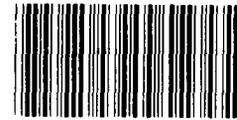


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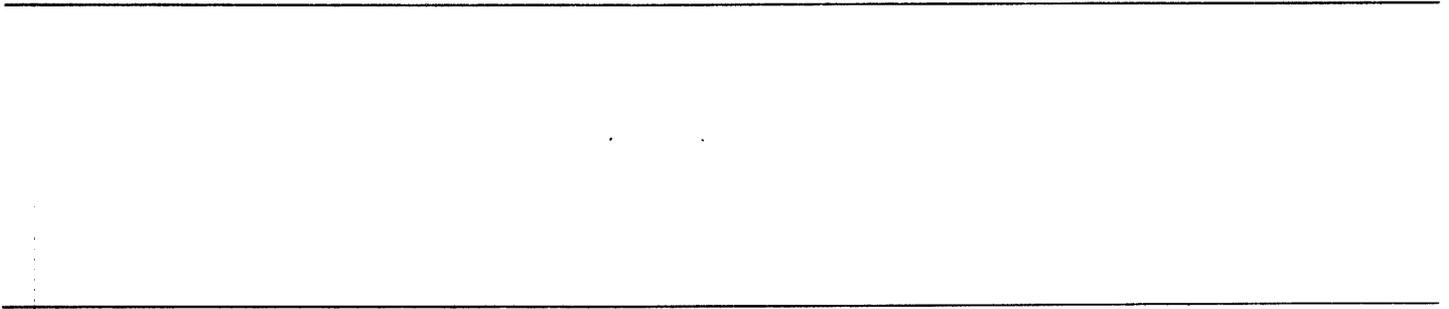
UNITED NATIONS

Progress to Strengthen U.N. Internal Evaluation Systems Has Been Slow



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**National Security and
International Affairs Division****B-222687**

January 14, 1987

The Honorable George P. Shultz
The Secretary of State

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We have reviewed the progress made to strengthen internal evaluation in the United Nations and have examined U.S. efforts to monitor and promote this evaluation and to assess U.N. development programs. This work was undertaken because of continuing congressional interest in improving the economy and efficiency of U.N. program management and the State Department's emphasis on promoting internal evaluation as an essential management tool. Our review focused on the progress being made by the U.N. headquarters in New York, composed of its Secretariat, regional commissions, and other semi-autonomous agencies, and on certain U.N. specialized agencies, such as the International Labor Organization and the World Health Organization. This report summarizes our observations, conclusions, and recommendations. Details are contained in appendices I and II.

**U.N. Headquarters
Slow to Implement
Internal Evaluation
Systems**

Internal evaluation represents a systematic, coordinated approach to assessing agency programs and activities. It is performed by the management of the organization responsible for the activity being assessed. According to the United Nations, internal evaluation may be carried out by any one or combination of the following parties: (1) those implementing the activity (self-evaluation), (2) an interdisciplinary task force or peer group within the United Nations, (3) a central evaluation unit within the agency, and (4) outside consultants on contract. While the last type of evaluation is instigated by internal management, it may also represent a form of external evaluation because it is performed, with some degree of independence, by entities outside of the management responsible for the activity concerned.

Several U.N. system organizations are making some progress in establishing internal evaluation capabilities. For example, some specialized agencies, such as the International Labor Organization and the World Health Organization, have begun to integrate evaluation findings into their programming, budgeting, and management processes. However, the U.N. headquarters in New York, including the regional commissions,

some of the major departments, and certain semi-autonomous organizations, have made little or no progress in developing strong internal evaluation capability. For the most part, these organizations are under the direction of the U.N. Secretary General and the U.N. General Assembly, although some of them, such as the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), do have their own executive officers and governing bodies and have unilaterally acted to strengthen their evaluation systems.

The Secretary General has been slow to implement provisions in 1981 and 1983 General Assembly resolutions that would strengthen the capability of U.N. headquarters evaluation units and systems. For example, evaluation units and systems of several headquarters organizations that were reported as deficient in 1983 have not been strengthened. In accordance with a 1983 General Assembly provision, a single U.N. Central Evaluation Unit (CEU) was established in 1985. However, the CEU does not have adequate resources to perform its tasks, such as conducting independent evaluations; formulating evaluation policies, procedures, and feedback for all programs; establishing self-evaluation guidelines and supporting and training staff in evaluation techniques; providing central evaluation information services; and monitoring the implementation and quality of management-oriented evaluations carried out by program managers. The CEU has a staff of only four permanent members, which Unit officials state is too small to effectively carry out the Unit's responsibilities.

The Secretary General has acknowledged the lack of progress and has proposed that, due to resource constraints, emphasis be placed on self-evaluation by program managers. In June 1986, the Secretary General reported to the General Assembly that temporary arrangements would be made to provide more support to the CEU but did not specify the nature of the support.

In past reports, particularly our September 1981 report, Identifying Marginal Activities Could Help Control Growing U.N. Costs (ID-81-61), we emphasized the need to identify obsolete, marginal, and ineffective activities in order to shift resources to higher priority activities. This shift would be a means of freeing resources needed to effectively perform evaluation functions. However, the recent report of the Group of High-Level Intergovernmental Experts, which was convened by the U.N. General Assembly in 1985 to review U.N. administrative and financial functions, concludes, in part, that such marginal activities are not being adequately identified. Evaluation would be a useful tool in detecting

marginal activities and addressing problems the Group cited in its report. For example, the Group referred to the lack of (1) application of priority-setting criteria set out in rules and regulations that govern planning, monitoring, and evaluation and (2) clear linkage between setting priorities and determining resource requirements.

U.S. Efforts to Monitor U.N. Evaluation Processes

The Department of State's Bureau of International Organization Affairs, along with the U.N. Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)—the only independent U.N. body having broad authority to perform evaluations—was a motivating force behind the 1981 U.N. resolution to strengthen internal evaluation. Since then, the Bureau has continued to highlight evaluation, announcing in 1984 that one of its policy priorities was to promote the improvement of evaluation mechanisms in the United Nations and to conduct independent assessments of development assistance programs of various U.N. agencies.

Within the Bureau, two offices are responsible for U.N. evaluation and assessment activities: (1) the Office of U.N. System Coordination is charged with promoting the adoption and improvement of U.N. evaluation mechanisms and (2) the Evaluation and Planning Division (EPD) of the Office of International Development Assistance is responsible for assessing the programming, implementation, and evaluation of U.N. development and humanitarian assistance field activities.

State's Monitoring and Assessment Efforts

The Coordination Office has two staff members (the director and one officer) who devote part of their time to promote and monitor evaluation efforts within the U.N. system as well as to oversee JIU activities. The Office's main effort to monitor and assess U.N. evaluation activities has focused on reviewing JIU reports and reports of the U.N. Secretary General dealing with evaluation. From this perspective, the Bureau has strongly supported JIU positions and recommendations to strengthen U.N. evaluation systems and has prepared instructions for U.S. delegations so that U.S. positions on evaluations could be voiced at formal U.N. governing body meetings.

In regard to the U.N.'s emphasis on self-evaluation by program managers, Bureau officials believe that such evaluation is useful only as a data gathering mechanism. Such data, for example, would be useful to management to monitor performance and progress and could be useful in conjunction with external evaluation of program performance.

U.S. Assessment of U.N. Programs

Along with its assessment responsibility, EPD addresses longstanding U.S. concerns about U.N. programs. Its mission is to ensure that U.S. contributions to the U.N. system are being used in accordance with the purposes for which they were appropriated by Congress and that the humanitarian and development assistance activities of specific U.N. agencies are consistent with U.S. interests and objectives and are implemented with a reasonable degree of efficiency and effectiveness. Although EPD is under the auspices of the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, it is staffed and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID).

During 1983-1986, the Division conducted over 20 assessments and program studies of U.N. agencies. These assessments resulted in position papers or other documents containing recommendations. The Division reported that a number of the studies had been distributed and used by donor governments and U.N. agencies. Two of these, for example, pertained to the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and the World Food Program (WFP). A 1985 Division paper, which presented proposals for improving UNDP's programming and project review processes, was instrumental in UNDP's institution of a series of measures designed to improve the quality and effectiveness of UNDP-financed programs and projects.

The WFP assessment, an inter-agency effort involving State Department, Department of Agriculture, and AID personnel which was completed in May 1986, included on-site visits to WFP field projects. According to EPD officials, the rest of the Division's assessments were limited to so-called desk audits because of funding constraints and associated travel restrictions. Thus, the reviews were limited to the examination of relevant data that was readily available, without the benefit of visits to the project sites.

A Division official acknowledged that desk audits had limited their ability to reach conclusions on the effectiveness and impact of the U.N. programs. However, he stated the results of such assessments can be useful to both the United States and the United Nations.

The momentum and continuity of the Division were recently disrupted because of funding problems, which have reduced the number of EPD staff from three officers to one officer (the director). By August 1986, efforts to reinstate funding for an additional position appeared to be successful. However, in November 1986, we learned that one officer's

position has been placed on hold and that the eventual intent is to withdraw the position. Should this occur, only the Division Director will be retained.

Conclusions

Although many U.N. organizations have made some progress in developing internal evaluation capabilities, the U.N. headquarters has been slow to expand and strengthen its internal evaluation systems. The Secretary General points to the shortage of resources as a major problem. In this regard it is evident that adequate staff have not been made available to several U.N. headquarters organizations. Consequently, progress toward developing and implementing basic evaluation standards and directives has been constrained, and the overall objective of integrating evaluation results into the program planning and budgeting processes has not been met.

The Secretary General proposes to remedy this problem by putting emphasis on internal self-evaluation by program managers. Because self-evaluation is a highly subjective process, however, we believe that it needs to be supplemented by the direction, oversight, and control that more independent internal evaluation units could provide. Thus, the United States, with other like-minded nations, should continue to pursue implementation of the General Assembly's position on strengthening U.N. evaluation systems and units. This will require members' commitment and willingness to shift some program resources or to pursue increased funding in order to support internal evaluation units.

The Bureau of International Organization Affairs' Evaluation and Planning Division, while working under staffing constraints, has demonstrated the ability to independently assess selected U.N. development programs and to provide U.S. managers with information needed to make decisions regarding U.S. participation in U.N. programs. However, the interrupted funding for the Division's work has seriously disrupted the momentum and continuity that were being established, and future disruptions need to be avoided.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Secretary of State direct U.S. representatives to the United Nations to pursue implementation of the 1981 and 1983 General Assembly resolutions by requesting the U.N. Secretary General to

- provide the necessary staff resources to establish or strengthen evaluation units for all U.N. headquarters organizations;

- review the CEU's staffing requirements to ensure that it is adequately staffed to carry out its central evaluation activities;
- establish time frames and milestones for completing initial evaluation training, providing central evaluation information services, and integrating evaluation into the program planning and budgeting cycle; and
- provide annual reports on the status of evaluation systems' implementation.

We also recommend that the Secretary of State direct the Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs to establish the Evaluation and Planning Division as a permanent State Department-supported operation within the Bureau.

Agency Comments

The Department of State provided oral comments on a draft of the report. State Department officials concurred with our findings and recommendations pertaining to U.N. internal evaluation and stated the Department will work through available U.N. channels to seek support for our recommendations. The Department also agreed with our recommendation to strengthen the Evaluation and Planning Division.

As you know, 31 U.S.C. §720 requires the head of a federal agency to submit a written statement on actions taken on our recommendations to the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Government Operations not later than 60 days after the date of the report and to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the agency's first request for appropriations made more than 60 days after the date of the report.

We are sending copies of the report to the Chairmen of the four above Committees; interested House and Senate authorization committees; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely yours,



Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General

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Abbreviations

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
AID	Agency for International Development
CERP	Comprehensive Economic Reporting Program
CEU	Central Evaluation Unit
CPC	Committee for Program and Coordination
DAM	Department of Administration and Management
DIESA	Department of International Economic and Social Affairs
EPD	Evaluation and Planning Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAO	General Accounting Office
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IDCA	International Development Cooperation Agency
ILO	International Labor Organization
ITC	International Trade Center
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
UNCHS	U.N. Centre for Human Settlements
UNCTAD	U.N. Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	U.N. Development Program
UNESCO	U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Program
UNICEF	U.N. Children's Fund
UNIDO	U.N. Industrial Development Organization
UNRWA	U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

Status of Evaluation in the United Nations

The U.N. system is comprised of many different organizations. For example, the U.N. headquarters in New York is comprised of major departments, committees, and regional economic commissions, which are under the direct supervision of the Secretary General and the General Assembly. Certain semi-autonomous organizations, such as the U.N. Development Program (UNDP) and the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), are included as headquarters-affiliated bodies. In addition, the U.N. system has 15 specialized or autonomous organizations, which operate under their own governing bodies and secretariat.

We reviewed internal evaluation activities at U.N. headquarters, seven semi-autonomous organizations, and three specialized and autonomous organizations.¹ Internal evaluations conducted or planned by these U.N. system organizations are of three basic types: (1) self-evaluations completed by people responsible for managing the projects and activities under review, (2) in-depth evaluations of large projects or programs conducted by teams of evaluation specialists, project managers, or outside consultants, and (3) peer evaluations conducted by U.N. personnel not associated with the activities being evaluated. Periodic self-evaluation of projects is the most common form of evaluation used or planned by eight of the organizations. In addition to the three basic categories of evaluation, UNDP and UNICEF conduct other types of evaluations. For example, both use thematic evaluations, which address selected topics such as agricultural training, and program impact or effectiveness evaluations. UNDP also applies tripartite evaluations, which involve UNDP, the host country, and executing agency representatives.

In general, we found that the U.N. system is making progress in establishing internal evaluation capabilities. The U.N. headquarters, however, has been slow to strengthen internal evaluation capabilities in all of its affiliated organizations as directed by U.N. General Assembly resolutions. For example, while some of the larger organizations affiliated with U.N. headquarters, such as UNHCR and UNCTAD, have taken action to strengthen evaluation, others, such as the regional commissions, do not have internal evaluation units or established systems.

¹United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Program (UNHCR), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), UNDP, UNICEF, International Labor Organization (ILO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), World Health Organization (WHO), and International Trade Center (ITC).

U.N. System Organizations Are Improving Internal Evaluation Systems

Over the past 10 years the U.N. Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) has reported several times on the status of internal evaluation in organizations of the U.N. system. These reports show progressive, though limited, expansion of evaluation activity between 1977 and 1985. For example,

- in 1977, only 2 of 13 organizations surveyed by JIU had established some type of evaluation system, and 6 others were under development;
- by 1981, 12 of 23 organizations included in the JIU survey had established some type of system, while 5 others had a system under development; and
- by 1985, 21 of 24 organizations had some type of internal evaluation system, although the U.N. headquarters and U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had fallen considerably behind the other large agencies in system implementation.

Most of the 10 organizations we reviewed have made progress in expanding and improving their evaluation systems. Seven of the organizations have internal evaluation units responsible for planning evaluations, participating in evaluations, and reviewing evaluation reports. Two organizations, ITC and WHO, which do not have evaluation units, have other forms of evaluation systems designed into their program plans. One organization (UNRWA) did not have an evaluation unit or system. For those organizations having evaluation units, the number of professional staff assigned to them ranged from two in UNHCR to five in IAEA. The number of self-evaluation activities conducted per year ranged from 50 in ILO to 2,000 in UNDP.

ILO and WHO have made significant progress toward integrating evaluation results into the management planning and decision-making processes. After developing a three-volume manual, between 1979 and 1982, on Procedures for the Design and Evaluation of ILO Projects, the ILO evaluation unit has emphasized quality control and dissemination of evaluation information. For example, in addition to staff training programs, an evaluation information system is being developed; listings of progress and performance indicators have been prepared; and counseling was provided to ILO staff on how to apply the performance indicators to planning and programming efforts.

JIU reported in 1985 that, since 1978, WHO has established one of the most extensive evaluation systems in the U.N. system and has made the most progress in integrating evaluation into the basic management cycle. The WHO evaluation process is a highly decentralized, continuous self-evaluation. Outside experts are sometimes used to act as a peer-group or

to assist as individual experts in evaluation. Control and oversight are exercised by a network of regional and headquarters committees and intergovernmental bodies. WHO officials told us that the Headquarters Programme Committee of WHO will not allocate budgetary resources to a program unless it has carried out an internal evaluation, undergone a program review, and initiated any corrective action needed.

Responding to the U.N. General Assembly resolutions to improve evaluation systems, UNCTAD, in February 1985, redeployed three professional staff to form an evaluation unit. The redeployment, however, was considered temporary, only for the 1984-85 budget period. Nevertheless, UNCTAD planned to conduct 10 evaluations in 1986, one for each of its major programs. The evaluations will be conducted within a combined self-evaluation and independent evaluation framework.

While UNRWA does not have an evaluation unit or a formal evaluation system, it does have a management and audit division responsible for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. In 1987, this division is planning to conduct its first program evaluation of UNRWA's education program, which represents 60 percent of its budget.

Five of the 10 organizations use the results of the evaluations only for internal purposes. These five organizations do not make internal evaluation reports available to member states because agency officials believe project managers are more likely to submit candid self-evaluation reports if the results are kept confidential. ITC, on the other hand, does provide copies of individual evaluation reports to its member states, upon request. All organizations having an evaluation system, except for UNCTAD, which had not yet completed an evaluation, provide their governing bodies with regular reports of their evaluation activities, which usually highlight the most significant findings in individual reports.

Limited Resources Cited as a Common Problem

Obtaining and maintaining adequate resources for evaluation appear to be problems common to many of the 10 organizations that we visited. For example, ITC, which established its unit in 1975, relies upon voluntary contributions to support its evaluation activities. According to ITC's evaluation officer, the agency has included funds for evaluation in its regular budget requests; however, they have consistently been deleted by the governing body during the budgetary review process. The two evaluation specialists in UNHCR, which established its evaluation unit in 1980, do not have permanent status. According to one agency official, converting these positions to permanent status would be very difficult

in view of member states' budget growth concerns. The UNDP had four professionals in its Central Evaluation Office, three below the estimated requirement when the Office was established. UNDP officials doubt that they can effectively perform their evaluation functions without additional staff. In this regard, the JIU reported in 1985 that, in order to effectively implement its evaluation system, UNDP's Central Evaluation Office would need the three additional staff envisioned when the office was established.

U.N. Headquarters Has Been Slow to Implement Evaluation Provisions

The U.N. headquarters has been slow to strengthen evaluation units and systems in all of its affiliated organizations. Although some of the larger semi-autonomous organizations, such as UNDP and UNICEF, are beginning to show some progress, others still do not have evaluation units or systems. The major departments and commissions under the the Secretary General are still in the initial phase of developing evaluation system definitions and methodologies and determining staffing needs.

Member nations, particularly the United States and like-minded western nations, through their U.N. General Assembly representatives, have repeatedly expressed concern about the lack of evaluation capability. This concern is compounded by the present financial crisis in the United Nations. As the JIU reported in 1985, "the value of evaluation is accentuated by the difficult international economic situation, scarce resources for international development, and zero-growth budgetary policies in many of the organizations."

Lack of Progress in Implementing Evaluation Activities

In 1981, the U.N. General Assembly, in a U.S.-sponsored resolution, emphasized its support for evaluation and requested that the Secretary General strengthen U.N. evaluation systems and evaluation units. Specifically, the Secretary General was asked to

- specify the responsibilities and tasks of the U.N. evaluation units;
- prepare for the General Assembly precise evaluation plans linked to the medium-term planning process and the budget cycle;
- develop guidelines for the design of programs and projects to make them more susceptible to evaluation;
- design and issue basic standards for the conduct, content, and process of evaluation, ensuring that the quality of evaluation products is continually assessed; and
- take appropriate measures to ensure that evaluation findings are promptly and systematically utilized in the management decision-

making process and that evaluation findings are followed up and recommendations carried out.

Our review showed that most of the resolution's provisions remain to be implemented. The Secretary General needs to establish or strengthen internal evaluation units in several organizations. An evaluation manual, which is intended to provide the guidance necessary to implement most of the resolution's provisions, has been drafted but not yet issued. In addition, the Secretary General has been slow to provide necessary resources to establish a strong central evaluation unit as the focal point for internal evaluation efforts.

In response to the 1981 resolution, the Secretary General reported in April 1983 on the status of evaluation systems and units in 17 U.N. headquarters organizations. They included 4 headquarters departments, 4 regional commissions, and 9 semi-autonomous agencies, such as UNCTAD and UNHCR. His report showed that 11 of the organizations did not have full-time evaluation officers or evaluation units. The 6 organizations having evaluation units had a combined total of 15 professional staff. Two of the 15 were part-time, and 2 performed other duties besides evaluation.

A December 1983 General Assembly resolution criticized the continued failure to implement its 1981 resolution and reiterated the need to strengthen the capacity of U.N. evaluation units and systems, in particular those in regional commissions. The Secretary General was requested to review all available possibilities to strengthen the capacity of U.N. evaluation systems and to take measures for redeployment of resources to staff internal evaluation units. In addition, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of its Committee for Program and Coordination (CPC) to merge existing central evaluation units into one central unit responsible for evaluation system development (see p. 15).

The Secretary General reported in November 1984 that although significant efforts had been made, it was not always possible to redeploy posts for evaluation. At that time, he stated that he would propose a permanent solution in his 1986-87 budget for strengthening the evaluation functions in 5 of the 11 headquarters organizations categorized in 1983 as having no full-time evaluation officers or evaluation units. These included three regional commissions, UNCTAD, and the U.N. Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS). A total of five additional evaluation posts were to be provided, one for each organization. According to the 1985

JIU report, 2 of the 11 organizations, during 1983, had been able to convert a total of 3 posts for evaluation purposes. Neither of these two organizations was one of the five organizations identified to receive resources to strengthen their internal evaluation functions. We were not able to determine why only 5 of 11 organizations had been selected for strengthening or what the intentions for the other 4 might be.

Despite the earlier commitment, the proposed 1986-87 budget does not provide additional resources on a permanent basis for any of the five U.N. headquarters evaluation units proposed for increased resources in 1983. The Secretary General proposed in the 86-87 budget instead to provide temporary evaluation posts to UNCHS and the three regional commissions. In addition, he placed long-term responsibility for evaluation with the program managers. After a transition period to develop evaluation techniques, the program managers will carry out evaluation functions with assistance from the U.N. Central Evaluation Unit (CEU). UNCTAD did not receive a new evaluation post. However, the UNCTAD budget submission included provisions to continue to allocate two professional staff to the evaluation unit, which was established in February 1985 by a temporary internal redeployment (see p. 12), thus extending the life of the unit for 2 years. This allocation indicates initiative on UNCTAD's part to continue to devote some of its resources to evaluation.

U.N. Central Evaluation Unit Has Key Role in Strengthening Internal Evaluation

In May 1983, the U.N. Committee for Program and Coordination made a number of recommendations to the Secretary General, suggesting that the various central evaluation functions and units in U.N. departments be merged into a single unit to serve as a focal point for evaluation.

The CPC recommendations in effect reiterated the provisions of the 1981 General Assembly resolution (see p. 13) and identified specific central evaluation unit responsibilities. Some of these were to (1) establish evaluation policies, concepts, and objectives, (2) coordinate evaluation planning, (3) provide training and coordination, (4) provide central evaluation information services, and (5) monitor evaluation quality and compliance.

In response to the 1983 CPC request, the Secretary General announced in March 1985 the establishment of a single Central Evaluation Unit to facilitate the development and implementation of "a United Nations evaluation system" as an integral part of the U.N.'s policy-making and management process.

The CEU combined the evaluation functions of the two central units in the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA) and the Department of Administration and Management (DAM). The DIESA evaluation unit, established in 1980, was the focal point for strengthening evaluation throughout U.N. headquarters organizations in the economic and social sectors. DAM had similar responsibility for the non-economic social sectors (political, legal, humanitarian, public information, and common services). Four of the six evaluation staff (four in DIESA and two in DAM) were assigned to the CEU at the time of the reorganization.

**Action Taken by the
Central Evaluation Unit on
CPC Recommendations Has
Been Limited**

The General Assembly, the CPC, and the Secretary General have emphasized the importance of completing an evaluation manual as an essential first step in defining and establishing evaluation systems. The former DIESA evaluation unit was to have established such guidelines by mid-1983. However, the unit had become engaged in conducting special evaluations for the CPC and had been diverted from completing this task. Since its creation in 1985, the CEU has been similarly constrained by heavy workload and limited resources although, as of September 1985, it had completed a four-volume draft evaluation manual. The manual, once it is implemented, will address most of the provisions of the General Assembly resolutions. For example, it specifies responsibilities and tasks of internal evaluation units and provides evaluation standards and procedures.

Other than the manual, however, little other direct action has been taken to implement the resolution's provisions and to fulfill the responsibilities set forth by the CPC. For example, we were told that, while some pilot tests have been conducted on monitoring the quality of evaluations in U.N. headquarters, this function will not be fully addressed until the evaluation manual is completed and implemented.

According to CEU, efforts are still inadequate to coordinate evaluation planning, provide training and orientation, and provide central evaluation information services. CEU said it would like to see coordination on evaluation planning to establish some common ground on the selection of topics and issues to be evaluated, but found that it is difficult to coordinate evaluation planning with those headquarters organizations that do not have full-time staff working on evaluation matters. We were told that training and orientation programs had been cut from the CEU's

budget. Further, CEU officials stated that, while central evaluation information services are badly needed, no system had yet been established to assimilate and update evaluation data.

According to State Department officials, as of November 1986, the CEU evaluation manual was still not issued. Recent U.N. documents show that, while contemplated, certain activities, such as training and coordination, remain to be implemented. In regard to central evaluation information services, we did note that the Secretary General has proposed, in the 1986-87 program budget, to expand the role and functions of an Information System Unit to make full use of its capacity and expertise in computerized data bases. This will help support work associated with the planning, programming, monitoring, and evaluation cycle. Special attention was also to be given to further development of the internal evaluation process, with particular emphasis on the dissemination of guidelines defining self-evaluation techniques in the Secretariat.

Limited Resources Appear to Be Major Constraint to Effective CEU Efforts

According to CEU officials, numerous obstacles have prevented the Unit from effectively carrying out its functions and responsibilities. The lack of adequate resources was cited as a major constraint.

When the CEU was created in 1985, it was to absorb the responsibilities of the DIESA and DAM central units. However, the CEU only received four of the six professional staff from those units. CEU officials told us that work on special evaluations has increased since then, until it now represents about 50 percent of the Unit's workload. For example, the CEU is scheduled, through 1992, to conduct one evaluation per year of a major U.N. issue area such as drug control or population. Such evaluations, in our opinion, are and should continue to be a major CEU responsibility.

In conjunction with the special evaluations, the CPC, in 1985, charged the CEU with the task of performing "triennial reviews." These represent followup reviews of action taken on recommendations made 3 years earlier from in-depth evaluations. One triennial review per year is scheduled through 1992.

The CEU estimates that its special evaluation and other responsibilities leave only about 20 percent of the Unit's time and resources to devote to strengthening evaluation system capabilities. In this regard, JIU reported in 1985 that additional workload responsibilities can overwhelm a small Central Evaluation Unit and undermine evaluation system quality. Moreover, JIU reported that the CEU had only one evaluation post for

every 1,310 professional staff and each \$735 million in U.N. regular budget expenditures. While such statistics may lend credence to CEU's requirement for staff resources, there are no plans to provide additional staff to the CEU for the 1986-87 budget period.

Linkage Between Evaluation, Program Planning, and Budgeting Has Not Been Made

As the JIU pointed out in its 1985 report, integration of evaluation with the decision-making process in U.N. headquarters departments has not been completed because programs are still not systematically evaluated. JIU noted further that the United Nations has tried but failed to make this linkage since at least 1977 when the JIU first reported on evaluation in the United Nations. A CEU official stated that the Secretariat has made several attempts to coordinate evaluations with its planning, programming, and budgeting processes. For example, the Secretariat proposed that evaluations be linked to the medium-term plan² and that self-evaluation reports prepared by program managers be summarized and submitted to the CPC in order to assist the CPC in reviewing the 1986-87 program budget.

According to the U.N. Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) July 1985 report on the 1986-87 budget, evaluation exercises are not coordinated with the program planning and budgeting cycle. However, the Committee noted that every effort will be made by the Secretariat to take evaluation results into account when the medium-term plan and program budget proposals are prepared.

Limitations of Self-Evaluation

As we pointed out in our June 1986 report on the JIU, U.N. organizations are moving toward self-evaluation as the basic component of internal evaluation systems. This movement raises the issue of whether those whose interests are directly involved in programs or projects can objectively determine their strengths and weaknesses. For example, a UNHCR official, in a report on the review of evaluation results, stated that, although self-evaluation has proven useful, it has not reached desired standards because of staff reluctance to report critically on activities for which they are responsible.

²A medium-term plan is adopted every 6 years to serve as a framework from which the biennial program budgets are developed. By U.N. definition, the plan translates legislative mandates, such as resolutions introduced and adopted by member states, into viable programs with associated objectives, strategies, and estimated resource requirements. The present medium-term plan covers the period 1984 to 1989.

JIU reports that the "self" component of self-evaluation promotes a skepticism that managers can not objectively assess success or problems in their own activities. This skepticism, according to the JIU, can be alleviated if such evaluations are conducted and documented in a standard, mandatory format. Of more fundamental importance, according to JIU, is the need to build evaluation capacity and a results orientation on a participative basis throughout an organization. Moreover, JIU supports the efforts of several organizations that have begun "evaluation of evaluations," whereby consultants or internal working groups are used to assess the performance of internal evaluation systems.

U.S. Efforts to Monitor U.N. Evaluation Processes

The United States has had a strong and continuing interest in developing effective evaluation mechanisms within the U.N. family of organizations. Now that evaluation systems have been introduced in many organizations, the United States may want to also focus on development of these systems and their integration into the overall management program planning process. To implement evaluation-related policy objectives and to enhance efforts to strengthen U.N. evaluation capabilities, the United States may need to increase its monitoring of U.N. evaluation processes and continue to independently review selected U.N. program activities of direct interest to the United States.

Monitoring and Assessment Responsibilities

The Department of State's Bureau of International Organization Affairs is the principal U.S. organization for formulating and managing U.S. policy toward the United Nations. The lead responsibility for managing the Bureau's priorities for U.N. evaluation and assessment activities rests with two offices: (1) the Office of U.N. System Coordination in the Office of U.N. System Administration and (2) the Evaluation and Planning Division (EPD) in the Office of International Development Assistance.

Bureau guidelines on the division of responsibility between these two offices for U.N. evaluation and assessment activities were drawn up in April 1985, following a State Department Inspector General's report recommendation. The report had noted that disagreement existed between the two offices over lead responsibility. The guidelines state that both offices shall support the Bureau's priority to improve U.N. evaluation mechanisms and conduct assessments of field programs: the Office of U.N. System Coordination from the perspective of improving management operations of the U.N. system and the EPD from the perspective of assessing the effectiveness of U.N. system development activities in terms of U.S. interests.

Specifically, in the evaluation area, the Coordination Office is responsible for U.S. government efforts to (1) promote and monitor the effectiveness of the U.N. system's internal evaluation capabilities as part of the overall U.S. effort to improve the organizational efficiency of the U.N. system and (2) provide oversight of the activities of the JIU. The EPD is responsible for independent assessment of the programming, implementation, and evaluation of development and humanitarian assistance field activities of U.N. agencies.

Monitoring and Assessment Efforts

We discussed with Bureau officials how the offices monitor and evaluate U.N. organizational performance. According to a Coordination Office official, monitoring focuses on issues raised in Secretary General and JIU reports that include evaluation as a topic on the agenda of the U.N. General Assembly and other governing bodies, such as the CPC. The Bureau reviews the reports and prepares position papers and instructions to U.S. missions. It is then up to U.S. delegations to push for U.S. positions at the formal sessions. The Coordination Office also raises evaluation issues at relevant meetings of the U.N. system organizations.

The United States has taken strong positions on strengthening evaluation in the United Nations and has protested the failure to staff internal evaluation units. For example, in 1984, the U.S. representative to the U.N.'s Fifth Committee protested the delays by certain U.N. headquarters organizations in fulfilling a request for the redeployment of personnel posts to perform full-time program evaluation. The U.S. representative rejected the explanations offered by those entities that had reported that they could not deploy the necessary staff. The United States felt that evaluation not only warranted the same support that other organizational activities received but could, if properly applied, result in significant savings in personnel resources. The U.S. representative also stressed to the committee that any new posts for the 1986-1987 budget must be provided through the reallocation of existing resources.

JIU reports appear to be a primary conduit for the promotion of evaluation activities. We did not detect any specific strategy on the part of the United States to directly monitor U.N. action taken on the U.S.-sponsored 1981 U.N. resolution to strengthen evaluation in the U.N. system, even though the United States had emphasized when the resolution was introduced that close monitoring would be necessary to ensure that the resolution was carried out.

U.S. Mission's Role in Evaluation

The U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York is responsible for day-to-day interface with the U.N. Secretariat and is best suited for the direct, ongoing monitoring of the U.N.'s efforts to strengthen evaluation. However, the Mission has played a very limited role in tracking the implementation of evaluative activities of the CEU or other evaluation units in the U.N. Secretariat.

The focal point for evaluation-related matters in the U.S. Mission is the Resources and Management Section, which is staffed with five professionals. This office monitors the administration of U.N. budget and program planning by the Secretariat. It also works with the Secretariat on all management issues.

Mission officials stated that the Resources and Management staff are not assigned on a full-time basis to follow the development of evaluation mechanisms in the United Nations. According to one official, the Mission is in a position to determine whether an evaluation system has been institutionalized, but limited monitoring is conducted. Mission officials stated that, periodically, contact is made with the Director of the Program Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Branch in DIESA and with other evaluation systems in the U.N. system. However, these contacts are usually made by phone and are not documented.

Evaluation and Planning Division Assessments

The Evaluation and Planning Division reports that its monitoring and evaluating activities include (1) efforts by U.S. delegates at U.N. governing body meetings, (2) review and analysis of U.N. documents, including evaluation documents, (3) questionnaires and specific inquiries to U.S. diplomatic posts, and (4) the use of interagency teams, which occasionally visit headquarters and field offices of selected U.N. agencies to conduct more in-depth reviews.

From 1983 to 1985, the Division undertook a number of studies and assessments. These included the examination of U.N. agency program studies on (1) UNDP's evaluation program and policies, (2) UNIDO's technical assistance programs, (3) the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO's) technical cooperation programs and work with the private sector, and (4) UNICEF programs and the World Food Program (WFP). In addition, "desk" assessments were made of U.N. development activities in Sri Lanka, Jamaica, and Senegal. For the WFP field assessment, the field work was done in Rome, Ghana, Niger, and Senegal. The final report on WFP, which was the latest prepared by the Division, was issued in May 1986.

Because of funding and personnel authorization problems, the EPD's efforts to monitor U.N. organization development assistance activities have been mostly "desk" assessments. These studies involve review and analysis of data readily available from other informed and cognizant sources. The Division has conducted only one field assessment of a U.N. organization program—the WFP. Division officials acknowledge that the

lack of on-site field inspections has restricted their ability to reach conclusions on the effectiveness and impact on U.N. programs.

Despite the lack of field visits, some of the Division's work appears to have been useful, especially when fed back to U.N. organizations and donor countries. For example, a UNDP paper stated that UNDP was highly receptive to the Division's observations and recommendations and had implemented or planned to implement many of them.

The Division also appears to represent a valuable source of information to Bureau management, whether in regard to special projects or in a general sense. For example, the Division has been the action office for the Comprehensive Economic Reporting Program (CERP). Under this program, U.S. embassies have provided information to the Division on a biennial basis for the purpose of assessing U.N. system development assistance activities and their compatibility with U.S. interests. For example, a December 1985 CERP report summarized data from 92 field missions pertaining to such topics as (1) host country support for U.N. system assistance, (2) U.N. system development effectiveness, and (3) U.N. aid with private sector participation.

Funding Constraints Affect Evaluation and Planning Division Efforts

The Evaluation and Planning Division is unique not only in what it does but in its structure as well. Although it is under the auspices of the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, it is staffed and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID). The origin of AID and Bureau arrangements goes back to the establishment of the U.S. International Development Cooperation Agency (IDCA) in 1979. EPD was created in 1981 by memorandums of understanding between IDCA and the Bureau to manage U.S. participation in U.N. economic and social development programs. Both AID and Bureau officials believe that the close working relationship resulting from this arrangement has enabled the United States to increase its influence on the way U.N. agencies approach development issues and manage development programs.

The AID Administrator informed the Bureau in June 1985 that the Agency, because of severe reductions in its operating funds coupled with increasing demand for staff in other areas, would be unable to continue funding all of the positions allocated to the Bureau. Subsequently, two officers and the Secretary were removed, leaving one officer (the Director) who was scheduled to leave in 6 months. For fiscal year 1986, AID proposed that the State Department reimburse the Agency for three

of the four AID-funded positions. The total estimated cost to the State Department for the three positions would be \$153,000.

AID's Administrator and the Bureau's Assistant Secretary acknowledged that the reduction would weaken the U.S. government's capacity to assess and manage developmental and program issues arising in U.N. agencies and to do the careful preparation work with other donor governments necessary to bring about program reform. They cited the work of the Division with UNDP as one of its successful achievements.

The Assistant Secretary subsequently concurred with the concept of State Department funding and proposed that a joint AID/Department of State memorandum be sent to the Under Secretary of State for Management to request assistance in retaining three of the four Evaluation Division positions scheduled for reduction. However, questions and uncertainty remain about the availability of staff and the future of the Division. By August 1986, AID had agreed to reinstate funding for two evaluation officers in the Division (including the Director's position). But, in November 1986, we were told that a hold had been placed on actions to reinstate one of the positions, with the apparent intent to withdraw it. In this event, only the Division Director's position will have been reinstated, and Division activities will continue at a highly reduced level.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

We reviewed evaluation in the United Nations because of continuing congressional concern for the effectiveness of U.N. programs and activities and U.S. emphasis on evaluation as a means to strengthen U.N. management areas. Our objectives were to

- gain a perspective and understanding of the status of evaluation in the organizations of the U.N. system;
- document progress made in strengthening evaluation in the United Nations, as requested by a U.S.-sponsored 1981 U.N. General Assembly resolution;
- assess the State Department's Bureau of International Organization Affairs' efforts to promote and monitor evaluation in the United Nations and to assess the Bureau's evaluation of U.N. development programs.

We reviewed records and talked with personnel from the Department of State's Bureau of International Organization Affairs and the U.S. Missions to the United Nations in New York, Geneva, and Vienna between July and October 1985. Followup and update work continued at the Bureau through November 1986.

To assess the progress made to strengthen evaluation in the United Nations, we reviewed U.N. documents from the late 1970s to the present, including six JIU reports issued since 1977 on the progress and problems encountered in implementing evaluation systems. We selected 10 organizations (7 U.N. organizations and 3 specialized agencies) to determine, in a general sense, what manner of evaluation systems are in place. Finally, we held discussions with U.N. Secretariat officials in New York; major donor representatives to the United Nations from Western European countries (United Kingdom, France, and Germany) and Japan; former U.N. and U.S. experts on evaluation; and officials of the following U.N. system organizations.

- U.N. Development Program
- U.N. Children's Fund
- U.N. Conference on Trade and Development
- U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Program
- U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
- U.N. Industrial Development Organization
- International Trade Center
- International Atomic Energy Agency
- International Labor Organization
- World Health Organization

To assess the State Department's efforts to promote and monitor evaluation in the United Nations, we documented procedures followed and reviewed policy priorities and action programs and U.S. positions presented at formal U.N. General Assembly sessions. We also documented practices and procedures to directly assess U.N. developmental programs and activities.

We conducted our review in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. However, because the U.N. system organizations we visited are outside our audit authority, our review of U.N. documents was limited to those that are generally available to member governments.

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