Bangkok Principles on National Evaluation Capacity for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) era

1. This declaration seeks to capture an emerging body of shared understanding on lessons and priorities for evaluation practice in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to help guide joint action in future support of national evaluation capacity.

2. We the participants at the Fourth International Conference on National Evaluation Capacity, convened by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) and the Global Assembly 2015 and the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) here in Bangkok, 28-30 October 2015 declare to the evaluation community.

3. Representing evaluation users and producers, from 100 countries and members of national governments, national, regional and international organizations and networks; comprising professional practices that span from government, private and non-profit sectors; from internal management consultancy through formal independent oversight to academic research; we have shared our diverse experience and sought common understanding on challenges and opportunities for evaluation practice to support the SDGs. We stand ready to bring our collective and cumulative expertise to bear upon success in service to the SDGs as a transformational vision of a world of universal respect for human rights and dignity, equality, non-discrimination, democracy and the rule of law.

4. We understand the 17 SDGs and targets to have the potential to transform societies and mobilize people and countries. Achievement of the SDGs will need to be founded upon effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, sound policies and good governance, and we share the conviction that the evaluation function and profession has great potential in responding to the challenges at hand. Beyond evidence-based reflection embedded in evaluative findings and recommendations per se, the evaluation function can, if undertaken without deference to authority alone, bring legitimacy of duty bearers' engagement with stakeholders to development.

5. We note that the SDG's intentions for follow-up and review processes are specifically guided by objectives that evaluation function directly responds to *(inter alia)*:

   - identify achievements, challenges, gaps and critical success factors
   - support the identification of solutions and best practices and promote coordination and effectiveness of the international development system.
   - be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people
   - build on existing platforms and processes,
   - be rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data
   - require enhanced capacity-building support for developing countries, including the strengthening of national data systems and evaluation programs

6. We observe that the SDGs agenda shall be country-led and tailored to respective national priority setting. Evaluations can contribute to the process of setting country-level SDG priorities through

evaluability assessments and other tools and techniques. We recognize that there are different evaluation approaches, visions, models and tools available and appropriate to each organization and each country, in accordance with their respective circumstances, priorities and stakeholder engagement and governance models. We recognize that countries will lead and shape their own evaluation needs and approaches to this universal agenda, with both traditional development cooperation and 'South-South' collaboration partners in eventual support.

7. We recall the United Nations' General Assembly resolution [69/237](#) *on Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level* and call for national and international stakeholders, to support efforts to further strengthen the capacity for evaluation, in accordance with national policies and priorities. We note the SDGs call for global partnership and international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building and to mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources. We appeal to governments, bilateral and multilateral development agencies to embrace national evaluation capacity as central priority in their programmatic and resource plans.

8. As professionals of development and evaluation, we seek to attain and uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct and professionalism. Whilst undertaking our function in response to multiple and variable jurisdictional needs and expectations; we derive our legitimacy through independence and from ultimate accountability to those impacted by development interventions. At the same time we conduct our work in transparent recognition of different roles and interests of evaluator, evaluation subject or evaluand and commissioning parties.

9. We note that statistical monitoring and reporting are important but insufficient as vehicle for learning, accountability and decision-making. We also note that 'big data' and technological innovation will bring new voices, volume and validity to data collection, records management and quality control. Whilst relying upon good administrative and contextual data streams and monitoring reports; evaluation is often most effective if kept as a separate and distinct governance function and professional discipline founded upon a tolerance for critical review.

10. In moving forward in support of national evaluation capacity, we recognize the following types of efforts and initiatives as among options that warrant consideration:

- Conduct of country-level 'SDG evaluation needs' reviews and diagnostic studies
- Evaluability assessments pertaining to individual country or sector SDG goals and targets
- Fostering of evaluation as component of national governance and public sector management reform
- Establishing national evaluation legal frameworks - legislation and policies
- Developing clear national and local sub-national level mechanism for independent evaluation of progress against the SDGs
- Assigning resources (a percentage of the initiatives' costs) for the conduct of evaluations when realigning national plans with the SDGs and when designing/approving projects/programmes/policies
- Strengthening national and local data systems to monitor SDG progress
- Establishment of frameworks of formal competencies and professional evaluation standards
- Establishing evaluation training programmes within academic and public sector professional training institutions
- Creating opportunities for local, young and emerging evaluators
- Developing systems to promote transparent follow-up of evaluations recommendation
- Support to national, regional and global evaluation professional organizations
- Support for international forums of exchange between users and producers of evaluation, via the right of access to information, including regional workshops and web-based platforms for knowledge management

Bangkok, 30 October 2015