THE PARTICIPATION OF OBSERVERS IN DAC PEER AND SPECIAL REVIEWS

The guidance on the role of observers in the DAC peer review process that was endorsed by the DAC in 2005 (DCD/DIR(2005)24), and further revised in 2006 (DCD/DIR(2005)24/REV1), 2008 (DCD/DAC(2008)6/REV1) and 2013 (DCD/DAC(2013)34), has been revised to reflect updates to the Global Relations Strategy and to the list of countries eligible for observerships.

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1. **Purpose of observerships**

1. Since 2008, the DAC has stepped up its efforts to engage with providers of development co-operation beyond its membership. In 2011, it adopted a global relations strategy, which was updated in 2016 [DCD/DAC(2016)28/FINAL], to guide these efforts. This strategy establishes objectives, priority partners and instruments for engaging with key development stakeholders beyond the DAC membership.

2. Observerships can help the DAC to reach out to OECD non-DAC members as well as non-OECD countries. They can help the Committee to understand better and learn about non-DAC providers of development co-operation. Meanwhile, observing a DAC peer review has proved to be an effective way of bringing countries closer to the DAC. Observerships are an opportunity for the observer to learn first-hand about another development co-operation system and share and use this experience back in his or her home institutions.

3. The exposure to the peer and special review processes can also be useful in preparing an observer for eventual DAC membership (the obligations of DAC membership include a readiness to submit to a regular peer review and to participate in peer reviews of other members as an examiner). Several countries that observed a DAC peer review went on to request a special review of their own development co-operation programme. Most countries that have joined the DAC since 2013 had previously participated, as an observer, in a DAC peer review.

4. Since 2002, DAC peer reviews have increasingly included observers from countries and sometimes institutions that are not members of the Committee, a process which was formalised in the first *Code of conduct for observers in peer reviews* adopted by the DAC in 2005. This code was further revised in 2006 and 2008 to better clarify the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved: the observer, the country under review, the examiners and the Secretariat. More recently, this practice was extended to the special reviews the DAC conducts, along more simplified lines, of countries that are not members of the Committee. This note takes account of these developments and supersedes earlier guidance.

2. **Updated guidance on observer participation in DAC peer and special reviews**

i) **Observer eligibility and request for observership**

5. In line with the DAC Global Relations Strategy, priority to participate in observerships should be given to:

- The OECD non-DAC members (currently Chile, Estonia, Israel, Latvia, Mexico and Turkey).
- OECD accession countries (currently Colombia, Costa Rica, Lithuania and Russia).
- The OECD Key Partners (currently Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa).
- European Union member states that are not members of the OECD.
– Arab providers of development co-operation.

6. A country would normally be granted an observership once in a five-year cycle.

7. Interest in an observership should be communicated to the OECD Secretariat by the potential observer. The observer candidate should ideally provide the Secretariat with a written statement of how their country will benefit from the observer experience. The Secretariat will canvass DAC members to be peer reviewed in the next year or two in order to identify a suitable “host” for the observer. This written ‘application’ would serve as background for the country under review in considering their agreement to the request. Subsequent to agreement, the Secretariat will inform the examiners and the Committee of the arrangement.

8. DAC members wishing to host an observer can also advise the Secretariat who would seek a suitable candidate from among the priority countries. A candidate would follow the application procedures outlined above and the Committee would be informed.

9. The observer country should then nominate a representative to be their observer to the peer (or special) review (N.B. only one person can participate per review). The individual who serves as observer should be suitably experienced, with the ability to feedback and inform the observer country’s decision-making process during the foreseeable future.

ii) Optimum level of observer involvement

10. The observer should attend the headquarters visit, and, in the case of a peer review, may be able to participate in the field visit if logistics and the size of the team are manageable. Decisions on participation in field visits will be made at the discretion of the host country and the review team.

11. During the mission, the observer attends the meetings between the review team and the country under review as well as meetings between the review team and other interlocutors (e.g. civil society, parliament, other donors) as a silent partner. He or she also attends the review team’s internal meetings so that he or she can gain a full understanding of the process and see how the information gained at meetings is processed and used.

12. Observers to DAC peer reviews would be invited to attend the peer review meeting with the DAC at the OECD.

13. The observer will be responsible for securing funding for the observership. The country being reviewed would continue to be responsible for assisting with logistics.

iii) Observer reporting on benefits gained

14. As including observers in the peer and special reviews has a learning purpose, the Committee should be informed of how the observers are benefitting from the experience. It is recommended that:

- Within three months after the conclusion of the review process, the observer should provide the Secretariat with a short report on their experience and lessons learned, and how their institution will make use of, and disseminate, this information.

15. The Secretariat may synthesize the observers’ feedback reports in the Development Co-operation Report (or other appropriate source) as lessons learned from observerships.
iv) **Responsibilities of parties involved**

16. To summarise, in the ideal case, for the four parties (country under review, review team, observer, Secretariat), the following roles and responsibilities apply:

*Country under review* – offers to host or responds to a request for observership facilitated through the Secretariat; takes overall responsibility for the observer’s participation; manages the logistical requirements of the observership including all pre-planning and communication; involves the observer prior to the headquarters discussions.

*Peer review examiners/special review advisors* – approve the observership; facilitate the observer’s attendance in meetings where the country under review is not present, including internal review team discussions.

*Observer* – may request an observership through the Secretariat; allocates a suitably qualified person to fill the observer role; secures funding for the observership; provides a written report to the Secretariat.

*Secretariat* – facilitates an offer to host or a request for observership; informs examiners/advisors and the Committee; shares with the observer the memorandum, draft reports and other documents as relevant; receives report from observer; synthesizes the observers’ feedback reports for the DAC.