Partner Reporting on Support to Statistics (PRESS)

Task Team Meeting – October 31, 2008

Minutes

1. The eighth and final meeting of the Task Team on the Partner Reporting on Support to Statistics (PRESS) was held on October 31, 2008 at the offices of the PARIS21 Secretariat. Participants to the meeting were: Morag Ottens of Eurostat, Phil Cockerill of DFID, Petteri Baer of UNECE, Christophe Duhamel, Jean-Marc Landais, Marc Tocatlian, and Adriana De Leva (chairperson) of PARIS21. Naoko Watanabe of the World Bank joined the afternoon session of the meeting via teleconference. Jenny Gallelli joined the meeting to present the Directory of Partners (Volume III).

2. The discussion focused on a discussion of the PRESS 2008 report, on lessons learned from this experience for future rounds of PRESS, and on the future role of the Task Team. The Team was also de-briefed on the CCSA meeting of September 2008 in Tunis, at which a progress report on PRESS was presented. The conclusion of the CCSA meeting was that the PRESS findings be presented at its next meeting in February 2009.

PRESS 2008 – Comments on report

3. The PRESS 2008 report was distributed to Task Team members at the end of August 2008, and most comments received prior to the meeting were included in the report. In general, the Team found the report comprehensive and useful, particularly for field staff. It also felt that the report provides a wealth of information on the funding for statistical activities in low and lower-middle income countries, which can contribute to donor coordination and bilateral discussions with partners on future needs. In addition to some minor comments, which will be incorporated in the final version of the report, the meeting agreed that the report indicate clearly that results presented in the report reflect only reported information and that PARIS21 contact details be given to simplify any partner follow-up.

4. The meeting was also informed of the development of the Directory of Partners by the PARIS21 Secretariat. As was done for the Light Reporting Exercise, the Directory accompanies the PRESS 2008 report as Volume III. The Directory, broken down by geographic regions, presents the overall development objectives and specific statistical support of each partner in statistical development, as well as the key contacts in both the development agency and statistical offices.

5. The 3-volume PRESS 2008 will be distributed as an advance copy at the PARIS21 Steering Committee meeting during November 5-7, 2008. All partners will be asked to review the report, in particular their information, and provide final comments by November 14, 2008.

PRESS 2008 – Lessons Learned

6. Lessons learned from PRESS 2008, which would need to be considered for future rounds, were discussed along the following categories: (a) coverage; (b) questionnaire; (c) report; and (d) database.

(a) Coverage

- **partner coverage**: the meeting recommended that additional bilateral donors (outside the OECD) be contacted for their support to statistics (e.g., Turkey, Russia, China). In this regard, it is important to identify relevant contacts for these partners. The meeting agreed, however, that
statistical training institutes be excluded from the partners contact list, as they are financing recipients, not financiers.

- **recipient country coverage**: it was agreed that the list of recipient countries remain the same for the next round, as long as a clear definition of the selection criteria is provided in the report.

(b) **Questionnaire**

- **type**: it was agreed that PRESS would give partners a choice to respond ; (i) through the agreed-upon questionnaire (Excel macro sheet); (ii) a plain Excel sheet for those unable to use the macro; or (iii) an Excel “tagged” sheet that would permit easy mapping into the Access application, (this is particularly useful for partners that already have a reporting system).
- **statistical classification**: it was noted that partners often classify their activities under category 4 (general statistical items and methodology) and 5 (strategic and managerial issues). This classification tends to underreport support to sector statistics. To get a more precise response on the statistical area supported, it was suggested that a note be placed in the introductory note of the questionnaire, requesting that, where possible, more detail be provided on activities classified in categories 4 and 5.
- **lead donor**: question 6 of the questionnaire (Are you collaborating with other donors on this project?) was poorly answered for PRESS 2008 round. Since this is an important question to monitor donor collaboration, the question will be changed to “What is your role in this project?”
  - lead donor?
  - other donor?
  - implementor?

- **Data from previous round**: as part of the questionnaire, partners will receive data on their support from the previous PRESS round

- **Directory of Partners**: the Directory will be integrated more closely to the PRESS questionnaire, namely the request for updated information will be sent along with the request for updating PRESS.

(c) **Report**

- **frequency**: the meeting agreed that there be an annual report, whose publication date would be October 31 of each year. This implies that data collection would be done annually at the end of March/beginning of April (at which time CRS data of previous year would be officially available). A Guide on Reporting Rounds is being prepared by the PARIS21 Secretariat, outlining and detailing procedures for each step of a PRESS round.
- **content**: the meeting recommended that more analysis of results be undertaken in future reports. Specifically, the Team suggested that: (i) key messages be tailored to different audiences (e.g., policymakers vs statisticians, headquarters staff vs country offices); and (ii) census-related activities and their funding be separated in the report. It was also mentioned that to improve partner coordination at country level, it would be useful to maintain a list of donor coordination groups at country level and keep them informed on PRESS.

(d) **Database**

The meeting agreed that the database be adjusted to take account of the following points:

- geographical regions be adjusted to agree with PRESS 2008
- sub-regional organizations be added to the menu of recipients
- OECD bilateral members receive both past and planned questionnaire
• CRS project codes and donor project identification codes be inputted in database
• in tables of Volume II, only the most detailed category be picked up for the column “statistical areas”
• tabulation of Table III of Volume II (results by statistical category) be possible
• public access to database not yet allowed, but requests for information can be made to PARIS21 Secretariat via the following address contact@paris21.org.

7. The meeting also discussed how to improve data collection from UN agencies, whose response was generally poor in the 2008 round, principally due their decentralized decision-making. It was suggested that the CCSA, as initiator of the Task Team, lobby these agencies to improve their reporting for the next round.

8. In order that PRESS can truly be a tool for improving partner collaboration in statistics, the meeting acknowledged that the dissemination of PRESS reports, at both HQ and country offices of partners, is essential. In this regard, the members of the Team were urged to ensure a good distribution of the final PRESS 2008 report within their own organization. The report should be sent to country level staff most involved in statistics, preferably the economist/statistician.

Future Role of PRESS Task Team

9. Regarding the future of the Task Team, it was agreed that the Team terminate its work as a CCSA/PARIS21 Task Team and evolve into a PRESS Quality Advisory Group (QAG), under PARIS21. This recommendation needs the agreement of the PARIS21 Steering Committee in November 2008. The Terms of Reference of the QAG are under preparation, but its main duties would include:

- review of the questionnaire
- advice on annual reports, including coverage, key theme and messages
- advocacy and promotion of the use of PRESS results, as a basis for improved collaboration and coordination among partners

As to the composition of the QAG, the meeting suggested that present Task Team members continue in this group for the time being, and that other partners could volunteer to join. A pitch to this effect will be made during the presentation of PRESS at the November 2008 meeting of PARIS21 Steering Committee, if agreement is reached on the creation of QAG.

PRESS Work Programme – November 2008

10. Table 1 presents the PRESS work programme for the period March-June 2008, based on the above discussions:

   Table 1: PRESS – Work Programme, November 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Calendar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of PRESS 2008 results to P21 Steering Committee meeting</td>
<td>P21 Sect</td>
<td>Nov 5-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final comments from partners</td>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>Nov 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of PRESS 2008 to partners and recipient countries</td>
<td>P21 Sect</td>
<td>End-November</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terms of Reference for PRESS Quality Advisory Group</td>
<td>TT</td>
<td>Mid-December</td>
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