Independent Evaluation – Management Response

(Note: This form is to be included in the final report.)

Name of programme/office/unit:	United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT)		
Name of programme manager	Marion BARTHELEMY, Acting Director, Division for SAAR, Manager UNOSAT.		
Name of project undertaking	UNOSAT Mapping Service – Evidence-Based Information Support to Humanitarian Assistance, Peace and Security using Satellite Imagery and Geospatial Techniques project	ID	C2022.TARSA091.NORMFA
Name of evaluation	Midterm Evaluation of UNOSAT Mapping Service – Evidence-Based Information Support to Humanitarian Assistance, Peace and Security using Satellite Imagery and Geospatial Techniques" project		
Report issuance:	March 2024		

SECTION I – Comments on Findings/ Conclusions

The UNOSAT-EMS management team would like to express its sincere gratitude for this comprehensive and thoughtful midterm evaluation report. We appreciate the evaluator's acknowledgement of the high relevance, quality, and timeliness of our products (Finding 3), which is a core strength that we are committed to maintaining through continuous engagement with users and adaptation to evolving needs. We recognize the importance of aligning with the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, while recognizing that mainstreaming gender and vulnerability consideration is constrained when relying on satellite imagery. We will explore ways to further incorporate these aspects into our analysis and products based on technical feasibility and the needs of our users.

The finding on our unique niche and comprehensive service model within the UN emergency response system (Finding 9) is a testament to our long-standing relationships and established coordination mechanisms. We are cognizant of the difficulty in replicating this model and will continue nurturing these critical partnerships. Our Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) with various organizations (Finding 12) has been instrumental in fostering complementarities and synergies. We acknowledge the need to regularly review and renew these MOUs, aligning joint activities with our strategic priorities. While resource constraints impacted our innovation agenda, as noted in the finding on reduced activity related to new technology (Finding 20), we are actively seeking innovation in adopting new sensors, new ways of sharing our analysis and exploring new technologies. We recognize the value of a cohesive research and development strategy to better guide these efforts. In this regard, it is worth mentioning our UNOSAT Rapid Mapping Partner Initiative launched with the aim to increase our service delivery capacity through additional satellite imagery analysis support (in-kind contribution) from selected highly recognized universities, space agencies, or national geospatial institutions. Last year, we signed an agreement with GISTDA (Thailand Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency), who is now member of our UNOSAT Rapid Mapping Partner Initiative.

While appreciating the recognition of efficient utilization of resources (Finding 30), we acknowledge the need to address some staffing challenges. We recognize

the importance of the capacity development of partners through "learning by doing" (Finding 32), which is an important unintended outcome. We will explore ways to capture these results. Improving visibility among potential donors and users (Finding 37) is crucial for our sustainability. We will review our communication strategy, to enhance the references to our products in reports, social media and elsewhere. We are cognizant of the challenges highlighted in the report, including donor diversification (Finding 41). We will continue to proactively address these challenges through strategic planning and resource mobilization efforts to ensure the scaling up and the long-term sustainability of our operations.

Furthermore, we would like to provide some specific comments and clarifications:

- Page 15: Referring to the aspect of 'lack of relevance' of UNOSAT's peace and justice products, it is important to clarify that the United Nations –in the case of an organization like UNOSAT, may not have direct authority (power) or prerogative to punish wrongdoers or prosecute them. However, the results of UNOSAT's investigations are sought by UN member states, who can then use this information to inform their own policies on sanctions, prosecutions, or other actions they deem appropriate within their sovereign jurisdiction. These processes involving member states are often confidential in nature, limiting the public visibility of UNOSAT's contributions.

- Page 15/16: Regarding Gender Equality and Empowerment of women (GEEW) and Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), using the analysis of the satellite imagery to support them requires fairly complex work, combining our analysis with other population data, as the report states. This is not directly within the remit of UNOSAT's work. However, we plan to assess the extent to which gender-sensitive data and methods can be feasibly incorporated into our activities and outputs based on a need of assessment of our users.

- Page 18: Regarding the staff number mentioned considers 10 analysts and other personnel filling other functions such as IT, M&E, communication, procurement, HR, among others.

- Page 23: Finding 11 reflect UNOSAT's standard procedure when another organization has already triggered the Charter for the same event. UNOSAT's actions and the rationale behind them is to promote coordination and efficient use of resources within the emergency response system. In this particular case, UNOSAT referred OCHA Philippine's request to the existing charter call by UNOOSA to avoid duplication of efforts. Once the Charter is triggered by other entity, UNOSAT is not in position to initiate a separate Charter call or take over the existing one. In line with this, a few years ago, UNOSAT established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with UN-Spider called the OneUN Approach towards submitting requests to trigger the Space Charter on behalf of National Disaster Management Organisations. UNOSAT follows the established protocol to ensure efficient use of resources and avoid duplication.

- Page 30: Regarding AI development, we are actively engaged in discussion with CERN and Open Lab on AI development issues but unfortunately they have no resources to offer us pro bono at the present time. We are exploring how we might pay them for GPU Graphic Processing Units infrastructure as we normally do for servers and others, but these discussions have been slow-moving. It is important to note that the allocation of GPUs is a contentious topic within CERN's operations.

- Page 31, Executive summary: On utilizing historical data for AI model training, we are currently working via the Disha project to use our historical damage assessment data to train AI models. Previously, we have used our shelter data to train models for shelter mapping and used our flood data to train flood models. Therefore, a lot of these recommendations are already underway.

- Page 40/41: There is a long-term change angle to UNOSATs work, but it involves getting the UN and humanitarian system to adopt satellite imagery more and more in its operations. The one-off use of imagery within a particular crisis is a short-term activity but over the years we have succeeded in helping to "normalize" satellite imagery use across multiple parts of the UN.

- Page 42: As a minor point of clarification, we believe there were thousands of foreign nationals in Khartoum, rather than just hundreds.

- Page 44: Regarding AI work distribution across projects. Building on the previous comments, it is important to note that EMS project is still supporting one AI expert.

SECTION II - RECOMMENDATIONS						
Recommendation		Management Response and Planned Action				
		Accepted Partially Accepted Rejected	Planned action	Budget allocated (if necessary)	Status 6 months (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Status one year (planned, under implementation, implemented)
1.	Improve project visibility and inter-agency humanitarian evaluations of responses. The UNOSAT-EMS management team should agree with users to better reference EMS products. This also applies to other clients and users from side projects, co-funded projects and spin-offs, such as REACH's situational reports. Users can build on good practices from OCHA on referencing UNOSAT-EMS products to improve visibility of the UNOSAT-EMS. In return, UNOSAT-EMS could also be more pro-active and share products delivered by partners that are based on UNOSAT-EMS products to showcase what areas of use may consist of. UNOSAT-EMS should consider reviving an internal UN-wide GIS publishing platform to share non-public analyses for user access and reporting. This could enable partners to better leverage UNOSAT inputs.ßßß The UNOSAT-EMS' M&E facility should request to be part of future inter-agency humanitarian evaluations of responses to natural disasters, to use the opportunity to include questions about the use of the UNOSAT-EMS' products, in particular influence on decisions that concerned vulnerable groups (i.e. farmers, women, youth, elderly, etc.) in poorer countries. Answers to these questions should be used to inform future planning and awareness raising. Despite the confidential nature, collect more feedback data from the peace, security and human rights use of products.	Accepted	Review Communication Strategy to enhance referencing UNOSAT-EMS products in reports, communication, and social media., taking into account political and other sensitivities		Under implementation	Implemented
			Assess the possibility of inclusion of UNOSAT in the scope of upcoming Inter-agency humanitarian response evaluations.		Planned	Under implementation
			For the peace, security and human rights workstream, institute a lightweight feedback to main users to capture basic information, while maintaining confidentiality.		Under implementation	Implemented
		Comments: UNOSAT has already part of the One UN Geospatial Situation Room Initiative since March 2024. The initiative is planned to start in May 2025 for 3 years.				

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2.	Broaden the UNOSAT-EMS' funding base. Develop a strategy to ensure sustainable funding for the UNOSAT-EMS. This could entail: • Raising visibility on the UNOSAT-EMS as a 'public good' for the UN's emergency response system and campaign for pledged support. • Devising creative methods for budgeting the UNOSAT-EMS' costs as part of other UNOSAT projects. • Exploring work with private sector companies to provide free of charge AI model work while considering ethical standards and limitations. Seek funding for the UNOSAT-EMS' Outcome 3 on technology developed separately from the private/business sectors. • Analyse the donors' appetite for supporting sub-projects (example Norad project) that have synergies with the UNOSAT-EMS. • Looking for funding to support UNOSAT Rapid Mapping Partner Initiative. The latter's intention to help improve the way basic information is communicated through a more standardized set of data formats, as well as standardizing the different follow-up protocols used by different analytical providers, may be attractive to some donors.	Accepted	Continue developing synergies between UNOSAT projects aiming to maximize the effectiveness, coherence and harmonization of UNOSAT's budget. However, it should be recognized that it is not administratively feasible to use other project funds to directly support the EMS due to the specific nature and requirements of each project.		Under implementation	Implemented

Comments:

UNOSAT's management is already working continuously on broadening the donor base and fundraising to ensure sustainable funding for the EMS to deliver its services and develop further.

Synergies between different projects are already being developed. However, it is not administratively feasible to use funds from other projects to support the EMS. Therefore, the action regarding "Devising creative methods for budgeting the UNOSAT-EMS' costs as part of other UNOSAT projects" is rejected.

	Recommendation	Accepted Partially Accepted Rejected	Planned action	Budget allocated (if necessary)	Status 6 months (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Status one year (planned, under implementation, implemented)
3.	On technology development	Accepted	Development of R&D (Innovation) strategy.	Budget needed	Planned	Under implementation
	The UNOSAT-EMS management team should develop a research and development strategy that makes full use of its MOUs with NVIDIA, CERN and Google and its links to Wuhan University and the DISHA Initiative. The strategy could entail: • Undertake a benchmarking study to analyse GIS capacities of partner organizations and define a plan on how to support institutions that intend to grow their own capacities. • The technological developments that the UNOSAT-EMS will need to embrace to remain relevant and competitive within its niche, for example providing more integrated and complete situational awareness, while becoming faster and more accurate. • Ways in which UNOSAT can leverage its historical data sets for use in training AI models. • Options for products that are more interactive, such as the live maps, moving away from static products unless users request those. • The extent to which the UNOSAT-EMS should engage in AI model development, possibly in the framework of UN Global Pulse and the DISHA Initiative.	Comments: Innovation lies at the core of UNOSAT's work, and many of the recommended actions have already been undertaken on an ongoing basis. These actions will be continuously monitored, evaluated, and documented through R&D Strategy Furthermore, to bolster our innovation efforts, we plan to increase our collaboration with academic and research institutes. This collaboration can help develop new applications, expand our roster for traineeship opportunities, and enable knowledge sharing.				

	Recommendation	Accepted Partially Accepted Rejected	Planned action	Budget allocated (if necessary)	Status 6 months (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Status one year (planned, under implementation, implemented)
4.	On benefiting gender and groups made vulnerable UNOSAT should provide guidelines about further disaggregation of satellite imagery-derived products that could be reproduced by its users. It is impossible to see gender and other affected population characteristics from space, however geospatial analysis combined with other population data, for example census data, can identify where vulnerable groups are situated and how badly they are affected. This can be used to target relief differentially, according to need. Currently, EMS users are doing this disaggregation after receiving UNOSAT-EMS products. Therefore, to maintain the "rapid" quality of the UNOSAT-EMS, UNOSAT should provide guidelines about further disaggregation of satellite imagery-derived products that could be reproduced by its users, e.g., linking damage assessments analysis with the number of affected population disaggregated by gender or sex, given the gender dimensions of disaster risk and resilience and gender-related concerns in situations of conflict and instability, number of children and older persons, etc; or type of infrastructure damaged such as schools and farming plots (disaggregated by plot size), and the intersection between these different axes. Integrating gender analysis into the mapping service is crucial to understand the differential impacts of disasters on women, men, girls and boys. For example, mapping location and the extent of the damage (homes, schools, hospitals or health infrastructures, among others and overlaying with this sex-disaggregated population data, can help to identify which groups are most affected and include the analysis in the damage assessment for a better-informed	Partially Accepted	Assess the extent to which gender-sensitive data and methods can be incorporated into the project's activities and outputs.		Under implementation	Implemented
			Consult users regarding their kind of needs for gender-sensitive approaches to using geospatial data.		Under implementation	Implemented
			Considering recommendations that may emerge from that assessment, incorporate recommendations deemed feasible by technical leads.	Budget needed	Planned	Under implementation

humanitarian assistance. When done by the UNOSAT-EMS team, some of this data could be added to the final products made available to the public. While the UNOSAT-EMS does not have an explicit gender strategy, it could strengthen its approach to gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance and support by undertaking and learning from impact stories with focus on women and groups made vulnerable.		Conduct gender-focused impact stories to strengthen UNOSAT's approach to gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance		Planned	Under implementation
Comments:				

	Recommendation	Accepted Partially Accepted Rejected	Planned action	Budget allocated (if necessary)	Status 6 months (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Status one year (planned, under implementation, implemented)
5.	On a partnership strategy The UNOSAT-EMS should define a partnership strategy and map partners according to the joint interest and areas of work to increase awareness of active MoU and partnership opportunities. This may include: • Regularly reviewing MoUs that require being renewed. • Regularly scheduling meetings with partners and users to review common interest and potential joint work.	Accepted	Develop a partnership strategy		Planned	Under implementation
			Set up a calendar for meetings with partners at the technical and executive level		Under implementation	Implemented

	• Making use of stakeholder mapping exercises (see Annex XIII) to inform the team about existing partnerships. • Inform partners about new service delivery and products and new AI initiatives in the view of creating additional side-projects. • Consider partnering with UN Women in order to further strengthening the awareness that disaster and complex emergency impacts often reflect, and reinforce, gender inequality and how to overcome this in the area of GIS data analysis.	Conduct a review of the existing partnerships and MoUs to assess their status, relevance, and potential for renewal or expansion.		Under implementation	Implemented
		Organize awareness-raising events through diverse formats, channels, networks, and hubs to share updates and information with various partner agencies.		Under implementation	Implemented
		Explore partnership with UN Women to enhance UNOSAT's gender strategy for training, addressing how disaster impacts often reflect gender inequalities, and mainstreaming this perspective into UNOSAT-EMS analysis.		Planned	Under implementation

Comments:

By implementing these actions, UNOSAT will enhance and formalize prior undertakings, systematizing a partnership strategy. This systematic approach will facilitate strengthening collaborations with various stakeholders, including academic and research institutions.

Recommendation		Accepted Partially Accepted Rejected	Planned action	Budget allocated (if necessary)	Status 6 months (planned, under implementation, implemented)	Status one year (planned, under implementation, implemented)
6.	On capturing capacity development in the project's theory of change as an unintended outcome The UNOSAT-EMS should consider capacity development as an unintended outcome and seek to capture unintended results even if the project is not funded to build capacity of other institutions. Doing so will ensure the EMS' contributions to strengthening emergency response systems and institutional capacities will be acknowledged in subsequent evaluations.	Accepted	Revise the project's Theory of Change, aiming to integrate outcomes that focus on capacity building, including the project's contribution to UNOSAT's capacity development activities and its alignment with the achievement of SDG 17.		Under implementation	Implemented
			Share revised ToC		Implemented	
		Comments: The EMS team already contributes to various training activities organised by partner UN agencies focusing on emergency response, Moreover, some of the EMS products are used to create training materials and facilitate knowledge within the context of UNOSAT capacity development activities.				

Name of Director/Programme Manager	Date	Signature
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