Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and Donor Practices

TASK TEAM ON HARMONISATION AND ALIGNMENT OF DONOR PRACTICES

Summary of the Second Meeting

Held on 4-5 September 2003

This document was approved at the third meeting of the Task Team on Harmonisation and Alignment on 23 October 2003.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Agenda and summary record ........................................................................................................3

II. Update on recent events ..............................................................................................................3

III. Supporting implementation .......................................................................................................3

IV. Supporting and Reporting Progress at Country Level ..............................................................4

V. Reporting to SLM and HLF .......................................................................................................5

VI. Selection of Partner countries (and Budget) ...........................................................................5

VII. Tracking progress....................................................................................................................6

VIII. Next steps and other business .............................................................................................6

ANNEX 1: List of Meeting Documents.........................................................................................7

ANNEX 2: List of Participants .......................................................................................................8
I. AGENDA AND SUMMARY RECORD

1. The Task Team co-leader (Mr. Colin Bruce) welcomed participants to the second meeting of the Task Team on Harmonisation and Alignment. The agenda was adopted. Members suggested amendments to the draft summary of the last meeting (2-3 July) which will be revised accordingly and issued as DCD/DAC/EFF/M(2003)1/FINAL.

II. UPDATE ON RECENT EVENTS

2. Members were briefed on various events and initiatives related to harmonisation. Forthcoming events include:

   ▪ **September 2003** — The UK is hosting a seminar on joint training as a means of achieving common procedures and practices.

   ▪ **October-November, 2003** — Follow-up regional workshops on harmonisation are to be organised in Hanoi and Fiji. The World Bank informed members of an initiative by the Government of Bolivia on harmonisation and aid effectiveness. This would be discussed at the October CG meeting in Paris with a proposed follow-up mission to La Paz.

   ▪ **November 2003** — Seven like-minded donors agreed to harmonise their action plans. Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, UK, Ireland and the Netherlands are to produce a common action plan on harmonisation.

III. SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION

3. The Chair invited participants to express their views on what might be the value and role of the Task Team in supporting implementation at country level. In the ensuing discussion, members expressed the following views:

4. **Need for timely information on progress made on the harmonisation agenda** — In order to be useful and support progress effectively, the Task Team would benefit from a better collective understanding of the challenges both partner countries and donors are faced with when seeking to make progress on the harmonisation agenda. This might include information on what partner countries want to achieve on harmonisation, what is hampering progress and how donors at headquarter and country-level could respond to these challenges.

5. **The Task Team might act as a clearing-house on harmonisation** — A clearing-house would respond to the need for timely information (supra) by (i) ensuring that all parties (donors and partners) have ready access to key pieces of information; and facilitate decision taking and implementation by (ii) bringing together seekers and providers of information and services. Information would be made available by a network of focal points operating both within development institutions and partner countries.

6. **Country-led action plans on harmonisation are the linchpins of progress** — In addition, Canada suggested that the Task Team might play a useful role in facilitating these country-led action plans by identifying and sharing practical guidance on how roadmaps for progress on harmonisation might be elaborated.

7. **Promote champions of harmonisation** — It was recognised that champions or lead facilitators of harmonisation might play a useful role in advancing the agenda at country level. Further
reflection was required on what specific role champions might play and how the Task Team might be involved.

8. **The Task Team should undertake activities where it can clearly demonstrate added value** — Members also stressed the importance of engaging at country level only in demand driven processes and carefully consulting with partner countries on the value of undertaking specific actions (e.g. Joint Country Assessments).

9. In summing-up this agenda item the Chair identified three specific activities the Task Team might undertake in the area of support to implementation:

   - *Facilitate the exchange of information* — The Task Team could play a useful role in providing and facilitating access to important pieces of information such as key documents and calendar of events both at global and country level. In this connection, the Secretariat agreed to provide two Web-based services to its members; the first, was to post a comprehensive calendar of events and initiatives related to harmonisation; and the second, was to make available key documents on harmonisation on its Website. It was also agreed that as a matter of principle any document made available to the Secretariat might be disclosed to the public unless otherwise stated by its authors. This work will be closely coordinated with the Global Harmonisation Website.

   - *Provide other forms of support* — The Task Team might also consider providing other forms of support. A number of members, for example, suggested that there might be value – in accordance with the Task Team’s mandate – in setting out more detailed good practice in the context of specific aid delivery mechanisms (e.g. sector support).

10. The Chair also invited members to consider the value of developing a facility or ‘helpdesk’ to support implementation at country level. The objective here is to provide donors and partner countries with a convenient one-stop ‘clearing house’ that makes available information on harmonisation (especially practical implementation issues), helps users to explore and pursue options for dealing with implementation bottlenecks, and provides access to professional networks of technical experts and implementation facilitators.

IV. **Supporting and Reporting Progress at Country Level**

11. The Task Team co-leader (Mr. Bo Westman) introduced the next topic on the agenda: Joint Country Assessments (JCA). He reminded members that there had been preliminary discussions on this topic at the first meeting of the Task Team in July. The Secretariat then presented its proposal set out in Room Document 6.

12. Summing-up the discussion, the Chair highlighted the following points of agreement:

   - *JCAs need to support advancement of the harmonisation agenda at country level.*
   
   - *JCAs need to be responsive to partner country concerns and provide scope for partner country leadership* — It was also noted that JCAs might not be helpful in countries where harmonisation is well underway. Careful consideration should therefore be given to the selection of partner countries where JCA might be undertaken.

   - *Build on existing work and assessments and avoid duplication of processes already underway* — JCAs should draw on relevant work undertaken by SPA on alignment and work on indicators.

   - *A learning instrument and process* — It was recognised that JCAs are useful instruments for learning and collective understanding.
13. In accordance with the Secretariat’s proposal (Room Document 6), it was agreed that a first draft of the Terms of Reference of the JCAs would be prepared by a small group of interested members in consultation with the Secretariat for discussion with the Task Team at its next meeting. A final proposal would then be put forward for approval at the meeting of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness scheduled on 3-4 November. The following six members expressed an interest in taking this work forward: Sweden, Canada, Netherlands, Norway, EC and UNDP.

V. REPORTING TO SLM AND HLF

14. The Secretariat reminded participants that donors had agreed at Rome to report on progress made on the harmonisation agenda, and that a consolidated synthesis report will review and assess progress made by the development community against the commitments set out in the Rome Declaration. It was agreed at the last meeting that the report would draw from relevant material and sources of information including: country-based action plans on harmonisation, self-evaluations, peer review mechanisms and indicators of progress on harmonisation.

VI. SELECTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES (AND BUDGET)

15. This session was co-chaired by Messrs. Bo Westman and Colin Bruce. The Secretariat recorded indications of likely funding by members and noted a significant shortfall between commitments made and the budget proposed by the Secretariat.

16. The Chair reminded members that the criteria and modalities for selecting partner countries had been discussed at some length at the previous meeting. After further discussion broad agreement was reached on a list of 14 partner countries that will be associated with the work of the Task Team. These countries are:

- **Africa (7 countries)** — Ethiopia, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania and Zambia.
- **Asia (4 countries)** — Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kyrgyz Republic and Vietnam.
- **Latin America (2 countries)** — Nicaragua and Bolivia.
- **Pacific (1 country)** — Fiji.

17. The World Bank noted that this list which had grown from the last meeting now had thirteen countries in common with the seventeen frontier countries associated with the Rome Declaration on harmonisation. Excluding only four of these countries (Honduras, Kenya, Philippines and Jamaica), will make these countries conspicuous and more than likely raise questions that can prove awkward for the Task Team. It was suggested that if these countries were not to be included the Task Team should be in a position to provide a good reason.

18. Discussions then focused on the profile of the representatives that would be invited to attend the Task Team meetings. The Chair reminded members that it was agreed at the last meeting that partner countries would participate in their personal capacity and not as official representative of their respective countries.

19. It was decided that the Secretariat would prepare and send a letter addressed to the agreed partner governments inviting them to nominate an appropriate person to attend the Task Team meetings. It was also agreed that there should be clarity on what role partner country representatives should play in the Task Team (set out in Terms of Reference).
VII. TRACKING PROGRESS

20. The Secretariat briefed members on work underway by the informal technical group working on indicators that track progress towards the commitments made at the Rome High-Level Forum. The Task Team endorsed the overall approach suggested by the group. It was agreed that the informal group on indicators would hold another technical meeting before the next Working Party meeting in order to finalise a proposal on indicators.

VIII. NEXT STEPS AND OTHER BUSINESS

21. The Secretariat would put forward a proposal for a next meeting that might be back-to-back with the WP-EFF Joint Venture on Public Financial Management scheduled on 22 October 2003.

22. In concluding the meeting, the co-leader of the Task Team (Mr. Colin Bruce) made an interactive power point presentation on what he had drawn from the discussions to stimulate further reflection and contribute to defining a work program with time bound deliverables and shared responsibilities. *Inter alia,* this presentation touched on some of the key issues that need to be addressed on the broader harmonisation agenda including collecting and developing experience on common arrangements and staff and management incentives that support harmonisation efforts.
## ANNEX 1: LIST OF MEETING DOCUMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Description</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draft Annotated Agenda of the Second Meeting</td>
<td>DCD/DAC/EFF/A(2003)3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal for a Framework of Indicators on Harmonisation and Alignment</td>
<td>DCD/DAC/EFF(2003)4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Summary of the First Meeting</td>
<td>DCD/DAC/EFF/M(2003)1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggested List of Partner Countries and Members’ Proposal for the Nomination of Participants (Note by the Secretariat)</td>
<td>Room Document 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of Voluntary Contributions as of 1 September 2003 (Note by the Secretariat)</td>
<td>Room Document 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrative Key Sheets (Note by the Secretariat)</td>
<td>Room Document 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary Proposal on Indicators of Harmonisation and Alignment — Comments received from Task Team Members (Note by the Secretariat)</td>
<td>Room Document 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Key Features of a Joint Country Assessment on Harmonisation and Alignment</td>
<td>Room Document 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking Progress on the Commitments made at the Rome High-Level Forum on Harmonisation</td>
<td>Room Document 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonization and Alignment TT/Subgroup &amp; Summary of Meeting (Presentation by Mr. Colin Bruce)</td>
<td>Presentation 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting and Reporting Process at Country Level (Presentation by the Secretariat)</td>
<td>Presentation 2</td>
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