July 17, 2024

The Chair's Summing Up
External Evaluation of the Independent Evaluation Office
Executive Board Meeting 24/74
July 15, 2024

Executive Directors welcomed the fourth external evaluation of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO). They thanked the Panel for its thorough analysis and recommendations. They welcomed the assessment that the IEO has established a high degree of credibility and a reputation for rigor. They noted that the work of the IEO has been fundamental to strengthen the IMF's learning culture, support its institutional governance and oversight, and enhance its external credibility. They generally considered these objectives to be equally important.

Most Directors supported the suggestion for the IEO to consider undertaking early-stage evaluations as a means of providing timely feedback and insight on emerging issues to the Board and Management while respecting the principle of non-interference. They considered that the non-interference clause provides sufficient flexibility to accommodate early-stage evaluations of a targeted set of topics when warranted, but recommended being judicious in undertaking these evaluations. A few Directors cautioned that early-stage evaluations should be avoided in general to avoid interfering with ongoing operational activities and blurring the respective mandates of the Board and the IEO.

Directors broadly welcomed the Panel's recommendation to eliminate rigidities and better balance objectives in the IEO´s HR policy within the budgetary envelope. They noted that changes in this direction would help the IEO alleviate staffing pressures, preserve institutional memory, and address recruitment and retention challenges that the office has faced for some time. They encouraged the IEO to work with the Evaluation Committee (EVC) to review the IEO's HR policy in collaboration with HRD. A number of Directors, nonetheless, cautioned against creating unnecessarily bespoke HR policies for the IEO separate from those of the Fund that would conflict with the streamlining and harmonization requested by the Board.

Directors welcomed the finding that topics selected during the evaluation period have been appropriate and relevant, as well as the Panel's recognition of a more strategic focus of IEO evaluation topics relative to findings from past external evaluations. They broadly supported the recommendation to enhance the process for topic selection, including by making it more structured, transparent, and informed by Management's and the Executive Board's suggestions, while preserving the IEO's independence in the final decision on the topics to pursue. Some Directors expressed reservations about Management suggesting topics to the IEO. Some other Directors did not see a need to set explicit criteria for topic selection, which might limit flexibility.

Directors saw merit in simplifying the IEO's product line to short and full-scale evaluations, with the latter completed within 18 months to support timeliness and relevance. Many Directors, nonetheless, saw a need to preserve flexibility to better adapt evaluations including the number of recommendations to the characteristics and complexity of different topics. A few Directors, while supportive of shorter evaluations when needed, cautioned against a proliferation of evaluations, given their resource and staff workload implications, as well as their impact on the IMF's absorptive capacity. Directors agreed that ownership of IEO recommendations could be further strengthened through early and informal engagement of the IEO with the Executive Board, Management, and staff, while preserving the IEO's independence. They emphasized the importance of these engagements being flexible and informal. Many Directors did not see merit in introducing an "interim findings report," which could risk locking the IEO into findings and conclusions prematurely and increase demands on IEO and Fund staff; a few other Directors were open to such reports to enhance prioritization.

Directors broadly supported the recommendation to enhance ownership in implementation and improve the follow-up process. In particular, they generally agreed that a Management Buff on the Periodic Monitoring Report (PMR) could be considered even though the PMR is already endorsed by Management when circulated to the Board. They also concurred that actions in the Management Implementation Plan (MIP) should be SMART while keeping the IEO recommendations more general, and generally agreed that the Global Policy Agenda could reference the implementation of IEO recommendations. Directors supported having the IEO participate and issue statements in Board meetings on the MIP and PMR and noted that the EVC is also an appropriate venue for the IEO to advise the Board on matters relating to evaluations.

Many Directors saw the potential for joint evaluations by the IEO and other IFI evaluators in common areas and noted the need for careful coordination. They stressed the importance of a structured but practical approach, mindful of resource constraints. Some other Directors were skeptical of the merits of joint evaluations, given their practical challenges. Directors saw value in concurrent but separate evaluations and agreed that there are benefits to be gained from a collaborative approach to sharing information, methodologies, and best practices.

Directors welcomed the suggestion for the IEO to develop an evaluation policy. They looked forward to the IEO developing this policy in coordination with the EVC and in consultation with staff.

The recommendations of the Panel that have received broad support and outstanding issues that warrant further consideration will be followed up by the appropriate parties—the EVC, the IEO, staff, and Management. Directors will have further opportunities to discuss concrete proposals in the coming months.