

Management response: Evaluation of the UNCCD New York Liaison Office

Overview

The evaluation of the UNCCD New York Liaison Office (NYLO) aimed to assess the performance of NYLO in the light of the overall mandate, aims and functions of the secretariat. On that basis, it was tasked to make suggestions on the future role and potential of NYLO with the aim to further develop and target its contribution to the UNCCD, and to strengthen its capacity to deliver against growing expectations.

The UNCCD secretariat welcomes the evaluation report and commends it for clarifying the specific strengths and key achievements of NYLO in supporting the Convention, which will assist not only the office itself in further targeting its work, but also the Bonn-based secretariat in defining where to involve NYLO and what kind of support to expect from it. This is likely to enhance the effectiveness of NYLO, which was the main objective of the evaluation.

The secretariat appreciates the careful approach taken by the evaluation report on the role of NYLO in building and maintaining partnerships. Indeed, New York and Washington offer many opportunities for partnership building, but nurturing new partnerships requires continuous interaction and NYLO, with its limited resources, should avoid spreading too thin. Focusing on partnerships that are directly relevant for the secretariat's work programme and benefit from substantive backstopping from Bonn could provide the optimal approach for NYLO.

The secretariat recognizes that the evaluation required long-term insight into the UNCCD as an intergovernmental treaty platform and solid understanding of the political processes and working culture in the context of the UN in New York. For the most part, the evaluation report tackled related matters well, but in a few places, it could have benefited from more thorough knowledge. Furthermore, the secretariat does not fully agree with the analysis of the cost-sharing arrangement with the CBD, which was largely based on feedback received through external interviews. The shared staff have fully met their commitments to the UNCCD, and the secretariat sees no need to open related exchanges with the CBD secretariat.

The secretariat appreciates the suggestions of the evaluation report in the field of communications and looks forward to working further on them.

Recommendations

Evaluation recommendation 1: In collaboration with the Bonn-based secretariat units, particularly EDM and ERPA, NYLO formulates for every biennium a brief work programme that derives directly from the secretariat's corporate work programme.

Management response: Accepted. In line with the suggestions of the evaluation report, NYLO together with the relevant secretariat units defines the NYLO focus areas and key deliverables for the biennium, building on those activities in the secretariat's work programme that most benefit from the type of inputs that NYLO can make. This work programme will clarify the

mandate and mission of NYLO. It will be targeted and brief; while it will link the work of NYLO with selected priorities of the secretariat, it will also need to ensure that NYLO maintains its flexibility and freedom to react on emerging issues and processes.

Evaluation recommendation 2: NYLO revises its approach to partnerships.

Management response: Partially accepted.

The primary function of the secretariat and NYLO is to be at the service of Parties and hence the primary focus of NYLO's activities would be to support Parties. NYLO will continue to provide substantive and secretariat support for the activities of GOF on DLDD.

NYLO will coordinate with the Bonn-based secretariat and the GM on the establishment and/or maintenance of partnerships with relevant New York or Washington based organizations, with focus on partners that can effectively support the implementation of the secretariat's work programme and keeping in mind the limited resources of NYLO.

Evaluation recommendation 3: The secretariat continues improving regular information sharing between NYLO and the Bonn-based units.

Management response: Accepted.

There is a need for a proper backstopping framework to ensure continuous two-way communication and reporting between Bonn and New York, reaching all relevant secretariat units. NYLO will continue participating in the management meetings and in selected teams and working groups of the secretariat, with the aim to ensure that it remains updated on main UNCCD developments that are relevant to its work and that its messages and approaches are coherent with those of the Bonn-based units. Bonn based units will take into account the difference in time zones so as to facilitate participation in such meetings.

Evaluation recommendation 4: The secretariat ensures that NYLO resources are commensurate to its workload.

Management response: Partially accepted.

Depending on the upcoming NYLO work programme (with reference to the first recommendation) the secretariat may consider mobilizing temporary assistance to NYLO for tasks that require additional expertise or support, in line with its general approach on ensuring surge capacity. Such assistance may include more active use of internships and recruitment of consultants, among others. Longer-term additional staff to NYLO may be considered in the context of planning the UNCCD programme and budget for coming years.

With regard to the cost-sharing arrangement with the CBD secretariat, the secretariat considers that this arrangement is working well and sees no need for reviewing it at the moment.

The secretariat agrees that the New York office needs refurbishing and will consult with the CBD secretariat about sharing related costs.