IATI Q1 Transition Governing Board Meeting (Day 2) Virtual

Date: April 1, 2026

Attendance and agenda

Attendees

- Jack Lightley, FCDO
- Horia Sohir Debbiche, AfDB
- Abie Elizabeth Kamara, Sierra Leone
- Craig Hammer, World Bank
- Thea Schepers, Government of the Netherlands, (Outgoing Chair – attending handover agenda item only)
- Charlie Ngounou, AfroLeadership, GB vice-chair
- Motai Ramokoinihi, Kingdom of Lesotho
- Anand Nair, Fields Data
- Yemesrach Workie (UNDP), IATI Executive Director
- Orria Goni (UNDP), Sustainable Finance Hub, Head of Public Finance for SDGs
- Annelise Parr (UNDP), IATI Secretariat, Policy and Technology
- Adriel Dutra Amaral (UNOPS), IATI Financial Manager

Agenda

- Election of Board Chair and Vice-Chair
- Board roles and responsibilities
- Institutional Support and Secretariat arrangements
- Key deliverables for 2026
- Goals and objectives for the Board
- Representation role for the Board
- Ways of working

Summary of Key Decisions and follow-up actions

Decisions of the Board

- Appointment of Jack Lightley (FCDO) as Chair and Horia Sohir Debbiche (Vice Chair) for the 2026–2028 term.
- Outgoing Chair Thea Schepers to circulate a written handover note to the new Board.
- Agreement to finalise and review the Minimum Viable Service Product framework by 21 April 2026, aligning it with strategic priorities and the approved 2026 work plan and removing ambiguity around triggers and scenarios
- Agreement to begin preparatory work on post-2028 hosting arrangements.
- Commitment to strengthening advisory working groups and member engagement in them.
- Provide political support on interoperability in global forums.

Follow-Up Actions For the Secretariat

- Set up a meeting for Board discussion on updated Minimum Viable Service Product framework immediately after **21 April 2026.**
- On advice of the outgoing Board, between now and April 21st, pause any new travel, consultancies or recruitments pending Board review of MVSP.

Work plan

- Share country-system mapping and priority list once available
- Support the Board in identifying forums and key messages where Board members can

intervene politically, and provide key messages.

Financial

- Provide regular financial and (monthly) cash-flow updates; include closing year end cash balance in financial reports.
- Update the Financial Dashboard to remove historical figures and focus on current data

Institutional

- Map participation gaps in advisory working groups and seek Board support to address these gaps
- Share documents for the 2023 institutional review process leading to the current hosting arrangement.
- Schedule MA meetings in 2026 /2027 around the timeframes for discussions and decisions on future hosting arrangements post 2028.

Ways of working

- Establish a space (Teams or other solution) for document-sharing and dedicated Board discussion, accessible to all Board members and in compliance with their organisational guidelines.
- Send forward invitations via Outlook for all future quarterly Board and MA meetings.
- Continue practice of circulating papers 15 days in advance of board meetings, ensuring these are final
- ED to Incorporate 3-4 minute focused verbal interventions to introduce each agenda item at future quarterly meetings.
- Prepare one-page executive summaries for lengthy papers.
- Update the proposed date for the 2026 virtual MA to December 10th.
- Make IATI event calendar available to Board members

1. Opening

The opening session was framed primarily as an onboarding session for the newly constituted Board, designed to equip new members with a shared understanding of IATI's strategic direction, financial position, and governance responsibilities. The Executive Director indicated that onboarding should be considered as a continuous process rather than a single session, confirming her own availability and that of the wider Secretariat to provide further briefings and targeted information sessions as required, particularly on finance, governance, technology, and external engagement.

2. Reflections and Handover from the Outgoing Chair

The outgoing Chair provided a reflective overview of the previous Board term, highlighting achievements, constraints, and unresolved challenges. The discussion emphasised that the past two years had required the Board to focus heavily on stabilisation, including financial reform, governance consolidation, and rebuilding IATI's external positioning. She felt that progress had been made in restoring credibility and structure, though there was still work to be done.

Particular emphasis was placed on financial sustainability as the overriding issue for the incoming Board. The outgoing Chair felt that IATI should operate in a deliberately lean and prioritised manner. The importance of Board focus on strategy rather than operations was reiterated, alongside the need for trust between the Board, the Secretariat, and member organisations. She also highlighted the importance of ongoing member engagement by the Board, and the value of in-person engagement - when feasible - for both Board and MA meetings.

The outgoing Chair summarised discussions from the final meeting of the previous Board. Looking ahead, she encouraged the new Board to prioritize financial sustainability, continue operating in a lean manner, and clarify IATI's core services through a shared understanding and agreement on what is a minimum viable service. She noted the need for more information on the financial implications of the planned move to Madrid, flagging that from the information provided, only staff associated costs had been provided, and there were other costs like rent yet to be shared. She suggested providing monthly updates to the new Board once these costs are known by the Secretariat. The Board and Secretariat appreciated these reflections and thanked the outgoing Chair for her leadership during a challenging period.

3. Setting expectations

The new Board began with a substantive discussion on expectations for the coming term, focusing on the role of the Governing Board in shaping IATI's future relevance and impact. Board members agreed on the need to rebalance IATI's earlier emphasis on publication compliance, towards data usability and real-world decision-making. This was a key theme of the new Strategic Plan. There was general direction that IATI's role extends beyond technical data publication to broader questions of accountability, transparency, and public trust.

In this respect the new Board member representing Sierra Leone introduced herself as a long-standing government official from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, with more than 30 years of public service and extensive engagement with IATI, including past service as Partner Country Caucus Chair. She expressed appreciation for the opportunity to join the Board and emphasized the significance of IATI as a transformational initiative that goes beyond data to promote dignity, accountability, and citizens' rights to understand how development and humanitarian resources are used. She outlined her three key expectations: first, that the Board provide clear strategic leadership on the IATI standard, focusing on purpose as well as delivery and ensuring relevance to evolving global challenges such as climate finance, fragility, and humanitarian crises; second, that greater emphasis be placed on data use, including interoperability with partner country systems, reduced reporting burdens, and meaningful access for civil society and journalists; and third, that inclusivity be actively practiced, ensuring diverse voices - particularly from partner countries and local civil society - contribute to strategic discussions. She concluded by reaffirming her commitment to strengthening IATI's impact in rebuilding trust, empowering citizens, and ensuring resources reach those most in need.

4. Election of Chair and Vice Chair (2026–2028)

The Board proceeded to the election of a new Chair and Vice Chair.

Jack Lightley (FCDO) and Horia Sohir Debbiche (AfDB) made representations as to their suitability for the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. Lightley emphasised his understanding of the role of Chair as one of stewardship rather than management, requiring diplomatic leadership, consensus-building, and external advocacy. He highlighted the essential need for political engagement at global forums, as a means of addressing the increasing risks of duplication and fragmentation in the international development data ecosystem. He agreed on the importance flagged by the Board member from Sierra Leone on usability, as well as interoperability of IATI data, as well as its quality so that people are willing to incorporate it within their systems.

Debbiche saw the Vice Chair role as a key support to the Chair. She referred to her many years of engagement with IATI and her vision for IATI to make a leap to 'transparency 2.0' rather than becoming a simple compliance exercise. She has daily engagement with partner country governments across Africa bringing a deep understanding of their specific needs. Her three key focuses would be financial sustainability, partner country voices to be clearly heard, and measurement of results achieved

through the use of IATI data.

With no additional nominations for these roles, the Board agreed by consensus to appoint **Jack Lightley (FCDO) as Chair and Horia Sohir Debbiche (AfDB) as Vice Chair for the 2026–2028 term**.

5. Roles & Responsibilities of the Board per IATI's SOP

Continuing with the onboarding presentation, the Executive Director provided an overview of the IATI Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as a core reference document guiding day-to-day operations, acknowledging that the SOP is a living document and due to be updated in certain areas under the guidance of the Board together with a working group of members.

The SOP sets out the Board's primary responsibilities at a strategic level, which include setting IATI's vision, mission, strategic direction, and priorities, while operational delivery remains the responsibility of the Secretariat. The Board plays a central role in approving and overseeing implementation of the five-year strategy, initiating and approving minor updates to the IATI Standard, and making recommendations to the Members' Assembly, which remains IATI's highest governing body. Major changes to the Standard continue to rest with the Members' Assembly, supported by the newly established Standards Oversight Committee (SOC), which provides technical advice to the Board. The Board also provides guidance on Members' Assembly agendas and papers, approves IATI's annual report, commissions independent evaluations, and oversees follow-up on evaluation recommendations.

The Executive Director highlighted the Board's role in approval and oversight across finances, budgets, work plans, and quarterly implementation and financial reporting. Safeguarding financial sustainability is important, particularly following recent membership fee reforms and the depletion of contingency reserves. Work is underway to monitor risks, implement a Minimum Viable Service Product and risk management framework, and explore income diversification to reduce reliance on membership fees.

The Board also reviews membership contribution waivers which is important to avoid declining membership given the financial pressures facing civil society organizations. She pointed out that while some constituencies contribute limited financial resources, they provide significant political and strategic value to IATI's multi-stakeholder model, and would require sensitive consideration by the Board as part of the work to be taken forward by the SOP Working Group.

The Executive Director described the role of formal working groups as an important governance mechanism, and advisory to the Board. Their role is to support in-depth analysis and to engage members in important governance reform. She referred to the three current open groups - the Standards Oversight Committee, the Institutional and Governance Working Group, and the South-South Cooperation Working Group, noting that strengthening participation in these groups remains a priority.

While ambiguously stated in the SOP, it was agreed that ideally, the working groups should operate independently of the Board, however in some circumstances the knowledge of Board members may be welcome in certain topics, and they should participate. The new Chair requested the Secretariat to share information on current working group membership for the Board's assistance in encouraging representation from all caucuses.

Action: Secretariat to share list of current members of working groups especially where a caucus is underrepresented.

6. Institutional Support & Secretariat Hosting Arrangements (2023–2028)

In continuing her presentation, the Executive Director presented an overview of the current hosting arrangements, under which IATI is hosted jointly by UNDP and UNOPS, with technical services provided by Open Data Services based on Long term agreement with UNDP. She highlighted that the agreement runs until 30 June 2028, requiring attention by the Board to establish follow-on arrangements. The Board discussed the implications of this timeline, noting that decisions on post-2028 arrangements must begin well in advance given prior experience. The Executive Director pointed to the benefits of the current model but also recognised its cost, complexity, and rigidity when it comes to staffing decisions. She also referred to the UN reform measures currently underway which could see a merger between UNDP and UNOPS and offer streamlining opportunities.

The discussion highlighted the importance of aligning any future hosting arrangement with financial sustainability, technological needs, and organisational agility. The Board agreed that an institutional working group would need to be established and tasked with developing options and recommendations, supported by the Secretariat and informed by lessons from the current model as well as the earlier process. In response to a possible timeline and which papers would be needed, the Executive Director flagged the importance of proceeding immediately with an infrastructure roadmap (consultancy) to review investment priorities going forward into future hosting arrangements. The Chair asked to have access to papers produced as part of the earlier hosting arrangements process, and the new Vice-Chair who had been part of that process agreed to share evaluation details. It was flagged that MA dates would serve as important touchpoints for consultations and decision-making by members, and the upcoming meetings in 2027 and 2028 should be planned according to the timeline for hosting decisions.

The Executive Director responded to questions from the Board on the forthcoming new website and community forum, specifically the timing of its launch (1 May 2026) and the decision to have it developed by UNOPS and not ODS, which she indicated was based on budget savings. She confirmed the build was fully covered in the 2025 budget with only costs of the domain in 2026, mentioning that savings would be significant going forward.

Action:

- Secretariat to share documents for the 2023 institutional review process leading to the current hosting arrangement.
- Schedule upcoming MA meetings in 2026 /2027 taking note of hosting decision timeframes.

7. Strategic Plan and 2026 Key Deliverables

The Secretariat summarised the approved five-year strategic plan, explaining how it was built around four priority areas: country data systems, infrastructure and tools, advocacy, and policy dialogue. The Executive Director presented an outline of the key priority areas in the 2026 work plan.

The Board discussed how these priorities would be operationalised through the 2026 work plan and budget. Members acknowledged that not all ambitions could be pursued simultaneously given resource constraints and stressed the importance of sequencing and focus.

Shifting the focus to technology, the new Technical Seat on the Board enquired whether discussions had taken place with the previous Board about the technology enabling conditions vis a vis the proposed update to the Standard. He flagged that sequencing of Standard upgrades may have a bearing on existing tools and systems as part of the current investment strategy and may need Board consideration between regular quarterly meetings. The Executive Director pointed out the newly

formed Standard Oversight Committee (SOC) as the forum for those considerations.

The Vice-Chair was interested to know of any benchmarking that had taken place to compare OECD data to IATI data, and the Executive Director took the opportunity to update her on the Sevilla Platform for Action on interoperability co-led by IATI with TOSSD and the Chief Executives Board of the UN. Within this SPA, IATI has begun a joint mapping exercise with TOSSD which shows the large overlap between the two. Even more recently OECD's CRS team has looked at the crossover between CRS and IATI to see how they could use IATI to enrich CRS data.

Interoperability emerged as central for IATI's future and strategic positioning within the wide open data and accountability ecosystem, and not just a purely technical issue. The Board recognised increasing pressure from other international data initiatives and the risk of parallel systems duplicating effort, confusing publishers, and undermining the "publish once, use many times" principle of IATI.

The Board reaffirmed IATI's unique value proposition, including near-real-time data, forward-looking financial information, and a large body of linked documentation. The Executive Director further emphasised IATI's unique role as a single source of truth for other data reporting systems to build upon, in addition to its recognition in 2025 as a digital public good as a means of further enhancing the initiative's strategic positioning. Members agreed that safeguarding and communicating this value requires coordinated political engagement, led primarily by Board members alongside the Secretariat.

The Board discussed partner country data use at length, noting evidence that many countries are struggling with the cost and sustainability of aid management platforms. There was recognition that loss of access to such systems can seriously undermine progress made in planning and accountability. The discussion emphasised the need for a more systematic approach to supporting data use, including integration with national systems, peer-to-peer learning, and targeted capacity building.

The ED pointed to Action Area A of the Strategic Plan on *Country Systems, Capacity and Policy Influence*, which included as key priorities for 2026: Strengthened country systems integration through tailored diagnostics, mapping exercises, and technical support to embed IATI data into national AIMS, DFIMS, and M&E platforms.

Members welcomed the Secretariat's work to map country systems and identify patterns of use. The Board agreed that improving country-level data use is central to IATI's legitimacy and long-term survival, and that progress in this area must be visible and measurable.

8. Financial Position and Risk Assessment

UNOPS presented an overview of IATI's financial position, including the 2026 approved budget and expenditure to date. The discussion focused on IATI's financial position, budget execution, membership income, and near-term sustainability risks, alongside governance expectations for managing liquidity. The Secretariat explained that IATI is operating in a difficult financial context, with expenditures having risen faster than income in recent years. Cost-containment measures have already been implemented, including an annual reduction of approximately USD 750,000 and an agreed increase in membership fees from 2027 to 2030. While these steps have improved IATI's position, significant sustainability concerns remain.

The approved 2026 budget totals USD 3.6 million, made up of a USD 3.4 million core budget funded by membership contributions and USD 200,000 in non-core funding to be raised through voluntary contributions. As of 16 March 2026, expenditures stood at USD 738,000, representing a 20 percent delivery rate and indicating that spending is broadly on track. Reporting errors suggesting overspending were acknowledged and corrected, and the Secretariat confirmed there are no current budget overruns.

Around half of expected 2026 membership contributions have already been collected, which was considered reasonable progress at this stage of the year. Several members have advanced payments for future years, improving cash flow. However, cash projections show that although IATI expects to end 2026 with just under USD 450,000, much of this is already allocated for future years, leaving only around USD 190,000 in operational cash at the start of 2027. This was widely viewed as a serious liquidity risk.

Board members expressed concern that the organisation is highly exposed to delayed or missed payments from a small number of high-value members and stressed the need for realistic, data-driven financial planning rather than reliance on optimism. The Secretariat highlighted ongoing engagement with members, including those currently unresponsive, and confirmed that decisions on waivers or membership status would follow established procedures and involve senior-level outreach.

To address the situation, the Board agreed to prioritise work on a Minimum Viable Service Product as decided by the outgoing board by 21 April, pause new consultancies and non-essential travel until then, and strengthen financial monitoring. Monthly cash balance reporting, improved dashboard clarity, and closer engagement with top-tier members on advance payments were identified as essential next steps. The Board Chair further requested that financial reporting always contain the year end cash balance figure as essential to monitor.

Actions:

- Secretariat to provide monthly cash balance reports, including year end balance figures.
- Board to complete review of MVSP by 21 April
- Pause all new consultancies and non-essential travel until 21 April.

9. Ways of Working

The final agenda point centred around refining the ways of working between the Secretariat and the Governing Board, with a strong emphasis on predictability, clarity, and efficient use of Board time. The Executive Director noted that frequent board involvement in day-to-day management and decision-making outside formal meetings had proven unhelpful, while noting the positive value of Board-led political advocacy and partnerships.

The Secretariat outlined the current approach to agenda setting, whereby draft agendas for quarterly meetings are shared two months in advance, with a further ten days for Board input and preparation of any papers required. Board members were encouraged to engage early in agenda review to allow time for preparation of necessary documentation on priority issues.

It was agreed that quarterly board meetings would move one hour earlier, running from 8:00 to around 11:30 New York time, to better accommodate different time zones. The Secretariat committed to sharing calendar invitations well in advance and confirmed that a forward schedule of meetings would be circulated for agreement, including revision to the proposed MA to avoid key dates in December that conflicted with holidays and the festive period. December 10th was proposed for the MA.

A substantial part of the discussion focused on document management and accessibility. While documents have historically been shared via Google Drive, it was flagged that this may not be workable for some members due to institutional restrictions, data protection rules, and transparency requirements, particularly for those serving in an official government capacity. A preference for Microsoft Teams or another institutional platform was preferred, and this should be resolved promptly so that all Board members can reliably access the same materials. The Secretariat acknowledged these concerns and agreed to explore a Teams-based solution or dedicated Board forum.

It was emphasized that once board papers are circulated 15 days ahead of meetings, the Board did

not expect any changes to be made. The Secretariat confirmed that papers would not be altered after circulation, except through transparent corrections in response to Board comments.

On meeting conduct, there was general agreement to avoid formal presentations, and instead the Executive Director should provide a short, focused verbal intervention at the start of each agenda item - no more than four to five minutes - to highlight the single most important issue or risk the Secretariat wished the Board to focus on. This approach was strongly supported, alongside a request for one-page executive summaries and clearly flagged decision points within papers, enabling the Board to concentrate on strategic discussion rather than information recall. The Board Chair indicated he would follow up with some additional suggestions via email.

Actions:

- Continue practice of circulating papers 15 days in advance of board meetings, ensuring these were final
- ED to Incorporate 3-4 minute focused verbal interventions to introduce each agenda item.
- Offer Teams or other solution for document-sharing and dedicated Board discussion
- Prepare one-page executive summaries for lengthy papers.
- Send calendar invites for quarterly meetings well in advance.
- Update the proposed date for the 2026 virtual MA to December 10th.
- Make an event calendar available to Board members