the SPU is tasked with assisting the USG in defining substantive strategic priorities for the Department, enabling Department-wide action on*

key cross-cutting issues and undertaking related actions to engage stakeholders and strategic partners.

SPU's functions are a fact that can be verified in the various USG decisions and other subsequent instruments. It is not something gleaned from interviews. In addition an updated ST/SGB including SPU and its functions is in the process of being finalized.

Para 32: *While DESA predecessor Departments fulfilled the role of executing agencies providing technical assistance to countries, subsequent shifts resulted in a redistribution of these responsibilities to the Regional Commissions, and later, to national governments...Furthermore, DESA has, more recently, needed to refine its capacity development work toward an emphasis on capacity building (as opposed to technical cooperation) and to synchronize it with the reformed strategic priorities of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).*

Instead of using the term "subsequent shifts", the report should have more accurately referred to "the reorganization of the Secretariat ", and when it refers to "national governments", it should have specifically made reference to the adoption by the GA of the policy of "national execution" in operational activities for development.

The paragraph should also be amended as follows "... to refine its **operational activities** towards an emphasis on **capacity development** (as opposed to technical cooperation), and **to steer its work in closer alignment with the strategic priorities of the UNDG...**"

Para 36: *Despite these examples, full implementation of the Capacity Development Strategy has not yet been achieved...*

It cannot be expected that the strategy would be fully implemented at this time. OIOS should recognize that translating the strategy into actual realization will not happen instantaneously, nor in three months from its adoption. Implementing a strategy takes time, with well defined measures involving organizational consensus and transformational processes. All the issues being raised in the report have been recognized in the implementation plan and specific measures have been identified, but these are subject to further departmental discussion through the CD Steering Committee.

The report indicates that "all DESA management and staff" were surveyed. A number of key staff in the CDO were neither surveyed nor interviewed, so the survey may have been extensive but not covering all staff of relevance.

Para 46: *The Communications and Information Management Service (CIMS) reports to the Under-Secretary-General...*

CIMS does not report to the Under-Secretary-General. It reports to the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development.