The global context for aid to developing countries has changed dramatically in the past year. The 1993 Report of the Chairman of the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) examines this new landscape and its implications for the ways in which the DAC’s 22 Members administer their aid programmes.

Recent events such as the Israeli-PLO peace agreement and an emerging non-racial democracy in South Africa are examples of new pressures on the aid supply, already stretched to respond to demands from emerging democracies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the list of cross-border challenges requiring aid resources -- environmental degradation, the AIDS pandemic, and migration -- continues to grow. While a growing number of countries may no longer need concessional aid, many of the poorer ones, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, continue to depend heavily on such assistance, the Report notes.

Main features of the 1993 Report are:

* An overview of trends in the volume and allocation of official development assistance (ODA);

* A comprehensive report, unavailable elsewhere, on aid flows to Eastern European countries and the new independent states of the former Soviet Union;

* A report on the outcome of the DAC’s debate on the recasting of the DAC List of Developing Countries and Territories and on adjustments to the definition of ODA;

* A survey of trends in overall resource flows to developing countries and an update on their debt positions;
* An analysis of strategic development challenges, including region by region summaries;

* An update of DAC work in progress on themes such as urbanisation, migration, participatory development and good governance, and women in development;

* A country-by-country survey of recent aid policy development in DAC member countries, a review of their aid performance, and highlights of major findings from recent reviews of aid programmes.

The Report acknowledges that, with DAC member countries facing their own problems at home, parliamentarians are forced to weigh closely the cost of aid programmes alongside financing for domestic needs.

Against this background, reform of aid programmes to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness is even more essential, the Report states. Over the past 50 years, aid has been an important tool in building economic and social progress in the developing world, and the Report identifies aid as vital to building human security in the rapidly changing world of the 1990s.

Parliaments in DAC countries have an important role to play in rallying support for this aid rationale, and in ensuring that the effectiveness of aid is the first priority in aid decision-making.

The DAC is the primary forum where bilateral aid donors meet to discuss their aid programmes and issues related to aid for developing countries. The Chairman’s Report is its annual report. The 22 Members of the DAC are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, and the Commission of the European Communities.

Journalists may obtain a copy of the report from the OECD Press Division, 2 rue André Pascal, 75775 Paris cedex 16 (tel. 45 24 80 88 or 80 89).