



FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY

**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF
CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)**

**2016 SPECA Economic Forum “Enhanced Implementation of SDGs through
Cooperation”**

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Evaluation of SPECA

Session VI: Evaluation of SPECA

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EVALUATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF
CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)

Background

1. The 10th session of SPECA Governing Council held on 11 November 2015 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan marked the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Council. Representatives welcomed the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and called upon ESCAP, UNECE and their development partners to provide active support to regional efforts by SPECA participating countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, the Governing Council underlined that the SPECA region shares unique challenges in implementing the SDGs. In part, this is due to the landlocked nature of all SPECA participating countries, but more recently, policy challenges arising from the ongoing economic slowdown, have constrained public expenditures, and deepened income and social inequalities. The subregion is also host to a number of environmental problems, which are the product of past stresses imposed on a fragile ecosystem, as well as, present inefficiencies in resource use exacerbated by unusual weather patterns related to the climate change.

2. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the emphasis it places on development as a holistic, integrated and multi-stakeholder partnership approach present a critical opportunity for SPECA to deliberate on how it could be further strengthened to facilitate the achievement of the Goals. In support of this process, it is proposed that an evaluation be undertaken to identify areas for improvement focusing on programme, institutional, organizational, partnership and resource mobilization aspects of SPECA.

3. Over its 20 year history, SPECA has yet to be systematically evaluated. SPECA will benefit from an evaluation by providing information on its key achievements and challenges and on how it can be further improved to support its member countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The evaluation will be undertaken in a rigorous and independent manner in line with the norms and standards for evaluation set by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). Evaluation in the UN context entails a systematic, impartial assessment, of an activity, programme, strategy, policy, theme or institutional performance. Evaluation provides an evidence base for programmatic strengthening and enables the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations. In recent years, evaluation has received increased attention in the UN system for supporting efforts to continuously improve the organization. In late 2014, the United Nations General Assembly adopted its first ever resolution on evaluation¹ and referred to the designation of 2015 as the Year of Evaluation.

Purpose and objective

4. The proposed evaluation would be forward-looking and formative in nature: designed to support organizational learning and decision-making. The aim would be to contribute to the deliberations at the SPECA Governing Council on ways to further strengthen the Programme in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Agenda. The

¹ UNGA resolution 69/237 on Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level (December 2014)

overall objective is to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance and effectiveness of SPECA in fulfilling its mandate. In this context, it would highlight programmatic achievements; identify strengths and challenges in the current institutional and organizational setup of SPECA; highlight significant partnership arrangements and resource mobilization efforts; and formulate concrete and actionable recommendations for improvement. The evaluation would cover the work of SPECA between 2006 and 2015.

Method

5. The evaluation is proposed to commence during the first quarter of 2017 and take three months to complete. Detailed evaluation terms of reference (TOR) will be developed in consultation with SPECA member countries. The present SPECA Governing Council serves as an entry point to assess information available, which includes findings from an UNECE-funded study underway, and seek guidance from the delegates on the most beneficial areas of focus for the evaluation; timing of activities; type of data and information required; stakeholders to be involved; and projected use of evaluation results and recommendations. Follow-up consultations will be undertaken to ensure that the needs and expectations of SPECA member countries are addressed.

6. On the basis of the detailed TOR, an independent evaluation team would be recruited to undertake the evaluation in a rigorous and participatory manner and selected based on relevant background and experiences on regional cooperation and development in SPECA member countries. Experience in the areas of institutional assessment, results-based management, programme design and working with United Nations organizations, particularly in the SPECA member countries context, are important considerations.

7. The proposed management structure for the evaluation would be as follows: the evaluation would be carried out under the overall direction and guidance of the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia would assist in implementing the evaluation and facilitate the work of the evaluation team by providing access to relevant documents and information, arranging interviews and consultations with relevant stakeholders and informants, reviewing the draft report and ensuring that the evaluation results is shared with the SPECA Governing Council for consideration. The Evaluation Unit, Strategy and Programme Management Division of ESCAP would provide technical and quality assurance support and ensure that the evaluation is credible, independent and impartial as required under the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards for evaluation.

8. The evaluation would involve: (1) desk review of relevant strategic and meeting documents; (2) interviews with member States' representatives, key development partners in SPECA member countries, and relevant staff from ESCAP and UNECE; (3) an online survey to gather feedback from a wide range of stakeholders and (4) visit to selected member countries to engage with SPECA national focal points and other relevant government representatives as well as development partners, including other UN entities.

9. On the basis of the evaluation findings and recommendations, the SPECA Governing Council can consider options and agree on concrete actions to improve effectiveness of the work of SPECA in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.