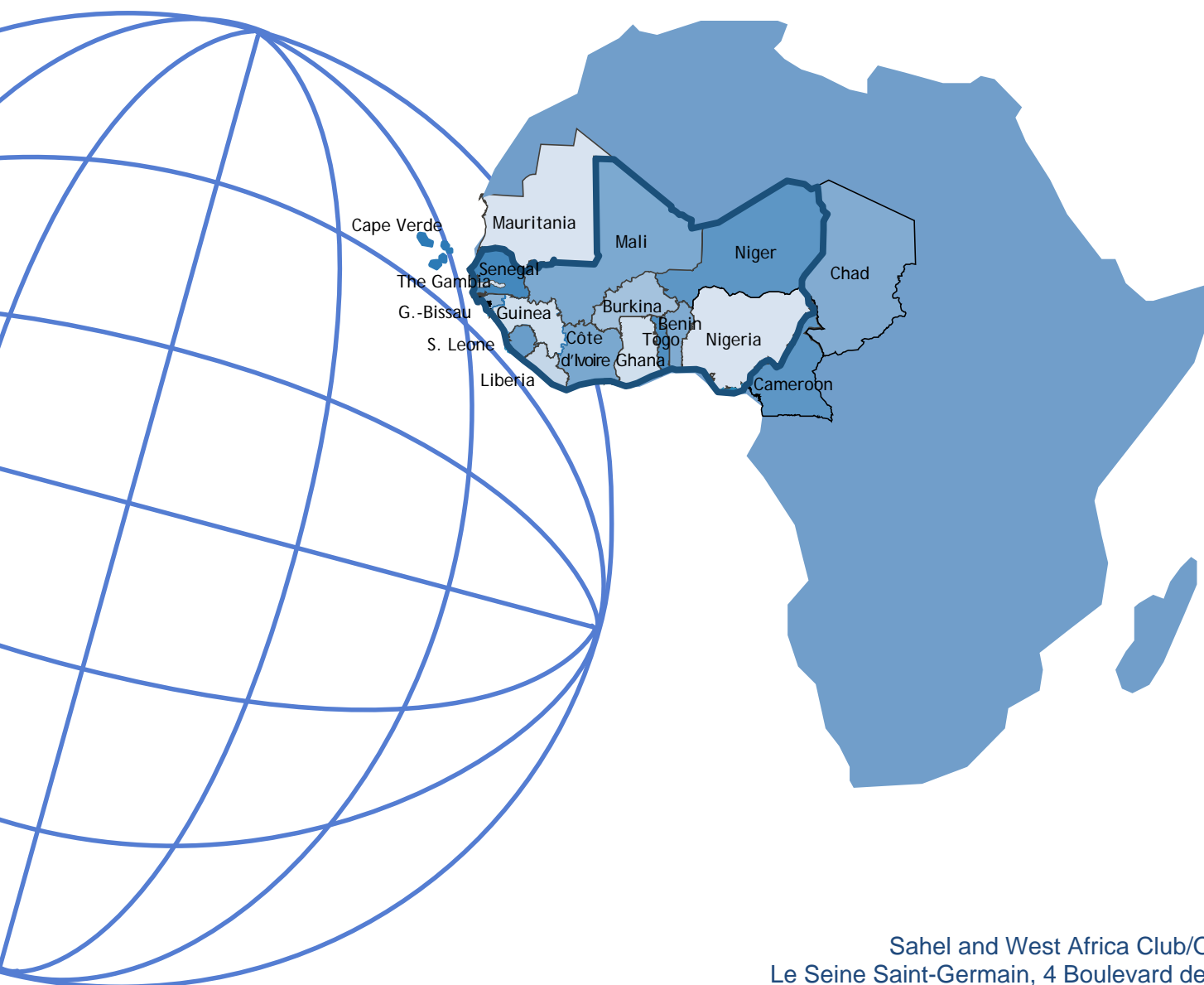




*Meeting of the Strategy and Policy Group
Issy-les-Moulineaux (France), 16 June 2008*



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MEETING OF THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA CLUB'S
STRATEGY AND POLICY GROUP (SPG)

ISSY-LES-MOULINEAUX (FRANCE), 16 JUNE 2008

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INTRODUCTION

SPG members decided in January 2008 that this meeting, limited to SWAC donors, would take stock of the SWAC's financial situation and define the modalities of its restructuring. The meeting was opened by Mr. Charles Goerens, President of the SWAC and Mr. Mario Amano, Deputy Secretary-General to the OECD who each insisted on the SWAC's intrinsic qualities and the need to implement a programme to reform the way in which it functions to adapt to the changes on the international scene.

The meeting focused on:

- Firstly, the financial situation and budgetary prospects;
- Secondly, the SWAC's identity, value added and functions.

1. SITUATION AND FINANCIAL PROSPECTS

Analysis and proposals

The SWAC's general resources have been decreasing since 2006 and with the available information they would most likely continue to decrease in 2009. Two factors explain this trend: firstly, the international context is ever more competitive which is combined with the renewal of a bilateral approach to the detriment of a multilateral approach; secondly, changes in the exchange rate between the Euro and other currencies. In 2008 the SWAC lost close to 100 000 Euros due to this situation.

Specific resources have increased greatly (by 20 May 2008 they reached 1.5 million Euros, or +232 % compared to March 2008). This notable increase originates with the ECOWAS Commission, who strongly confirms its desire to strengthen its partnership with the SWAC.

However, there are two problems linked to these contributions:

- They are applied to *ad hoc* actions which are implemented for usually a maximum of a few weeks (organisation of a workshop) or a few months (study/report).
- Even with high-level agreement, the mobilisation of said contributions is generally a long arduous process, transaction costs are high, and it is difficult to anticipate these contributions.

Financial prospects in terms of general resources indicate that as from 2009 the SWAC's current financing and the way in which it functions cannot be maintained.

Furthermore, the overheads which the SWAC must pay to the OECD have increased from 137 000 Euros in 2004 to 224 000 Euros in 2008. Other substantial increases are foreseen in the coming years. These overheads, voted in by the OECD's Council, are applied to twenty-five semi-autonomous bodies that report to a specific governing board and are financed by voluntary contributions that are managed by the OECD.

In 2009, the structural and operating costs should be 2 million Euros. Current forecasts indicate that total general resources will not attain this amount.

While the Secretariat must continue to mobilise general resources, it should also, based on SPG members' recommendations, set up a new approach to its budgetary and financial management. The six-point proposal is summarised below.

It involves returning to the two-tier management and organisation of the SWAC

1. A smaller main **Secretariat**, responsible for Secretariat's constant services and to its members: leadership of the SWAC; monitoring of all the regional dynamics; management of the Secretariat; coordination of the Work Plan and missions; preparation and follow-up of SPG meetings; mobilisation of general resources and the coordination of specific resources; along with SPG members, identification and establishment of specific activities which will be implemented within the Programme's framework; communications and external relations; coordination of partnerships with SPG members, continental and West African regional organisations and international organisations; strengthening of synergies with other OECD Directorates working on Africa and West Africa on substantive issues which could interest the SWAC.
2. **An operational programme organised around four areas of concentration: (i) Medium-and Long-term Development Perspectives; (ii) Rural Transformation and Food Security; (iii) Local Development and the Process of Regional Integration; (iv) Governance, Conflict Dynamics, Peace and Security. With these areas of concentration there is much flexibility in terms of the choice** of various specific projects of which the objectives, results and duration will be clearly identified. The budget of each of these projects will include all or part of the costs, notably salaries, needed for their implementation. This is current practice within the OECD. Contrary to the Secretariat, the **operational** Action Plan would be defined by topics. The topics addressed within the framework of the **operational** programme would evolve over the years according to SWAC members' demand in accordance with the orientations established by the SPG.

The main Secretariat and the Operational Programme shall of course be linked physically but shall respond to the work and financing which are both distinct and complementary. Furthermore, according to previous SPG recommendations, it was proposed:

3. From now on, to include in the fixed specific activity budgets, a lump sum which would cover the costs involved in implementing these activities.
4. To conclude with the ECOWAS Commission, a multi-year MOU based on the broad lines of the ECOWAS 2007-2010 Strategic Plan and 2020 Vision on the specificities and value added of the SWAC's work. This MOU, which should be validated by the Legal Services of both the ECOWAS Commission and the OECD, should highlight:
 - Areas in which there could be determinate cooperation: co-organisation of a workshop, forum; co-management of a study, etc. Procedures for transferring funds shall be clearly defined, which will enable these transfers to be carried out much more rapidly than is the case today (due to the *ad hoc* basis of these cooperative endeavours, the same long administrative process must be repeated).
 - Multi-year cooperation activities, as well as the modalities for their financing or co-financing. The implementation of the "West Africa" information portal and the second issue of the "West Africa" report come to mind.

This process should receive explicit support from cooperation agencies that finance both ECOWAS and the SWAC: references made to the SWAC in cooperation agreements between cooperation agencies and the ECOWAS Commission, including specific SWAC budgetary lines for certain projects, notification to agency representatives in Abuja.

While respecting the SWAC's identity and its mandate, two new approaches could be developed:

5. Some SWAC members could decide to address an issue together, for a set period of time, within the SWAC because the SWAC's framework is more appropriate than any other. Belgium is currently exploring this theory on the issue of child labour on West Africa cocoa plantations. Other issues could be envisaged, for example that of the complementarity between West African regional organisations.
6. The SWAC Secretariat could answer calls for proposals (and not calls for tender) issued by large international institutions, notably the European Commission, keeping in line with the SWAC's orientations and programme of work.

SPG Conclusions and Decisions

SPG members approved these proposals which endeavour to overcome this crisis as well as provide the Secretariat with more clarity and visibility of its organisation. They emphasised that this restructuration is the only possible path to assure the SWAC's future within the OECD. The SPG mandated the Secretariat to implement this restructuration as soon as possible, while taking into account the following components:

- Concerning restructuring into two tiers (points 1 and 2), the option of out-sourcing some tasks should be envisaged. Furthermore, the Secretariat should focus on the regional aspect, innovation, ideas, resource mobilisation/launching of programmes; and the specific/topical programme.
- Concerning the calculations of management costs/implementation of specific financing (point 3), the scale should be calculated and precisely defined with the OECD's appropriate services.
- Concerning the MOU with ECOWAS (and with other regional organisations), the Secretariat should ensure that it does not become a *coadjutor* simply used to implement the work programme of the organisation concerned. Furthermore, it was emphasised that the quality of ECOWAS/SWAC cooperation will no doubt determine the SWAC's future. Some of the SWAC's donors could envisage including "SWAC" budget lines in their financing of the ECOWAS Commission.
- Concerning the calls for proposals (point 6), SPG members should be consulted.

2. THE SWAC'S IDENTITY, VALUE ADDED, AND FUNCTIONS

Following the presentation of the second part of the working document, the debates on the SWAC's future confirmed that the notions of identity, utility, value added, and functioning are very closely linked.

The SWAC, its members, its Secretariat, its Programme

In extending the decisions related to financial issues and management, the SWAC's members would like that there is a clear distinction within the Club considering that:

- The SWAC is made up of its members who are the *Stakeholders or Shareholders*.
- The Secretariat is responsible for managing the SWAC and providing services to its members.
- The Programme brings together the activities/specific projects in accordance with the financing of its members from the north and south.

Regional identity

The SWAC is defined by the geographic area that it covers as well as by its regional approach in this area.

The SWAC's identity is rooted in this regional dimension/approach and on which its creation was based (Sahel-focused and centred on food security and drought control). Its identity is the trademark of the SWAC's recent achievements (cross-border cooperation, joint approach on migration, revision of the Food Aid Charter, supporting the implementation of the ECOWAS Common Agricultural Policy, the Atlas on Regional Integration, initiating contact with the DAC on the regional dimension of aid effectiveness, work on the regional post-conflict approach, etc.) The SWAC members asked the Secretariat:

- To provide them with access to regional information on the structural evolutions in the region.
- To provide them with updated information on events in the region and the international environment within the structural changes. This information can be motivated by the occurrence of a crisis (food, political, etc.) and/or by the international agenda (migration with a view to the Paris Conference, aid effectiveness with a view to the Accra Conference, etc.)
- To provide them with access to concise documents summing up the "the state of the debate" and outlining the interest in taking into account the regional dimension.
- To continue to improve its operational function geared towards supporting the formulation and implementation of regional policies and strategies.

Defining the products and a results-based approach

For the programme's activities as for the Secretariat's activities, the SPG asked that defined products and results be objectively verifiable.

The SWAC's position within the OECD

All the SPG members were concerned by the coherence of the OECD's Development Cluster while understanding that there can be difficulties with coordination within OECD member country governments. Financing granted to various Development Cluster entities are not managed by the same services and not even by the same ministries.

The Secretariat was asked to clarify the SWAC's specific role within the OECD's Development Cluster. From this point of view, the regional perception is pertinent because it does not exist anywhere else within the OECD. The SWAC could have particular responsibility within the Development Cluster with regard to the regional dimensions of development. However, the SWAC must work more closely with other members of the Development Cluster, especially the DAC of which many members financially support the SWAC.

The letter sent to the DAC Chairman concerning the regional dimensions of aid effectiveness was an initiative with great potential. There has been concrete follow-up to these joint DAC/SWAC initiatives.

More generally, the Secretariat was asked to develop closer relations with OECD member country delegations thus with the Organisation's Council.

Institutional Partnerships

The SPG asked the Secretariat to consider the ECOWAS Commission as the SWAC's main regional partner while highlighting the need for a closer relationship with the CILSS, who has been asked to be the technical branch of ECOWAS. The same comments were made concerning the SWAC's relationship with the African Union, UEMOA as well as other organisations.

Relations with West African civil society

SPG members believe that the Secretariat has relational capital with organisations representative of West African civil society which is under-valourised. They would like that the Secretariat help them enter into dialogue with opinion leaders/influential members representative of society, support the emergence of new leaders, promote the expression of representatives in English-speaking areas of West Africa.

SPG members believe that, at this stage, representatives of civil society should not necessarily be involved in the SWAC's governing board as the choice of participant may be too arbitrary.

They asked however that that organisations representative of civil society be more involved in the Secretariat's programmes and activities.

They also asked that the Secretariat provide them with precise information on the evolution of West African civil society.

Communications

Based on the relevance of its action, the depth of its understanding of West Africa and the SWAC's results and products, the SWAC should have development strategy for its outreach and the dissemination of its image, the "*OECD/SWAC trademark*." This strategy must be based in particular on:

- A pro-active reaction to events, the capacity to communicate to the broadest audience regarding timely and topical events, highlighting innovative and summarised analyses.

- A visible pro-active attitude (including outside the OECD) towards other member of the Development Cluster.
- The reality and the *marketing of services provided to members*: synthesis analysis, current event notes, *policy briefs*, monitoring of structural evolutions, setting up a network of experts or programme officers (food security, regional cooperation, migration, governance, etc.) within cooperation agencies, IGOs, and research institutes, etc.
- The quality and marketing of publications (books, reports).
- Production / dissemination of thematic maps regarding current issues (climate change, conflict, food crises).

3. CONCLUSIONS

Following this SPG meeting of 16 June 2008, the SWAC Secretariat has begun restructuring the SWAC and has introduced changes in its operations, without bringing into question its mandate, its role and its objectives as confirmed by SPG members on several occasions.

This restructuring will take form immediately and will be assessed at the end of 2008 with another evaluation at the end of 2009 leading to an in-depth review (end 2008 and end 2009) by SPG members in order to guide the SWAC in its future action, its specificity, its results and value added.

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ANNEX 2: AGENDA

Monday 16 June 2008

09.10 – 09.30	Introduction Mr. Charles Goerens, <i>President of the SWAC</i>
09.30 – 10.00	Intervention by Mr. Mario Amano <i>Deputy Secretary-General to the OECD</i>
10.00 – 10.30	Presentation of the document prepared for the SPG meeting Mr. Normand Lauzon, <i>Director of the SWAC</i> Mr. Laurent Bossard, <i>Deputy Director of the SWAC</i>
10.30 – 12.30	Exchange of views between SPG members on the SWAC's financial situation and its financial future: concrete suggestions, recommendations and proposals for an Action Plan
10.30 – 12.30	Summary of the morning session by SPG members and conclusions by Mr. Charles Goerens
13.00 – 14.45	Lunch
15.00 – 17.00	Exchange of views between SPG members on the SWAC's future: concrete suggestions, recommendations and proposals for an Action Plan
17.00 – 17.45	Summary of the afternoon session by SPG members
17.45 – 18.00	Conclusions by: Mr. Normand Lauzon Mr. Charles Goerens