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**Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS):  
Issues and Case Studies**

Prepared by the PARIS21 Secretariat

**Background**

1. In an effort to promote effective collaboration among development partners in the field of statistics, the PARIS21 Secretariat along with a number of partners developed a Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS). The PRESS collects information on ongoing and future support to statistical development by financial and technical partners. The exercise is intended to enable an easier exchange of information on statistical activities being carried out and planned in recipient countries.
2. Results from the PRESS exercise can therefore be useful in designing the assistance programs of development partners, by minimizing the duplication of efforts (in line with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness). For recipient countries, they could serve as a basis to improve the mobilization of resources for the implementation of their national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS) by identifying possible financing sources in particular areas. PRESS will also be of use to national planners to formulate action plans for statistical development activities in the international context.
3. To date, two rounds of PRESS have been conducted. The most recent round (PRESS 2009) reflects the activities of 60 donors in 113 recipient countries as well as regional and global projects to multiple countries. The PARIS21 Secretariat published the 2009 results in a summary booklet and a full report with details by recipient country, partner, and statistical activity. In addition, a short note on PRESS 2009 methodology was issued. All documents are available for download at <http://www.paris21.org/pages/partnership/press/>.

**Issues to be Addressed**

4. In 2009, the CCSA raised several issues on the PRESS and requested case studies on how its data are used. The following section addresses these points.

***Low response rate***

5. Although the response rate from many of the key financial and technical partners to PRESS 2009 (60 respondents total) improved considerably relative to PRESS 2008 (46 respondents), a few of the major UN agencies (e.g., UNDP, WHO and UNFPA) were unable to respond. Headquarters staff in these agencies indicated that — because of their highly decentralized organization schemes and the absence of a “statistical development” program category in their

internal management information systems — they had difficulty responding to the PRESS questionnaire, which requests detailed information on statistical support at the country level.

6. For the 2010 Round, the Secretariat will supplement an extraction from the OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) with an online questionnaire (an SQL table with ASP front-end). Previous rounds relied on an Excel questionnaire, which was heavy and complicated for some respondents. The new version will be more user-friendly and powerful: users will be able to see their previous year's submission and simply update the pre-filled data directly into the database. This system will also make the selection of statistical activities less cumbersome and include lookup tables for recipient country names to facilitate the importing of data into the database.

7. This new interface will simplify responding to the questionnaire; however, it does not of course resolve the issue of decentralized data/activities. To address this point, the Secretariat proposes that partners either (i) share the link to the online questionnaire with their country delegations or (ii) share contact information for their delegations with the Secretariat. In the former case, it would be useful if the headquarters staff were to send a note of explanation/encouragement to their delegations. The PARIS21 Secretariat is willing to help prepare such a note.

### ***Double-counting***

8. Partners have highlighted the potential for double-counting in the PRESS. Bilateral funds channeled through a multilateral or sub-regional institution, for example, run the risk of being reported twice. To address this issue, the Secretariat modified the questionnaire to request information on the partner's project role, identifying the partner either as a lead donor, other donor, or implementer. This information enabled the PARIS21 Secretariat to more easily filter out potential double-counting in the 2009 Round. Nevertheless, the responses received are not always clear. Verification with both financial partners and intermediaries are therefore necessary and will be strengthened in the future.

9. Thanks to the questionnaire modification mentioned above, the Secretariat has been able to estimate that — of the US\$ 1.4 billion reported as commitments over the period 2007 to 2009 — a mere US\$ 8 million (0.57%) derived from more than one donor. In presenting PRESS data, the Secretariat nevertheless includes these “additional” US\$ 8 million when highlighting commitments to recipient countries or regions but removes the figures when calculating global totals.

### ***Commitments vs. disbursements***

10. At the CCSA's 14th session, the Committee expressed its concern over the reporting of actual disbursements in addition to commitments. The PRESS is viewed as a mechanism for reporting and coordination rather than as an accounting tool. Precise monetary values of donor interventions are secondary to the activities themselves — in fact, PRESS also captures non-financial activities that would be otherwise overlooked in any accounting system.

11. The PARIS21 Secretariat nevertheless proposes to continue requesting information on disbursements, as these data are useful to the recipient countries themselves. However, in light of the CCSA reticence, the Secretariat will hereafter present only disbursements in the reports of future rounds. In fact, already in the 2009 Round, the detailed tables of the full report display only

commitment information. Data on disbursements will be available only via the web interface (see paragraph 16 below).

### ***Case studies on the use of PRESS data – Eurostat Experience***

12. Eurostat has provided the Secretariat with some illustrative examples of their use of PRESS information. These case studies demonstrate the need for and usefulness of the PRESS exercise.

13. When participating in their Joint Annual Review, Eurostat routinely extracts all of the European Commission's current and past statistical activities — which are reported to the PRESS — and supplements them with PRESS details on activities from other partners. These data provide a solid context for evaluating country activities as well as commenting on indicative programs and strategy papers. Eurostat also consults PRESS information, when necessary, to inform their day-to-day correspondence with their EC colleagues in Brussels.

14. When contacted by partner countries seeking technical advice, Eurostat also draws on PRESS information. These data are forwarded to EC country desk officers and delegations in partner countries to ensure their support does not duplicate — and instead complements — the efforts of partner organizations. In addition, Eurostat forwards hard copies of the PRESS report to all EC delegations and members of Eurostat's Advisory Group. Eurostat staff also bring copies on mission to advocate for this type of reporting.

### **Next Steps**

15. The PARIS21 Secretariat will launch data collection activities in April/May for the 2010 PRESS Round. As with previous rounds, data collection will begin with an extraction and verification of CRS data. The online version of the questionnaire — intended to target those partners who do not report to the CRS and to provide an extra level of detail for those who do — will be active at that time.

16. Once data have been fully compiled in the second half of 2010, the Secretariat will issue a full report and summary booklet presenting results. Data will be made available on the PARIS21 website via an interactive SQL database that the OECD is currently designing. Users will be able to download and manipulate data according to their own needs. This interface will be the sole means through which users will be able to access data on disbursements (as mentioned above).

17. The Secretariat intends to work directly with one or two recipient countries to complete the questionnaire from their perspective. This will enable the PRESS to develop a more accurate picture of the reality of statistical support to countries. Results will be included in the full report.

18. The Secretariat took note of the CCSA's preference for annual PRESS reports and therefore produced a full report for the PRESS 2009<sup>1</sup> and will continue to produce similar reports annually. The Secretariat will also discuss with its Steering Committee the possibility of conducting further analyses of the data in the full reports.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.paris21.org/documents/3625.pdf>