

Strategy and Policy Group (SPG)
of the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC)

Paris, 15 June 2011 (pm)

Summary Record

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Introduction

1. The Strategy and Policy Group of the SWAC met in Paris on Wednesday 15 June 2011 (afternoon). The list of participants can be found in Annex 1. The agenda was as follows:

- Signature of the Mandate and Memorandum of Understanding between the Club and the OECD; financial situation.
- Institutional relations (political lobbying and prospects for opening of the Club to new Members).
- Development of intra-OECD synergies.
- Current status of the 2011–2012 Programme of Work.
- Strengthening ties and synergies between the CILSS Secretariat and the ECOWAS Commission.
- Other business.

This summary record contains only the observations and decisions of the SPG, and the Secretariat's responses. The presentations of the Secretariat can be found in working paper SWAC/GOP(2011)1.

2. In his introduction, Mr. François-Xavier de Donnea, President of the SWAC, applauded the success of the conference on "Agricultural and Food Price Volatility: African views and perspectives", held 14-15 June 2011. He suggested that the Secretariat organise a similar event (though not necessarily on the same scale) to coincide with each June meeting of the SPG. Giving Africa a voice in major international forums by recognising both the OECD's and Africa's wealth of expertise is one of the added values of the SWAC.

I. Signature of the Mandate and Memorandum of Understanding between the Club and the OECD; financial situation

3. Due to major difficulties encountered earlier in the year (inability to sign the Mandate for legal reasons; difficulties in signing the agreement for its 2011 contribution), USAID asked the Secretariat to consider making the Mandate more flexible. USAID also asked for changes to the SPG working paper (SWAC/GOP(2011)1) to make it clear that: 1) the two-year budget is a projected budget, 2) the U.S. contribution – paid in U.S. dollars – is “equivalent” to 200,000 euros, and 3) the 2012 contribution is contingent upon the availability of funds. France also reiterated the fact that it cannot make a formal commitment for more than one year. ECOWAS indicated that its legal department required a copy of the Mandate countersigned by the President of the Club; UEMOA expressed the same need. All of the Members asked to receive a copy of the Mandate signed by each Member. The Secretariat was asked:

- to send the Members a revised version of document SWAC/GOP(2011)1;
- to send the Members a copy of the Mandate signed by each Member;
- to send ECOWAS and UEMOA a copy of the Mandate signed by them and countersigned by the President of the Club ;
- to start discussions on the wording of the next Mandate in collaboration with the OECD's Legal Directorate and the Members to determine how to take into account the concerns of Members who cannot make multi-year financial commitments while still ensuring the predictability of

financial resources, as well as how to address the problem of contributions not made in euros, and whether it is possible to make a distinction between signing the Mandate and making a financial commitment, etc. However, it was agreed that the Mandate would not be modified before the end of its current term, which is end-2012.

4. Switzerland reiterated the fact that, in accordance with Article 3.1 of the Mandate, the SPG must approve the annual operational and financial reports. The 2010 reports presented to the SPG in December 2010 only covered the period from January to October. The Secretariat will therefore send the Members a complete operational and financial report for 2010 for formal approval.

II. Institutional relations (political lobbying and prospects for opening of the Club to new Members)

5. The SPG noted the idea of creating a function of “SWAC Ambassador” reporting to the President. The objective would be for the Club to be more in touch with decision-makers, including the most senior officials in West African countries, to share the results of its work with these officials while addressing their concerns, to be present at major West African and international meetings, and to build its capacity to mobilise new Members, including emerging partners, etc. The President, in consultation with the Secretariat, will prepare a budgeted proposal, which will be submitted to the Members for review at the SPG meeting in December 2011.

6. The SPG noted the efforts of the President and the Secretariat to mobilise new Members and extend partnerships, particularly with the European Union, Spain and Brazil.

7. The SPG noted the possibility of an official request from the African Union Commission to obtain Observer status.

III. Development of intra-OECD synergies.

8. France reiterated its call for more synergies among all the sectors working on development within the OECD. It again highlighted the need for greater coherency, better linkages between the SWAC Secretariat’s work and other stakeholders within the Organisation, and closer examination of possible administrative synergies. Switzerland and Belgium supported France’s position while emphasising the need to maintain the Club’s specific characteristics and relative autonomy. The Secretariat will submit some proposals to the SPG, after making appropriate contacts with other OECD Directorates, and report back at the next SPG meeting.

IV. Current status of the 2011–2012 Programme of Work

9. The SPG noted the progress made in preparing for the 2011 Forum, scheduled to be held in Praia (Cape Verde) on 5-6 December and dedicated to West African-Brazilian relations and renewable energy. The SPG also noted that the Forum is a platform for dialogue and not a decision-making arena. The Secretariat was asked:

- to focus discussions on West African concerns and strategies and promote the involvement of regional actors such as the EBID, BOAD, etc.
- to encourage consultations between West African stakeholders before the Forum, particularly concerning biofuels.
- to capitalise on the sharing of South-South cooperation experiences.

10. In the area of “Security and Development,” the SPG asked the Secretariat to better define the scope of the analysis and the subjects to be addressed. Understanding the root causes of insecurity is a shared concern, as is the need to highlight West African perceptions of insecurity. The new definition of the scope of the discussions should also put greater emphasis on the link between “security” and fragility, food security, employment and economic development in general. A quantitative analysis of the economic consequences of insecurity would be of direct relevance to policy-makers.

- The Secretariat was asked to narrow its approach to this subject to focus primarily on the links between security and development.
- The meeting on this subject scheduled for 27-28 September was postponed to a later date.

V. Strengthening ties and synergies between the CILSS Secretariat and the ECOWAS Commission

11. ECOWAS indicated that in its view, this process is now only a question of implementing the political decisions that have already been made (implementation of the decision of the March 2010 summit of CILSS Heads of State). Under these circumstances, the SPG considered that any action by the Club Secretariat would not be justified.

VI. Other business

12. The SPG noted calls by several Members for the subject of cross-border cooperation to be addressed across all aspects of relevant SWAC activities.