Working Party on Statistics

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 50TH MEETING

held on 5 and 6 June 2000, at the Château de la Muette, Paris

(Note by the Secretariat)

Reviews of DAC and CRS reporting. Statistical reporting directives. Current issues in ODA reporting: reporting capital subscriptions to IFIs; ODA reporting of the costs of refugees in donor countries; reviewing the ODA eligibility of peace-related activities. Special studies: Basic Social Services; Rio Conventions; Mali case study. Presentations.

Annex 1 provides a list of participants.

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 50TH MEETING OF THE DAC WORKING PARTY ON STATISTICS

PARIS, 5-6 JUNE 2000

1. Election of the Chair

1. Mr Ahti, who chaired the Working Party in 1999, was unable to attend. The United Kingdom proposed and Germany seconded the election of Mr Dorst (Netherlands) as Chair of the 2000 meeting. He was elected unanimously.

2. Adoption of the Agenda [DCD/DAC/STAT/A(2000)1/REV1]

2. The agenda was adopted without modification.

3. Approval of the Summary Record of the 49th Meeting [DCD/DAC/STAT/M(99)1/PROV]

3. Germany had agreed with the Secretariat a clarification to the record of the discussion of the reporting of debt relief. The Secretariat agreed to amend the record accordingly. There were no other comments.

4. Reviews of Reporting in 1999


Reporting Delays

4. Most Members stated that they would be able to provide data on 1999 flows by the end of September. Canada, which is in the process of converting data systems, and Germany, which must await data from its 16 Federal States, were concerned about their ability to report by September.

Discrepancies in reporting on basic social services between Table DAC 5 and CRS forms

5. The Secretariat (Mr. Scott) encouraged Members to report complete data on basic social services on Table DAC 5, as work done for DCD/DAC/STAT(2000)7 showed that there were large discrepancies in amounts reported on DAC5 versus amounts reported in the CRS. In response:

- Canada acknowledged that their CRS reporting on individual activities only covered CIDA’s geographical programme (about one third of total bilateral ODA). Reporting on the remainder was done at semi-aggregate level in an Annex to Table DAC3a, which could explain some of the discrepancies.

- The United States reported that it had recently corrected some categorisations of expenditures and that CRS and DAC data should match from now on.
• The United Kingdom flagged difficulties arising from the fact that reproductive health care was not included under the basic health definition on Table DAC 5. The Secretariat offered to clarify the position by showing aid to reproductive health separately on the sector table in the Development Co-operation Report.

Contributions to WFP and UNHCR

6. To avoid both double counting and under-counting of contributions to UNHCR and WFP, the Secretariat (Mr. Scott) suggested that Members use the data in Room Document 1 to help distinguish bilateral and multilateral flows and that they discuss any serious discrepancies with the Secretariat.

7. The United States stated that though reporting “directed multilateral” contributions to WFP as bilateral was technically possible, these expenditures had to date been reported as multilateral to reflect that the US was using multilateral agencies. However, the United States would verify whether there was any political reason to continue reporting these contributions as multilateral. In answer to a question from Japan about contributions to UNHCR, the Secretariat pointed out that as practically all “special programmes” expenditure by UNHCR was earmarked for a specific country or purpose, Members should report their contributions to UNHCR special programmes as bilateral aid.

8. Australia, Italy, Spain and the United States asked whether contributions to regional activities or to thematic programmes in countries not identified should be classified as bilateral or multilateral. The Secretariat suggested these contributions be reported as regional or unallocated bilateral aid.

9. The Secretariat encouraged all Members to use the data in Room Document 1 to report 1999 contributions to these agencies and suggested a review of this experience at the next meeting of the Working Party in 2001.

GNP / GNI Issues

10. Since under the new System of National Accounts (SNA93), GNP is no longer calculated, the Secretariat (Mr. Scott) suggested replacing GNP with GNI in the ODA/GNP calculation. It also suggested that once all Members had GNI data, the ratio should be standardised on GNI from 1995 flows.

11. The United Kingdom stated that they were already using GNI. Canada said that their Statistical Department was using GNI but reporting to the DAC was still done using GNP. The United States recommended that all Members use the same figure for GNI as published in line 99a.c in the International Financial Statistics. Japan declared that an international consensus was necessary to adopt the GNI and was not sure it would be able to calculate GNI back to 1995, given that the new SNA was only going to be implemented in Japan at the end of 2000. Switzerland would need to check with its statistical office about whether it could provide the Secretariat with GNI.

12. The United Kingdom requested that the Secretariat investigate the political aspects of the move to GNI and suggested that some publicity may be necessary before the shift occurred. The United Kingdom also proposed that once GNI was adopted, all major publications on development show the data in terms of GNI at the same time.

13. The Secretariat acknowledged the political implications of changing to GNI. It undertook to check with Members concerned before replacing any GNP data with GNI data. Moreover, it was agreed that any change in public presentation should be co-ordinated with a changeover (a) within the UN (including possible UNCTAD discussion in 2001 of the 0.7% target) and (b) for the World Bank Atlas, and
be fully explained in publications. Any Members who wished to revise their ODA figures starting with 1995 at the same time as supplying the Secretariat with GNI figures, were welcome to do so.


14. The Secretariat (Mr. Grolleau) presented the annual report noting continued improvements in the coverage and pertinence of CRS data on individual aid activities. A large number of copies of the regional CRS publications had been sold, and there had been great interest for the special studies on aid to basic social services (BSS), aid to forestry and aid targeting the Rio Conventions. As regards areas where further improvements were required, Mr. Grolleau noted that more complete reporting by the European Commission and the United Nations could enrich CRS-based sectoral analyses. There was progress in reporting of disbursements, but increases in coverage were still needed to allow these data to be fully exploited. Greater emphasis had to be placed also on publicity about and dissemination of CRS data. The fact that parallel data collection systems on specific subjects were planned and created, despite improvements in CRS data coverage and quality, meant the CRS was not sufficiently known in aid agencies.

15. The Chair invited all Members to comment on the report and express their views on how data dissemination could be improved. Members generally supported the CRS and had found the special studies undertaken recently most useful. France hoped to increase the coverage of its reporting within the next two years. Germany thought the report gave too optimistic a picture of its expected reporting performance in the near future. Denmark, Italy and Switzerland expressed their intention to also report disbursement data to the CRS. The United Kingdom appreciated the fact that the BSS study had helped to spot problems in its internal reporting system.

16. All Members supported the idea of one or more “handouts” that would give brief information about the CRS (and DAC statistics) and ODA in general. Canada was ready to put information about the CRS on its electronic bulletin board, but wished the Secretariat to draft a suitable text. Spain drew attention to the fact that, even if handouts were useful, internal co-ordination was required to avoid the creation of parallel systems.

4.3 Markers [Room Document 2]

17. The Secretariat (Ms. Benn) presented the status of reporting on the markers. She noted that, with the exception of some large donors, coverage was satisfactory for the “Aid to Environment” and the “Gender Equality incorporating Women in Development” markers. Half of the Members had started to report on the “new” markers - “Direct Assistance to Poor People” and “Participatory Development/Good governance”. The Secretariat encouraged Members to report on the markers, which had proved to be a very useful analytical tool.

18. The United States reiterated the reservations it had expressed at last year’s meeting as regards the poverty marker which, in its view, created confusion as it was limited to direct poverty activities and so excluded much indirect aid to poverty reduction. The Secretariat proposed to continue the regular data collection on markers and to postpone the methodological and definitional work to refine them for a year, as the redrafting of the CRS directives was the priority activity for next year.


19. This year, for the second time, a report on the reporting of ODA debt and debt forgiveness was circulated, drawing the attention of delegates to the importance of these data for policy making, and
underlining certain shortcomings of the data compiled. In introducing the paper, the Secretariat (Ms. Guz) asked all Members to confirm the reported data or Secretariat estimates on their own credits, and those Members with deficient reporting to make improvements. The importance of good quality debt data was agreed while several delegates underlined the difficulties in collecting reliable data. The Chair asked those Members unable to confirm their data at the meeting to do so through bilateral exchanges with the Secretariat.

5. Statistical Reporting Directives


The Secretariat (Mr. Scott) informed Members that the DAC Statistical Reporting Directives and Handbook for Reporting Debt Reorganisation were approved by the DAC at its meeting on 10-11 April 2000 and govern reporting on the DAC Questionnaire from this year onwards (1999 flows).


Members agreed to the Secretariat’s proposal to use the revised Annex 2 of the DAC Statistical Reporting Directives for reporting 1999 flows. The United States asked whether the ICRC should be considered a multilateral agency, rather than an international NGO. The Secretariat subsequently confirmed with the ICRC that its Board comprised individuals acting in a private capacity, not appointed by their Government, and that ICRC should therefore continue to be treated as an INGO in DAC statistics.

Agreement was reached regarding future modifications to Annex 2. Members may propose amendments at any time. Where the Secretariat provisionally agrees that an organisation should be added to the ODA-eligible list, the Member may report its contribution to that agency as ODA immediately. However, the list will only be formally updated once the changes are agreed by the Working Party, usually at its annual meeting.

5.3 Revision of CRS Directives [DCD/DAC/STAT(2000)10 and Room Document 3]

The Secretariat (Ms. Benn) presented a workplan for revising the CRS Directives. As a first step, it would organise a “brainstorming” session for interested reporters in early July. It would then prepare a first draft of the revised Directives for discussion at an informal meeting scheduled for 20-21 November 2000. Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the observer from UNICEF expressed interest in actively participating in this work.

The Secretariat (Ms. Guz) presented proposals for modifications of CRS Form 2 as part of the revision of CRS directives with a view to reaching agreement in principle on the basic approach before redrafting the directives. The two main changes proposed are:

- Adding future debt service payments to CRS Form 2 in order to be able to report debt on a residual maturity basis in response to international demand.
- Adjusting debt stock as soon as debt is forgiven and not when the forgiven debt becomes due.
25. Also proposed were some additional adjustment codes, and an optional alternative CRS Form 2 layout. Finally, Members unable to provide good data on amounts of ODA debt forgiven on CRS Form 2 were asked to provide the data regularly on a separate sheet (Annex 5 in the paper) given the demand for this information.

26. Several countries asked for more time to assess the proposals. Germany recalled that they have opted for the system of year-by-year reporting of debt relief and that for them unified reporting in CRS and DAC has been the guiding principle. Germany also said that the problem of overestimation of debt stock with respect to HIPC is a minor problem. The Secretariat replied that the adjustment to debt stock is not a disbursement, but simply a correction to the outstanding amounts of debt stock. The adjustment the Secretariat requests is equal to the commitment of forgiveness excluding future interest - which those reporting on a year-by-year basis have agreed to notify to the DAC. The Secretariat pointed out that, unless this was done, debt stock for Germany’s debtors would be greatly overestimated for any recipient, HIPC or other, receiving significant forgiveness from now on.

27. The Secretariat (Mr. Hammond) invited Members to inform the Secretariat by the end of July 2000 whether they agree to the proposals and/or if they wish to pursue bilateral discussions.

6. Current Issues in ODA Reporting

6.1 Reporting Capital Subscriptions to IFIs [DCD/DAC/STAT(2000)5]

28. The Secretariat (Mr. Scott) reiterated the benefits of moving to the encashment basis in reporting capital subscriptions. Encashments showed far less fluctuation over time than deposits and so gave a clearer idea of trends. They represented actual disbursements from treasuries and were closer in time to the effective use of funds by the agencies. Furthermore, research by the Secretariat revealed that some Members were already reporting on an encashment basis. Belgium and Sweden confirmed this, while the United Kingdom said it used encashments for contributions to the GEF, Montreal Protocol and IFAD.

29. Australia, Austria, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States favoured moving to reporting on an encashment basis, since this was a statistically more reliable measure and often more consistent with national accounting systems. Finland and Italy would be willing to move to encashments if this were agreed. Though the Netherlands needed to check whether this was desirable, it did confirm that encashments were consistent with its national accounts system. France, which reports on a deposit basis, stated that once the French Parliament approved credits, these were encashed practically immediately thereafter. Denmark uses encashments for internal purposes, but there was a debate within Denmark whether to switch internally to reporting on a deposit basis. Canada could see no reason to move to encashments, since in agreement with the IFIs during replenishment negotiations, notes of equal value were scheduled to be deposited over a specific amount of years, thus decreasing any sudden increases in one particular year. The United Kingdom also broke up its notes into equal annual parts.

30. Australia, Austria, Finland, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland agreed to the Secretariat’s proposal that there be a cut-off date in the future for a switch in reporting from a deposit basis to an encashment basis. Some Members preferred a cut-off date 2 to 3 years in the future. Germany advocated a retrospective cut-off date with revisions being made to a relatively long period of data. This would avoid, as far as possible, double-counting the same contribution, first at the time of deposit, and then at the time of encashment. The United Kingdom itself favoured encashments at present, but new accounting procedures might lead it to favour deposits. Norway favoured retaining deposits and Germany and Japan were still considering the issue.
31. Finally, regarding the Secretariat’s proposal for optional reporting of either deposits or encashments, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States would support this. Austria would welcome the opportunity to report encashments, but flagged the issue of data comparability. Germany and Italy\(^1\) opposed optional reporting since the point of the statistics was to arrive at comparable data.

32. Noting that there was a large majority, but no consensus in favour of optional reporting, the Chair suggested that discussions continue at the next Working Party on Statistics meeting in 2001. In the meantime, Members who have not provided the Secretariat with encashment data for any year since 1995 (inclusive) should submit this, so that the effect of changing from deposits to encashments could be more clearly ascertained.

6.2 ODA Reporting of the Costs of Refugees in Donor Countries [Room Document 4]

33. At the end of 1999, the DAC Senior Level Meeting agreed to a Swiss proposal to review the rules for ODA reporting of refugee costs. The Secretariat subsequently hired Mr. Gérard Perroulaz (Graduate Institute of Development Studies, Geneva) to carry out this study. Ms. Vanessa Peat was assisting him. A Questionnaire had already been sent to Members and responses were requested by 20 June in order for the consultants to complete the study by early September. Regarding Point 5 of the Questionnaire, Ms. Peat signalled that the null option (i.e. the possibility of not reporting any costs of refugees in donor countries as ODA) had been omitted. She made it clear that Members were at liberty to suggest this null option, or add any other options or suggestions under Point 6.

34. Ms. Peat signalled that she and Mr. Perroulaz wished to carry out interviews in Austria, Finland, Germany, Norway and the United Kingdom, and encouraged these Members to send their responses to the Questionnaire prior to the interviews.


35. The Informal DAC Task Force on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation requested at its last meeting (21-22 February 2000), that the Working Party on Statistics examine the ODA-eligibility of certain expenditures related to security sector reform to facilitate further discussion at the Task Force’s next meeting in October 2000.

36. Most Members had not had the opportunity to discuss the issue with their counterparts on the Task Force, but expressed their willingness to respond on the questions in the document by 31 July 2000.

37. Denmark and the United Kingdom stated that they were not in favour of broadening the definition of ODA to include military expenditures, as this would undermine the credibility of ODA. Denmark suggested including expenditures on security sector reform as memo items, which would not be included in ODA. However, Denmark also thought that strengthening the civil sector could be included under ODA, specifically items on the civilian management of security expenditure (item 1b in Annex 1 of the document), civilian expertise on security issues (item 1c), enforcement of recruitment policies in relation to armed forces (item 3d) and civilian oversight mechanisms of armed forces (item 4b). Collecting information in the form of ad-hoc surveys should also be considered. Canada, the United Kingdom and the

\(^1\) Italy later indicated that it would not oppose a consensus on optional reporting, if all other Members were in agreement.
United States stressed that data on such expenditures would be very difficult to obtain since these came from different budgets and identification of amounts was not consistent.

Spain suggested that since there were so many different interpretations of conflict prevention, the Task Force should examine and define concepts further.

7. Special Studies

7.1 Basic Social Services [DCD/DAC/STAT(2000)7]

The Secretariat (Ms. Benn) presented the report on measuring aid to basic social services (BSS) noting that it was a product of several years of work by the Working Party. Aid to BSS had been discussed as part of the revision of the sector classification and the marker methodology, and the study “Opportunities and constraints for better donor reporting on basic social services” had been undertaken. At its meeting on 14-15 June 1999, the Working Party had agreed on the methodological approach for measuring aid to BSS [cf. DCD/DAC/STAT/M(99)1]. A first draft of the report had been sent to Members for comments in January 2000 together with a request for supplementary data on aid to BSS not identifiable in CRS or DAC statistics. Ms. Benn asked whether Members were satisfied with the revised version presented in DCD/DAC/STAT(2000)7 and whether that paper could be referred to when responding to requests for data on aid to BSS. Another question to the Working Party was what use could be made of the paper at the 5-year review of the World Summit for Social Development taking place at the end of June.

Members thanked the Secretariat for a good report. Germany was of the view that the paper was suitable for the Geneva Conference, but the figures on aid to water supply and sanitation needed clarification. In particular, only data on “water supply and sanitation - small systems” and “water supply and sanitation - large systems, if poverty-focused” should be shown. It also wished to add to the report a comment on difficulties experienced in allocating funds for BSS in recipient countries not interested in the 20/20 Initiative and to emphasise, by bringing footnote 2 into the text, the possibility of overestimation as well as underestimation of aid to BSS in DAC/CRS statistics. UNICEF agreed with Germany on the necessity to revise the data on water supply. The United Kingdom supported the idea of a cut-down version of the report for Geneva 2000, stressing, however, the importance of careful presentation of the data. The Secretariat (Mr Hammond) concluded the discussion noting that the Secretariat would prepare such a paper taking account of Members’ comments.

7.2 Rio Conventions [DCD/DAC/STAT(2000)8]

The Secretariat (Ms. Benn) presented the draft report on the pilot study. She thanked the seventeen Members that had contributed to the study and so made it representative. Aid activities targeting the objectives of the Rio Conventions had been found to be highly focused on relatively few sectors, few in number, and generally represent a small share of Members’ bilateral ODA. But aid related to the Conventions could not be separately identified from other activities without the marker. This meant that the data could be collected only if Rio markers were introduced in regular CRS reporting (limited to the focus sectors) or if special surveys were undertaken. Another possibility was to give the Convention secretariats access to regular CRS data and leave supplementary data collection to them.

All Members thanked the Secretariat for an excellent report and noted that the study had been worth undertaking. As regards the specific question on recommended future action, six Members (Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain) preferred the option of limited marker data
collection in regular CRS reporting. Five Members (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) were in favour of special studies but some felt that these may need to be undertaken every 2 years, or even annually, rather than every 3-4 years as proposed by the Secretariat. Australia stated the definitions of the Rio markers were too stringent to produce useful data for domestic purposes and, unless there was a change, would support special studies. The Netherlands likewise stressed the need to clarify the definitions, in particular the distinction between “principal” and “significant” objectives. Denmark and Norway expressed concern over the additional workload and wished to further discuss the question of division of labour. The other Members would give their comments either bilaterally (France, Italy and the United States) or through the colleagues participating at the meeting of the DAC Working Party on Development Co-operation and Environment on 13-14 June 2000.

7.3 Mali Case Study

43. The Secretariat (Ms. Benn) reported on a field visit to Mali at the beginning of May. The Club du Sahel had invited the Secretariat to contribute to the Study on Aid Flows which was being carried out as part of the Mali Aid Reform. The Commission in charge of the Reform had identified lack of information on aid flows within the Malian administration as a major obstacle to efficient aid management. The study sought to make proposals for improving the quality of this information and facilitating information exchange between the donors and the Malian Government. Specific tasks included making an inventory of the available national and international sources of information, comparing data in the different sources and explaining any inconsistencies between them, and describing the existing systems and practices of information exchange.

44. The discussions during the visit had highlighted how “aid received by Mali” was not equal to “aid extended to Mali” i.e. the recipient’s perception on the size of the aid flows was different from that of donors. Some types of aid activities were not undertaken with the public sector and therefore did not enter the Government’s accounts. As donors were promoting decentralisation and increasingly working with the civil society, it could be expected that in future less and less aid would fall under the Malian instruments for monitoring aid, such as the special investment budget. Furthermore, these instruments did not include data on experts and other forms of non-project technical co-operation, or on aid activities managed directly by aid agencies’ headquarters (e.g. food aid, emergency aid, thematic budget lines).

45. Ms. Benn noted that Members could contribute to increasing the transparency on aid flows in Mali through full reporting to the CRS. While no specific further work had yet been planned, she invited Members to indicate whether they, in principle, supported pursuing this activity. Members found the study most interesting but naturally needed to discuss the possible resource implications internally in the agencies. Switzerland expressed its keen interest to participate, even if this would imply extra work. In its view, a case study of this kind was highly motivating as it could lead to improved aid management in general. The representative of UNICEF was also very much in favour of continuing the work on Mali.

8. Presentations

8.1 Improving Data Collection and Presentation

46. The Secretariat (Ms. Ahmad) demonstrated how incoming data on DAC tables is processed, and presented the DAC Standard Data Format, an alternative for compiling the DAC Questionnaire. This was generally welcomed as offering the possibility to simplify reporting. The Internet version of the DAC Directives was also shown, and there was a presentation of the CD-ROM International Development Statistics.
8.2 Better Data Dissemination

47. The Secretariat (Mr. Hammond) reported back on the 4th General Meeting of INDIX, which had again highlighted the importance of data exchange. He briefly described the Global Development Gateway and noted the Secretariat was actively participating in its aid effectiveness module by exploring ways of using the Internet to share CRS and other information across the entire development community. If World Bank funds are forthcoming, the Secretariat will be one of the major actors in the preparation of a prototype demonstration of the aid effectiveness module for the end of September 2000. The pilot will demonstrate the possibility for users to search simultaneously a wide variety of databases while looking at information from three angles: 1) a range of stages in the project lifecycle, 2) a range of partners, and 3) a community of interest.

48. Members were informed the DAC might host a forum in Autumn 2000 to bring together potential Gateway partners (data providers and users) to build on the pilot exercise.

8.3 Indicators and PARIS21

49. The Secretariat (Mr. Hammond) provided an update on the indicators for the International Development Goals (IDGs). The environment indicators had been refined and there was now an agreed set of 21 indicators. There had been discussion of indicators for participatory development and good governance. Some 10 potential indicators -out of some 150 potential ones examined- had met the criteria for selection. Nevertheless it was felt that they were too incomplete to be adopted and that more discussion was required. This would continue electronically. A major outcome of the indicator work would be the publication, on 26 June, of *A Better World for All*, which would use the indicators to report progress towards the IDGs and highlight the effort still required for their attainment.

50. The Secretariat (Ms. Strode) outlined progress with the PARIS21 initiative since the Consortium was founded in November 1999. The focus of the work would be on advocacy, information exchange, promoting funding of programmes for Sequenced Information Strategies, and other related initiatives, such as funding for population and agricultural censuses. An example of a model for information exchange - a listing of statistics projects taken from the CRS - was circulated for information. Members were encouraged to report fully on statistical capacity building activities.

8.4 Draft DAC Programme of Work [DCD/DAC/STAT(2000)9]

51. The Secretariat (Mr. Hammond) invited comments on the two DAC activities in the programme of work that involved statistics. Members were content with the presentation of the regular work on DAC and CRS statistics. Germany, while noting that it supported statistical capacity building, reserved its position on indicators and PARIS21, pending further discussion of the organisational arrangements. The United Kingdom wanted to see work on indicators and annual updates to *A Better World for All* funded from the core DAC budget and asked that the references to PARIS21 in the programme of work be updated. The United States was still to identify its contact point for PARIS21 and was keen to see broader ownership of the poverty strategies and development frameworks through which PARIS21 would work.

9. Other business

52. The United Kingdom suggested that WP-STAT meetings would be more productive if there was a more iterative process of consultation in the year between meetings and at least three months’ warning of issues requiring advance consultation.

53. The date of the next meeting was fixed as 6 and 7 June 2001.
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