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**Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and Donor Practices**

**DRAFT SUMMARY OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE JOINT VENTURE ON  
PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

**Held in Paris on 17-18 November 2004**

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## DAC WORKING PARTY ON AID EFFECTIVENESS AND DONOR PRACTICES

**DRAFT SUMMARY OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE  
JOINT VENTURE ON PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT  
HELD IN PARIS ON 17-18 NOVEMBER 2004**

**A. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA & SUMMARY RECORD**

1. The Chair (David Shand) welcomed participants to the fourth meeting of the Joint Venture on Public Financial Management (PFM). Members adopted the agenda of the current meeting and the summary of the last meeting.

**B. GOOD PRACTICE PAPER ON BUDGET SUPPORT**

2. The European Commission (Gilles Hervio) introduced the revised draft of the Good Practice Paper on Budget Support [DCD/DAC/EFF/(2004)21] that had been elaborated in close collaboration with the World Bank, IMF and DFID. Members expressed broad support for the paper. In the ensuing discussion, the Chair noted the following areas of agreement:

- *Scope of the paper* — members acknowledged that the paper did not focus too narrowly on public financial management issues but attempted, as was agreed in previous meetings, to spell out good practice in the provision of budget support.
- *Budget support is only one modality for providing aid* — members noted that aid is typically provided through a combination of aid delivery mechanisms which also include sector support and project support. Each of these three modalities should be assessed on its respective merits. It was agreed that an introductory chapter would clarify this point.
- *Criteria for providing budget support* — it was noted that different donors necessarily have different criteria for providing budget support and that it was not the purpose of the good practice paper to reach agreement on these or common criteria. It was recognised, however, that there would be value in seeking greater clarity on donors' respective criteria.
- *Streamlining conditionality* — members noted that a proliferation of conditionality posed serious problems. While it was agreed that streamlining conditionality would improve aid effectiveness, it was noted that harmonising conditions (i.e. different donor having same conditions) could potentially lead to greater volatility of aid flows.
- *Earmarking budget support* — it was agreed that project support or sector support were more effective modalities than general budget support for earmarking aid, given the fungibility of resources within the budget.
- *Budget support in post-conflict countries* — a number of members noted that budget support was currently provided in a number of post-conflict countries or fragile states with very poor PFM systems – but that there were often special reasons for providing budget support in such cases.

3. It was decided that a revised version of the good practice paper on budget support reflecting these comments would be submitted to the Joint Venture for final approval.

### **C. GOOD PRACTICE PAPER ON CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN PFM**

4. Germany (Matthias Witt) introduced the draft of the Good Practice Paper on Capacity Development in Public Financial Management [DCD/DAC/EFF/(2004)22] that had been elaborated in close collaboration with the World Bank. This was complemented by comments made by the World Bank (T. K. Balakrishnan). The Secretariat (Paul Isenman) also presented comments provided by the group on capacity development (DAC Governance Network).

5. Members congratulated Germany on the quality of the paper and expressed strong support for it. In the ensuing discussion, the Chair noted the following areas of agreement:

- *Build public support for sound PFM* — members acknowledged the importance of supporting demand for sound PFM within recipient countries. To this end, donors should actively engage in communication strategies with political constituencies and civil society.
- *Improving PFM is not just driven by budget support* — members underscored the relevance of sound PFM as a way of ensuring broader use of country systems for all aid modalities, and not only as a condition for providing budget support.
- *Donor capacity matters too* — donors should examine their strategies and ability to deliver effective capacity development in PFM. This will require appropriate delegation of authority to field offices and developing the right mix of skills for donor staff: emphasis on capacity development skills as well as on technical skills.
- *Comprehensive capacity development strategies* — members noted that capacity development efforts were more likely to be effective when the partner country had a clear and comprehensive capacity development strategy.

6. It was decided that a revised version of the good practice paper on budget support reflecting these comments would be submitted to the Joint Venture for final approval.

### **D. GOOD PRACTICE PAPER ON PREDICTABILITY OF AID FLOWS**

7. DFID (Simon Gill) introduced the draft of the Good Practice Paper on Predictability and Accountability of Aid Flows [DCD/DAC/EFF(2004)23]. In considering this topic, the Chair sought members' guidance on how to present predictability within the overall set of good practice papers. Following the ensuing discussions, the Chair noted the following elements of agreement:

- *Importance of predictability* – all members underscored the importance of strengthening partner countries' ability to plan development resources over the medium-term.
- *Predictability over different time periods* — members noted the importance of managing predictability over different time periods. While improvements were needed over the short, medium and long-term, in-year predictability was particularly important for partner countries' cash flow management.
- *Inclusion of all forms of aid delivery* — Predictability is important for all forms of aid delivery but lack of predictability was potentially more disruptive in the case of budget support.
- *Designing conditionality in support of enhanced predictability* — Members recognised that conditionality design, particularly clarity on conditions was a crucial factor in improving predictability and reducing volatility of aid flows.

8. It was decided that a revised version of the good practice paper reflecting these comments would be submitted to the Joint Venture for a final decision.

**E. TOWARDS A STRENGTHENED APPROACH TO SUPPORTING PFM REFORMS**

9. Nicola Smithers from the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Programme (PEFA) presented an overview in progress by the Public Expenditure Working Group (PEWG -comprising PEFA, World Bank and IMF) in developing a strengthened approach to supporting public financial management reforms [DCD/DAC/EFF(2004)25]. This was complemented by comments made by the World Bank (T. K. Balakrishnan).

10. There was general recognition that the Working Group had accomplished significant progress in addressing concerns members had expressed at the previous meeting of the Joint Venture. Following the ensuing discussions, the Chair noted the following elements of agreement:

- *Developing a shared body of knowledge* — Members recognised that this approach had the potential of developing shared body of knowledge on recipient country PFM systems from which both partner countries and donors could draw.
- *Better use of information for capacity development* — It was also recognised that this information would be of important for capacity development, not just fiduciary issues.

11. At the last meeting of the Joint Venture (8-9 July 2004) it had been agreed that a revised chapter would underpin all three good practice papers included in the single issue. It was agreed that a stand-alone annex describing the approach developed by the PEWG would underpin all three good practice papers. It was agreed that any additional comments would be sent to Nicola Smithers by the end of August 2004.

**F. DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS FOR RECIPIENTS OF EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE**

12. Philippe Adhémar, Chairman of the Public Sector Committee (PSC) of the International Federation of Accountants' (IFAC) presented the Draft 'Exposure Draft' of the accounting standard, or IPSAS, on Disclosure Requirements for Recipients of External Assistance [Room Document 3]. He informed members that the final version of the exposure draft was expected by the end of 2004 and would allow for a formal round of consultations with both donors and the accounting bodies of a broad range of partner countries. This introduction was complemented by a presentation by Charles Coe (Consultant) on the main features of the Exposure Draft.

13. A number of members expressed the view that the Joint Venture and its members were not all in a position to form an opinion on the draft exposure draft and suggested that other fora might be better placed. The Chair reminded members that approval of the Exposure Draft was not required but that it had been prepared by IFAC at the request of the JV and its predecessor body. He also noted that its objective of improving fiscal reporting was fully consistent with the aid effectiveness agenda in general and previous good practice papers. Some members expressed concern that the disclosure requirements might be too onerous for some recipient countries and it was agreed that the exposure draft would benefit from field testing in one or two countries. It was also noted that in some cases donors would need to provide information to recipient countries to enable them to report on all forms of financial assistance.

**G. COMBINING THE GOOD PRACTICE PAPERS**

14. Given the strong linkages between the good practice papers produced by the Joint Venture and the good practice paper on Sector Approach elaborated by the Task Team on Harmonisation & Alignment, the Secretariat had suggested combining the papers into a single document to be published in the DAC

Guidelines and Reference Series. In support of this approach, the Secretariat presented an outline of an introductory chapter [Room Document 4] covering the following sections:

- Budget Support.
- Sector-Wide Approaches (developed by the Task Team on Harmonisation & Alignment).
- Capacity Development in PFM.
- Predictability of aid flows.
- Strengthened approach on measuring performance in PFM (would be an appendix that underpins all of the chapters of the volume).

15. The Chair noted that the topic of predictability was of special importance and needed to be included in the volume of good practice papers to be issued by the DAC. The question was whether it should be treated as a cross-cutting topic in the introductory chapter or as a stand-alone chapter. The Chair noted that members expressed different views on this question. While some expressed a preference for a cross-cutting topic, others argued in favour of a stand-alone good practice paper. The Chair suggested that a decision on this question would be made once a revised version of the chapter on predictability was available.

16. It was agreed that a single consolidated volume of good practice paper would be made available by the Secretariat by January 2005 for approval by the Working Party and the DAC. It would then be put forward to the Paris High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness.

## **H. PREPARATION OF THE PARIS HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON AID EFFECTIVENESS**

17. The OECD Secretariat (Stephanie Baile) introduced the progress report being elaborated for the Paris High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. This was complemented with information on the Issues Paper and the DAC Survey on Harmonisation & Alignment. The Chair invited members to provide their comments on both of these documents to the Secretariat.

## **I. NEXT STEPS**

18. It was agreed that future of the Joint Venture on Public Financial Management would be agreed by the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness following the Paris High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (28 February – 2 March 2005).

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