

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
3 December 2010
WTO, Geneva

Opening remarks

1. The Chair of the meeting, Deputy Director-General Harsha V. Singh, welcomed participants and noted that the task for the Policy Committee was threefold: (i) to review the report on STDF's operations in 2010; (ii) to review and approve the new STDF Operating Plan for 2011; and (iii) to discuss the preparation of the new STDF strategy for 2012 and beyond.

Adoption of the agenda

2. The agenda was adopted. A list of participants is provided in Annex 1.

Opening statements by Policy Committee members

3. Ms Renata Clarke (FAO) conveyed regrets for the absence of Dr Modibo Traoré, Assistant Director-General of the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department of the FAO. Ms Clarke expressed her thanks to the STDF for providing a forum for the pooling of expertise on SPS issues and capacity development. She further indicated that the FAO Council recently expressed a desire to increase FAO's involvement in partnerships that do not compromise its neutrality. She reinforced FAO's commitment to the work of the STDF and indicated that she looked forward to an increased role of the STDF in coordination and collaborative initiatives with key partners.

4. Dr Alejandro Thiermann (OIE) presented OIE's capacity building activities in response to its Fifth Strategic Plan 2011-2015. Central to this new plan is improving animal health and welfare worldwide through strong veterinary governance and consolidating the major objectives and results of the Fourth Strategic Plan. He made reference to OIE-WHO-FAO collaboration and introduced OIE's present and future activities in the context of good governance, training of OIE delegates, and highlighted OIE's missions undertaken in relation to OIE-PVS, PVS-GAP Analysis and Veterinary Legislation. Preference will be given to activities linked to the STDF work plan, e.g. capacity building workshops and exercises in GAP analysis.

5. Dr Awa Aidera-Kane (WHO) conveyed regrets for the absence of the Assistant Director-General of the WHO. She informed participants of the appointment of a new Director of Food Safety, Mr Maged Younes, who looks forward to further collaboration with the STDF. She underscored the importance of standard-setting and capacity building activities. She highlighted the strengthening of diagnostic capacity in the area of food safety and noted that WHO's work in the area of zoonoses is important to the work of the STDF. She mentioned that STDF is a good platform for collaboration and expressed WHO's commitment in this regard.

6. Ms Gretchen Stanton (WTO) conveyed regrets for the absence of Mr Clem Boonenkamp, Director of the Agriculture and Commodities Division of the WTO. Ms Stanton gave a brief overview of the STDF, including the rationale for its creation, as well as a synopsis of STDF's role and its operations. In particular Aid for Trade and the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) are two important initiatives in the WTO, with close linkages to the STDF work. She expressed WTO's satisfaction with STDF's work and the results it is generating, notably within the broader context of results-based management. She highlighted that the WTO would support an increased focus of the Facility on coordination and information dissemination activities.

7. Ms Selina Jackson (World Bank) conveyed regrets for the absence of Mr Bernard Hoekman, Sector Director of the World Bank's Trade Department in the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Vice-Presidency (PRMVP). She indicated that the World Bank continues to support the work of the STDF.

8. Mr Bryan Fornari (EU) expressed general appreciation and complemented the quality of the work of the STDF, while recognizing its challenging nature. He hoped that the introduction of new staff would ensure the continuation of the high-quality activities for which the STDF is known. Mr Fornari highlighted two particular issues: (i) achieving an appropriate balance between STDF's dual role in project development/funding and coordination; and (ii) increasing STDF's focus on economic growth and poverty reduction by better integrating national development strategies and objectives into STDF's work. He stressed that the STDF is best placed to fulfil a coordination role rather than acting as a funding mechanism and highlighted the inherent difficulties in ensuring ownership of initiatives with vertical funding. However, he recognized that project funding in certain research areas (e.g. pilot testing of economic analysis tools or SPS indicators) is critical to support STDF's coordination work and expressed the need for STDF to remain in touch with "realities on the ground".

9. Ms Tone Matheson (Norway) was pleased to be part of the STDF Policy Committee. She acknowledged the importance of STDF's work and indicated her commitment and support in strengthening the Facility. She indicated that Norway shared the views expressed by the EU and looked forward to the discussions on the new STDF strategy and work plan.

10. Mr Daniel Martinez (United States) conveyed his thanks for the opportunity to attend the meeting. He highlighted the vital role that the STDF plays in trade in food and agricultural products and reiterated continued support of the United States for STDF's activities. He stressed the importance of formulating and measuring new mission goals of the STDF to guide its future work. It would be useful to have further clarity within the STDF framework on what developing countries need in order to expand into world markets. Whether the STDF has the resources and is properly positioned to react to such needs is a matter for further consideration. In terms of STDF's mandate, Mr Martinez mentioned that the Facility should continue to focus on assisting countries in meeting international SPS standards, while recognizing the importance of market and safety issues at the national level. He expressed the need for an open and frank discussion within the Policy Committee and with other partners on these and other aspects.

11. Mr Washington Otieno (Kenya) thanked the STDF and its partners for the results accomplished over the past year and indicated that the impact of STDF's work is clear in many developing countries. He highlighted the importance of the Regional Action Plan to control fruit fly in West Africa and in effectively engaging the private sector in SPS capacity building. Kenya and Zambia were mentioned as cases in point. He informed participants that the Centre of Phytosanitary Excellence (COPE) had been established in 2010 with STDF funding. Its main function will be to contribute to capacity building and networking in East Africa and ensure minimal duplication in activities. The STDF workshop on public-private partnerships in support of SPS capacity was very successful and useful in exploring developed and developing countries' perspectives on this topic. He conveyed his appreciation for the involvement of African countries in this workshop and underscored the need to further involve Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in STDF's work. At present, SPS measures are predominantly viewed as non-tariff barriers that block, rather than facilitate, trade of food and agriculture products within African regions.

12. Ms Antonieta Urrutia Anabalón (Chile) highlighted how her participation in the STDF had increased her knowledge in this area though at times she felt it was challenging to fully understand how the Facility works. Efforts to disseminate information on STDF activities within the region were sometimes challenging due to a lack of legislative support and a lack of continuity of SPS policies in some countries. She recognized the importance of having sufficiently empowered national SPS

contact points in place to assist in strengthening capacity in specific SPS areas. The support of international organizations was key in this regard.

Report by the STDF Secretary

13. The Secretariat provided an overview of the Facility's activities in 2010 and introduced the new format of the draft STDF Annual Report (STDF 342), which was circulated prior to the meeting. The new report uses a set of defined indicators and assumptions to measure the extent to which the five outputs of the STDF work programme (as formulated in the Operating Plan 2010-11) were achieved in 2010. As such, the report provides a "mid-term" review. The report will be completed in the first quarter of 2011.

14. The Secretariat concluded that the STDF is on track in terms of achieving the expected outputs. Various activities implemented in 2010 contributed to the development of high quality tools and information resources, the dissemination of experiences, and the application of good practices in SPS capacity building. Other programmes, notably Aid for Trade and the EIF, are increasingly addressing SPS issues and priorities, though admittedly it is difficult to measure whether the amount of funding dedicated to SPS within these initiatives has actually increased (without the collection of specific baseline data). In terms of project funding and development, the STDF met its targets. Seven projects were approved for funding (out of 14 applications received), eight projects were completed and two projects evaluated. In addition, seven project preparation grants (PPGs) were approved for funding (out of eight applications received) and seven PPGs were completed in 2010.

15. The Secretariat further suggested that consideration could be given in the future to funding only projects developed through PPGs (i.e. moving away from direct funding of project proposals), as the review of project proposals directly received from applicants took an increasing and significant portion of the Secretariat's time and resources, even for projects that were not eventually funded by STDF. Thought could also be given to extending the project implementation period from two to three years and increasing the maximum amount of funding available for projects. The Secretariat suggested that these and other issues be considered during the development of a new STDF strategy and work plan in 2011.

16. The Secretariat reported that it had sought to minimize the impact of changes in the staffing of the Secretariat in 2010. In terms of funding, ten donors made contributions to the STDF in 2010 (as of 3 December), totalling CHF 4,108,015 (i.e. approx. CHF 900,000 short of the annual target level of funding of US\$5 million). For 2011, pledges were received from the EU, Netherlands and Sweden (approx. CHF 2.5 million) under multi-annual contribution agreements.

17. The World Bank welcomed the suggestions made by the Secretariat on project funding, in light of the constraints faced by the Secretariat. The WTO appreciated the new structure and format of the STDF Annual Report. The representative from Chile also expressed her satisfaction. The Secretariat pointed to the existence of a list of acronyms at the start of the document.

18. The EU thanked the Secretariat for its presentation and indicated that it may provide more specific comments in the next weeks. The EU suggested to use the planned survey (on strategy development) also for receiving additional feedback on the use of STDF tools and information resources. The EU also referred to the CRS database, maintained by the OECD, and its inability to track flows of SPS technical assistance. Lobbying for the inclusion of "SPS markers" should be further explored. The Secretariat observed that the STDF had lobbied in the past without success and that additional support from bilateral donors would be welcome in this regard. More generally, the EU queried about the role of the STDF in terms of providing and facilitating training on project design.

19. The FAO agreed that there is a need for better tracking of SPS components in broader programmes and queried the role that the STDF could play in this regard. The FAO also highlighted the significant time involved in reviewing STDF project applications within the organization, notably from a technical perspective, and underscored the integral role of STDF's coordination function.

Review of the STDF Operating Plan for 2011

20. The Secretariat introduced the draft STDF Operating Plan (STDF 314 rev.1). The plan is a revised and updated version of the Operating Plan 2010-11 (STDF 314), as approved by the Policy Committee on 11 December 2009. In particular, the Secretariat highlighted the following differences:

No distinction between global, regional and national level coordination activities

21. No comments were made by the Policy Committee on this issue.

Organization of one global-level seminar on a specific thematic issue (towards the end of 2011)

22. The representative from Chile stated that the seminar on SPS indicators held in July 2010 was successful and that this topic could be a good follow-up theme for next year.

Inclusion of the STDF pilot project on the use of economic analysis to inform SPS decision-making

23. The WTO requested information on whether pilot countries had already been identified. The Secretariat reported that it had started discussions with Mozambique and that expressions of interest had also been received from Zambia and Namibia.

Inclusion of the STDF pilot project on SPS indicators

24. The EU expressed an interest in being involved in this project, in particular the EU delegations in Indonesia and Jamaica. The EU also suggested to increase the number of pilot countries to three and consider raising the budget for this activity. The Secretariat agreed to consider these suggestions during the implementation of the work in 2011, in consultation with the Working Group.

25. The FAO reported that its members had called for a more "corporate" approach to the development of SPS indicators. The IPPC Secretariat already collaborates with the STDF in the area of plant health. As FAO's work develops in this area, the organization will seek collaboration with the STDF.

Preparation of one study/research on a topic of interest to the SPS capacity building community

26. The EU suggested that the study/research could focus on SPS issues at the regional level. There are various examples of studies on SPS issues at the regional level, e.g. in the Caribbean where some islands rely on others given the small scale of their infrastructure and limited resources.

27. The WTO reminded participants that the SPS Committee normally holds one workshop in October each year. The establishment and functioning of national and regional SPS coordination mechanisms was currently considered as a topic for the workshop in 2011. More generally, improving the collaboration between Codex, OIE and IPPC was identified as a key area of work under the Third Review of the SPS Agreement. It was noted that the STDF study on Regional SPS Frameworks and Strategies in Africa was useful and that there may be other related studies which need to be undertaken in this regard.

28. The OIE repeated the need for the "three sisters" to improve coordination and highlighted the usefulness of SPS capacity evaluation tools. The OIE also agreed with previous comments made by the representative of Kenya regarding SPS measures becoming a barrier to trade in the African region

and the lack of regional cooperation in this regard. The importance of finding the right mechanisms to implement measures while taking advantage of collaboration at the regional level was highlighted. The Chair queried whether there are successful case stories that may be worth exploring in more detail.

Extension of the term of the three STDF developing country representatives and the LDC representative until the end of 2011

29. The WTO observed that the nature of STDF's work often requires additional time for delegates to build familiarity with the substance and procedures of the Facility. The OIE suggested that there could be a one-year overlap - in that the last year of an outgoing representative coincides with the first year of a new representative. The FAO observed that a one-year overlap period, as suggested by the OIE, may be difficult to implement in practice and queried whether representatives could be changed individually rather than changing all representatives at once.

30. In response, the Secretariat highlighted the importance of new representatives taking part in the development and implementation of at least two annual work plans. It was suggested that instead of a one-year overlap period, as suggested by the OIE, there may be scope for a "one-meeting overlap". In the future, consideration could also be given to additional training and enlarging the representatives' mandate (for instance acting as "STDF ambassadors" in their regions with a small budget to promote STDF activities). These issues should be further considered in the context of development of a new strategy for the STDF in 2011.

Inclusion of a separate chapter and budget line on information dissemination activities

31. No comments were made by the Policy Committee on this issue.

No development of a new STDF film in 2011

32. The WTO indicated that it had no difficulty with this proposal, notably in light of other ongoing activities and staffing constraints in the Secretariat. It highlighted the value of the existing STDF film, which is an excellent training tool, and pointed to the three additional language versions (Arabic, Chinese and Russian) currently under development. The STDF should be encouraged to develop a similar tool - with a similar impact - in 2012 or beyond. The Chair suggested that regional cooperation and differences in SPS compliance could be one possible topic for a new STDF film.

Inclusion of a budget for two project evaluations in 2011

33. The Secretariat noted the resource-intensive nature of evaluations in general and highlighted that STDF projects increasingly include monitoring and evaluation components. There are currently ten outstanding *ex-post* evaluations to be carried out in 2011, i.e. four projects completed in 2009 and six projects completed in 2010. In view of this, it was proposed to limit the number of *ex-post* evaluations for projects completed in 2010 to one-third (33%), i.e. two out of six projects completed in 2010. The Secretariat further proposed to develop criteria for the selection of these projects and to discuss these criteria at the next meeting of the Working Group. The Secretariat also proposed to raise the budget for each evaluation to US\$25,000 to allow for in-depth evaluations and field visits.

34. Norway expressed uncertainty about the appropriate percentage and the selection of projects (random or decided in advance). The Policy Committee should review this approach in December 2011 and determine whether to proceed with a limited number of evaluations or revert to the previous system of evaluating all projects. The FAO indicated that more information from the field about specific problems experienced would be useful. The EU underscored that the reasons guiding the evaluations should guide the selection process of the projects to be evaluated. Drawing from its own experience, the EU generally felt that numerous evaluations are undertaken but little use is made of the information generated. The timing of evaluations is also an important factor to consider.

35. In response, the Secretariat considered that it is generally difficult to adequately capture the impact of projects if evaluations are undertaken immediately upon completion of a project. The FAO reminded participants that measuring impact generally requires more time and that lessons learnt should not only be applicable to future STDF projects but also inform the design of other initiatives. The United States viewed that well-designed projects may not always need an external ex-post evaluation. In future, a stronger focus should be placed on how lessons learnt can feed into the development of other projects.

All tables, schedules, etc. are confined to annexes.

36. No comments were made by the Policy Committee on this issue.

Other comments

37. In general terms, the EU acknowledged the difficulties in collecting comments on documents distributed by the Secretariat prior to Working Group meetings and suggested that members submit their comments in advance to the Secretariat to allow for better preparation and discussion at the meetings. The FAO supported this suggestion and called on the due diligence of members in this regard. The Secretariat indicated that this suggestion was in line with the recommendations in the STDF evaluation report issued in November 2008. Comments made by members could be put on the STDF password protected website.

38. The Policy Committee adopted the Operating Plan for 2011.

New STDF Strategy

39. The discussion on the development of a new STDF strategy was divided into two parts: process and substance.

Process

40. The Secretariat introduced its proposal for the development of a new STDF strategy for the period 2012 and beyond (for adoption by the Policy Committee at its next meeting in December 2011). The new strategy will be developed in the course of next year as a short vision or mission statement within the broader context of results-based management (as opposed to the previous descriptive approach). The Secretariat will take the lead in its development, in close consultation with Working Group members, observers, other stakeholders and developing country beneficiaries. Development of the new strategy will be initiated with the circulation of a short and targeted questionnaire in early 2011. Two separate Working Group meetings will be organized in 2011 dedicated to strategy development on the margins of regular Working Group meetings in March and June. If necessary, the organization of additional meetings could be considered towards the end of 2011. The Secretariat requested input from members on how to involve beneficiaries in this process.

41. The Policy Committee agreed with the approach suggested by the Secretariat. The representative from Kenya stated that he could provide assistance in contacting relevant organizations on the ground with a view to coordinating feedback from the region. To facilitate this process, the questionnaire would have to be circulated as early as possible. The EU expressed its satisfaction with the consultative process and suggested that the Secretariat consider sending the draft questionnaire for comments to the Working Group before wider circulation. The questionnaire should facilitate the expression of new ideas and thinking. The WTO warned that the dates for the SPS Committee weeks in 2011 could be changed due to the ongoing trade negotiations.

Substance

42. The WTO considered STDF's coordination role as key in the future development of the Facility. The STDF should increasingly act as a centre of excellence on good practice with a focus on improving SPS capacity in developing countries through the development and use of practical tools. The STDF should focus on disseminating information on the results of its work and on further assisting beneficiaries to identify and prioritize their SPS needs within the context of existing tools applied by partner organizations and the overall development strategies of developing countries. The WTO also questioned whether changes would need to be made to the Operational Rules of the STDF.

43. The FAO observed that STDF's existing logical framework does not adequately capture its coordination role and highlighted the need for increased involvement of STDF's partners in disseminating tools and information resources. A further clarification of STDF's Operational Rules would also be welcome. The OIE suggested that the STDF should seek to assist countries in prioritizing development needs, particularly in areas where tools already exist, and make a link to existing evaluations and animal health competencies. Where countries have undergone an assessment of their needs and priorities, they should be encouraged to submit proposals based on the gaps identified.

44. The representative from Kenya highlighted the usefulness of sharing experiences in the context of bilateral technical cooperation frameworks. He also referred to the EU approach whereby fact-finding missions are carried out (e.g. by COLEACEP) before funding decisions are made. This approach assists countries in minimizing duplication of efforts and results in interventions in areas where gaps have been identified but not yet addressed. Existing tools applied by partner organizations should be used in this exercise where possible.

45. The EU noted that the new STDF strategy should focus on identifying the relative balance between STDF's coordination and funding activities. Support was also expressed for a more succinct vision which would allow the STDF to be more flexible in planning as well as being able to react to externalities. A suggestion was made to adopt two-year work plans. The FAO suggested that the new STDF strategy should be for a period of five to ten years with specific intervals to allow for adjustments.

46. The Chair summarized the discussion and indicated that there will be numerous opportunities in 2011 for members to express their views on the future direction of the STDF.

Information from Policy Committee members

47. No additional information was shared under this agenda item.

Other business

48. No additional information was shared under this agenda item.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.45

List of Participants

MEMBERS:		
	Name:	Organization/Country:
1.	Ms Selina Jackson	The World Bank
2.	Mr Alejandro Thiermann	OIE
3.	Ms Awa Aidara-Kane	WHO
4.	Ms Renata Clarke	FAO
5.	Mr David Nowell	FAO
6.	Ms Chaweewan Leowijuk	Thailand
7.	Mr Washington Otieno	Kenya
8.	Ms Antonieta Urrutia	Chile
9.	Mr Daniel Martinez	USA
10.	Ms Tone Matheson	Norway
11.	Mr Bryan Fornari	European Commission
12.	Mr Harsha V Singh	WTO
13.	Ms Gretchen Stanton	WTO
14.	Ms Serra Ayrál	WTO
15.	Mr Melvin Spreij	STDF
16.	Ms Marlynn Hopper	STDF
17.	Ms Kenza Le Mentec	STDF
18.	Mr Simon Padilla	STDF
19.	Ms Anneke Hamilton	STDF
OBSERVERS:		
20.	Mr Eiji Minemura	Japan (Observer)
21.	Mr David Yung-Ting Yu	Chinese Taipei (Observer)
22.	Mr Yi-Fu Lin	Chinese Taipei (Observer)
23.	Ms. Woan-Ru Lee	Chinese Taipei (Observer)