



INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION

EVALUATION REPORT

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the Evaluation of the Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination (OESC)

“OESC has added value to social and economic development intergovernmental processes with effective logistical and substantive support; further strategic prioritization is needed to build on this success”

Draft as of 3 June 2011

Assignment No. IED-11-003

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 (OIOS)
on the United Nations Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination**

“OESC has added value to economic and social development intergovernmental processes with effective logistical and substantive support; further strategic prioritization is needed to build on this success”

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 DESA’s Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination is one of 11 detailed assessments of DESA’s 10 divisions and its Executive Direction and Management function. It will be issued to DESA as an internal management report.

The Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination is mid-sized when compared to the other divisions and offices of DESA with approximately USD 28,992 thousand estimated expenditures (regular and extrabudgetary), including 48 staff posts for the 2010-2011 biennium.

In undertaking the evaluation, OIOS examined the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness (including impact) of the Division. 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 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.

OESC has benefited from a clear and distinct mandate in providing multifaceted substantive support to the economic and social development intergovernmental process, a role that it has been fulfilling effectively. In providing this support, OESC has been achieving or surpassing its formally stated objectives, and United Nations system and external stakeholders have consistently praised OESC’s performance in the servicing of meetings, both in terms of behind-the-scenes logistical support and substantive inputs. Furthermore, OESC has contributed to the strengthening of ECOSOC by assuming a proactive role in shaping the ECOSOC agenda and through the promotion of enhanced coordination within the United Nations system and beyond. For example, during the most recent MDG Summit in September 2010, OESC was instrumental in supporting the intergovernmental negotiations that resulted in an outcome document reconfirming Member States’ commitment to the MDGs and included a statement of principles and priorities that will inform MDG achievement efforts going forward.

In recent years OESC’s role has become increasingly multi-faceted. In line with the 2007 General Assembly resolution 61/16 on “Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council”, the Division has worked effectively to broaden the spectrum of ECOSOC’s stakeholders. OESC has

actively sought stakeholder participation and inputs into both the formal meetings of the ECOSOC annual session, as well as less formal meetings among the members of various intergovernmental commissions and agency representatives. OESC has also succeeded in engaging the NGO community in the work of ECOSOC; the number of NGOs applying for consultative status increased dramatically in recent years. And, as part of the effort to strengthen ECOSOC, the General Assembly mandated two new functions to the body in 2007—the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF)—both of which have been supported by the Division with the addition of only one new staff person.

Given these expanding mandates and increased workloads, OESC is now at a critical juncture where it needs to develop a more strategic approach to its multi-faceted work and prioritize more efficiently amongst its competing demands.

The Division has also missed opportunities for maximizing its impact, in particular by not adequately following up on its outputs. In this regard, some Member States called for more guidance on how to practically apply the lessons emerging from ECOSOC sessions and publications—specifically, how to move forward with the kinds of national and regional policies that would make a real difference at the national level. Also, no specific resources were earmarked for Division evaluation or monitoring activities; in interviews, OESC staff acknowledged that they were unable to devote much time to tracking the ultimate impact of individual reports and conferences. Furthermore, OESC has not exploited some potential synergies across the United Nations system or within DESA that could help the division make the most efficient use of its limited resources.

While Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) participation in ECOSOC has increased, OESC has not fully defined its civil society and private sector engagement role. A number of challenges existed in doing so, including a reported lack of resources to meet the increasing demands of Member States and NGOs; insufficient IT infrastructure and support; and overlapping roles and responsibilities with other United Nations entities, most notably the Non-Governmental Liaison Service, which is administered by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. OESC's work to engage the private sector is still in its infancy.

Finally, the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review report (QCPR) warrants further re-assessment. Its weaknesses, when conducted on a triennial basis in the past, have included limited depth, rigour and transparency, as well as a somewhat static format. Resource limitations may have adversely affected the report. The outcome of these combined factors is a TCPR report that does not provide adequate information and analysis to support Member States in the formulation of guidance to United Nations funds and programmes and specialized agencies.

Based on the results above, OIOS makes the following 3 recommendations to OESC:

- Develop a strategic plan to strengthen partnerships across the United Nations system, as well as within DESA;
- Develop a targeted private sector engagement strategy; and
- Re-assess the methods being utilized to carry out the QCPR mandate.

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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 2008.¹ The forty-ninth session of the [Committee for Programme and Coordination \(CPC\)](#) selected that evaluation report to be presented for consideration at its fifty-first session, and the selection was formally mandated by the ensuing General Assembly Resolution on Programme Planning.²

2. In accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, the overall objective of the evaluation was to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness, including the impact, of the [Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination \(OESC\)](#).

3. In conjunction with the DESA-wide programme evaluation, OIOS prepared eleven subprogramme evaluations, one for each DESA division and one for the executive direction and management function of the Department. The current report on the OESC was based on data collection that OIOS undertook from September 2010 through February 2011. This report will be presented as an internal management report.

4. This report incorporates revisions based on comments received through ongoing dialogue with OESC during the drafting process. OESC's final comments are appended in full, as per practice instituted further to General Assembly resolution 64/263.

II. Methodology

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

- i. **A document analysis** of OESC's strategic framework, programme and project documents, service delivery records, monitoring and reporting information from IMDIS, and other evaluations, studies and audits;³
- ii. **17 in-person interviews with OESC staff**, including all members of OESC management;⁴
- iii. **17 in-person and telephone stakeholder interviews**, including with Member States permanent representatives, national government officials, civil society

¹ Further General Assembly resolutions [48/218B](#), [54/244](#) and [59/272](#) as well as ST/SGB/273.

² A/64/16, Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, July 2009; paragraph 41, p.11.

³ This included a document content analysis undertaken by Syracuse University.

⁴ Stratified random samples at the 90 per cent confidence level of all DESA staff were drawn to ensure representation of staff at all levels and across all divisions.

organisations, academics, and staff and management from the United Nations System;⁵

- iv. **Field missions** to Thailand, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and South Africa;
- v. **A web-based survey of all OESC staff, conducted as part of a survey of all DESA staff;**⁶
- vi. **A web-based non-random survey of 111 subprogramme stakeholders;**⁷
- vii. **Observations of intergovernmental meetings** serviced by OESC;⁸
- viii. **An independent expert panel review of the quality of DESA's key publications**⁹; and,
- ix. **A bibliometric analysis on the usage of DESA publications.**

6. 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, and data were triangulated to strengthen the evaluation. Individual quotations have been used as illustrative of wider testimony resulting from multiple stakeholders.

7. The evaluation had four main limitations. First, the low response rate achieved in the stakeholder surveys and the relatively low number of stakeholder interviews means that the results of these data collection efforts do not necessarily represent the views of OESC's stakeholders as a whole. Second, due to the timing of the evaluation, OIOS was not able to observe the work of OESC during ECOSOC sessions. Third, the expert panel review included only two Division publications. For OESC, one of these was the "Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system"- [A/62/73-E/2007/52](#). OIOS refers to this as the "primary analytical report"; the expert panel did not review the "Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system: conclusions and recommendations"- [A/62/74-E/2007/54](#).¹⁰ Lastly, the bibliometric analysis permitted only

⁵ Stakeholder interviewees were selected with input from OESC.

⁶ There were 25 OESC respondents to the DESA staff survey, a 52 percent response rate. All closed-ended questions in OIOS' surveys included a balanced response scale with equal numbers of positive and negative ratings. Percentages reported are based on number of respondents who expressed an opinion in response to a given question.

⁷ The subprogramme stakeholder survey brought 13 responses, yielding a 12 percent response rate; because of this low response rate, this information was not used without sufficient triangulation from additional relevant data sources.

⁸ While the timing of the evaluation regrettably did not allow for the observation of the high-level ECOSOC sessions, OIOS-IED did observe a meeting of the Committee on NGOs, as well as portions of the MDG summit.

⁹ The panel consisted of three senior academics, chosen on the basis of regional exposure and, in particular, expertise in documentary peer review. The OESC reports/publications reviewed (as part of the larger DESA assessment) were: the SG report on the "Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations Development system" ([A/62/73 – E/2007/52](#)) and the publication "Achieving Sustainable Development and Promoting Development Cooperation - Dialogues at the Economic and Social Council (2008)".

¹⁰ See footnote 9 for two OESC reports reviewed by the expert panel.

III. Background

8. Promoting international economic and social cooperation was identified as a fundamental purpose of the United Nations by its founders, as set out in Chapter I of the Charter of the United Nations.¹¹ Chapters IX and X of the Charter provide detail 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.¹² DESA serves as the Secretariat and provides the substantive support to ECOSOC and the vast majority of its subsidiary bodies, including functional commissions and expert groups.¹³

9. Since 1946, the economic and social affairs function of the Secretariat has been evolving in organizational form, with the most recent major restructuring in 1997. Kofi Annan's proposal for comprehensive reforms of the Secretariat consolidated into one entity departments dealing with economic and social affairs, which had been previously structured mainly along functional lines, and led to the establishment of DESA in its current form.¹⁴

10. The 2010-2011 Strategic Framework for OESC defines the objective of the subprogramme as follows: "To advance the role of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in supporting efforts to promote more coherent and integrated implementation of the United Nations development agenda, comprised of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals."

11. OESC, which adopted its current name and structure in 2003, consists of four branches, each of which is responsible for different aspects of the support the Office provides to ECOSOC and the Second Committee of the General Assembly.

¹¹ Charter of the United Nations, Chapter IX, Article 55: can be accessed at:

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter9.shtml>

¹² Charter of the United Nations, Chapter IX, Article 60: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter9.shtml>

¹³ Functional Commissions and expert bodies serviced by DESA include:

- Statistical Commission;
- Commission on Population and Development;
- Commission for Social Development;
- Commission on the Status of Women;
- Commission on Sustainable Development;
- United Nations Forum on Forests;
- Committee on Non-governmental Organisations;
- Committee for Development Policy;
- Committee of Experts on Public Administration;
- Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters; and
- Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

¹⁴ A/51/950, "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform"; and General Assembly Resolution 52/12, "Renewing the United Nations".

- The **Policy Coordination Branch** provides substantive inputs and servicing to the ECOSOC and the Second Committee of the General Assembly, including the Annual Ministerial Review that takes place within the high-level segment of ECOSOC.
- The **ECOSOC and Interorganization Cooperation Branch** provides substantive and organizational support to the coordination and general segments of the annual ECOSOC session and other meetings of ECOSOC and the General Assembly and ensures interagency coordination around these events. It also advises the ECOSOC Bureau on issues related to the nexus between peace and development and promotes outreach on ECOSOC's work.
- The **NGO Branch** services the NGO Committee, made up of 19 Member States, and facilitates the process of granting consultative status to NGOs to participate in ECOSOC and the Human Rights Council meetings. Its role has expanded to ensuring liaison between civil society organizations and the United Nations intergovernmental process.
- The **Development Cooperation Policy Branch** focuses on development cooperation including operational work of the United Nations system. It provides substantive and organizational support to the Development Cooperation Forum, prepares the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of United Nations system operational activities and services the operational activities segment of the ECOSOC session, among other activities.

12. In 1980, the General Assembly requested that every three years the Secretary-General prepare a review of the operational activities of the United Nations system, which would inform an intergovernmental debate and subsequent resolution on the same topic. OESC was given the responsibility for the data collection, analysis, and drafting of the report—previously called the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR)—and for facilitating the related intergovernmental negotiations and resolutions. OESC staff noted that it was given this responsibility because it is a regular budget entity with comparably limited technical cooperation activities, and thus a neutral actor in the debate on operational activities. Each report assesses the operational activities in the context of the resolution that emerged from the previous resolution (i.e. the 2007 TCPR *report* “examines the question of whether [the operational activities] meet the expectations of Member States as expressed in the General Assembly resolution 59/250” [the 2004 TCPR *resolution*]). The TCPR encompasses the work of approximately 40 agencies, funds, programmes and other entities of the United Nations system. It covers the entities' activities, as well as the funding modalities that underpin them.

13. In addition, all OESC branches respond to ad hoc requests from the ECOSOC Bureau related to mandated activities which are unplanned in relation to the programme budget. They are also periodically asked to support one-time events, such as the General Assembly plenary on the MDG Summit Outcome, that provided a road map for the achievement of the MDGs by 2015 and a report of initiatives announced, and the GA negotiations on system-wide coherence.

14. For 2010-2011, OESC is carrying out its programme of work with 48 staff members, 13,696,900 USD in regular budget funding and 1,529,500 USD in extrabudgetary funding.

IV. Results

A. OESC provided effective substantive support to the social and economic development intergovernmental process

OESC had a clear role in supporting the intergovernmental process

15. OESC has benefited from a clear and distinct focus on providing substantive support to the social and economic development intergovernmental process. This is a role that was clearly understood by both stakeholders and staff. Almost none of the interviewed or surveyed stakeholders stated that OESC's work was duplicated by any other United Nations entity, and a strong majority of them indicated that the roles of OESC staff were well-defined. This evaluation identified no other entity that played the same role; the desk review of OESC's website and other related information confirmed the existence of a significant degree of clarity on OESC's role. Additionally, stakeholder interview data provided evidence that, overall, stakeholders understood, in a consistent manner, the type of intergovernmental support that OESC is tasked with providing. OESC staff themselves indicated that the mandate of their division was clear (84 per cent rated clarity as good or excellent) and relevant (88 per cent rated relevance as good or excellent).

OESC has achieved or surpassed its objectives with regard to intergovernmental support

16. Within the context of OESC's objective "to advance the role of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council" in support of the United Nations development agenda, the office's responsibilities range from drafting substantive reports to the GA and ECOSOC and facilitating politically sensitive intergovernmental negotiations, to logistical and administrative support required for the smooth running of meetings. In the current biennium, 343 substantive servicing of meeting outputs and 43 parliamentary reports are scheduled, and OESC plans to produce 2 recurrent publications.¹⁵ The office is on schedule to achieve these outputs by the end of the biennium, with approximately 60 percent of outputs implemented or in progress at the midway point of the reporting period—the end of 2010. The Office has been consistently improving its rate of completion of all scheduled outputs, with a 96 percent implementation in 2006-2007, and 99 percent in 2008-2009.¹⁶

17. In some cases, OESC has exceeded its performance measures for the current biennium. For example, OESC has succeeded in significantly increasing the level of NGO participation in ECOSOC sessions: in the 2008-2009 biennium there were 36 NGO contributions, and in the current biennium, 90 NGOs have already made such contributions, surpassing the target of 40.¹⁷

¹⁵ IMDIS data substantive servicing of meetings outputs are counted in 3-hour session blocks.

¹⁶ IMDIS data and Syracuse University analysis.

¹⁷ IMDIS data.

18. In addition, United Nations system and external stakeholders interviewed and surveyed consistently praised OESC's performance in the servicing of meetings, both in terms of behind-the-scenes logistical support and substantive inputs. Stakeholders, including Permanent Representatives, United Nations system agency heads and internal Secretariat partners were uniform in their assessment of the high level of professionalism and service orientation of OESC staff. Among OESC stakeholder survey respondents, a large majority agreed that the work of OESC was significantly important to their entity's key development activities.

OESC has proactively contributed to the strengthening of ECOSOC

19. OESC has taken a proactive role in helping Member States to shape the ECOSOC agenda, enhancing its prominence in a wide variety of substantive areas, ranging from peacebuilding work to corporate philanthropy for social and economic development to implementation of the MDGs. One stakeholder summed up the observations shared by many by saying, "They are constantly thinking about how to present ECOSOC as relevant in whatever the high priority areas are ... OESC is an advocate for ECOSOC."

20. This advocacy role was fundamental to the goals laid out in the division's strategic framework and work planning documents, which emphasize OESC's responsibility to strengthen the role of ECOSOC in:

- (1) policy development that advances the United Nations' development agenda;
- (2) promoting coordination and coherence within the United Nations system; and,
- (3) engagement with post-conflict reconstruction and development.¹⁸

21. These expected accomplishments require OESC to act as a "champion" for ECOSOC. One example of the strategic vision demonstrated by OESC was the identification of themes for ECOSOC high-level segments that complemented ongoing discussions of progress toward the MDGs, an activity particularly appreciated by stakeholders. OESC also proactively supported the work of the Second Committee by proposing and organizing panel discussions on substantive themes on the Committee's agenda and supporting the work of the Bureau on an on-going basis, which helped delegations to make the link between the work of ECOSOC and the GA.

22. During the most recent MDG Summit in September 2010, OESC made further contributions to the strengthening of ECOSOC and the work it is engaged in. OESC was instrumental in supporting the GA intergovernmental negotiations that resulted in an outcome document reconfirming Member States' commitment to the MDGs and included a statement of principles and priorities that will inform MDG achievement efforts going forward.¹⁹ Specifically, OESC received praise from a variety of stakeholders, including Member States, staff from the Executive Office of the Secretary General (EOSG) and representatives from economic and social development United Nations systems entities, for its effective support of the negotiation process and its consensus facilitation. For example, one of the Ambassadors who played a major role in the MDG negotiations wrote a memo to the Secretary-General to relay his appreciation of OESC's negotiation skills and effective support.

¹⁸ See Expected Accomplishments in IMDIS and Strategic Framework.

¹⁹ A/65/L.1

OESC strengthened ECOSOC through enhanced coordination within the United Nations system and beyond

23. Answering the call to enhance coordination and coherence within the United Nations system, as stated in the division's second expected accomplishment, OESC has positioned itself as a liaison between Member States and a variety of United Nations system actors. In interviews, high-level managers within the Secretariat and other United Nations system entities expressed their appreciation for this role and the effectiveness with which OESC has carried it out. The multi-sectoral nature of OESC's work—with substantive focus changing annually according to the theme of the ECOSOC session and other intergovernmental meetings—means that the division must harness expertise from within and outside. United Nations system stakeholders appreciated that the Division was able to identify the necessary knowledge, either internally or through the use of consultants, in a timely manner. OESC respondents to the DESA staff survey also expressed confidence in their Division's ability to manage these relationships: 88 percent indicated that OESC was effective at "fostering collaboration and partnerships for the development agenda within the United Nations system." Stakeholders and staff reported that OESC responded well to the changing priorities of Member States—many emphasizing that the nature of OESC's work as a support body required it.

24. Beyond its role in promoting coordination with traditional United Nations system partners in the development arena, OESC has also effectively broadened the spectrum of ECOSOC's stakeholders.²⁰ The 2007 General Assembly resolution 61/16, "Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council," called for increased ECOSOC engagement with humanitarian and peacebuilding functions, Bretton Woods institutions, UNCTAD, and NGOs. OESC has worked to strengthen the links between these entities and ECOSOC, actively seeking their participation and inputs into both the formal meetings of the ECOSOC annual session as well as less formal meetings among the members of various intergovernmental commissions and agency representatives.²¹ As indicated in para. 17, OESC has succeeded in more than doubling the level of NGO participation in ECOSOC sessions over the course of the last two biennia.

B. The Division has not developed a fully strategic approach to its multifaceted work

OESC's mandate has expanded over the past four years

25. As part of the effort to strengthen ECOSOC, the General Assembly mandated two new functions to the body in 2007—the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF)—to be supported by OESC. OESC absorbed the AMR and DCF support functions with the addition of only one professional post.²² The AMR, which provides an opportunity for Member States to make voluntary presentations at the ECOSOC high-level segment on national progress toward the MDGs and other internationally agreed development

²⁰ IMDIS planning documents emphasize in particular the engagement with the peacebuilding function, as outlined in expected accomplishment #3.

²¹ For instance, OESC organized a meeting between the ECOSOC bureau and the members of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2010, at the Permanent Representative level.

²² The General Assembly granted an additional P4 to the Development Cooperation Policy branch with resolution 63/260 in 2008. This staff person works on the DCF.

goals, has expanded significantly since its initiation in 2007. That year, OESC aimed to have 6 countries make voluntary presentations, and while the target for 2010 was also 6 countries, the session was actually much more extensive, with 13 national presentations, that were well received by Member State participants interviewed for this evaluation.²³ The preliminary work in preparation for the AMR has also been growing, with a significant increase in the number of Member States volunteering to host regional AMR meetings in the run up to the high-level ECOSOC session.²⁴ Stakeholders interviewed expressed a high level of satisfaction with the logistical and substantive support provided to the AMR process, both at the regional level and during the ECOSOC session. But staff at all levels in OESC indicated that they frequently worked well beyond normal business hours in order to achieve this level of success, and they reported increased stress and lowered staff morale as a result. Some stakeholders also volunteered that OESC staff appeared to be working particularly hard to simultaneously meet multiple work demands.

26. At the same time, OESC has been working to build up the profile of the DCF, so that it can help transform ECOSOC into, as the DESA website says, “the key venue for global dialogue and review of trends, coherence and effectiveness of international development cooperation.”²⁵ For 2010, OESC succeeded in recruiting many prominent partners to the related policy dialogues, including, for example: the chair of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the Acting Vice-President of the World Bank Group; the Ministers of Finance or Investment of Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Viet Nam; and, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

In this context of expanding mandates, OESC did not strategically prioritize among its many activities

27. OESC has not taken a more proactive and creative role in setting its work priorities. The mandates of the division are expanding, and the number of required outputs—reports, publications, meetings, and conferences—is stretching OESC staff thin. Some high-level stakeholders within the United Nations system suggested that given the reality of limited resources, OESC, in particular, should think more strategically about how to implement its mandates. As one stakeholder, representing the view of other stakeholders interviewed, said, “I pointed out that a mandate that asks the Secretary-General ‘to report on’ does not have to mean a separate report for each [item].” The Division has not attempted to address multiple mandates within a single report, which would be one way to better strategize in responding to its expanding mandate requirements.

C. The Division has missed opportunities for maximizing its impact

OESC has not adequately followed up on its outputs, thereby losing opportunities for enhanced impact

²³ OESC Programme Budget.

²⁴ Last year there was 1 regional AMR preparatory meeting; this year there will be 4.

²⁵ DESA website: http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/dcf_one-pager.pdf

28. OESC did not have systematic and regular mechanisms in place to follow up on its work. The OESC work plan outlined in the programme budget did not include dedicated resources for this kind of follow-up work, including for self-evaluation and monitoring. In the absence of adequate follow up, the sheer number of the Division's outputs has threatened to overwhelm the capacity of some Member States and country teams to integrate OESC outputs into their work in a meaningful way. For example, some Member States called for more guidance from OESC on how to practically apply the lessons emerging from ECOSOC sessions or publications, including how to move forward with national and regional policies that would make a real difference in a country's development progress.²⁶ This would enhance the impact of the work of Division. In interviews, OESC staff acknowledged that, due in part to the volume of the Division's outputs, they were unable to devote much time to tracking the ultimate impact of individual reports and conferences. OESC stakeholders and staff alike acknowledged in interviews that in some cases the Division was focused, by necessity, on completing reports and events, checking them off the work plan list, and moving on to the next assignment.

OESC faced challenges in promoting the utility of its publications and other documents

29. As noted above, OESC produces a large number of reports and documents in support of the parliamentary process.²⁷ While stakeholders interviewed or surveyed generally indicated that they were satisfied with these reports and other documents meant to provide background analysis and context for intergovernmental negotiations, some challenges threatened the utility of these reports.

30. One challenge was ascertaining the appropriate balance between analysis and political context. The OESC website states that the comparative advantage of the DCF (which OESC supports) is in "organizing balanced North-South discussions about development cooperation."²⁸ OESC walks a fine line between developing their own analytical position and negotiating the reality of competing political interests. OESC staff indicated that this balance was sometimes difficult to achieve in a manner that promoted utility.

31. A further challenge related to the identification of the right audience and the lack of a dissemination strategy for OESC publications. In addition to the documents supporting the intergovernmental process, the Division also published the proceedings of the ECOSOC high-level segment in bound format for more general consumption. The independent expert panel commissioned by OIOS found that the intended audience of this publication was not evident. Data showed that users have downloaded the 2008 edition of "Dialogues at ECOSOC" 16,647 times, and the website for the publication received as many as 50,202 visits, according to DESA. DESA also printed 2100 copies of the 2008 book, of which 79 were sold and 1700 distributed free of charge. An additional 549 e-books were purchased. While these numbers certainly indicated interest on the part of the public, the independent expert panel found no evidence of a strategy in place to maximize the publication's use and pointed out that the inconsistency of the statements and Member State responses resulted in an uneven reading experience, thus

²⁶ OESC notes that the TCPR/QCPR is a vehicle to ensure the implementation of the UN system

²⁷ One of the most resource intensive, the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) will be discussed in more detail below, in Result Statement D.

²⁸ http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/pcf_one-pager.pdf

²⁹ OIOS acknowledges that there were challenges inherent in promoting the book, including the fact that the quality of the publication can be only as high and as coherent as the quality of the individual presentations included in the dialogue.

OESC has not fully exploited potential synergies across the United Nations system or within DESA to maximize use of its limited resources

32. The Division did not fully utilize potential collaborations with United Nations partners. Each year, OESC works with different partners who provide the topical expertise needed for the ECOSOC session, and once the session is over, the Division must start recruiting partners from other parts of the system for upcoming work. The collaborations are, therefore, relatively short-lived, increasing the risk that there will be minimal follow-up. Interviews with operational partners who have provided substantive inputs to OESC work revealed that, in many cases, the relationships between these entities and OESC could be strengthened. These partners implied that OESC could take the next step beyond coordination and start to build lasting collaborations with key relevant entities. It should be noted that United Nations system follow-up to the AMR is promoted by the fact that ECOSOC coordination segment discusses every year the follow-up to the previous year's segment.

33. OESC staff and stakeholders interviewed identified Departmental activities that would be enhanced if the various DESA Divisions worked more closely together. For example, stakeholders and staff noted that the normative work and policy advice that OESC provides to Member States would be significantly enhanced if it took better advantage of the analytical work being generated by other DESA divisions. Furthermore, staff interviews highlighted that there was additional opportunity to harness the knowledge of the Financing for Development Office in support of the DCF.

34. Even within the Division itself, OESC has overlooked opportunities for synergy and building on lessons learned. OESC interviewees, both management and staff, were split about evenly on the success (or even existence) of the OESC's efforts to integrate lessons-learned into its future work, and interviews with OESC staff showed that not all staff and managers had a clear understanding of the responsibilities of other branches within the Division. Staff seemed to have the least amount of clarity with regard to the work of the ECOSOC and Inter-organizational Cooperation Branch.

D. While NGO participation in ECOSOC has increased, OESC has not fully defined its civil society and private sector engagement role, and its interaction with the private sector has been limited

The Division has succeeded in enhancing NGO involvement in the ECOSOC process

35. OESC has succeeded in engaging the NGO community in the work of ECOSOC, and the number of NGOs applying for consultative status has increased dramatically in recent years. At its 2005 session, the Committee on NGOs considered 292 applications for consultative status,

²⁹ OIOS bibliometric analysis 2010 found one scholarly citation between 2006 and 2010.

but by 2010 that number had risen to 495 applications. Additionally, a significant increase in workload was also recorded for Quadrennial reports submitted by NGOs with consultative status on their activities—increasing from 345 Quadrennial reports submitted in 2005 (for the 2001-2004 reporting period) to 727 Quadrennial reports to be submitted to the NGO Committee at its 2012 session (for the reporting period of 2007-2011).³⁰ The NGO Branch of OESC services the Intergovernmental Committee on NGOs and is responsible for the process by which NGOs are deemed eligible to appear before EOSOC, its subsidiary bodies, and the Human Rights Council. In addition, the branch undertakes outreach activities to encourage NGOs to participate in the meetings of ECOSOC and its functional commissions, as well as in the work of the United Nations system more broadly. It is increasingly called upon to promote and enforce predictable and rules-based access of civil society organizations to United Nations intergovernmental processes, and performs the role of an ombudsman for civil society organizations that have grievances.

The Division has been challenged by Information Technology (IT) constraints

36. Staff and management in the NGO Branch reported that they faced workload challenges that had adversely affected their ability to meet all demands of Member States and NGOs. In particular, the branch has experienced a deficit in IT support. The Branch employs 5 professional staff and 5 general service staff, none of whom are IT specialists. This is a significant problem because the NGO Committee was the first intergovernmental committee to move to a completely “paperless” approach, built on a computer system that requires some specialized maintenance. As a result, the work of the OESC NGO branch relies heavily on information technology for their data bases and administrative processes.³¹

Roles and responsibilities of the NGO Branch versus those of other United Nations Secretariat bodies working with civil society were not clear

37. While the NGO Branch has a clear role in supporting the NGO Committee as it grants or denies consultative status to NGOs, other aspects of its work are not unique to the branch. Most entities across the UN system are working to include civil society in their activities, reflecting both the growing prominence of the NGO community and the United Nations’ drive to engage more actively with the wider world. United Nations system entities such as UNDP, UNCTAD, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UNEP all have NGO offices with robust work programmes that maintain close ties to the NGO community. Within DESA itself, other divisions have focal points or units that interact with NGOs—and even within OESC, the NGO Branch is not the only body working with civil society. The ECOSOC and Interorganizational Cooperation Branch and the Development Cooperation Policy Branch³² also interact with NGOs on a regular basis.

³⁰ Data from the branch

³¹ During the session of the NGO committee observed by OIOS, the “paperless” system broke down and caused substantial delays and complications.

³² A small task force of NGOs provides informal advice on the preparations for the DCF. NGOs are also part of a multistakeholder Advisory Group of the USG on the DCF, which provides advice on the strategic positioning and work of the DCF

38. Most notable, according both to interviews with high level staff in the NGO Branch and to an analysis of the information available on the United Nations websites, was the overlap with the Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), which is not a part of DESA. The NGLS is mandated “to promote and develop constructive relations between the United Nations and civil society organizations.”³³ The OESC NGO Branch’s website lists responsibilities including “strengthen and enhance dialogue between NGOs and the United Nations to enable NGOs to participate in the economic and social development activities of the organization.”³⁴ NGO Branch staff indicated that responsibilities are divided between their branch and NGLS on an ad hoc and informal basis—through conversations and personal relationships. They also indicated that they had heard stakeholders express confusion over which entity they should approach in a given situation. This confusion was echoed in some stakeholder interviews with OIOS. The structural relationship between DESA and NGLS further complicates the picture: DESA provides funding to the NGLS, but the entity is administered by UNCTAD.³⁵

39. The problem of overlapping responsibilities in the realm of NGO relations is not a new one. In 2003, then Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed a high-level panel to review the United Nations system’s engagement with civil society and make recommendations for enhancing the relationship. The resulting report—known informally as the Cardoso report—emphasized the importance of a strong relationship between the United Nations system and civil society and pointed out that the current fragmented approach weakens the relationship. The report described the NGO accreditation process as resource intensive and relatively inefficient, and it outlined areas of overlap among the various NGO liaison offices within the United Nations Secretariat.

OESC’s work with the private sector was in its infancy

40. As it has with the NGO community, OESC has also worked to engage the private sector in the work of ECOSOC. In reaching out to businesses, OESC has communicated with relevant United Nations offices including the Global Compact Office and the United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP). Together with UNOP and the Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy, OESC has organized a series of conferences on ways to promote the business sector’s involvement in advancing the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals. In addition, the private sector is one of the six constituency groups that OESC has targeted to participate in the DCF. The first DCF programme included representation from the private sector, notably the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), an organization with a membership of over 200 major global corporations. In addition, most regional ministerial meetings in preparation for the AMR have included panellists from the private sector.

41. Nevertheless, the business sector’s participation in ECOSOC activities has been limited to date. Considering that the private sector is intended to be one of the six major constituency

³³ NGLS website: <http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=sommaire>

³⁴ NGO Branch website: <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/>

³⁵ DESA is the largest source of funding for NGLS. In addition, NGLS receives extrabudgetary resources from Member States including Canada, France, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and Norway, and from *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF) and the Ford Foundation

groups of the DCF, the DCF has had only weak business involvement. No individual corporations or private philanthropic entities have participated in the programme of the DCF. In fact, the WBCSD was the only business representation in 2008, and there were no business representatives in 2010, though other NGOs with ties to the business world did attend. While OESC's partners in the corporate philanthropy event series praised the division's cooperative attitude, they did indicate that their approach to dealing with the high-level corporate leaders in attendance did not reveal a familiarity with corporate culture or expectations. This complaint was not unique to OESC, however—it has been repeated by corporate partners who have collaborated with various parts of the United Nations system in a number of different types of partnerships.³⁶

E. Resource challenges and methodological limitations have resulted in a Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review report that does not support Member States with the information and analysis to formulate policies in an optimal manner³⁷

The depth, rigour and transparency of the TCPR evaluation, including data collection methods, have been limited

Based on a comprehensive interpretation, the TCPR is composed of two reports: the first, produced most recently in May 2007, provided an assessment of the operational activities of the United Nations system for consideration by ECOSOC and the second, produced most recently in August 2007, took account of the views and comments of Member States and contained recommendations for the consideration of the General Assembly.³⁸ This OIOS evaluation reviewed only the first “primary analytical” report -- A/62/73-E/2007/52. That report was part survey and part evaluation, which resulted in a lack of clarity that created some risks to its ultimate effectiveness. In the introduction, it used the language of evaluation, calling itself an “assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, impact and efficiency of operational activities of the United Nations system and of the sustainability of their outcomes.”³⁹ But the enormous scope of the report and the practical limitations in terms of length, have resulted in a lack of depth and comprehensive analysis. When specifics were mentioned, the report often used individual cases without indication as to the degree to which they were broadly representative. When discussing the contribution of United Nations operational activities to national capacity development, for example, the TCPR report stated “Since 2004, there has been increased recognition of the United Nations system’s contributions, not only in areas of technical and technological innovations and training, but also in terms of advocacy for and direct assistance to the achievement of internationally agreed goals and compliance with international commitments in other related

³⁶ See IED Report on “United Nations-Business Partnerships Addressing Climate Change” for a discussion of the risks of partnerships with business.

³⁷ At its 63rd session in 2008, the GA decided to change the review from a triennial to a quadrennial cycle in order to better provide policy guidance to the United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies; and also decided to hold its next comprehensive policy review in 2012 and subsequent reviews on a quadrennial basis (A/RES/63/232). It will henceforth be called the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR).

³⁸ A/62/73-E/2007/52 11 May 2007 “Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations development system” and A/62/253 13 August 2007 “Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations development system: conclusions and recommendations” which draw on the statistical report produced annually entitled A/62/74-E/2007/54 “Comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system” is A/62/74

³⁹ A/62/73-E/2007/52, para. 3.

areas.”⁴⁰ Yet the report provided little specific evidence for this positive statement. Furthermore, when discussing the role of the resident coordinator, the report pointed to “promoting collegiality” as one of the primary ways that the resident coordinator should show leadership, without offering a specific discussion on how this could be achieved. Conclusions and recommendations were implied in various places throughout the report and written in general form. The expert panel reviewing this report further noted that the non-specific nature of the embedded conclusions raised the question of whether they were practically useful.

42. The expert panel further concluded that the TCPR report did not adequately describe the methodology or data sources used in the preparation of the report. For instance, though the 2007 report was based on 40 country assessments conducted by FAO, IFAD, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, and WFP, the report did not explicitly state which countries were chosen or the criteria for their selection. The TCPR appeared to take the results of these evaluations at face value without validating the data sources or the reliability of the conclusions. It also did not provide methodological detail on how it used other data sources to triangulate its findings. As the expert panel points out, even the fairly concrete conclusions dealing with the lack of funding and other resources, were weakened by the lack of explicit ties to actual data sources in the text.⁴¹ OESC has indicated that it “will include such information in the upcoming Quadriennial Comprehensive Policy Review to be conducted in 2012.”⁴²

OIOS stakeholder interview and survey data also raised concerns about the credibility of the data itself. In interviews, stakeholders questioned whether the TCPR data collection and analysis methodologies were adequate for such a significant undertaking. This OIOS stakeholder and survey data also included calls for an assessment to determine the degree to which OESC resources, including technical evaluation capacity, are sufficient to produce the mandated report, given its broad objective and other challenges. This is particularly true in light of the existence of other OESC mandated work that has been growing in recent years. In interviews OESC indicated that they attempted to address shortcomings by surveying the views of Member States on the UN system’s operational work through a workshop, questionnaires and interviews during country missions. OESC has further indicated that *the findings and analysis in the TCPR report are supported and supplemented by a series of background documents addressing specific themes such as on funding, capacity development and effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the United Nations system.* And, that *the background information was to the greatest possible extent triangulated.* OESC further indicated that *the Development Cooperation Policy Branch (DCPB) within OESC is a full member of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and seeks to comply with professional evaluation norms and standards.*

43. Furthermore, the TCPR has suffered from disincentives to full cooperation among United Nations system entities. One example offered by some stakeholders interviewed was that of a United Nations system entity staff member working in a country-level office who would have little motivation to provide data that could place his or her colleagues or country-level work in a negative light. Stakeholders with field experience interviewed by OIOS indicated that a staff

⁴⁰ A/62/73-E/2007/52. para 62.

⁴¹ Although the specific methodology is not contained in the TCPR report, background documentation which substantiated OESC’s methodological process was presented to OIOS.

⁴² Formal Comments from DESA on the OIOS draft report of OESC- 22 May 2011.

member in this situation would be likely to provide bland or general information rather than a comprehensive assessment of his or her offices' own work that identified failures as well as successes. In addition, the entities themselves were never given the opportunity to respond formally to the TCPR's conclusions through an official management response.⁴³ Evaluators interviewed in the United Nations system pointed out that this undermined the credibility of the exercise and did not encourage full and robust engagement in the process.

OESC's multiple roles in the TCPR process presented challenges

OESC writes the TCPR report⁴⁴ and also supports the negotiations which arise out of it creating challenges that have further weakened the report. As indicated above, the "primary analytical" report is prepared by OESC staff and consultants as an independent piece of research and analysis and OESC also prepares the second report⁴⁵ for the General Assembly drawing conclusions and making recommendations based on the "primary analytical" report. As an OESC staff member stated, "Member States all want us to have clear reports and sound analysis. But some do not want us to reach too many conclusions. They do not want us to judge them and be too judgemental in our conclusions." OESC staff interviewed also noted that the TCPR entailed possible criticism and judgment of the United Nations system and that some Member States requested that the report should point to the challenges faced in implementing the TCPR. While there has been no evidence that OESC staff consider political expediency when conducting their analysis, there is evidence that different Member States, as well as different operational entities within the system have diverse expectations as to the breadth and depth to be provided in the Secretary-General's TCPR report.

The TCPR has also been constrained by a static format and limited follow-up implementation

44. The TCPR has maintained the same tone and format over the last several cycles and has not been enhanced or revised to reflect more current developments. The expert panel stated that, "there are no references on any possible changes in methodology or assessment criteria between [the 2004 and 2007] reports in A/62/73..."⁴⁶ Some stakeholders likewise noted in interviews that the report has not changed considerably cycle to cycle in spite of dramatic changes in the development context, and they indicated that from the field-based perspective, the report was, therefore, not particularly relevant.

45. Lastly, representatives of operational entities stated in interviews that field-based staff had a very low level of awareness of the TCPR and felt little obligation to plan their work programmes with information in the TCPR report in mind. OESC staff, however, argued that the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) plays a critical role in sensitizing country level staff about the TCPR. And they indicated that the UNDG reflects TCPR decisions in its guidance

⁴³ The draft outlines and report were discussed at HLCP and UNDG. UN system entities were invited to provide inputs and comments at various stages in the process, including on the recommendations (through a network of focal points on UN system operational work across the UN system). A consultant also visited the headquarters of specialized agencies for consultations on the TCPR. A workshop held in Turin at the end of the report preparatory process engaged several UN system representatives

⁴⁴ A/62/73-E/2007/52.

⁴⁵ A/62/253.

⁴⁶ Expert panel conclusions, p. 10.

notes (on e.g. preparation of UNDAF, mainstreaming of gender or south-south cooperation, job description of the RC, the annual report of the resident coordinator), as well as in the general support it provides to UNCTs. They further pointed out that progress in UNDG's follow-up work on the TCPR is reported in annual reports to ECOSOC.

46. Governance structures have also hindered effective TCPR implementation. The report itself acknowledges that the impact of the TCPR process and the resulting resolution is diluted by the fact that all of the operational entities have their own governing bodies, and, in particular, the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions have fully independent governance structures. These entities, therefore, do not have structural accountability to the General Assembly resolution emanating from the TCPR.

47. OESC staff closely involved with the preparation of the TCPR indicated that plans were underway to update the process to prepare the report. In particular, they spoke of plans to take a more "creative" approach to engage Member States and other partners of the United Nations system, and to spend more time analyzing various key themes of the TCPR by ensuring an early start to the preparations and through the conduct of a few thematic evaluations.

V. Conclusion

48. The mandate of OESC—to advance the role of the General Assembly and ECOSOC in support of the United Nations development agenda—is a multifaceted directive, requiring highly developed political sensitivities, the ability to harness substantive expertise from many sources, and solid logistical and organizational skills. Especially over the past few biennia, OESC has largely succeeded in all three of these functions. The ECOSOC has been strengthened as a result of the proactive work of OESC. Member States, United Nations system partners, and members of the civil society community were uniform in their high regard for the competence, professionalism and service orientation of the Division.

49. With its focus on servicing the social and economic development intergovernmental process, OESC has enjoyed a well-defined role that is not duplicated by other entities within the United Nations system. Member States and other stakeholders have a clear sense of the Division's value added in the annual cycle of ECOSOC and the General Assembly Second Committee sessions, preparatory and side events, and supporting reports. Member States and other stakeholders also hold in high regard the Division's ability to navigate the intricacies and bureaucracy of the United Nations processes. And, for partners within the United Nations Secretariat, OESC has served as a trusted liaison to the world of the Member States and their changing priorities.

50. In recent years, the General Assembly has added to the Division's responsibilities, requesting support for the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum, two events tied to the ECOSOC high-level session. These were added to the Division's work programme with the addition of only 1 professional staff position. Some managers, staff, and stakeholders were concerned that by overworking the Division, Member States and other stakeholders put the quality of the outputs at risk.

51. Within this context of expanding mandates, OESC should strive to be more strategic and creative in fulfilling the responsibilities assigned to it. To this end, the Division should focus on deepening and enhancing partnerships within DESA and across the United Nations system to increase efficiency. In part, this is a structural challenge because each operating entity is responsible for its own list of expected accomplishments with little incentive for deep cooperation. However, the opportunity is there for OESC, with its position relative to ECOSOC, to take a lead in promoting United Nations system efforts to increase collaboration and coherence.

52. Maximizing results—in the global policy sphere and on the ground in the developing world—should be one metric for measuring effectiveness. For OESC, this requires an enhanced emphasis on follow-up. Member States are asking for more support on the real-world applications of OESC's reports, conference themes and policy outcomes, and, while limited resources make impact assessment and follow-up support difficult, these measures are necessary to ensure that all the good work of the Division is yielding real results in the development context.

53. In addition, the Division should re-examine its approach to engagement with civil society and the private sector. With regard to civil society engagement, the division has made considerable strides in recruiting more NGOs to the intergovernmental process. However, the existing structure of maintaining an NGO Branch within OESC, separate from the NGLS, which is also primarily funded by DESA, reduces efficiency and lessens the potential for further advances. While OIOS recognizes that decision making related to this structural arrangement extends beyond DESA, further dialogue and consideration of this arrangement is a logical next step forward. Also, if OESC wants to more fully capitalize on the potential benefits of a vibrant relationship with the private sector, it needs a more comprehensive strategy.

54. OESC also needs to reconsider some aspects of the TCPR/QCPR report development process, including the methodology being utilized. The 2008 General Assembly decision to move the TCPR process to a quadrennial schedule, and to harmonize the strategic planning processes of United Nations funds and programmes with its recommendations, has created a new opportunity for OESC. OESC should further define its role within the context of its TCPR/QCPR mandate with an eye toward effective contributions to the integration of TCPR findings into the work planning of operational entities.⁴⁷ While recent changes in the schedule may help the management of these entities incorporate the TCPR/QCPR related General Assembly resolution into their strategic planning process, it is still too early to determine what impact these potentially positive changes may have. OESC has shown signs of self-awareness in this regard, reaching out to partners in pursuit of constructive dialogue on how to make the TCPR/QCPR more useful and relevant to their work. And the cooperative, service-oriented attitude that OESC is credited with by most of its stakeholders may assist it in the context of refining the TCPR/ QCPR process.

55. In order for the United Nations social and economic development arena to benefit from the strong work that OESC has done to date, there is a need for the Division to take the next steps outlined in this evaluation report.

⁴⁷ This was proposed by the General Assembly in its resolution responding to the 2007 TCPR

VI. Recommendations

56. Based on the results above, OIOS makes the following three recommendations to OESC:

Recommendation 1: OESC should develop a strategic plan for strengthening partnerships across the United Nations system, as well as within DESA (See Result D, paras. 35 to 39)

57. With its expanding mandates, OESC should collaborate more closely with partner entities to exploit potential efficiencies and capitalize on their respective strengths. OESC has already taken the first steps to effective collaboration—opening lines of communication and establishing mutual respect and trust—and the division should now move forward into closer cooperation and joint action.

58. In doing so OESC should consider carrying out mapping exercises with relevant partner entities (United Nations Regional Commissions, United Nations country teams, and other operational entities) to determine areas of overlap and potential synergy in reports, publications, meetings, and other outputs. These efforts could build on similar past exercises.⁴⁸ They would provide OESC with a systematic format to identify the most feasible and potentially fruitful partnership initiatives to pursue, thus assisting it its efforts to maximize its available resources.

59. In carrying out this recommendation OESC should also redouble efforts to collaborate with divisions within DESA, including by sharing lessons learned after meetings, conferences, and the production of other outputs. OESC should also ensure that it capitalizes on all of the substantive expertise available within DESA, especially for specialized events like the DCF and others.

Recommendation 2: OESC should develop a targeted private sector engagement strategy (See Result D, paras. 40 to 41)

60. Collaboration with the private sector is relatively new for the United Nations system as a whole. It is clear, however, that energetic engagement with businesses, private foundations, and individuals that share the United Nations' ethos has the potential to greatly benefit the Organization's social and economic agenda. OESC, in its role supporting ECOSOC, should take the lead within DESA to develop a strategy for interacting with the private sector. This strategy should:

- a) Make use of expertise available within the United Nations system, through the Global Compact Office and the United Nations Office for Partnerships in particular;
- b) Consider the full range of potential business partnerships; and,
- c) Take steps to safeguard against the reputational and other risks inherent in partnering with the private sector.

⁴⁸ For example, a similar exercise was undertaken with the UNDP Office for United Nations Affairs, but the follow up to this thus far has been minimal.

Recommendation 3: The OESC should re-assess the methods being utilized to carry out the QCPR mandate (See Result E, paras. 42 to 49)

61. The QCPR is an ambitious undertaking, aiming to survey, assess, and make recommendations on a significant component of the work of the United Nations system. To maximize the credibility and utility of the report, OESC may wish to consider:

- a) Improving the transparency of the QCPR data collection methodology by explaining it in the report and re-visiting the approach and methods used to collect data and formulate a more evidence-based report;
- b) Continuing to solicit informal feedback and comments from the agencies, funds, programs, and other operational entities whose activities are the subject of the QCPR; and,
- c) Including in the report a formal management response containing comments of these entities and OESC's response, in the style of an evaluation report.

Undertaking an assessment to determine the degree to which current OESC resources, including technical evaluation capacity, are sufficient to produce the mandated report given its broad objective and other challenges.

ANNEX A

In this Annex, OIOS presents the full text of comments received from the Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination of Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the evaluation report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the Evaluation of This practice has been instituted by as per General Assembly [resolution 64/263](#) following the recommendation of the [Independent Audit Advisory Committee \(IAAC\)](#). Overall, the Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination concurred with our results and conclusions. The comments from the Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination on the draft OIOS reports have been incorporated into this final report.

Comments from the Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination on the OIOS draft report:


United Nations  Nations Unies
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

TO: Mr. Yee Woo Guo
A: Acting Director
Inspection and Evaluation Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

DATE: 25 May 2011

REFERENCE: DESA-11/00863

THROUGH:
S/C DE:

FROM: Juwang 
DE: Chief
Office of the Under-Secretary-General
Department of Economic and Social Affairs

SUBJECT: Draft report of OIOS on the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination
OBJET:

1. I refer to your memo of 18 May 2011 addressed to Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, transmitting the final draft report of OIOS on the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination (OESC) and inviting comments on the final draft.
2. OESC expresses its appreciation for the evaluation and has requested the Office of Under-Secretary-General to transmit its comments (attached herewith) on the final draft.
3. On behalf of Mr. Sha Zukang, I would like to take this opportunity to thank IED/OIOS colleagues for your evaluation of OESC/DESA.
4. We will follow up on the results of the evaluation and the recommendations.

Thank you.

cc: Ms. Carman L. Lapointe
Mr. Byung-Kun Min
Ms. Ellen Vinkey
Mr. Nikhil Seth
Ms. Lotta Tahtinen
Ms. Ursula Germann

**Comments from the Department of Economic and
Social Affairs
on the draft report of the Office of Internal
Oversight Services on the evaluation of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination
of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

22 May 2011

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) attaches great importance to the OIOS evaluation of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination (OESC). It welcomes the overall positive evaluation of OESC's support to the intergovernmental process and the recognition of the high degree of professionalism and commitment of OESC's staff members.

My Office and OESC plan to study the report carefully and will take action to follow up on its recommendations, as appropriate. However, the Department believes that the report would have been more useful, if additional contextual and factual information had been taken into account on the analytical and normative work of OESC to support the General Assembly 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of United Nations system operational activities. The specific points below address these and a few other issues raised in the report on which the Department would like to share its perspectives:

The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review Process and reports (paragraphs 42 to 49)

It should be recalled that the Department has been entrusted to provide analytical and normative support to the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the UN system (TCPD). The Department has a very limited engagement in the implementation of operational activities for development and is recognized by Member States and within the UN development system to be the only comprehensive, independent and credible source of information and analysis on operational activities in the absence of an alternative credible system-wide evaluation mechanism. The Development Cooperation Policy Branch (DCPB) within OESC is a full member of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and seeks to comply with professional evaluation norms and standards.

The OIOS report states that the "TCPD process and report have not provided adequate policy guidance, through the General Assembly, to the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies". The reference to "process and report" is unclear and misleading. Such policy guidance is provided by Member States themselves through a resolution, in 2007 General Assembly resolution 62/208. It is by no means the intention of DESA's reports to provide such policy guidance to funds, programmes and specialized agencies, but to support Member States with the necessary information and analysis to formulate policies.

The analytical work of DESA is hence limited to a very specific purpose, i.e. inform Member States of progress made by operational entities of the system on the implementation of intergovernmental policy guidance expressed through previous General Assembly (and ECOSOC) resolutions. The OIOS report mentions "OESC's multiple roles in the TCPD process"

and draws attention to a possible conflict of interest between the analytical and the normative roles of DESA.

OIOS gives little credence to the fact that the roles of the analytical report (A/62/73 – E/2007/52) was clearly limited to an evidence-based analysis (and by no means “policy prescription” as stated in paragraph 42) and that another report (A/62/253) contained recommendations of the Secretary General for the consideration of Member States, which took account debates in ECOSOC in July 2007. The two-step process was indeed meant to separate the analytical and normative roles of DESA in this context. While different Member States and also different entities within the system may have different expectations as to the breadth and depth to be provided in reports of the Secretary-General, it is somewhat speculative to state that “OESC would proceed with an eye toward avoiding controversy and thus facilitating the kind of consensus that is necessary for a successful resolution”.

The OIOS report states that while the TCPR report “uses the language of evaluation”, it suffers from a lack of depth, rigour and transparency, as well as limited data collection methods. The Department would like to point out that the findings and analysis in the TCPR report are supported and supplemented by a series of background documents addressing specific themes (shared with the OIOS team), such as on funding, capacity development and effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the UN system. The background information was to the greatest possible extent triangulated and validated through stakeholder consultations. An intensive consultative process on emerging findings and conclusions took place both with Member States and through mechanisms of the UN system. Some of this fairly solid evidence is mentioned in footnote 41 of the OIOS report, but is not reflected in the rather negative evaluative comments in paragraphs 42-45, which are not sufficiently substantiated.

This methodology was not described in depth in the report due to limitations on the length of the report. The Department will include such information in the upcoming report for the quadriennial comprehensive policy review to be conducted in 2012, as recommended by OIOS. Likewise the limitation on the number of pages in the 2007 report did not allow going in depth on all the findings of the TCPR evaluation..

OIOS notes that UN system organizations were not given the opportunity to “respond formally to the TCPR’s conclusions through an official management response” (paragraph 45). This is a valid point, as a formal management response is good evaluation practice, which is also endorsed by the General Assembly (resolution 64/263). The Department will explore whether a formal management response, e.g. by the UNDG, might be requested by Member States for inclusion in the next analytical report to be produced for the QCPR in 2012.

Regarding the impact of the TCPR at country level, the OIOS report does not use country-level sources to substantiate its assessment that there is little awareness about the TCPR at the country level. The Department is of the view that the mechanisms offered by the UN Development Group serve as a powerful lever to sensitize country level staff about the TCPR. As stated before, it is not the mandate of DESA to promote the implementation of TCPR guidance at country level.

The OIOS report points to stakeholders' views that OESC's resources might not be sufficient to produce the TCPR reports (paragraph 44). The Department shares the view that preparing the TCPR would require much reinforced regular budget resources, especially in light of the fact that OESC has had to absorb new mandates with only one additional post. It notes however that extra budgetary resources provided an important supplement to the regular budget for preparing the 2007 TCPR.