

CHAPTER III TRANSPARENCY



The University of Victoria's Centre for Global Studies



Idea: On-line bulletin board

Tool: Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Electronic Bulletin,
World Trade Organization (WTO)

Summary

In recent years, WTO activities have been under intense scrutiny by NGOs around the world, especially with respect to issues of openness, external transparency, and participation. In response, the WTO has been improving its outreach activities as a means to engage NGOs in an exchange of views on a broad range of issues. A special section of the WTO website that is devoted to NGOs, the NGO electronic bulletin, is one of many outreach tools¹ being utilized to increase public awareness of WTO activities and enhance its dialogue with NGOs.

Background

The WTO is committed to ensuring transparency and increasing communication with NGOs. It produces and distributes a special electronic NGO bulletin to those organizations wishing to receive information on the current status of WTO activities. Viewed as an integral part of WTO efforts to reach out to individuals and organizations, this tool is an initiative of the Director-General of the WTO. It was launched in April 2000 and counts over 1,000 subscribers.

Method

The NGO electronic bulletin can be accessed and downloaded from the following website: http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/ngo_e/ngobuletin_e.htm. It can also be received electronically by e-mail request at: ngobulletin@WTO.org. The page is easily accessible and user friendly. Information on the site and the various links is in all three official languages of the WTO (English, Spanish, and French); however, the bulletin is available in English only.

The bulletin site presents a guide to downloading files to a PC and hyperlinks to the monthly bulletins, including the format in which each monthly bulletin was saved (MS Word document), the number of pages (3–4), and the size of the file (ranging from 105–140KB). There are also contact details. Each bulletin contains links to full-text, publicly available, recent WTO documents, a list of recent news stories with links to more details (press releases) on the WTO site, recent speeches by WTO officials, and lists of upcoming meetings. Bulletins are available for viewing from October onwards, but not all months are available. The site has hyperlinks for bulletins from October–December 2000, for instance, and will then resume in February 2001.

Each monthly bulletin generally follows the same format. It begins with a statement by the WTO outlining reasons for the initiative and inviting feedback on the newsletter:

This electronic newsbulletin is an initiative by the Director-General of the WTO to facilitate access of non-governmental organizations to publicly available WTO information. Subscription is open to all interested organizations and/or individuals. For new subscribers, should you wish to receive this newsbulletin, please send an e-mail to the following address: ngobulletin@wto.org. It would be highly appreciated if readers could let us know whether they find this newsletter useful. For any comments, suggestions or questions, please send them to the above-mentioned e-mail address.

The contents of the bulletin are then listed under six main items (most include hyperlinks to areas of interest or contact details) as follows:

- *WTO and NGOs*
 - 4th Ministerial Conference in Qatar (this item changes from time to time)
 - Selected upcoming WTO meetings
 - Outreach activities
 1. WTO Secretariat Activities with NGOs
 2. WTO Community/Forums. This electronic facility invites individuals to make their views known to the WTO and other users of the site by participating in ongoing on-line forums and chats or by starting a discussion on a WTO-related topic. Before entering the discussion area for the first time, a registration form needs to be filled in.
 3. WTO Internship Programme
 4. Access to Sanitary and Phytosanitary Documents
 - Links to selected recent official WTO documents on:
 6. Agriculture/SPS
 7. TRIPS (trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights)
 8. Ministerial Conference
 9. Services
 10. Environment
- *Director-General bulletin*. This provides highlights of the Director-General's recent activities. It is an initiative of the Director-General to increase information flows within the WTO Secretariat and can be found on the WTO website.
- *Main WTO news in brief*
- *Special issues*
- *Selected speeches by the Director-General*
- *Upcoming meetings*

Example

Excerpts from the Monthly Bulletin of April 2001, No. 03
4th WTO Ministerial Conference in Qatar

As of now, this issue will permanently feature in the NGO bulletin in order to provide you with both general and NGO-specific information related to the organization of the 4th Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar on 9-13 November 2001. Please note that preparations are underway. For the expected thousands of participants — delegates, observers, journalists and NGOs — detailed information on transportation, accommodation and accreditation will be available on the WTO website soon.

Prospective participants are therefore requested to hold making arrangements for the Conference until that time. Concerning NGOs, the registration procedure is expected to be published by May 14, 2001.

Selected upcoming WTO meetings

·For the tentative weekly schedule of meetings, please go to [http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news_e.htm# What's On](http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news_e.htm#What's%20On) For a complete list of WTO meetings, see below.

·On 27 April, the WTO General Council will meet in Special Session to deal with implementation related questions. The Chairman of the General Council and the Director-General will report on ongoing consultations with WTO Members.

Outreach Activities

WTO Secretariat Activities with NGOs: On 12 April 2001, the WTO Secretariat published a note indicating intended activities involving NGOs from now to the Doha Ministerial Conference, as well as during the Conference in November. The document is available in all three official WTO languages and can be found at <http://docsonline.wto.org/DDFDocuments/t/WT/INF/30.doc>

Preliminary Assessment

The NGO bulletin has been successful because NGOs do not have to go to the website to remain up-to-date about WTO activities, and the WTO can reach out directly to NGOs by informing them of activities that are of particular relevance to them. The bulletin is also simple, quick, convenient, and cost-effective as it can be e-mailed rather than sent out by hard copy and it does not involve any costs, other than the time needed to put the material together every month. In this sense, it is an excellent tool for an organization faced with limited financial resources. The bulletin is also timely, allowing recipients to be as informed and responsive as possible to WTO activities, and can reach multiple recipients at the same time in any part of the world. The fact that the bulletin can only be accessed on the Internet or received by e-mail may represent a disadvantage to individuals or NGOs, particularly those in developing countries, constrained by a lack of financial resources to access the Internet. Another disadvantage is that all the NGO electronic bulletins are provided in English only.

The NGO electronic bulletin stands as an example of best practices for increasing transparency and encouraging participation. This WTO initiative has been acknowledged as successful by those individuals and organizations receiving the electronic bulletin, as well as by other organizations. Indeed, a major NGO in Geneva, the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), has already incorporated a new feature based on the WTO idea in their publication: Hyperlinks to Relevant Documents Within the Bulletin Itself.

Endnotes

1. Material available to NGOs on the WTO site includes: Information on WTO and NGOs (WTO and NGOs relations and WTO Secretariat activities with NGOs); Documents from NGOs (monthly list of NGO position papers received by the WTO Secretariat); NGO-related WTO activities (meetings involving NGOs, News Releases, NGO Bulletin, WTO Documents of interest to NGOs, and contact details for NGOs). See website: http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/ngo_e/ngo_e.htm (26 April 2001). The site also includes a chat room for interactive discussion, which was launched in February 2001.

References

Doha WTO Ministerial 2001: NGO attendance wt/inf/30. 12 April 2001(01-1905).

WTO Secretariat activities with NGOs.

Website: http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min01_e/min01_ngo_activ_e.htm (26 April 2001).

Guidelines for arrangements on relations with Non-Governmental Organizations. Decision adopted by the General Council on 18 July 1996. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOS): Guidelines. WT/L/162 23 July 1996. Website: http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/ngo_e/guide_e.htm (26 April 2001).

NGO Bulletin - WTO's NGO newsletter.

Website: <http://sdgateway.net/maillinglists/list118.htm> (26 April 2001).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs):NGO bulletin. WTO monthly bulletin for NGOs (April 2001). Website: http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/ngo_e/ngobuletin_e.htm. (26 April 2001).

Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs): material available on the WTO Website. Main website for NGOs: http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/ngo_e/ngo_e.htm (26 April 2001).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs): NEWS

The WTO and civil society. Comments by the Director-General to US NGOs.

Website: http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/ngo_e/ngospe_e.htm (26 April 2001).

The WTO Director-General: Bulletins. Bulletins and messages from Mike Moore.

Website: http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/dg_e/bullet_e.htm (26 April 2001).

Contacts

Bernard Kuiten

External Relations Division

World Trade Organization

Centre William Rappard

Rue de Lausanne 154

1211 Geneva 21

Switzerland

Phone: + 41 (22) 7395676

Fax: + 41 (22) 7395777

Email: Bernard.Kuiten@wto.org

To subscribe, send an e-mail request at ngobulletin@WTO.org

WTO Homepage: www.wto.org

Idea: Live Webcasting

Tool: Multi-Lingual Website, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Summary

Despite UNCTAD's efforts to include as many concerned parties/individuals in the Third International Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCIII) as possible, the vast number of interested non-governmental organizations (NGOs)/ international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and civil society groups could not attend for logistical and/or financial reasons. In response, UNCTAD hosted a live webcast of all open sessions during the entire conference, including interactive debates and an archive for "on-demand viewing".

Background

The main objective of UNCTAD is to maximize the trade, investment, and development opportunities for the least developed countries (LDCs) and assist them in becoming an equal partner in the world economy.

May 14–20, 2001, marked the LDCIII, arranged by UNCTAD and hosted by the EU at the European Parliament. The conference brought together representatives from all of the LDCs, the relative UN bodies, academics, practitioners, NGO/INGOs, and other civil society representatives. An NGO Forum was held in parallel with the conference, to represent the "voice of civil society." Representatives from over 600 NGOs from throughout the world participated, 250 of whom were from LDCs.

Method

The official LDCIII website is available in six languages: English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish. It is a comprehensive website – all necessary background, contacts, and further information are provided – and all information is easily accessed. There are links on this home site to the webcast and media relations, and all links are framed by the LDCIII website.

Webcast

The main page shows a timetable of events, and charts the main interactive debate sessions that took place during the conference. There are additional links to the general statements of each day or session.

Belacom Steam Power was contracted to run the live webcast during the conference, and now provides on-line service to the archived webcasts and debates. All webcasts are operational through Real Player or Windows Media Player software (free for download).

All previously recorded sessions are available for "on-demand" public viewing in a user-friendly timetable format at: <http://mediacast.unctad.org/ldc/archive/17may/index.asp> (May 17, 2001 webcast).

General statements are available for most sessions of each day of the conference. The interactive debates are also available for viewing. Not all individual statements are available yet, but the majority are broadcast in English, French, or Spanish. Individual speeches made at the Plenary are also available in text format (see "Statements" link on LDCIII website for the text of other speeches and statements).

Preliminary Assessment

Despite the thoroughness of the webcast, the majority of general statements, individual comments, and interactive debates are only available in English, and sometimes French, Spanish, or Arabic. The principle of transparency only holds true when information is accessible and comprehensible to the concerned parties. Given that most participants were from developing nations and that the content of the conference dealt with greater participation of the LDCs in the world economy, more effort should have been taken, within reason given the expense, to provide the webcasts in languages common to citizens of developing nations. This is especially true for Bangladesh and China, neither of which were provided appropriate translations on the webcast.

References

NGO Forum

<http://www.oneworld.org/liaison/forum/en/home/introduction.htm>

Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCIII)

<http://www.un.org/events/ldc3/conference/>

UNCTAD

<http://www.unctad.org/>

Contacts

Mr. Awni Behnam

Secretary of the LDCIII Conference

UNCTAD Secretariat

Palais des Nations

1211 Geneva 10

Phone: (+41 22) 907-57-27

Fax: (+41 22) 907-00-56

NGO Forum

Phone: +32 (0)2 743 87 81/88/87/63/65

Fax: +32 (0)2 732 19 34

E-mail: forum@clong.be

UN Department of Public Information

Contact: Tim Wall at 32-2-280-6295

Idea: Live Webcast- Proceedings and Meetings.

Tool: Website and Video-on-Demand, Summit Implementation Review Group,
Hemispheric Summit Office, Canada

Summary

The Hemisphere Summit Office (HSO) is an Ottawa-based task force created by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The HSO is responsible for the policy, communications, event logistics and administration of major Hemisphere-related events in Canada, including the Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly in June 2000 and the Summit of the Americas in 20-22 April 2001. To provide opportunities for citizen participation in the 2001 Summit process it launched the idea of webcasting the Summit from the *AmericasCanada.org* website. It provided unedited, unmediated content.

Background

The *AmericasCanada.org* website has been in operation since 1999. *AmericasCanada.org* has served as the primary information website for five events: the Pan Am Games (July 1999); the Americas Business Forum/FTAA Ministerial Meeting (November 1999); the OAS General Assembly (June 2000); and the Summit of the Americas.

Method

The estimated costs for the four days web cast of the Summit plus one month's archiving of its materials was \$70,000. For the web cast to be carried out successfully it needed: broadcast-quality cameras; fiber optic lines to a television operating centre; Internet services facility that converted the TV signals to digital format, then to a recognized Internet media player (such as Windows Media or RealPlayer); and a web server that could handle that capacity. The Multimedia Division at HSO offered two types of web cast streaming in Windows Media Player format: high-speed (220 kbps) or low-speed (56 kbps), for users to choose from depending on their computer set-up. Nearly 60% chose the high-speed stream.

Preliminary Assessment

The live web cast, as well as the related video-on-demand materials, allowed interested individuals from around the world to watch the proceedings, unedited. The HSO web cast both the official proceedings and the meeting between civil society representatives and ministers. The 5,000 people who watched the web cast saw what the leaders were actually saying. The HSO made available the Declaration and Action Plan worldwide within 20 minutes of the leaders signing it. Television broadcast of a press event is ephemeral, whereas with the web cast archives and video-on-demand, people can continue to visit and re-visit the official speeches and other related materials. The web cast transmitted all information in the four official languages of the Summit of the Americas (English, French, Spanish and Portuguese). The web cast was "floor sound" meaning that the recording took place in whatever language the speaker spoke.

There are a few drawbacks. Still in its infancy, web casting an event is very expensive. Because of the relative high level of computer capacity required (computer systems with speakers, audio and video capacity, and the appropriate "plug-ins"), the web cast is not accessible to all Internet users. It would be useful to add instructions on the website where the web cast is carried out on how to download media plug-ins.

Endnotes

1. AmericasCanada.org. <http://www.americascanada.org/about/menu-e.asp> (29 May 2001).
2. Based on email correspondence from 28 May 2001 with Wendy M. Zatylny, Deputy Director Multimedia, Programming & Promotions Hemisphere Summit Office, Canada. E-mail: wendy.zatylny@dfait-maeci.gc.ca.

References

AmericasCanada.Org is the official website of the III Summit of the Americas:
<http://www.AmericasCanada.org>. Site users can access information in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Summit information is available at <http://www.ameriquescanada.org/eventsummit/menu-e.asp>

Videos are available from the Screening Room.

<http://www.ameriquescanada.org/screeningroom/event/event-e.asp>

Contacts

Office of the Summit of the Americas, 2001
900 Place d'Youville, 6th floor
Québec City, Québec, Canada G1R 3P7

Marc Lortie
Senior Coordinator - Federal-Provincial Relations
Foreign Affairs and International Trade
Senior Coordinator for Federal-Provincial Relations
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada
K1A 0G2
Phone (613) 944-0382

Mr. Marc Lortie, the Prime Minister's personal representative, had overall responsibility for the Summit. He guided the preparations for the Summit, which included the development of Canadian policy and event logistics.

The Hemisphere Summit Office
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0G2
Email: mediainfo@americascanada.org

Wendy M. Zatylny
Deputy Director
Multimedia, Programming & Promotions
Hemisphere Summit Office, Canada
Phone: (613) 944-5233
E-mail: wendy.zatylny@dfait-maeci.gc.ca

Idea: Access to Information

Tool: Policy on Disclosure of Information in Three Organizations

Summary

The following breakdown of disclosure of information (DOI) policy uses the World Bank (WB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the Scottish Human Rights Centre (SHRC) as examples of organizations with effective disclosure policies.

Background

In the past, national governments have been pressured to make the disclosure of information a requirement and the access to information a right. International organizations are now being pressured to expand their disclosure policies and increase their institutional transparency. Some organizations such as the WB and the EBRD have made significant efforts to increase the number of documents for public access.

Currently, the WB is reviewing its Public Consultation on WB Policy on Information Disclosure; it is to be revised and presented to the WB Board for consideration in July 2001. The EBRD revised its Public Information Policy in 2000 to broaden the scope of information it will disclose to the public. As a national example, Scotland's HRC recently proposed a Freedom of Information (FOI) Act to promote accountability in government and to establish a general statutory right of access to official records and information.

Method

There are several elements to consider when designing a DOI policy.

Information Categories

The most appropriate information categories should be devised, depending on the amount of published information and the public's interest in it.

EBRD: Information on policies and strategies includes Draft and Final Sectoral Policies, Final Country Strategies, and Medium-to Long-term Strategies. Project-specific information includes Project Summary Documents, Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects, and Public Sector Project Board Reports.

WB: Operational information includes Project Information Documents, Staff Appraisal Reports, Country Economic and Sector Work, Sectoral Policy Papers, and a few other documents. A separate category is provided for Environment-Related Documents; Project Data; Financial Information; Economics and Research; and Administration.

Each category and sub-category of disclosed information could follow different policies for release, for example, timing, cost, or access (see below).

Ensuring Compliance (EBRD)

- Commit staff to ensure that information is disclosed in a timely fashion.
- Encourage the "pro-active release" of information as this will help to create a more open culture. Give guidance when this is acceptable.

- Issue a management report to the Board on implementation of the policy on a regular basis.
- Perform ongoing reviews, especially concerning the terms of “confidentiality” with an intention to increase disclosure.
- Make each department responsible for implementing the policy to ensure accountability.

Exceptions for Disclosure

The WB and the EBRD generally adhere to the same exceptions for disclosure:

- information that had been provided on the understanding that it is confidential, unless given explicit permission from originators;
- disclosure would violate the personal privacy of staff members or is considered privileged information, such as legal advice;
- disclosure could impede the integrity and impartiality of the deliberative process and the free exchange of ideas internally, or could seriously undermine policy dialogue with the concerned country;
- disclosure would be detrimental to the interests of the organization, its members or staff, or would violate law or national security;
- Board documents, unless approved by the Board;
- certain financial information, for prudential reasons; and
- disclosure would be impractical given excessive costs or logistics.

The EBRD narrows its exceptions in some cases:

- documents intended for internal use only;
- information related to procurement processes; and
- project evaluation reports for internal use only.

The SHRC proposes that certain information or content will be exempt. General information includes that relating to investigations, legal proceedings, health and safety purposes, or policy advice, while content-based exemptions can only be determined per document. The SHRC proposes that a “harm test” be undertaken for both types of exemptions to demonstrate whether or not disclosure would cause harm or prejudice or hinder the openness and accountability of work. If information is found to be harmful (“substantially prejudiced”), it should be severed from the document and the remaining information disclosed.

Accessibility

Hard-copy documents, such as manuals, books, reports, etc., can be made available through an ordering system using post, telephone/fax, or e-mail.

Electronic formats, such as web pages, downloadable documents, or pdf files, can be made available through the organization’s website.

Archives or information centres contain both electronic and hard copy documents. They usually provide all of the organization’s disclosed documents, including additional resources (see WB Public Information Centres below).

Disclosure of archival material is often more restricted due to maintenance costs. The WB allows public access to archival material that is at least 5 to 20 years old. The policy omits the following documents indefinitely, unless prior consent is given by the source:

- personal and medical records;
- records of internal staff grievances/appeals;
- documents subject to attorney-client privilege;
- documents that involve unreasonable disclosure of personal affairs;
- documents that appears defamatory;
- documents that might prejudice the safety of staff or property;
- documents that might prejudice a current investigation into breach of law; and
- documents that might have significant adverse effects on the organization, staff, or country relations.

The proposed WB policy also provides a public catalogue or bibliography of Archives content. Requests are made in writing and their eligibility is determined by the Archives staff, and when necessary by the Legal Department. Restricted access to the Archives is reviewed by request. There is general public access to the Archives reading room, which is supervised by staff. The WB provides for affordable remote access to Archives material for developing nations.

The SHRC proposes a code of practice to set out the best practices of record keeping in manual and electronic formats. It follows a 30-year rule for record keeping of previously determined documents, and believes that adequate resources are essential to coping with increasing costs and demands.

Reviews and Appeals

The SHRC recommends information offices be provided, with sufficient powers and resources to assess policy, questionable applications, and appeals. The applicant must be made aware of the right to appeal, and that the Information Commissioner's decision is final unless otherwise ordered by the judiciary. If the appeal is granted, information should be provided free of charge.

Neither the WB nor the EBRD have an appeal process; however, their policies allow for high-level reviews of denied or unprecedented applications.

Timely Processing of Applications

The SHRC recommends that the application procedure should be simple to operate and that applications should be processed within 20 working days. In complicated cases, a provision for an extended time period is allowed, but this needs to be clarified to avoid arbitrary delays. When the document is to be published in the future (less than 30 days), the application may be refused. Otherwise, it should be provided immediately.

The EBRD provides varying time limits on each document type.

- Sectoral Policies: Drafts are disclosed after pre-Board discussion by Directors and are posted for 45 days on the website (open to comments). Approved policies are posted on the site indefinitely.

- Country Strategies: After consultation with the concerned country(ies), they are posted on the website.
- Medium- to Long-term Strategies: After completion, they are released in a summary form and posted on the website.
- Project Summary Documents: Private-sector projects are released at least 30 days prior to Board consideration; public-sector projects at least 60 days before.
- Environmental Impact Assessments: The release period must follow national law, or EBRD's requirement of 120 days for public projects and 60 days for private projects.

Costs, Charges, and Budget

- Free-of-charge: The SHRC recommends that access to information that is already available or information requests that are considered simple should be free of charge to encourage greater public use. The EBRD and the WB websites provide much of the disclosed information without charge.
- Fees: The SHRC recommends that a minimal cost should be applied for complex requests, but only if information is actually provided. The EBRD and the WB do not have a set fee for processing applications.
- Flat-rate: The SHRC recommends that if fees are applied, a flat-rate should be applied across all information requests.
- Cost-sharing: When fees are applied, the SHRC recommends that they be below total cost.

The WB recommends making “innovative use of information technologies” to keep costs lower. In July 2000, its website received 230,000 visitors; they requested 238,000 lengthy publications.

Translation

Document translation is the most costly application for a DOI policy. However, it is essential to the principle of greater transparency that information not only be accessible, but also comprehensible to all stakeholders. The European Union (EU) has one of the most effective translation policies. It translates all disclosed documents in the languages of all EU member countries/nationalities.

The WB has no specific policy on what documents are translated and into how many languages. It publishes some documents in several languages, such as the DOI draft for Public Consultation (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish, and Portuguese). For those countries that have WB Public Information Centres, most documents are available in the local language. The WB recognizes that some documents “disclosed only in English are of no use to many affected people.”

The EBRD has 4 working languages of translation: French, English, German, and Russian. The 20 various languages used within the EBRD exceed its budget for translation. However, it reviews translation on a case-by-case basis with consideration given to the significance of the document for any one country and the associated costs.

References

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Public Information Policy. (2000). Available at: <http://www.ebrd.com/english/>

Public Consultation on the World Bank Policy on Information Disclosure. (2001). Available at:
<http://www.worldbank.org/html/pic/disclosure/index.htm>

Scottish Human Rights Centre. (2001). *Freedom of Information: An Open Scotland. A Response to the Consultation.* Available at: <http://www.shrc.dial.pipex.com/freeinf.htm>

World Bank Disclosure of Information Policy. (1997). Available at:
http://www.worldbank.org/html/pic/Dp_root.htm

Contacts

EBRD General Inquiries

Beverly Harrison

phone: 44-20-7-338-6372

fax: 44-20-7-338-6690

e-mail: harrisonb@ebrd.com

Infoshop

The World Bank's Development Bookstore

1818 H Street, NW; Room J1-060

Washington, DC 20433

Phone: (202) 458-5454

Fax: (202) 522-1500

E-mail: pic@worldbank.org

Scottish Human Rights Centre

Ionad Choirichean Dhaonna na h-Alba

146 Holland Street, Glasgow G2 4NG

Phone: 0141 332 5960

Fax: 0141 332 5309

E-mail: shrc@dial.pipex.com



Idea: Derestriction Policy

Tool: Derestriction of Executive Board Discussion Summaries, International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Summary

In recent years, the IMF has improved its information disclosure policies, based on the belief that much of the effort to strengthen international financial architecture involves heightening transparency by individual countries.¹ Moreover, the key to an efficient and stable international financial system is ensuring that all parties provide access to information and that decision making is transparent. To this end, the IMF has increased the amount of information available on IMF surveillance of member countries through the release of Public Information Notices (PINs).

Background

A key part of IMF surveillance of member countries' economies is the annual Article IV process; this produces summaries of the IMF Executive Board's discussions and the staff's assessment of each country. These reports – PINS – are published for over three-quarters of the IMF membership, and staff reports are published when the country concerned agrees. The onus for the release of PINs is placed on individual countries. As of the end of April 2001, 73 members had agreed to the publication of 86 such reports. PINs have been available since June 1999, when the IMF Board authorized their release.

Method

Although PINs vary in length, they all feature a similar format.

For an example of a PIN, see *IMF Concludes Article IV Consultation with the Lao People's Democratic Republic* at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2001/PN0140.HTM>

Preliminary Assessment

PINs are useful precedents for increasing transparency of IMF activities and internal policy deliberations. Their availability can encourage more widespread discussion and analysis of policies.

One challenge faced by the IMF in becoming more transparent is that it is accountable directly to member countries' governments, and thus its role as confidential adviser cannot be compromised. The IMF has identified other constraints:

“Becoming more transparent is, to a large extent, not technically difficult. But developing effective transparency – with the dissemination of good data, and transparent policy-formulation – involves a long-term effort to develop legal frameworks, administrative capacity and technical expertise. This will take time, especially in many developing countries. The work on devising the standards that will form part of the foundation of transparency is still in its early stages. In many areas, the relevant codes and standards have yet to be fully developed; and there are still many refinements to come in this area. The IMF is playing a role in these developments. And it also has a role to play in providing technical assistance in its areas of expertise to help countries achieve effective transparency, to their own benefit and the benefit of the world economy as a whole.”²

PINs from 1997 to 2001 are easily accessible at the IMF home page. They only appear in English. It would more useful if individual countries published PINs in their national language.

Endnotes

1. IMF (2001, March 9), *Reforming the International Financial Architecture – Through 2000*. At: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/ib/2001/030901.htm> (May 3, 2001).
2. IMF (2001, April), *Transparency*. At: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/ib/2001/042601b.htm> (May 3, 2001).

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Development Research and Policy Analysis Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. *Progress in Strengthening the International Financial Architecture*. At: <http://www.unescap.org/drpad/survey2000/annexv1.htm> (May 3, 2001).

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IMF. (2001, April). *Transparency*. At: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/ib/2001/042601b.htm> (May 3, 2001).

Idea: National Contact Points

Tool: Contact Points, Codex Alimentarius Commission

Summary

To facilitate continuous contact with member states, the Codex Commission, in collaboration with national governments, has established national Codex Contact Points. The Contact Points are responsible for disseminating all Codex documents to any interested party, in addition to facilitating input and dialogue with citizens.

Background

In 1963, the World Health Assembly approved the establishment of the joint Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) Program on Food Standards and adopted the statutes of the Codex Alimentarius. The Codex Alimentarius, or the food code, is a global reference point for food producers, consumers, and national food-control agencies. It formulates and harmonizes food standards and promotes their global implementation, and it provides for government input into the development of codes for hygienic-processing practices and recommendations on compliance with those standards. The code has had an enormous impact on food producers and processors, as well as on the end users – the consumers. The importance of food to every citizen necessarily means that the Codex Commission must inform and seek input from all levels of society.

Method

The goals of the Codex Commission include:

- an increase in public awareness and understanding of the Codex standard-setting process;
- democratic and transparent processes in standards making and the full participation of all countries; and
- adequate representation of consumer interests and funding to enable consumer organizations to participate.

To meet these goals, most governments involved with the Codex Commission create a Contact Point, typically found within the ministry responsible for health and safety or agriculture. Although the Codex Secretariat disseminates all documents directly to international consumer groups and states, it also turns the information over to the Contact Points to disseminate to local interest groups.

Contact Points

The Codex Commission encourages each member country to establish a Contact Point within their national government. The Commission promotes their uniform operation by publishing core function in its Procedural Manual. These common functions include:

- receiving all Codex final texts (standards, codes of practice, guidelines, and other advisory texts) and working documents of Codex sessions, ensuring that they are circulated to those concerned within their own countries, and maintaining a library of Codex final texts;
- sending comments received on Codex documents and proposals to the Codex Commission, its subsidiary bodies, and/or the Codex Secretariat;
- working in close cooperation with the national Codex committee, where such a committee has been established. The Contact Point liaises with the food industry, consumers, traders, and all concerned others to ensure that the government is provided with an appropriate

- balance of policy and technical advice upon which to base its Codex-related decisions; and
- coordinating and promoting Codex activities throughout their own countries.

The Contact Point will vary from country to country, depending on the availability of funding, but as few as three full-time staff members are needed to operate one. If a website is to be maintained, additional technical staff will be required. A separate office may be set up or the work may be part of another government agency. There are significant expenses involved with copying and distributing Codex information. Consumer organizations, industry associations, professional health organizations, academic organizations, and other levels of government use the resources of the Contact Point to develop and submit comments on issues relevant to them. Individual citizens may also submit their comments on Codex issues.

The Codex Commission has mandated that all documents must be sent to the Contact Points, that anyone can access them, and that anyone is free to comment on Codex policies. Comments are directed to the government department/agency with responsibility for developing draft positions on these issues.

The consultation on Codex issues is ongoing and the Contact Points actively seek out opinions; many use their websites to highlight the relevant Codex issues for which comments are being solicited. Several initiatives have been taken by various Contact Points to encourage further comment, including the following:

- Argentina has emphasized the creation of provincial Contact Points to work in concert with a central National Point;
- New Zealand has opened a discussion area on their website where citizens can open dialogues on Codex-related issues; and
- in Columbia, an organization that is participating in Codex work has a daily television slot to publicize Codex activities.

Preliminary Assessment

The Codex Commission has been criticized for failing to assist in the training of consumer leaders on Codex issues and in the application and monitoring of the use of Codex standards at the national level, particularly in developing countries. There are also difficulties in obtaining funding for consumer participation in Codex activities. It appears that significant investment is needed in the Contact Point system to educate and facilitate participation. The problem is particularly relevant to developing nations, and more support is needed to maintain Contact Points in these countries.

Contact Points in some developing nations only provide Internet-based information in English, which suggests a lack of focus in informing local consumers on Codex activities. As well, the Contact Points have been criticized for informing foreign industrial groups to a greater extent than their own citizens.

References

Codex Commission – Main Page
<http://www.codexalimentarius.net/>

Contact Points

United States – <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/codex/>

Canada – <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/english/codex/index.html>

Denmark – <http://www.vfd.dk/>

Croatia – <http://www.dznm.hr/>

Lebanon – <http://www.libnor.com/>

Contact

Patrick J. Clerkin

Associate United States Manager for Codex

United States Department of Agriculture

4861 South Building, 1400 Independence Ave, SW

Washington, DC 20250-3700

Phone: 202-690-4042

E-mail: patrick.clerkin@usda.gov



Idea: Open Evaluations

Tool: External Evaluations of Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility, International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Summary

Independent evaluators conducted evaluations of the IMF's Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) programs. Program operations were assessed and recommendations for improving the ESAF design were offered. All information was made public to contribute to IMF transparency and to help the public understand the role of ESAF programs. Supported recommendations led to specific proposals for the Executive Board to consider for future programs.

Background

Following considerable debate on the effectiveness of ESAF in bringing about poverty-alleviating growth, the IMF Executive Board decided that an external evaluation, using a case study approach, should complement the internal review done by its Policy Development and Review Department. The external evaluation was to complement IMF internal evaluations, with the goal of securing fresh, independent views on IMF policies relating to ESAF that were not limited by institutional constraints.

Method

Four evaluators were appointed by the IMF Executive Board to consider the views of concerned country authorities and social partners, parliamentarians, multilateral development banks, bilateral donors, non-governmental organizations, academic experts, and IMF executive directors and staff. The final evaluation, based on the case studies, was jointly prepared by the four evaluators.

Initially, the four evaluators met to discuss administrative arrangements and to conduct preliminary discussions with IMF staff and with members of the Evaluation Group of Executive Directors, who were responsible for overseeing their work. They met a second time to reach final agreement on country sampling and other procedural matters. They then attended and participated in an Executive Board meeting.

A program of country visits was conducted over the course of three months. The method of evaluation was based on surveys in the field (a cross-section of stakeholders were interviewed) and on IMF documents and other available literature.

The external evaluation conducted by the evaluators focused on three topics:

1. developments in countries' external position during ESAF-supported programs;
2. social policies and the composition of government spending during ESAF-supported programs; and
3. determinants and influence of differing degrees of national ownership of ESAF-supported programs.

The evaluators were given unrestricted access to IMF staff reports, internal memoranda and studies, existing data bases, briefing papers, debriefing reports, and other communication with management, in addition to minutes of Executive Board meetings. They were free to request relevant information from country authorities and other sources outside the IMF.

The evaluators were also responsible for the selection of country cases, subject to the following guidelines:

- a) number of countries for each topic studied should be in the range of 4 to 7;
- b) groups of countries should be geographically diverse; and
- c) sample should contain both strong and weak performing countries.

Preliminary Assessment

The criticisms and recommendations of this first-ever external evaluation of ESAF were made public, as was the IMF's response to the evaluation. Both the report and all responses are available on the Internet. Although the IMF did not endorse all the views expressed by the evaluators, it agreed that their recommendations provided fresh and different perspectives, and broadened the debate surrounding the improvement of ESAF programs.

References

Botchwey, K., Collier, P., Gunning, J. W., and Hamada, K. (1998, January 13). *Report of the Group of Independent Persons Appointed to conduct an Evaluation of Certain Aspects of the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility*. Available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/ESAF/evaluat.htm>

International Monetary Fund. (1997, March). *External Evaluation of the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) Terms of Reference*. Available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/ESAF/termsref.htm>

International Monetary Fund. (1998, March 11). Statement by Mr. Esdar, Chairman of the Evaluation Group of Executive Directors, on the Report of the External Evaluation of the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility Executive Board Meeting. Available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/ESAF/stmnt.htm>

Idea: Website to Facilitate Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Access

Tool: NGO Liaison Office (NGLS) , United Nations

Summary

In an attempt to enhance the interaction between the UN and NGOs and the participation of NGOs in UN activities and processes, the NGO Liaison Office (NGLS) created a website (www.unsystem.org/ngls). It executes a broad information outreach, publications, and communications program.

Method

Information on the NGLS website is easily accessible. It is provided in English, French, and Spanish, and is divided into 10 main sections, as follows.¹

1. **Go Between*. This is the NGLS newsletter, which provides system-wide information on the activities of the UN, on UN-NGO cooperation, and on NGO activities. Published six times a year, it is distributed both electronically and in hard copy to some 6,000 NGOs and 1,000 members of the international community worldwide. Issues are available from 1997 onwards.
2. **Roundup*. This series of publications (about 12 editions per year) monitors and reports in-depth on UN events, activities, and issues. Follow-up to the UN world conferences in the respective commissions of ECOSOC is included. Issues are available from 1996 onwards.
3. **Environment and Development File*. This series of in-depth briefing papers (4 to 5 editions a year) monitors and reports on sustainable development issues and follow-up to the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development. Issues are available from 1994 onwards.
4. *NGLS Handbook*. This publication, updated every two years, provides in-depth profiles of UN agencies, programs, and funds that work for economic and social development. In addition to information on each agency and its work program, the handbook describes how UN agencies cooperate with NGOs.
5. *Voices from Africa*. This series of publications was conceived as a vehicle to enable African NGOs and development activists to present their experiences, views, and proposals on Africa's development "problematique" to the international community. An edition is published every 12 to 18 months, and each edition is constructed around a broad theme. By giving Africans the opportunity to express their views to an international readership, the series seeks to provide a useful input to northern development education and information activities.
6. *Development Dossiers*. Another series of publications, this one allows independent development thinkers and activists to analyze and discuss major issues on the international development agenda. NGLS publishes at least one Development Dossier per year.
7. *@ Ease with E-mail*. This handbook on how to use electronic mail is for NGOs in developing countries. Computer-based communications through e-mail, bulletin board systems, computer conferencing and networking, and on-line data bases offer a modern, effective, and affordable communications toolkit with which to share information, network, and solicit participation. The handbook explains basic terms and concepts, offers advice and contacts, lists existing computer communications networks and local e-mail service providers, and suggests ways to benefit from these communication tools.
8. *Gender on the Agenda*. This guide provides specific and practical information on how UN world conferences operate and how NGOs can enhance their participation in them.

9. *Fact Sheets/Guides*. These are guides to NGO participation in selected UN events.
10. *Guide for NGOs*. This directory (with one to two pages for each organization) provides basic information (pdf format) on the work of the entire UN system, including contact points for NGOs. It is updated about every two years.

* These publications are available in Adobe Acrobat Reader (pdf) format and plain text versions (txt). Earlier issues can be received by contacting the NGLS office in Geneva or by searching the APC conference at “ngls.news”.

In addition, the website has hyperlinks as follows:

1. *About*: background information on NGLS;
2. *Calendar*: listing of location and contact details of UN meetings and upcoming events;
3. *Contact*: details of the Geneva and New York offices;
4. *Links*: to the UN home page and UN agencies.

Preliminary Assessment

The NGLS is effective, reliable, and saves time and resources. Three main features of the NGLS website stand out as successful. *Voices from Africa* ensures that African NGOs have their own section to voice their concerns. The *Fact Sheets/Guides* provide support to NGOs wishing to participate in selected UN events. Finally, the *Guide for NGOs* provides useful contact points for NGOs.

Endnote

1. NGLS. This information is drawn from: <http://www.unsystem.org/ngls/documents/publications.en/index.htm> (May 24, 2001).

References

NGLS Website: www.unsystem.org/ngls.

Contacts

NGLS Office in New York
 UN-NGLS
 Room DC1-1106, United Nations
 New York, NY 10017, USA
 Phone: 1(212) 963-3125
 Fax: 1(212) 963-8712
 E-mail: ngls@un.org
ngls@undp.org
ngls@igc.apc.org

Tony Hill
 Coordinator, NGLS
 UN-NGLS
 Palais des Nations
 CH 1211 Geneva 10,
 Switzerland
 Phone: (4122) 917-2076
 Fax: (4122) 917-0049
 E-mail: ngls@unctad.org

Idea: Accessible Documents

Tool: Website Posting of Documents for Public Viewing and Commentary,
International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Summary

As part of an initiative to increase transparency, the IMF posts several types of documents on its website for public viewing and commentary. Prepared by IMF member countries, these documents set forth their policy intentions regarding the use of IMF resources or staff-monitored programs.

Method/Usage

The following documents are prepared by, and made available on the IMF website, through an agreement with each member country.

- *Letters of Intent/Memoranda of Economic and Financial Policies* describe the policies that a country intends to implement in the context of its request for financial support from the IMF.
- The *Policy Framework Paper* series ended in January 2000, but is still posted on the website. Prepared in collaboration with the staffs of the IMF and the World Bank (WB), these documents outline the member government's economic objectives and macroeconomic and structural policies for three-year adjustment programs that use ESAF resources. The documents are also related to external investment needs and major funders.
- *Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (I-PRSPs)* summarize the current assessment of a country's economic situation, describe its existing poverty reduction strategy, and detail how it plans to produce a fully developed PRSP in participation with stakeholders.
- *Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)*, prepared in collaboration with the WB, the IMF, and civil society, outline the national strategy for a country's macroeconomic, structural, and social policies over a three-year economic adjustment program that encourages growth and reduces poverty. These papers are updated annually.

All documents can be viewed on the website either according to individual country submissions or by date of submission (in consecutive order, from most recent). Country submissions are posted for approximately every two weeks (depending on frequency of submission) from 1996 to the present. Any documents submitted before 1996 are stored in the IMF Archives; IMF permission is required to search the Archives. Most text is only posted in English.

Format of Documents

Although each country submits its own documents, the IMF requires a standard format, as follows.

Each Letter of Intent/Memoranda is to be preceded by the following statement:

The following item is a Letter of Intent of the government of [country name here], which describes the policies that [country name here] intends to implement in the context of its request for financial support from the IMF. The document, which is the property of [country name here], is being made available on the IMF website by agreement with the member as a service to users of the IMF website.

The web page contains a formal letter addressed to the Managing Director, dated and signed by the Minister or representative(s) of the government responsible for submitting the document. There is also an on-line survey on Letters of Intent/Memoranda for website users.

Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are to be preceded by the following statement:

Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (I-PRSPs), prepared by member countries, summarize the current knowledge and assessment of a country's poverty situation, describe the existing poverty reduction strategy, identify gaps in poverty data, diagnostics, and monitoring capacity, and lay out the process for addressing these gaps and producing a fully developed Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in a participatory fashion. This country document is being made available on the IMF website by agreement with the member country as a service to users of the IMF website.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are to be preceded by the following statement:

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are prepared by member countries in broad consultation with stakeholders and development partners, including the staffs of the World Bank and the IMF. Updated every three years with annual progress reports, they describe the country's macroeconomic, structural, and social policies in support of growth and poverty reduction, as well as associated external financing needs and major sources of financing. This country document is being made available on the IMF website by agreement with the member country as a service to users of the IMF website.

The web page for these submissions specifies who submitted the paper and on what date. A table of contents is listed and a full-text version is available with Adobe Acrobat Reader (size of file is noted). Comments on these papers can be submitted to the office responsible for PRSPs (prsp@imf.org).

The full paper is posted on the web page with a link to each new chapter/section. There is an option to view additional information, for example, tables and charts, in Adobe Acrobat Reader. As well, some of the papers are published in the national language in addition to English.

Example

An example of these documents is available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/NP/LOI/2001/ltu/01/INDEX.HTM>

Preliminary Assessment

The IMF has worked to increase the transparency of its and its member countries' documents. Given the immense pressure by civil society to disclose documents in a timely fashion, the IMF's on-line approach works well. The website is clearly laid out, user-friendly, loads quickly, and streamlines

searches by limiting posted information to the most recent. Restricting information to electronic format and English version only keeps maintenance costs low and updates undemanding. However, as a general concern with any single medium of information distribution, those without Internet access cannot easily retrieve these documents. Furthermore, the number of people who can understand the documents is limited due to the English only restriction. Allowing website users to e-mail comments to the relative IMF offices is an easy way of further increasing civil society participation, although it may be perceived as a trifling gesture in the face of more effective participation tools. The website does not offer enough contact information for IMF staff or country representatives, despite the disclosure of names on country letters of intent and memoranda.

References

IMF Website: *Country Intention Documents*.

<http://www.imf.org/external/np/loi/mempub.asp>

Contacts

International Monetary Fund,
700 19th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20431
Phone: (202) 623-7000
Fax: (202) 623-4661
E-mail: publicaffairs@imf.org

IMF General Inquiries
Phone: (202) 623-7300
Fax: (202) 623-6278



Idea: Accessible Non-Governmental Organization Database

Tool: Database of United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Summary

To effectively consult non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a list of names and contacts of organizations must be maintained. Currently, 2,049 NGOs have consultative status with ECOSOC (UN Economic and Social Council) alone, and there are thousands more who are willing to participate. The challenge is to create a useful database that will serve the consultation mechanism by allowing the user to target those NGOs that have the most input to offer.

Background

The maintenance of a representative, accurate, easy-to-update, and accessible database on NGOs can be an asset, not only to the organization that maintains it but also to those who can access it. An NGO database that is funded and maintained by a large organization can be essential for smaller organizations that need the same information but lack the resources to create their own data base. In this way, NGOs who are not consulted on a regular basis can use the database to find an organization that is consulted, and contribute directly to it.

A database is only as useful as the information it holds, and there are techniques available to ensure that it is more than an unorganized stack of folders. Information technology and the Internet are the most preferred way to quickly organize and disseminate large amounts of information, but significant start-up costs are involved and access will be limited to areas where the Internet is commonly available. Although no one database exemplifies all that a database should be, many have good ideas.

Method

The World Health Organization (WHO) directory provides a comprehensive look at each of the 193 NGOs in official relations with it. It summarizes each group's location, budget, language, staffing, membership, activities, publications, and any affiliations or joint project the group is involved in. Most important, it has a direct contact to the NGO member in charge of WHO activities and lists all past contributions the group has made to WHO.

Organization of the information increases the potential utility of the database. For instance, the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) database allows a user to search 1,468 NGOs alphabetically, by region or by subject. As the amount of information increases, so too do the possible search criteria. NGOs could be listed in a broad category such as environmental, then narrowed further to wildlife, and further still to specific animals. If subject queries were combined with regional searches, it would be possible to accurately locate the best NGO for a given purpose. Access to the database is another factor that reflects its content. Universal access is the most useful method and the Internet is a relatively inexpensive option to make a computer-based database accessible. The DPI database incorporates links to contact persons and websites of each NGO where available, and the entire database is downloadable, which offsets the need for constant Internet connection.

The CIVICUS database is not a list of NGOs as such, but rather a list of 40 countries, which describes the current state of civil society in each country. Recognizing that every database is in a constant state of evolution, new groups and new information on existing NGOs must be continually

monitored. Thus, at each entry, CIVICUS provides a link to comment on or update the information contained in it. Its database also offers the name of the author of the entry and a link to contact that person directly to discuss any problems with the information. CIVICUS also provides links to useful background readings and resources that can provide further information to the user.

Preliminary Assessment

Using a database on NGOs to focus consultation efforts is necessary to ensure consultation resources are used efficiently. However, those accessing a database created by another organization should exercise caution. The information will be tailored to the membership and could have a particular orientation.

References

CIVICUS Index on Civil Society – Home Page
<http://www.civicus.org/pages/regions1.html>

UN DPI NGO Directory
<http://www.un.org/MoreInfo/ngolink/ngodir.htm>

WHO Directory of NGOs in Official Relations
<http://www.who.int/ina-ngo/>

Contacts

Volkhart Finn Heinrich
Global Project Coordinator-CIVICUS Index on Civil Society
Ringlestrasse 26,
60385 Frankfurt,
Germany
Phone: 49-69-4800-8977
Fax: 49-69-4800-8978
E-mail: finn.civicus@t-online.de

Idea: Access to Staff and Information

Tool: Public Information Centres, World Bank (WB)

Summary

Located in Washington, DC, the WB *InfoShop* is the coordinating office and website for all Public Information Centres (PIC) around the world. It maintains country offices and libraries that provide country-specific project documents. In addition, PIC Europe (Paris) and PIC Japan (Tokyo) offer WB “operational documents” for all member countries and libraries, as well as all recent WB publications.

Method

InfoShop

Located near WB headquarters in Washington, DC, the *InfoShop* is essentially a “one-stop shop.” It is designed to attract a broad range of WB customers, including researchers, companies, nongovernmental organizations, embassies, international organizations (IOs), and the general public. It also coordinates and develops the network between all of the country office PICs.

InfoShop provides a resource centre, with information assistants who answer questions, give guidance on WB resources, connect customers to experts, and provide bibliographic information. Personnel also customize presentations for groups or individuals on WB disclosure policy, project cycle, and related documentation. There are computer terminals that access WB CD-ROMs and websites.

Country Offices

A PIC is located in every country office, which are found in most WB member countries. Country office PICs provide public reports on the country and on the region, a library of recent bank publications, and a website, in most cases. All information is accessible in English, and often the local language as well.

For further information, see <http://www.worldbank.org/pic/eca.htm> which provides a complete list of contact information for country office PICs.

*PIC Europe and Tokyo*¹

The PICs in Paris and Tokyo provide the following services:

- general information on the WB and its projects;
- operational/project documents for consultation and for sale,² and WB publications and CD-ROMs, which can be purchased from a local distributor or on the Internet;
- two computer stations for viewing WB websites and CD-ROMs;
- a Help Desk for telephone, mail, and e-mail inquiries;
- a website providing links to:
 - information kiosks (see below)
 - country-specific libraries
 - purchasing publications
 - publications on Europe or Japan, respectively
 - other European or Japanese contacts, respectively
 - FAQs on projects, countries, sectors, data, the WB, etc.

- other documents such as the WB Disclosure Policy and Archives
- a website search tool.

These services are free of charge, except for copying fees. Hours of operation are Monday to Friday, 9:30-10:00 am to 5:00 pm (2:00 pm in Paris for visitors; telephone calls are answered until 5:00 pm). Each country respects its own national and religious holidays.

Information Kiosks

These are a recent addition to the PIC network (established Feb-March 2001). Linked to PIC Europe, they are self-service information bureaus for Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Belgium. The kiosks are located in national centres, such as the German Foundation for International Development, the Trade Partners UK Information Centre, or WB country offices. The level of service and resources available varies between offices.³ However, generally they offer the following services in English and the local language (with instructions where needed):

- a display of a selection of WB publications and documents;
- general information on the WB;
- access to the WB external website, the sites linked to PIC Europe/Japan and *InfoShop*, and CD-ROMs; and
- brochures on the WB (general, project cycle, etc.).

The WB also provides a Business Information Kiosk as part of its Private Sector Liaison Office (PSLO), relating to the WB Enterprise Outreach Service.⁴

All services are free of charge, except for copying fees. Operating hours follow the regular business hours of the respective country.

Example

Country Office PIC for Indonesia

www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/regions.htm

The PIC in Jakarta provides over 5,000 publications, including a library collection. The main types of documents are:

1. Economic and Sector Reports
2. Environmental Analysis
3. Environmental Assessments
4. Loan & Credit Agreements
5. Operational Policies and Bank Procedures
6. Project Information Documents
7. Sector Policy Papers
8. Staff Appraisal Reports
9. World Bank Annual Report
10. World Development Report
11. World Development Indicators
12. Global Development Finance, and others.

A comprehensive website offers information and links on the following topics:

- background information on the WB and its PICs;
- statistics on WB loans, visitors, and inquiries for July 1999-June 2000 in a downloadable format for Excel software;
- types of resources in the PIC collections;
- a catalogue and classification of all books and documents
 - the catalogue is stored electronically using Global JOLIS, a new web-software database located in the WB Library Network at: <http://jolis.worldbankimflib.org/external.htm>

The following services are provided: reference inquiry, photocopy service, Internet use, CD-Rom searches, video viewing, and assistance with links on information available from WB Headquarters.

There are seven depository libraries in Indonesia at: Jakarta (Atmadjaja University Library, The National Library, Parliament Library); Bogor (IPB University Library); Bandung (ITB Library); Surabaya (Surabaya Institute of Technology/ITS); and Ujung Pandang (Hasanuddin University Library). Depository libraries receive about 300 official WB publications per year, while regional libraries receive about 40 titles, consisting of all major annual publications and any official publications specific to the library's geographic region. All publications can be ordered through the *InfoShop* or on line, and Indonesia has two book distributors that can assist with the order as well. The Jakarta PIC holds a wide selection of newspaper clippings in Bahasa Indonesian and English on development-related issues (mostly from local papers and from the *Asian Wall Street Journal & International Herald Tribune*). The Jakarta office subscribes to 14 independent periodicals and 8 local/national newspapers.

Preliminary Assessment

A PIC can be implemented as an elaborate and comprehensive centre, such as the *InfoShop*, or as a simple self-serve model such as the European information kiosks.

There are limitations to language and translation: the country PIC cannot choose the language of publication for documents. Some WB country offices, such as the one located in Bosnia, only publish documents in English, which limits the WB's claim to greater transparency and the public's understanding of its policies and projects.

Costs can be an inhibiting factor. The WB Tokyo Office has only one full-time staff member assigned to the PIC, resulting in long waits or unanswered telephone calls. The Tokyo PIC recommends making inquiries by e-mail or fax. If the PIC is understaffed, additional means of communication must be implemented.

As well, deciding on the location and number of PICs can be problematic. While some areas have an acceptable number for the level of WB activity in the region, there is only one office for the Middle East and North Africa, one for Latin America and the Caribbean, and two for South Asia. This severely limits the public's access to WB information, especially in regions where the Internet is not widely available. Countries with limited access to Internet/computer services may have difficulty locating the nearest PIC.

Endnotes

1. The Toyko website is only available in Japanese. The Europe website is available in French and English.
2. Certain documents are available for copying with an at-cost fee. They can be bought at the respective PIC or ordered by mail, e-mail, or fax (see References/Contacts).
3. More complex inquiries are directed to PIC Europe.
4. Launched in January 1999, EOS is an initiative to bring the WB closer to companies in Europe, most notably SMEs.

Contacts

DSE Deutsche Stiftung für internationale Entwicklung

World Bank Information Kiosk

Tulpenfeld 5

D-53113 Bonn

Germany

Phone: +49 - 228 2434-5

Fax: +49 - 228 2434-766

E-mail: biblio@dse.de

website: <http://www.dse.de/zd/>

Public Information Centre (Europe)

The World Bank

66 avenue d'Iéna

75116 Paris Cedex

Phone: 33 1 40 69 30 26

Fax: 33 1 40 69 30 69

E-mail: pparis@worldbank.org

website: <http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/EURVP/web.nsf/Pages/PIC%2bHome%2bPage>

Public Information Center (Jakarta)

Jakarta Stock Exchange Building

Tower 2, 13th Floor

Sudirman Business District Center (SCBD)

Jl Jenderal Sudirman Kav. 52-53

Jakarta 12910

Phone: 62 21 - 5299 3000; 5299 3146

Fax: 62 21 - 52993111

E-mail: wsonda@worldbank.org

contact person: Endang W. Sonda (Wiwiek), Librarian

Trade Partners UK

search: World Bank Information Kiosk

website: <http://www.tradepartners.gov.uk/index.html>

World Bank InfoShop

701 18th Street, N.W. E-mail: pic@worldbank.org (also for presentation bookings)

Washington, DC, USA website: <http://www.worldbank.org/html/pic/PIC.html>

Idea: Access to Staff - Comprehensive Contact List

Tool: Directory, World Bank (WB)

Summary

The World Bank has an extensive and well organized contact list of its experts and senior staff, as well as its regional, country and media contacts, all available to the public on their internet website.

Method

There are two major sites that provide information for the public on how to contact staff members and World Bank offices. The first is the *Contacts and Locations* website, which details contact information on *Bank experts* (sorted by topic, as well as by name), *senior staff*, *media contacts*, *regional media contacts in Washington, D.C.*, *Western Europe and Asia contacts*, and *country contacts* for more than 100 of their member countries worldwide. The site also features the *General Inquiries* information for the World Bank, including its street address, telephone and fax numbers, and a link to a comprehensive *list of advisory services* and *sector/topical help desks*. The second is the *Feedback* website, where questions on finding on-line information can be submitted, and a section on *Frequently asked questions and shortcuts* is available.

Preliminary Assessment

The list of contacts is numerous and informative, with e-mail addresses being provided for each contact, and in most cases telephone numbers that can provide direct contact with the staff members and offices in question. The information is easy to locate, being made available in lists sorted by countries, regions, seniority of important staff members, and by sector. The *Feedback* section is particularly useful as a tool to locate contacts, a service specifically designed to provide advice on the navigation of the site.

References

The World Bank Group-Contact Information and Locations

<http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/gen.htm>

Feedback Website

<http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/institutional/EFeedBk.nsf/MainTopic>



Idea: On-line Dialogue

Tool: Open Discussion with Scholars and Trade Experts, World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank (WB)

Summary

The WTO and the WB invited government officials, business representatives, students, NGOs, and other parties interested in trade matters to participate in a month-long on-line forum on “Trade and Sustainable Development,” beginning on October 23, 2000.

Background

In order to provide informed debate on global trade issues, the WTO, in collaboration with the WB, set up an on-line forum where any interested person could post questions and provide commentary on trade and sustainable development issues. Experts and scholars carrying out studies on these issues from 15 universities and research centres across the globe answered questions from all forum participants. The project was the first initiative of the WTO Network, which links the organization with universities and research centres to build and disseminate knowledge on international trade issues. This free exchange of knowledge and experience between various academics and the public at large was a catalyst for fomenting lively discussion. The Trade and Sustainable Development Forum had been preceded by six different forums, on topics ranging from financial services to regionalism.

Method

The forum was divided into 2 two-week discussions. The first two weeks centered on the effects of trade and poverty, while the final two weeks focused on how to ensure that trade and the environment are mutually supportive. To provide suitable background knowledge for the forum, as well as introduce participants to the work of some of the contributing academics, a number of supporting documents were available on the forum’s website, located at www.itd.org/forums/tsdfor.htm. These documents covered many aspects of trade and its connection with poverty and the environment and added to the informed nature of the discussion.

Throughout the month-long forum over 1,300 people contributed their thoughts and questions. While the first two-week segment drew many more contributions than the final segment, in both cases the forum provided a strong medium for thoughtful discourse. A summary of the questions fielded from both segments has been posted on the forum’s website and is sorted under different topical headings. For example, the section on trade and poverty is broken down into subheadings on poverty, inequality and the WTO; technical standards and poverty; why developing countries should participate in a new round of WTO negotiations; democracy and the WTO; and individual country cases. Trade and the environment is split into three different classifications: environment and trade; continuation on poverty, inequality and free trade; and trade and competition.

Example

Some examples of the questions and responses to them from the Trade and Sustainable Development Forum follow.

Trade and Poverty

1. Poverty, Inequality and the WTO

Q: from uzairahson@soon.com

How can the WTO contribute to give the fruits of free trade directly to the poor communities who are poor because of the bad mechanism of distributive justice in most of the LDC's?

A: from Prof. Alan Winters of the University of Sussex

As you are aware, the WTO does not have any direct influence on countries' distributive systems. This is far too sensitive a national issue to be the subject of an international agreement. It does, however, have some indirect influence on the incomes of the poor.

By helping to provide encouraging and stable conditions for international trade, the WTO contributes to the creation of wealth and income. Unless governments actively expropriate the disadvantaged, at least some of this will flow through to the poor in their countries despite starting off with unattractive distributive shares. The evidence suggests that, ON AVERAGE, the poor do as well from economic growth as everybody else, including growth stimulated by international trade liberalization and openness. As growth occurs it will eventually become evident in these countries that excluding a large share of the population from active and enthusiastic participation in the economy has major costs in terms of output and income forgone. Also by encouraging trading relations, and hence contact, between countries, the WTO helps governments and people in developing countries see the benefits accruing to countries where distribution encourages everyone to participate fully in economic activity.

4. Democracy and the WTO

Q: from Mara_Burr@deweyballantine.com

My name is Mara Burr and I am an attorney in Washington, DC specializing in international trade.

A: There are a number of problems with the WTO-lack of meaningful public participation, lack of transparency, the inconsistent way in which panels and the Appellate body have dealt with disputes, and the problem of balancing domestic environmental concerns/measures with international trade obligations.

The mandated review of the dispute settlement system did not result in agreement on how to improve or amend the current system. As a result of the failed dsu review, the problems that caused many groups to feel shut out of the system still exist. It seems clear that at least the "real parties in interest" whether those parties are the affected industry or non-governmental organizations should have access to the system (even if only as an observer). Are there ongoing efforts to deal with these issues in a meaningful way? Can we expect any sort of agreement in the near future?

Trade and the Environment

1. Environment and Trade

*contribution by Dr. Rashid Hasan, Additional Director, Ministry of Environment and Forests, India

Trade and environment can be mutually supportive provided that the developed countries fulfill their obligations to help developing countries with positive measures such as capacity building, transfer of technology, financial support, etc. So far only lip service at various times has been provided, without any tangible results. The experts participating in the forum may enlighten me, how this support measure could be effectively and beneficially provided to the developing countries with suitable illustrations. The enhancement of capacity building in terms of human resource development,

technological and financial could go a long way in making trade and environment mutually supportive. It is without saying that institutions like the WTO, UNDP, World Bank, etc., have to play a very proactive role.

Preliminary Assessment

The WTO's Forum on Trade and Sustainable Development proved to be a successful venue for encouraging gainful participation in the debate on the impacts of global trade. The contribution made by the panel of trade experts, combined with the open nature of the Internet, made for a timely diffusion of academic insight into the nature of globalization and international financial institutions.

References

Trade and Development Centre - Trade and Development Discussion Forums
<http://www.itd.org/forums/forums.htm>

WTO News - 2000 News Items - WTO and World Bank open online forum on trade issues
http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news00_e/wto-wbforum_e.htm

Contact

Enquiries on Forums
E-mail: devitd@wto.org

