

Record of the Proceedings

Chair: Joseph Tedou, Cameroon

I. Introduction

1. The chair opened the meeting by insisting that the session's topic — the Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS) — is an important exercise for the international statistical community. It helps inform the dialogue not only between countries and donors but also within organisations. He then called on participants to approve the agenda, which was accepted without modification.

II. Next major step in the PRESS process: the Country Report on the Support to Statistics (CRESS), challenges and elements of methodology

2. The World Bank representative delivered a presentation on reporting on statistical development. Based on the PRESS experience, the presentation intended to open perspectives at the country level to determine how to establish a permanent process of reporting. A Country Report on the Support to Statistics (CRESS) could be an element of overall financial management within the NSDS framework. He highlighted that statistical co-ordination is a part of the overall co-ordination recommended by the Statistics for Results Facility (SRF), the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and the Accra Agenda for Action. He then submitted three main recommendations:

- Countries: to develop their reporting system on statistical development within the NSDS, to launch reviews of public expenditure to statistics including CRESS, to review and update international sites on reporting, and to disseminate the reports via their web sites.
- Donors: to encourage their country representatives to participate and support country efforts to prepare CRESS and to provide relevant and disaggregated information on support to statistics.
- PARIS21: to finalise and disseminate the guide on reporting, to prepare a guide on CRESS including nomenclatures, and to report annually on CRESS exercises worldwide.

Discussion

3. Participants recognised the importance of this type of reporting but underscored several difficulties in implementing it. Even in countries that have management systems, there is often great difficulties in identifying aid to statistics. In some countries, there may also be a hesitancy to publish such results. Other participants called for reporting on aid to statistics in the framework of NSDS implementation and as a means to satisfy the Paris Declaration principle of mutual accountability and managing for results. Eurostat commented that the CRESS would be useful as a means of cross checking what countries actually receive and what donors commit. In closing, participants came to a consensus that reporting on support to national statistical systems has to

be improved both at country and donor levels and called on the Secretariat to promote CRESSs, provide guidance, and facilitate the sharing of experiences.

III. Presentation of the PRESS questionnaire for 2010 Round

4. For the 2010 PRESS Round, the Secretariat will supplement an extraction from the OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) with an online questionnaire. The Secretariat demoed this new questionnaire and the OECD.stat portal which will provide access to PRESS results with improved analytical facilities. In the questionnaire, users will be able to see their previous year's submission and simply update the pre-filled data directly into the database. This system will also make the selection of statistical activities less cumbersome and include lookup tables for recipient country names to facilitate the importing of data into the database. Both the questionnaire and the analytical facilities developed for the PRESS are available to interested parties in the context of the CRESS exercise. The Secretariat announced that the link to the questionnaire will be forwarded to PRESS respondents within a week, with the results available in the OECD.stat portal by the end of this year.

IV. Use of PRESS data: A Tool for Collaboration

5. The Eurostat representative presented the use of PRESS results as a tool for collaboration. Her presentation was organised along four dimensions: the **Good** (usefulness of the tool), the **Bad** (pitfalls to overcome), the **Ugly** (the PRESS parley and moving on), and the **One and Only** (empowering the PRESS).

6. The **Good** of the PRESS is that it provides:

- *Increased knowledge on who is doing what in support to statistics.* PRESS is an important tool for Eurostat since it facilitates for instance reporting to the Development General Directorate in Brussels. It is also a very good tool for staff who have to rotate posts every three to five years due to the mobility policy. Eurostat systematically disseminates the PRESS annual report to all EU delegations around the world.
- *Increased emphasis on statistical support.* The CRS only reports on statistical support as a whole; however, with the detailed classifications in the PRESS, visibility of statistics has been strongly enhanced.
- *Rationalisation of scarce resources.* The knowledge database in place at Eurostat authorises direct reporting to the PRESS system.

7. The **Bad** represents the following potential issues:

- *Not all donors are reporting.* PARIS21 being a partnership and the value of PRESS being recognised as a valuable tool for knowing where to put money wisely is a good advocate for convincing absent donors to report.
- *Double-counting is still a problem,* but it is important to insist on the fact that the quantity of money spent is probably not the most important component of the PRESS. PRESS is a unique system where non-financial support is also recorded.
- *The classification is too detailed.* This is the case if the wrong person is filling out the form: forms should be completed at the level of project managers, where the information on statistical activities is known.

- *Future activities are not reliable.* PRESS is the sole place where partners can see information on what is planned in support to statistics (remember that the current CRS is reporting up to 2008).
- *Another form to fill.* This will no longer be the case with the new e-questionnaire to be made available next week.

8. The ***Ugly*** contains three hearsays:

- *We cannot report to PRESS!* PRESS has been endorsed by the CCSA. If the European Commission can do it, so can you!
- *It is not used!* It has to be, in the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Remember that PRESS is an infant only two years old.
- *It overlaps with other systems!* Not true: the CRS is less detailed and does not include planned activities nor the most recent year.

9. Finally, the ***One and Only*** concludes that:

- PRESS is a tool providing the opportunity and means to move forward to true collaboration.
- It is easy to use.
- Incremental improvements are welcome.

Discussion

10. Participants warmly welcomed the presentation and supported the idea of using these slides as advocacy documents for PRESS. The representative from UNSD recognised the importance of the tool but highlighted the difficulty for UNSD as a non-funding agency with a mandate to co-ordinate, rather than administrate, the UN agencies. Statistics being a small component of UN support, more time is needed to better structure the co-ordination, particularly because many agencies do not have a management information system. Nevertheless UNSD is committed to make progress on this issue.

V. Closing Statement

11. The chair concluded the session by commenting that the PRESS can be used as advocacy to encourage partners to work together. It is not an accounting exercise, but rather a tool for collaboration and should be integrated into NSDSs processes.