REPORT ON RECENT MEETINGS

Room Document 1

DAC Meeting, 9 December 2009

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Contact: Françoise Zekri - Tel: +33 (0)1 45 24 17 82 - Email: francoise.zekri@oecd.org

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REPORT ON RECENT MEETINGS

1. Joint Meeting of the DAC and Working Party of the Trade Committee on Aid for Trade (10 November 2009)

1. The 2009 - 2010 PWB on aid for trade identified two main output areas: (a) monitoring aid for trade, and (b) best practices in making aid for trade more effective. The first part of 2009 was devoted to the drafting of the joint OECD/WTO publication ‘Aid for Trade at a Glance’. The remainder of the PWB is focused on making aid for trade more effective through best practice on how to evaluate aid for trade; how to make aid for trade more results oriented, and how to address binding constraints to trade capacity building.

2. The DAC and the WP/TC met on 10 November to discuss these issues as well as aid for trade and the green growth agenda and preliminary orientations for the 2011 – 2012 joint programme of work and budget. The meeting was preceded by a meeting of the WTO Advisory Group on Aid for Trade.

3. The session on evaluation started with presentations from representatives of USAID, SIDA, DFID, EIF, World Bank, OECD and the EC who shared their initial thoughts, approaches and methodologies on the evaluation of aid for trade. The Secretariat outlined in a scoping note on how to evaluate aid for trade and presented the DAC Evaluation Resource Centre. The discussion which followed was supportive of both the presentations and the plan of future work.

4. The session on managing for results in aid for trade highlighted that an effective assessment of the performance of aid for trade requires, from the outset of project/programme design, clear objectives and verifiable targets which are connected through a results chain. Members supported proposals to collect evidence of good practice in managing for results in aid-for-trade and to establish an inventory of existing programme indicators for the selected aid-for-trade areas.

5. Members welcomed the paper ‘Binding Constraints to Trade Expansion: Aid for Trade Objectives and Diagnostics Tools’. The paper showed that the most common objectives set for aid for trade have a strong economic underpinning and discussed the various tools and methods to identify the most binding constraints that prevent developing countries from reaching them. The paper also points to future areas for work such as the sequencing and complementary policies that are crucial for strengthening the impact of aid-for-trade assistance. These aspects will be discussed in a “good practices” paper foreseen in the 2009-10 PWB.

6. The Secretariat presented a short note on ‘aid for trade and green growth’, followed by a discussion of the OECD Green Growth Strategy (GGS) and how it connects to development cooperation work including aid for trade. Members cautiously supported the paper and work in this area but were hesitant on where the work was going. They also felt that this work should retain a focus on LDCs, and have more details on the potential trade opportunities created.

7. Members discussed Draft proposal for 2011-2012 joint DAC-TC PWB on Aid for Trade and asked for greater clarity of the intermediate output results especially those related to linking the aid for trade initiative to the wider trade and development agenda. In addition they highlighted the need to try to engage non-OECD members more frequently in the work.
2. Annual Meeting of the Informal network of Development Communicators
(DevCom - Dublin, 9-11 November)

8. This meeting provided a key opportunity to discuss messaging, and more generally plan the communication strategy for the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF4). In addressing the challenges faced by the communicators, numerous speakers offered their views and advice on communicating about aid and development:

- Michael Gaffey, DDG IrishAID, noted that the concept of ODA – and our assumptions about it – have been rocked by things like climate change.

- Simon Maxwell, ODI, confirmed this by saying that the MDGs used to be an easy sell – not any more. In this crisis of globalization, the solutions must be global. “We need a new narrative – the MDGs won’t do. Other issues are at the forefront: climate change; fragile states; global public goods; whole of government approaches; multi-laterals. But we need to talk about these in simple terms; to tell stories with a beginning, middle and end, which people can understand and relate to.”

- Dambisa Moyo (Dead Aid) also addressed the group. Although Moyo’s arguments are familiar, a few merit underlining. Like Maxwell, she recognized the challenging job of the communicators, stressing that “we need to temper our targets with realism (MDGs), acknowledge that the record is poor, and focus on results – the standard answers aren’t good enough.”

- Jamie Drummond (ONE) emphasized that “we need to communicate both promise and problems, and to be more honest about failures. We also need to get others to speak well of us, and to use the global downturn to help people see the link,” – the idea of a global community. Drummond argued that “we [the people in the aid business] have become the establishment – we need to become the activists again. We need to help the idealists – the people who identify with aid – to stay engaged. To do this, we need to popularize the AAA/Paris Declaration.”

- Koos Richelle, Co-Chair of the WP-EFF, sent a message that the HLF4 cannot be about business as usual. “This must be an HLF with a difference, including more than the usual suspects. We must give more voice to our partners.” He reiterated that evidence of concrete results on the ground is essential, and that it is not only about Seoul, but the way forward.

9. A small focus group – including representatives from the DevCom Coordinators, Ireland, Korea, New Zealand, the UN Millennium Campaign, the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and DCD – met immediately after the DevCom annual meeting to brainstorm on the communication strategy for the HLF4, incorporating the thinking from the meeting and looking at ways for taking it forward.

3. First High-Level Symposium – UN Development Co-operation Forum
(Vienna, 12-13 November)

10. The first High-Level Symposium to prepare for the 2010 UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) was organised by UN DESA jointly with the Government of Austria in Vienna on 12-13 November 2009. The event, titled “Accountability and Transparent Development Cooperation: Towards a More Inclusive Framework”, focused on one of the three pillars of the DCF on mutual accountability, while also discussing topics on aid transparency, south-south cooperation and policy coherence. The DAC Chair participated in a panel on “promoting mutual accountability mechanisms at the global and regional levels” and Richard Carey moderated one of the discussion groups among donors.
11. Representatives from donors, partner country governments, parliamentarians, civil society and local governments discussed the recommendations contained in the background paper on mutual accountability and aid transparency which highlighted elements for global and national mutual accountability mechanisms. While recognising the importance of making progress on mutual accountability at country level, the Forum stressed that there is no “one size fits all” approach to mutual accountability. The Forum recognised that DCF can play a useful role in sharing experiences and monitoring progress on international and country-level mutual accountability particularly through drawing on existing resources and initiatives.

12. Beyond the technical debate, the Forum was useful to reinforce the secretariat-level co-operation between the UNDCF and the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, particularly in ensuring complementarities, synergies and focus during the up-coming international meetings on development in 2010-11 (i.e. UN DCF, UN MDG Summit, Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness). At the thematic level, the Forum drew on the WP-EFF Cluster work on “Ownership and Accountability” [which held a side meeting in Vienna] and also raised the profile of the WP-EFF Task Team on South-South Cooperation and the High Level Event on South-South Cooperation and Capacity Development in Bogotá, Colombia on 24-26 March 2010.

4. PARIS21 Consortium Meeting (16 – 18 November 2009)

13. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) held the meeting of its Consortium in Dakar, Senegal from 16 to 18 November 2009. Nearly 450 participants (statisticians, policy makers, academics, development agencies, etc.), hailing from all continents and over 100 countries, took part in the event.

14. Three keynote papers (Demand for better statistics and use of data, Strategy for the development of statistics, and Partnership for the development of statistics) drove discussions in plenary and parallel sessions. A “Dakar Declaration on the Development of Statistics – DDDS” (see DCD/DAC/RD(2009)17/RD7) was unanimously approved by acclamation during the closing plenary. The DDDS outlines a five-point call to action for the Partnership on issues relating to: strategy implementation, mobilisation of technical and financial resources for statistics, co-ordination of donor support to statistics, meeting the needs of data users, and development of statistical tools and methodologies.

15. The Consortium meeting provided a new impetus for the partnership on statistical development, and the Dakar Declaration — which draws heavily on the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness — will be one of the central documents in the field over the next five years. All meeting documents, including the full text of the Declaration, are available on the Consortium website at: http://www.consortium-paris21.org/

5. Launch of the African Tax Administration Forum, (ATAF), KAMPALA, 18-20 November

16. The inaugural conference of the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF) was successfully launched by the President of Uganda on 18th November and was attended by 31 African countries, plus DAC donors and several multilateral organisations. At the meeting, ATAF constituted itself as an independent legal body of currently 25 member countries, with a Chair (South Africa) and a Council (Botswana, Rwanda, Nigeria, Senegal, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe (with a representative from North Africa to follow). It was agreed the ATAF Secretariat will continue to be hosted by South Africa.
The meeting confirmed the Forum’s goal to become the platform for African tax administrators. Its objectives are to articulate African tax priorities, develop and share best practices in the region and further afield, and build capacity in African tax policy and administration through peer learning and knowledge development. DAC members committed, between them, to support ATAF by meeting the funding gap (approximately USD 2 M) between African member’s subscriptions (which will rise as the membership increases over time) and the institutional and programme costs over the first two years.

The presence of the DAC Chair and Deputy Secretary General, Aart de Geus, who chaired sessions at the meeting, signalled strong OECD commitment to ATAF. Support to the development of ATAF has been planned over two years and was acknowledged as an excellent example of close cooperation between the DAC’s GOVNET and the CTPA. The launch of the meeting was preceded by a successful meeting of the GOVNET’s Task Team on Tax and Governance on 18th November.

Based on the note DCD/DAC(2009)47 and Corrigenda 1 and 2, DAC Members discussed individual donor plans to further untie their aid to the maximum extent, in line with commitments agreed in the Accra Action for Agenda (paragraph 18b). The discussion was organised according to Members share of their aid that is untied, i.e (i) Members that report their aid as fully untied (Ireland, Luxemburg, Norway, United Kingdom); (ii) Members who report 90% or more of their aid as untied (Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Sweden, Switzerland); (iii) Members whose shares of untied aid are reported as between 75% (the 2005-7 DAC average) and 90% (Germany, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand); and (iv) Members whose shares of untied aid are less than 75% (Austria, Canada, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, United States).

There was no discussion of the Members that fully untie their aid. Concerning the Members that untie above 90% of their aid, the Chair congratulated them on a high untying performance and encouraged them to keep up this high performance, recognising the difficulties that might be associated with untying remaining small amounts of tied aid. Concerning the Members that untie their aid above the DAC average, the Chair noted the already high levels of untying, the difficulties some might face in further untying but encouraged them to improve untying performance where possible. For countries below the DAC average, the Chair welcomed the plans and schedules of some Members to fully untie their aid or to significantly increase the share that will be untied and encouraged others to continue to review their situation and set out or strengthen present plans.

In addition, the meeting discussed issues related to definition and reporting issues; procurement practices, and the country and activity coverage of the AAA commitment to further untie aid to the maximum extent. With a view to preparing a note for discussion in the DAC in March 2010 (and then on to the SLM), another informal meeting of DAC Members will be held in February 2010.