

# **PARIS21 consortium meeting 22-23 June**

## **Maison de la Chimie, Paris**

### **Summary Record of the meeting**

Chairmen : Jean-Claude Faure

Guest Charumbira

*Thursday 22 June*

### **Agenda Item 1**

1. The chair opened by welcoming all participants and stressing the importance of the initiative. He emphasised how keen the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) was to see the initiative be successful and how it was a test bed for ideas of improved donor co-operation.

### **Agenda Item 2 - Presentation of proposed PARIS21 initiatives.**

2. The PARIS21 secretariat presented a brief history of PARIS21, together with an explanation of the possible future activities, around which the consortium meeting was structured.
3. Mary Strode (PARIS21 secretariat) gave a brief summary of a donors meeting which had been held on Wed 21 June. The key emerging issues were a strong desire to build on existing capacity, to work through existing regional institutions and structures, to encourage support geared to the medium and long-term and for a range of additional activities to raise awareness of the need to build and use statistical capacity. Japan, Switzerland, European Commission, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Netherlands and Canada had expressed support for the aims of Paris21 and pledged practical or monetary support. Other donors also supported the initiatives and pledged to input some of their staff time.

### **Agenda Item 3 - Advocacy**

4. Mr Eele (World Bank) opened the discussion by presenting a proposal to develop a range of advocacy tools to make the case for statistics and the involvement of statisticians in the policy process. He noted that a range of such tools is likely to be needed and that PARIS21 was a natural body for collectively producing them.
5. Mr Masilela (South Africa) responded with a presentation about what was needed to convince his ministry to fund statistics. He emphasised the need for relevant, usable, timely information. He also stressed the need for statisticians to show that their services provided good value for money when competing for scarce government resources.
6. Interventions were extremely supportive of the need for advocacy products and the desire to place them high on the list of priorities for PARIS21. Mr Garonna (UNECE ) noted that statisticians needed to become involved in the political process as a means of advocacy for their products.

7. Ms. Kakande (Uganda) noted the need to foster the integration of different kinds of information and for the statistics office to have a variety of professions working for them to make this possible.
8. Dr Ajayi noted the need to carefully define the audience for advocacy products, a topic that was returned to later during the lunchtime working groups. Dr Abu- Libdeh (Palestine) asserted that the statistics offices would also benefit from advocacy work, which raised the profile of policy processes that could benefit from data. The use of the media as a stimulus for demand was also encouraged.

#### **Agenda Item 4 - Sequenced Information Strategies**

9. Mr Williams (United Kingdom) gave a presentation about the key components of a Sequenced Information Strategy (SIS). His presentation also gave details of the proposed multi-donor initiative to support the development of Sequenced Information strategies in countries applying for HIPC debt relief.
10. Mr Machinjili (Malawi) raised the problems that they had in co-ordinating the activities of the donors. There was often a reluctance to support and integrate within an integrated household survey system that had been designed for Malawi. Dr Ajayi later noted that this example clearly demonstrated the need for donors to support and implement a SIS rather than work in isolation, or else they risked undermining statistical development. Dr Salaria (Pakistan) noted that for the SIS initiative to be successful there would need to be a commitment from donors to support its implementation. Mr. Divay (France) gave strong support to the idea of sequenced information strategies. He noted that the strategies formed an essential part of action programmes and should be part of programmes promoted by donors. The SIS process should gain the commitment of users and partners.
11. Dr Abu-Libdeh (Palestine) stressed the need for a holistic approach encompassing all data needs. A focus on PRSP data alone, he warned, could risk ignoring country-focus and national priorities. Mr Garonna (UNECE) suggested that priorities within the SIS should be based on the policy priorities of the country. This would imply a focus on poverty in the nations applying for HIPC debt relief.
12. Mr Diop (Afristat) urged that regional institutions be more involved in any SIS process. He drew attention to the fact that many regional organisations had statistical staff. Afristat, with its 17 members, had worked to develop a common minimum statistics programme amongst its members.

#### **Agenda Item 5 - Information requirements of poverty reduction strategies.**

13. Ms. Prennushi (World Bank) gave a presentation with feedback from the recent Cote D'Ivoire workshop. The workshop had noted a number of key issues for countries including: funding, strengthening capacity for analysis, need for quick monitoring surveys to inform policy, providing quick and wide access to data, requests for guidance on indicators; and had shown the benefits of networking and sharing experiences of such workshops.

14. Mr Chinganya (Zambia) stressed the need to look at the data that has already been collected. Generally incentives were biased towards further data collection, when this was not always necessary. Making the activities of data mining, processing and analysis as financially attractive as data collection would yield much new data. Mr Mkai (Tanzania) agreed that data mining and analysis needed incentivising as they add value. He stressed that national ownership of the indicators was important.
15. Mr Sebregondi (European Union) gave a presentation noting the need for donors to use data to formulate results-based conditionalities, rather than the current policy-based conditionalities. This had been the approach tried successfully in Burkina Faso by the European Union.
16. Mr De Vries (UNSD) urged delegates to consider the pro's and cons of a standardised list of indicators. The UN approach had been for a standard set through the CCA initiative. However they were anxious to learn and hear feedback from others of their experience with such sets.
17. Mr Browne (UNDP) noted that the production of national Human Development Reports (HDRs) was a good vehicle for stimulating debate on poverty policy.
18. Dr Ajayi emphasised the need to reinvigorate the integrated household survey programme. This should include boosting capacity for analysis. He stated that the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) programme was no substitute for such a programme due to its limited scope.
19. Mr Ould N'Dah (Mauritania) commented that the PRSP sourcebook contained a huge list of indicators. He stressed that any sequenced information strategy should take a global view of the statistics system with the National Statistics Office as the anchor to that system.
20. Mr Chu (UNESCO) suggested a statistics programme that focused on policy priorities 'problem-solving' rather than monitoring in general.
21. Mr Leete (UNDG) stressed the country involvement in the process to select the Common Country Assessment (CCA) indicators. He emphasised that the IDG indicators should be seen as a minimum set which needed to be fleshed out by the addition of other indicators chosen at country level.
22. Ms Prennushi (World Bank) closed the debate by asking whether statistics offices should necessarily be the ones who analysed data for policy purposes. Should statistics offices produce the data and others do the analysis. It was noted that while PRSPs are demanding a lot of data and that countries were free to choose their own data for measuring progress.

#### **Agenda Item 6 - Information Exchange**

23. Mr Hammond (OECD) presented the results of a rapid attempt at an information exchange exercise which had been undertaken in the days prior to the consortium meeting. He noted that while the information was incomplete, it was nonetheless useful. He asked delegates for their views on the importance, feasibility and methods of information exchange.

24. Ms. Thiongane (ECA) made a short statement about the Addis plan of action, formulated by the Committee on African Statistical Development. She noted the similar issues that arose in that plan. A consultant report on how best to follow-up the plan had just been received by ECA.
25. Mr De Vries (UNSD) gave an interesting presentation about the drive by the UN Stats Commission, through UNSD, to share best practices on a range of topics. Plans to use the UNSD website to share experiences of things which worked well and not so well were highlighted.
26. Dr Abu-Libdeh (Palestine) supported the idea of information exchange and suggested a number of important items to be included - whether the project was initiated locally, the cost of the data collection element, the other costs associated with the programme, if local resources were put into the programme and the purpose of the intervention. He suggested a web based interactive database, subject to the limits of available technology. Mr Du (China) encouraged links to be established to NSO websites. China had placed a table, which they had produced for their CG meeting, showing the programmes that they were receiving from all donors on their NSO website. Mr Ould N'Dah (Mauritania) also emphasised links to national websites as a means of sharing information. Their website holds information on current programmes.
27. Mr Sebregondi (EU) noted that an EU project on information exchange already exists. The challenge is to keep the system as upto date as possible. Any PARI21 exercise should adopt a gradual approach to information exchange, building up the available information.
28. Mr Browne (UNDP) suggested that their DCAS database that is filled in by country offices, is designed to provide an assessment of currently active projects by all donors.
29. Mr Garonna (UNECE) emphasised that any data collection exercise should have a minimum burden on respondents. He suggested that any information exchange should be approached on a common basis with UNSD. A common information framework was suggested, backed-up by hyperlinks to national websites. Such a database should be policy-related. It could also be used for peer reviews of use of statistical methods.
30. Mr Belkindas (World Bank) emphasised their willingness to participate actively in any information-sharing project. However such information exchange projects had proved difficult previously. The Bank would like a focus on technical co-operation projects to see what others are doing and to avoid duplication.
31. Mr Pommier (France) suggested that a database with indicators of statistical capacity and capacity building projects was needed. This should answer questions such as the extent of national versus donor funding in projects, the involvement of the different ministries. In addition satellite information could include indicators such as the ratio of NSO to Central Bank statistician salaries, number of Statisticians per head of population. Information exchange is a natural role for DAC.

32. Mr Marshall (FAO) emphasised that PARIS21 was an opportunity to put the principles of information exchange into practice. There had been much talk previously about what donor co-ordination meant, but little concrete action. The emphasis should be on making an existing database useful.

33. Mr Williams (UK) emphasised the desire for a double-sided database, which paired information about programmes with the country situation. Ideally such databases should be country-lead.

Mr Diop (Afristat) was in the process of updating a survey of statistical activities in region, which would be useful to delegates. *Friday 23 June*

#### **Agenda Item 7 - Information Exchange - Case Study 1**

34. The morning opened with an enlightening presentation by Mr Lee (World Bank) and Mr Padilla-Trejo (Peru) about the MECOVI project that aimed to improve the surveys of living conditions in Latin America and the Caribbean. The project provided a good example of multi-donor co-operation and promoting the wider use of improved data for policy-makers and civil society.

35. Mr Flatt (ESCAP) noted that the project demonstrated the need for an active role for the NSO.

36. Mr Garonna (UNECE) noted that the project emphasised the benefits of a regional approach to capacity building. The newly formed conference of Latin-American statisticians was one such forum.

#### **Agenda Item 8 - Related Initiatives**

37. Mr Leete (UNFPA) presented a paper about a proposed initiative to support censuses. The initiative was a result of the disappointing progress and lack of funding support in the current round of censuses globally. The presentation highlighted the need to make censuses cost effective through sharing best practices and equipment. It also highlighted the potential costs of poor census data.

38. Mr Marshall (FAO) gave a presentation about their proposed programme for agriculture and food statistics. The programme involved both data collection and better dissemination. It emphasised the need for better co-ordination and to make access to data as easy as possible through one-stop shops.

39. Mr Chinganya (Zambia) noted the need to sensitise policy-makers to the needs for census data. Mr Williams (UK) also emphasised the need to build demand for the data provided by censuses and other sources. Mr Garonna (UNECE) stressed the need to convince the national authorities of the benefits of a census. The example of transition countries that stimulated interest in censuses through their press was given. Dr Salaria (Pakistan) advised NSOs to publish, discuss and analyse results to stimulate public and policy-maker interest and demand for data.

40. Dr Abu-Libdeh (Palestine) noted that the census was the only basis for local data for local authorities. He requested more work by UNFPA to stress the importance of government commitment.

41. Mr Ould N'Dah (Mauritania) requested more work on the best practices and ways to sell products.

42. Mr Garonna (UNECE) stressed that censuses faced similar problems throughout the developing world, i.e. where to get the resources. Governments need to be made to realise that census data is essential. They should be encouraged to set up funds to cover the census costs in case of budget problems near to enumeration dates. Innovative use of resources was emphasised. For example conducting censuses during school holidays and using teachers as enumerators.
43. Mr Diop (Afristat) emphasised that censuses were important, but so were the conditions in which statisticians worked.
44. Mr Azouvi (ISI) noted that had a database of technical experts and university statisticians to help in future capacity building programmes.
45. Mr Pommier (France) emphasised the need for a simple census to keep costs down. Censuses can immobilise the entire NSO whilst they are being carried out. France questioned whether it wasn't better to have a separate agency to carry out the census because of this. Agriculture data was also difficult to obtain resources for. Both must have government commitment and must not be seen just as an opportunity to renew office equipment and attend training at donor expense.

#### **Agenda Item 9 - Mobilising Resources**

46. Dr Abu-Libdeh (Palestine) impressed upon the audience the potential benefits of having a Statistics Masterplan (or Sequenced Information Strategy - SIS) to help build capacity. Resource commitment from government, co-ordination of donors, planned actions and appropriate involvement of private sector organisations can be addressed through such plans.
47. Mr Mikhno (Belarus) stated that lack of resources was not always the principal cause of a lack of statistical capacity. Making statistics timely, relevant and accurate was a continuing challenge that if tackled successfully would ensure that the statistical system had enough resources.
48. Mr Doss (UNDG) noted the growing demand for information at a time of reducing resources. There was a need to be realistic in the demands placed upon the statistical system, within the framework of the wider public sector programme. He emphasised how competition amongst donors to fund particular activities had actually used up capacity, rather than built it. The focus should be on using national resources for capacity, with long-term support where needed.
49. Mr Belkindas (World Bank) provided capacity building resources in the form of grants and loans through the administrative budget. The Bank has a global trust fund for donor support with projects in many countries. In addition the Bank were expecting more resources to be released to support activities within the framework of PARIS21. The Bank is ready to invite those contributing to the trust fund to play a role on its management committee, which has yet to be set-up.

50. Mr Pommier (France) recalled that large amounts of resources had been put into statistical capacity building but with mixed results. More international, sustainable programmes were needed. The heart of the problem was the reluctance of governments to commit their own resources to statistics. Countries were used to donors picking up the cost. Donors should ensure that existing resources are used more effectively. Multilateral donors need to co-ordinate and to sign a code of good behaviour. Support needs to be long-term i.e. 5-10 years.
51. Mr Padilla-Trejo (Peru) noted that one problem with financing censuses was that they were not seen as an on-going process.
52. Mr Mkai (Tanzania) suggested asking user departments to directly fund data collection. Primary users could be asked either to provide funds, suggest sources or support calls for funding of the data that they wanted.
53. Mr Leete (UNFPA) impressed upon the audience that censuses themselves build capacity by providing maps and local area data that forms the basis for so many other results.
54. Mr Wright (CIDA) urged delegates to seize opportunities quickly. Those opportunities included Poverty Reduction Strategies, economic co-operation projects, women's initiatives and others.

#### **Agenda Item 10**

55. The secretariat gave a short oral briefing about the lunchtime working groups and the mechanisms for reporting back. The report-backs are dealt with under item 12, and in the separate note about the proposed PARIS21 task teams.

#### **Agenda Item 11 - Information Exchange - Case Study 2**

56. Mr Wright and Mr Prigly (Canada) and Mr Du (China) outlined their co-operation project. Canada emphasised how the project was demand driven. The Chinese NBS listed their challenges as management, statistical themes and infrastructure. Canada aimed to support china in meeting its challenges in these areas.
57. The joint programme had the active interest of all the relevant heads of agencies and was based on equal partnership, careful design, powerful management and some project guiding principles.

#### **Agenda Item 12 - Report back from the lunch groups**

58. During lunch, groups were convened to discuss the setting up of possible Paris21 task teams and their roles. The convenors reported back to the main meeting with suggested task teams. Details of the scope, modalities, key dates and convenors for the task teams are attached as Annex 1. It was agreed that the secretariat would announce the creation of the task-teams before end July 2000 and invite

those interested to sign up. It is envisaged that task teams would work largely electronically, although some meetings may be necessary. Task team convenors were reminded to consider the needs of those unable to participate electronically.

59. Mr Garonna (UNECE) noted some basic objectives for the advocacy work. Giving examples of what has worked and emphasising the positive uses of statistics was required. Regional level PARIS21 meetings would be required to mobilise resources, policy-makers and statisticians. A pragmatic and ambitious programme was being proposed for PARIS21 that UNECE supported.
60. Ms Thiongane (ECA) stressed that all African sub-regions needed to benefit from sub-regional workshops.
61. Mr Pommier (France) reminded delegates of the need to effectively involve the regional organisation.
62. Mr Mubila (ADB) stressed that the two key projects were data mining and immediate action for PRSPs. ADB was interested in both and was developing proposals for their own work in this area, which would require donor support.
63. Mr Marshall (FAO) emphasised the need for inter agency links, as in food and agriculture statistics - FIVIMS was cited as an example.

### **Agenda Item 13 - Managing PARIS21 - The structure of the Management Committee**

64. Mr Faure (Chairman) suggested that the structure be called a steering committee. The secretariat lunch group proposed a steering committee structure of 15 members. It was felt that 15 was the maximum number of members possible if the committee were to be the light, rapid-acting body needed. The membership would be drawn as follows: 5 multilateral founding organisations (WB, IMF, OECD, UN, EU), 5 Developing countries - asking the 5 UN regional commissions to select a country, which in turn would nominate an individual, and 5 donor countries. The donors and developing countries would each serve 3-year rotating terms. Those organisations not represented would be able to lobby the committee through either their regional representative, linked multilateral organisation, partner agency or through the PARIS21 secretariat.
65. The steering committee would meet every 6 months, alternating between USA and Europe. Its remit would be to steer the activities of the P21 consortium and to guide the work and priorities of the secretariat.
66. Mr Bové (IMF) stressed the need for a simple light management structure.
67. There was discussion of the secretariat location. Mr Leete (UNFPA) proposed some paris21 secretariat to be located within the UN. Mr Williams (UK) welcomed the benefits of UN location, but noted the inherent difficulties of split locations. Mr Garonna (UNECE), Mr Bové (IMF) and Mr Belkindas (World Bank) also noted the potential difficulties of split locations.

68. Mr Prigly (Canada) suggested that PARIS21 already had a dual structure, with the WB trust fund as the implementation agency and the P21 secretariat co-ordinating information exchange and normative work.
69. Mr Williams (UK) suggested that PARIS21 be judged by its outputs rather than through attempts to define it. Whilst close links with the UN Statistics Commission were essential it was felt that the Commission was not developing country focused.

#### **Agenda Item 14 - Closing Remarks**

70. Mr Belkinds, Mr Eele, Ms Prensushi (World Bank) stressed that the link between PARIS21 and PRSPs was correct. A programme geared to long-term capacity building, but incorporating short-term gains was essential. All should attempt to build on existing capacity and emphasise different solutions for countries at different stages of statistical development. Working through regional organisation and undertaking awareness activities were essential.
71. The CIS representative emphasised the benefits of PARIS21 in supporting good governance through facts and information. They supported the proposed programme, which was practical and geared to the medium-long term, building on existing capacity and recognising the need for tailor-made solutions at the national level.
72. Mr Mubila (ADB) had been approached by 10 countries for help with PRSPs. It was suggested to attach PARIS21 sessions to existing proposed WB workshops and enlarge the agenda from there.
73. Mr Faure(chairman) closed by emphasising the need for all involved in the consortium to do their part to ensure that results are seen rapidly.