

Annual Members' Assembly 11-12 September 2019, Brussels, Belgium

Final minutes of the meetings

Opening

1. Representatives from member organisations and invited CSO observers from the global south met in Brussels for IATI's annual Members' Assembly meeting. The two days of formal meetings of 111 delegates were preceded by a day of caucus meetings and a Board meeting.
2. Governing Board Chair Mr. Theo van de Sande (Netherlands) chaired the plenary meetings, together with Board members Leo Stolk (Oxfam Novib), Sarah Johns (Bond), Timothy Takona *outgoing* and Joseph Barnes *incoming* (UNICEF), Zefania Romalahy (Madagascar) and Steven Flower (Open Data Services, TAG Chair). He thanked the European Commission and the European Investment Bank for the hosting of the event and provision of facilities and funding of the venue.
3. This document contains references to the following documents, available at the links below:
 - IATI Members' Assembly Agenda
https://iatistandard.org/documents/807/IATI_MA_2019_Agenda_MA_updated_12_Sept.pdf
 - Overview of papers and presentations
<https://iatistandard.org/en/events/iati-members-assembly-2019/>
 - List of participants
https://iatistandard.org/documents/834/IATI_Members_Assembly_2019_Final_Participants_list.pdf
4. The Chair reviewed the agenda and invited opening remarks on behalf of the hosts of the event. Members heard from the European Commission's Mr. Félix Fernandez-Shaw, Director, DEVCO; Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director Lotta Karlsson representing the EU Presidency, and Giuseppe Nastasi representing the European Investment Bank, before moving into the main part of the programme.

Presentation of IATI Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025

5. The Chair presented the new IATI Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025 and the Secretariat reminded members of the thorough and inclusive process of consultation in the development of the new Plan, and the iterative way in which it had been drafted which provided ample opportunity to incorporate

feedback from members. The Chair set out the key challenges and opportunities that had been identified as part of the consultation, and outlined the key objectives, cross-cutting areas and success criteria contained in the plan. He clarified that the annex containing the results framework should not be considered final and was presented here for discussion and input by members who should ultimately feel a share of ownership in the delivery of the Plan. With this clarification, members approved the Plan enthusiastically, subject to the additional work required on the draft results framework and the approval of the changes in governance, both of which would be taken up in a subsequent session.

6. Recalling the minutes of the previous Members' Assembly meeting, the Chair referred to the agreement of members to a number of governance changes including in responsibilities of Board and members. The required changes were made in IATI's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in March 2019 but were not submitted to members for approval as required. Acknowledging the oversight, the Chair agreed to set in place a written procedure to approve the latest SOP as soon as possible, and reiterated the Board's commitment to seek members' approval for all change to the SOP.
7. The Board took note of a request by members to ensure that all briefing materials, SOPs, previous decisions and minutes of earlier meetings were available and accessible to all members, particularly new focal points, and the Secretariat will take proactive steps through its communications channels to address this request.

Action points:

- *Written procedure for approval of strategic questions between physical meetings to be clarified in the next SOP update and circulated for approval by members at the first opportunity.*
- *The Board will retroactively seek members' approval of the Standard Operating Procedures (v.5) through written procedure through a single consultation at the time of incorporating SOP changes following the 2019 MA.*
- *The Board will work with the Secretariat to finalise the text of the Strategic Plan by resolving minor points of historical inaccuracy and undertaking additional work on the governance section.*
- *Ensure all materials circulated ahead of meetings where governance decisions are to be made are timely and new focal points have all the background information they require to understand and contribute meaningfully to key discussions and decisions.*

Setting priorities for 2020 and agreeing metrics for measuring progress

8. Members engaged in group discussions and reported back to plenary on specific questions around prioritisation of the 2020 work plan and on performance metrics. One group represented Francophone participants of the MA and considered perspectives and implications for that constituency.

Discussions from each group were captured live by participants for later reference by the Board and Secretariat; some of this content can be accessed through the following links: [Priorities](#); [Metrics](#). Several members commented that more time was required for the crucial task of selecting the right indicators to monitor progress on the Strategic Plan and requested the creation of a working group for this purpose (noting that the governance of working groups would be discussed in a subsequent session).

9. Returning from a mandatory building evacuation which cut this session short, members requested additional time later in the agenda to provide input to the Board on priorities for the first year, to guide its setting of the work plan for 2020.
10. The subsequent session revisiting this subject on the second day was a lively interactive session led by UNICEF in which members could propose areas they felt were of highest priority and 'upvote' or seek further information on particular proposals. The results of that session can be accessed here: http://bit.ly/IATI_Slido and will assist the Board and Secretariat in formulating work plans that reflect the new Strategic Plan and priorities of members.

Action point:

- *Board to work with members to establish a working group to finalise the results framework*

Update from the Data Use Task Force

11. Representatives of the Data Use Task Force led by its new Chair, Andie Vaughn (USAID) gave an update on achievements of the task force in taking forward strategic objectives established following the 2017 MA and applying the Data Use Fund towards achieving those objectives. Task Force members reported that about 50% of the funds were spent so far and pointed to some very successful activities, for example awareness-raising for IATI in Ghana. They acknowledged some delays resulting from procurement challenges and sequencing of certain activities which were on hold pending the availability of the new datastore. Some actions to address these challenges were presented, for instance working through UNDP country offices to enable procurement in languages other than English. The Task Force announced a working lunchtime session the following day and invited the participation of new interested members.

Strengthening the IATI Community to maximise impact

12. TAG Chair Steven Flower presented a [Board paper](#) proposing refinements sketched out in the Strategic Plan to meet new challenges in the way technical advice is gathered from a broad base of experts and used to guide the management of the Standard. He outlined the challenges that have arisen as a result of the growth of IATI leading to a Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

that has become too large and unwieldy to properly meet the advisory needs of the initiative. He set out a proposal to strengthen the IATI Community by establishing formal Working Groups to respond to specific advisory needs including on technical matters, and Communities of Practice that would meet the learning and networking needs of different groups of members. Instead of separate policy (MA) and technical (TAG) meetings, a single annual IATI gathering would be trialled in 2020 to address technical, policy and learning and networking needs. One of the aims of this new approach will be to broaden the base of membership.

13. Members acknowledged the challenges outlined, and endorsed the proposals contained in the paper. Members also pointed to the important aspects of community and networking between different interest groups afforded through TAG meetings that should not be lost in any new configuration. Members emphasised the importance of transparency in the working groups' mandate, membership and recommendations, of ensuring no parallel governance channel was set up, and that the established processes around technical upgrades and policy decision-making remained with the Board and the MA in line with current arrangements. Members requested that further clarification be provided on who could participate in the groups, what approvals were needed to establish them, whether both members and non-members could join, and what the feedback mechanisms would be for each group. The Board agreed to address these questions in developing protocols for the groups and share them with members. Clarification was also sought on the future technical focal point on the Board, and the process for appointing such role since this was previously done by those attending TAG meetings.

Action points:

- *Secretariat to develop governance protocols and systems for establishing Working Groups and Communities of Practice along with related proposed changes to the SOP for Board review and subsequent circulation to members for approval, together with proposals for the first groups to be established*
- *Board to clarify arrangements for retaining a focused technical seat on the Board including the process of appointment to that seat*
- *Secretariat to develop a proposal for a single IATI event in 2020 that will take the place of the TAG and MA meeting, and allot required time for governance, technical and learning elements*

Day 2

Work plan implementation and financial update

14. In a joint presentation by the Board and Secretariat, members heard an update on the strengthened secretariat following the decisions of the 2018 MA on the Institutional Review, along with an interim update on the budget and progress of activities during the extended financial year Sept 2018 - Dec 2019 (implemented as a one year correction to bring the financial year in line with the calendar), and the financial situation of the initiative. This report complements the detailed financial reporting through the [IATI Annual Report](#). Members agreed the Board proposal to establish a contingency reserve amount equivalent to 15% of the budget for the preceding year, taking effect in January 2020. The approved amount of the contingency reserve in 2020 is \$631,249, (15% of the 2019 budget). The fund would remain aligned with future annual budgets and would not result in any increase in membership contribution.
15. One member raised a question on the establishment of a new contribution schedule level for private sector members in the draft March 2019 SOP. After a lengthy discussion on this point members agreed to deletion of the reference to larger Private Sector organisations where it appears in the draft v.5 SOP from March 2019, instead adding a footnote indicating that there is currently no private sector member over \$10m. The question of contributions for this size of an organisation will be further considered by the Board. With this decision, members agreed to keep membership contribution levels in line with the current scale for a further three years up to December 2022. The scale of contributions will be reviewed at that time to better reflect the increase in number of IATI publishers.
16. Members also sought clearer information on financial matters such as budget (re)allocations (from the 2018 budget and alignment of IATI resources with strategic priorities over the five years of the Strategic Plan.

Action points:

- *Board to develop criteria for members' approval for drawing down contingency reserve for inclusion in the SOP.*
- *Board to develop a high level resourcing framework and financing strategy covering the five year period 2020 - 2025 to support delivery of the Strategic Plan*
- *Secretariat to produce a mapping of the 2019 carryover budget to the new Strategic Plan objectives*
- *Board to bring forward a proposal for private sector membership fees (organisations over \$10m) to be agreed by members next year.*

Technical implementation update

17. IATI's new Technical Lead Wendy Thomas provided updates on the significant progress achieved since the August 2018 Technical Audit which had mapped out a framework for consolidating IATI's technical core and

strengthening its systems and architecture. Commendations were received from many members on activities such as developing SDG guidance, improving transparency of technical work and collaborative planning processes undertaken with Board focal points.

18. The Secretariat gave a joint presentation with the external developers working on IATI's new datastore and validator respectively and responded to a range of questions including how these would work with one another and how d-portal would interact and be further developed or replaced in view of the new products. On the matter of d-portal it was widely agreed that as a key tool particularly for use in promoting IATI but also for use by partner countries to find information, it would be the subject of user research and careful planning as a priority in 2020.
19. Members were appreciative of the good work done and looked forward to the availability of these new tools for testing and use, although some concerns were raised about the future of AidStream, which remains a key publishing tool for smaller organisations. They also welcomed the clear commitment to enhancing d-portal and the forthcoming improvements to monitoring indicators (e.g. what is an active publisher). Suggestions for future work included analysis of donor publishing requirements (with a view to facilitate harmonisation) and guidance for publishing data on blended finance.

Action points:

- *Secretariat to follow up with AidStream provider to ensure it remains available and up to date for all publishers that require it until a long-term solution is in place.*

Other updates

20. Throughout the two days of meetings, lightning talks were given by members and observers highlighting key examples of data use drawing on IATI data to generate new tools and portals such as the EU Aid Explorer and the USAID Foreign Aid Explorer. These sessions also revealed challenges faced by data users comparing IATI data with other data sources, with a view to highlighting for publishers some important areas for data quality improvement.
21. Members also heard an update from OECD on the progress of work on the Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) measure, completion of reporting instructions and data survey using IATI as a data source with three multilateral institutions.
22. Optional lunchtime sessions were held by the Publish What You Fund team providing an introduction to the 2020 Aid Transparency Index; by the Data Use Task Force to undertake joint work planning for the upcoming period; and by the Secretariat offering hands-on training on the use of d-portal.org for those interested.

Closing

23. In closing the Members' Assembly, the Chair opened the floor for speakers to share their reflections. Members provided useful suggestions on improving transparency between meetings through better organisation of key governance materials on the website and through regular communications between the Board and members. They also suggested ways to improve decision-making at the Members' Assembly, including providing the financial update earlier in the meeting to inform discussions on workplan and priorities. Several pointed to the proposal on establishing a single IATI annual event as a way to ensure there would always be sufficient time for discussion of standing items and important governance matters without detracting from the time in the agenda for the really valuable and interesting presentations from the community.
24. The Chair once more thanked the EC and EIB hosts and interpreters for their invaluable support. He extended particular thanks on behalf of all participants for the generous and culturally rich reception organised and offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium.
25. He reminded members of the next round of Board elections scheduled for late Spring 2020 and encouraged members to consider putting their organisations forward to participate in this rewarding work.