

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FORUM ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting Summary

Montreux, Switzerland
4:00-6:30p.m., 23 October 2013

Development Cooperation Policy Branch
Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations

BACKGROUND

The DCF Advisory Group met on the eve of DCF Switzerland High-level Symposium on 23 October in Montreux. The purpose was to take stock on the work and events that had taken place thus far in the current DCF cycle and to look ahead to the High-level Symposium in Berlin next March, and to the high-level meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum in New York on 10-11 July 2014.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

1. CURRENT CYCLE OF THE DCF – TAKING STOCK AND LOOKING TO THE DCF GERMANY HIGH-LEVEL SYMPOSIUM IN MARCH 2014

The Group was briefed on the current cycle's progress so far. Thematic activities carried out in the 2012-2014 cycle included the policy dialogue on the role of development cooperation in advancing gender equality and empowerment of women (Vienna, December 2012) and the Delhi Conference of Southern Partners in April 2013, which laid the ground for the meeting of Directors General in Addis and the establishment of the Core Group of Southern Partners. The Core Group of Southern Partners was one the main collaborations from this cycle; the DCF would serve as a platform to facilitate the work of the Core Group and its interaction with other stakeholders. Preparatory work had also focused on the role of philanthropic organizations and of local and regional authorities in development cooperation post-2015.

Beyond the DCF, the ECOSOC strengthening process and Rio+20 follow-up had led to an intensified focus by the Council on sustainable development in its three dimensions and to the creation of a High-level Political Forum (HLPF), The HLPF would focus on the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, which would replace the Annual Ministerial Reviews by 2016. The HLPF will take into account the work of the DCF. While the relations between the two remained to be further developed, a strong link between the two should be established.

A continuous priority area for the DCF would be monitoring and accountability to support effective development cooperation and sustainable development results. These themes would be the focus of the DCF Germany High-level Symposium in March 2013. DESA and the Government of Germany had organized, as a curtain raiser for the symposium, a panel discussion alongside the Special Event of the President of the General Assembly in September 2013. Among other ideas raised was the role of the technology and the data revolution and how to build on new and existing global and multiple accountability mechanisms. The Germany Symposium was expected to provide some action oriented messages in this regard that will feed into the 2014 DCF, as well as inform the ministerial meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC).

Synergies between the DCF and the GPEDC had increased. These efforts should be built upon and further learning and exchange should take place between the two processes, notably its secretariats, in moving toward both the ministerial meeting in Mexico and the DCF in New York.

As the coordinator of the parliamentary group of the DCF, the IPU had taken an initiative on aid policies that could be relevant to discussions at the DCF Germany High-level Symposium and the 2014 DCF. The initiative builds on the finding of past DCF surveys on mutual accountability, that an inclusive and fully owned aid policy at country level is essential to maximizing effectiveness and results of development cooperation. The IPU had commissioned a draft guidance note for development cooperation practitioners and stakeholders (governments, parliamentarians, civil society, and providers of development cooperation), with two objectives: (i) to promote an in-depth discussion in the DCF, creating common ground among stakeholders on the role and features of an aid policy; and (ii) to raise awareness among all stakeholders of the need to advocate the adoption of aid policies (or improvement of existing policies), to participate in their implementation, and to take measures to strengthen mutual accountability. The draft paper would be circulated to the Advisory Group members for their comments. The guidance note would constitute a practical tool to complement the considerable research output of the DCF.

2. BRAINSTORMING FOR 2014-2016 DCF CYCLE – POSSIBLE FOCUS, WORKSTREAMS AND COLLABORATIONS

At the 2014 DCF and in the next cycle, the DCF should continue to address the new realities of the development landscape in a forward looking and focused way. It should continue its valuable work in promoting a multi-stakeholder dialogue on accountability, trends and progress in development cooperation and South-South and triangular cooperation. Further assessment was also needed on how these work areas of the DCF would complement and be complemented by other platforms and fora, while avoiding duplication of efforts. Certain niche areas, such as trade, debt and investment, should not be a main focus of the DCF.

There was an active initial discussion among participants on possible future areas of focus for the DCF. Some suggested a continued focus on the paradigm shift of development cooperation for post-2015, helping to reframe development cooperation to reflect paradigm changes (e.g. North-South, South-South) and account for interlinkages at the global level (e.g. tax avoidance as a global issue with serious impact on development cooperation). The DCF was the platform that could generate this kind of conversation. Others proposed a focus on concrete issues of how development cooperation can support the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda. . It was stressed that the DCF could inject practical ideas into the discussions on concepts and terms being brought forward in the post-2015 deliberations, such as universality, unified, equity, equality, transparency and accountability. There was a need, for

example, to fully grasp the term universality and understand what this means for a post-2015 development agenda and for the renewed global partnership for development.

There was some discussion on an evolving definition of development cooperation. Some participants highlighted that, while ODA remains central to many countries, especially least developed countries and African countries, development cooperation should be looked at in broader terms, to also address trade and tax regimes and other systemic and structural issues which are critical to support an enabling environment for development. Other participants flagged the need for a holistic approach to development financing, with ODA as part of development cooperation, but not the pivotal point. On climate financing, two different points of view emerged: (i) to secure additionality, climate financing needs to be accounted for separately; and (ii) keeping a separate track for climate financing does not make sense given the move to a unified agenda and financing framework.

Accountability and measurement were two fundamental concepts that were discussed throughout the meeting. Participants showed broad consensus that a post-2015 development agenda needs to be complemented by a robust, universal and comprehensive accountability architecture, yet avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. Accountability mechanisms were also becoming more important to justify official development assistance to domestic constituencies in donor countries. Hence an accountability mechanism should reflect the plurality of stakeholders and help to foster an enabling environment for CSOs. Further capacity development would be needed to include other stakeholders, like civil society and Members of Parliament, into accountability mechanisms. Bringing in new ways of reporting, such as reports from civil society, could be a way to enhance overall non-governmental stakeholder engagement.

It was also stressed that the international community should strive for accountability mechanisms that go beyond dialogue, to foster mutual learning, knowledge sharing, coherence of approaches and, if necessary, policy change. Global accountability should be linked with domestic and mutual accountability to allow a bottom-up approach where the realities of people are taken into account, helping to identify development needs and solutions to problems at the local level.