

FIRST MEETING OF THE HLF-3 STEERING COMMITTEE

18 JANUARY 2007

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

1. The Steering Committee (SC) for the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness met for the first time on Thursday, January 18, 2007, in Paris, with video links to Accra, Hanoi, Managua, New York, Tokyo, and Washington, and an audio link to Pretoria. Jan Cedergren chaired the meeting, which was attended by SC members listed in Annex A, and a few of their colleagues.

I. Expectations for HLF 3

2. The draft Concept Note for the Forum received broad support from the Steering Committee which viewed it as a good basis to scope issues, frame discussions, and take decisions. There was clear agreement that the central focus of the Accra HLF is to take stock of the progress and address weaknesses in implementing the Paris Declaration commitments as a whole, but without amending or renegotiating these. Unbundling the various issues related to aid effectiveness was seen as a practical way to make decisions on content and focus. The preparatory process could identify a limited set of issues on which more work and additional high level attention is warranted, understanding that flexibility will be required to accommodate additional issues that might appear late in the process for HLF discussion.

3. The forum itself is expected to lead to endorsement of actions and decisions on policy issues at a high level. Possible decisions—particularly any outcome document—should be discussed well in advance through broad consultations. All participants clearly agreed on the need for a strong role for partner countries in the preparatory process, in the definition of scope and agenda, and at the forum itself.

4. Since not all issues to be discussed at HLF 3 could be expected to have reached a stage where actions can be specified and endorsed, a major decision needs to be taken in the relative near-term on the format and duration of the event, as this will influence the preparation for the forum, including its format, agenda, and outcome document. Specifically, will HLF 3 be strictly a high level forum with only plenary sessions or follow the Paris HLF format which included Round Tables followed by a high level segment?

5. The proper integration into the HLF of the ongoing work on Managing for Results was emphasized. A first important step in this area will be the Hanoi Roundtable, which should help identify areas where partner countries need support (in particular in terms of capacity building), and issues needing attention from donors to better manage for results.

6. A greater participation of Civil Society (from the Northern as well as from the Southern constituencies, with an emphasis on actors in the field) in the forum is also expected. Canada, as chair of the CSO Advisory Group, would help the Steering Group organize the CSO role and contribution to the forum, including on the Accra agenda, and in reviewing their own progress in implementing the Paris agenda. Specifically, a panel of Heads of NGOs could be organized in Accra.

7. Planning for the forum should aim to maximize benefits from complementary discussions in other international fora. Similarly, the preparation and outcome of HLF3 can influence parallel and later events. Such events include but are not limited to the ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum (with two meetings scheduled in July 2007 and July 2008), the G20 meetings, which will be chaired by South Africa in 2007, and the second series of discussions on Financing for Development (with a meeting scheduled in December 2008 in Doha).

8. A large number of topics which could form part of the HLF3 agenda was put on the table and discussed in this first meeting but it was recognized by the chair and others that, in later discussions, it will be critical to maintain focus on identified priorities, and to guard against “agenda creep” especially into areas which are not aid effectiveness issues. All participants recognized that substantial background research and preparatory work will be required before the forum.

9. There was broad support for the proposal in the Concept Note for treating Health and Education as “tracer sectors”-- to flesh out a broad spectrum of issues encountered in making Paris Declaration work at the ground level-- building on on-going work on aid effectiveness in these sectors. The next step would be looking more specifically at what is needed before and in Accra to take this forward, and from which other sectors can learn. Other issues, topics, sectors proposed for HLF3 discussion, include:

- Predictability of aid, conditionality, complementarity, and division of labor.
- The broader aid architecture, along the lines raised in the draft Concept Note.
- A stronger link between the resources and results process to the scaling up agenda
- Global Programs, on which a specific set of actions has already been agreed (at an OECD Development Forum and the DAC Senior Level Meeting, 5-6 December) with the idea of feeding into the HLF. This was supported in the discussion, recognizing that this is an area where the Paris Declaration explicitly called for further guidance to be developed.
- Capacity development, in particular for line ministries. This has obvious links with the delivery of technical assistance. The question of South-South technical assistance, and its support by donors, could also be considered.
- Governance.
- Greater involvement of emerging donors in implementing the Paris agenda.
- Untying of aid. There was a suggestion that this be addressed through, for example, focusing on opening smaller-scale national procurement to local companies and subject to local procurement methods.
- Aid for infrastructure and for trade, with their links to growth, were also mentioned as pertinent topics to consider.
- Statistical capacity development.
- Emergency and humanitarian aid, fragile states.
- The role of regional institutions, organizations, and actors.

10. The next version of the draft Concept Note will make suggestions to the Steering Committee drawing from the points above but addressing the need to avoid mission creep.

II. Organization

11. The HLF could be sponsored by the World Bank, the Regional Development Banks, the OECD/DAC and the UNDP/UNDG (possible sponsorship by the UN will be explored). It is expected to be a large participatory event, bringing together a broad range of stakeholders (partner governments, donors, NGOs, parliamentarians, regional institutions, vertical programs). This will be especially the case if there were to be Roundtables associated with the HLF3 itself.

III. Role of the HLF 3 Steering Committee and the Core Group

12. The Core Group which is the second of the two organizational committees for HLF3 will be chaired by the World Bank and will concentrate on dealing with day to day practical issues. Ghana and the DAC Secretariat will be members. The AfDB, the EC, Japan and the UNDP offered support through their offices in Accra. Ghana has already created a national preparatory committee headed by a top Ministry of Finance official, with representation from all involved parts of the administration (the President's Office, Foreign Affairs, Security, Tourism, State protocol, etc.). Technical sub-committees have started to work on the preparations for the Forum. The conference facilities have been identified.

13. At this point in the process, the Steering Committee will meet quarterly to take stock of issues, to review further development of the HLF concepts and objectives, and to take decisions as required. The SC will also report to the WP EFF. A public website could be created, in order to increase the openness and transparency of the preparation process.

14. Canada, as the Chair of the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, was elected as an ex-officio member of the HFL3 Steering Committee

IV. Dialogue with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

15. Canada debriefed on the first meeting on the Dialogue with CSOs, and a separate report will be prepared for the Steering Committee. Briefly, the advisory group had agreed on its terms of reference which emphasize:

- working with CSOs both as development actors and as promoters of accountability.
- promoting dialogue with CSOs on aid effectiveness, and to include them in the Accra preparation process.
- preparing in consultation with the WP-EFF, the Steering Committee and CSOs, proposals on aid effectiveness and civil society for discussion at Accra..

16. At present the group participation will be limited to a maximum of 12 members; there is recognition of the benefits of including a broad array of Southern CSOs, not least to ensure that the views of operational CSOs are well-represented. The next steps will be to identify milestones to Accra, which could include conferences and workshops, and to prepare the March 7 dialogue between the WP EFF and CSOs. A budget for this working plan will be prepared, and contributions will be sought to complement Canada's commitment to fund a position in the DAC secretariat and to sponsor a conference.

V. Next Steps

17. The Concept Note will be revised, based on this discussion, and will remain in a "draft" form for some time, until sufficient progress has been made on its content. The next Steering Committee meeting will take place on April 20.