

**STDF POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING  
DRAFT SUMMARY REPORT**

MONDAY 17 JUNE 2019  
WTO, GENEVA

**1 WELCOME REMARKS**

1. Ambassador Alan Wolff, Deputy Director General of the WTO, opened the meeting and welcomed participants, highlighting the uniqueness of the STDF partnership, the excellent results achieved since 2004 and the importance of standards for trade, which contributes to economic growth and income generation. He pointed to the interest of the Ottawa Group, which met in the margins of the G20, to consider this approach to SPS capacity building to determine if and/or how it may be relevant or replicable in other areas of WTO's work.

**2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

2. The meeting was chaired by Ambassador Alan Wolff. Members adopted the agenda. A list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**.

**3 FINAL DRAFT EVALUATION REPORT**

3. Ambassador Wolff welcomed Eamon Cassidy and Mark Hellyer from Nathan Associates Inc. and thanked them for their extensive work on the external evaluation of the STDF. He expressed his satisfaction that the evaluation report recognized the excellent work of the STDF and its Secretariat (housed at the WTO), which is efficient and effective in its operations, and provides "excellent value for money".

4. Eamon Cassidy provided opening remarks acknowledging the engagement and transparency of the Secretariat, partners and other members throughout the evaluation, and the huge amount of important work that is already being done. He noted that the evaluation's recommendations are offered in this context to build on past successes and take STDF to greater heights.

5. Mark Hellyer presented the key conclusions, findings and recommendations of the external evaluation. He highlighted the ongoing relevance of the STDF, noting that the recommendations are forward-looking and based on the evaluation team's constructive feedback of what is already being done very well and what could be further improved. He pointed to the importance of more than 100 key informant interviews with STDF partners, donors and other members to inform the evaluations findings, and the evaluation team's desire to reflect the opinions of all members consulted, even where there may be diverging views.

6. Mark Hellyer summarized the key findings of the evaluation, with particular attention to: (i) the performance and impact of STDF project and project preparation grants, which is much greater than what could be expected from a facility of this size; and (ii) opportunities to further develop and strengthen the STDF's knowledge platform to package, deliver and share available knowledge in a way that benefits and influences the work of STDF members, and also reaches and can be used by ultimate beneficiaries in developing countries. He highlighted that the STDF, as a programme, scores very highly and to have more global impact, increased focus on knowledge and learning is key.

7. Four recommendations – each of which contains five specific sub-recommendations – were presented in detail. It was noted that implementing these recommendations would require additional resources, primarily to further develop and strengthen the STDF's knowledge platform role and build the operational capacity of the Secretariat, with additional human resources for communications, M&E and learning. In this context, there was a call for partners to re-commit to the STDF and allocate additional resources (staff) internally to work towards this objective. There is also a need for the STDF to identify and work more with regional organizations and others who

can act as "multipliers of knowledge" to reach the ultimate beneficiaries more directly, and for developing countries to become more visible in the STDF.

8. STDF partners thanked Nathan Associates for an excellent presentation and thoughtful analysis. Some requests for clarifications were made, including on the following: (i) whether the recommendation on innovation came from developing countries; (ii) additional information and clarification on the budgetary and resource implications of the recommendations, and possible conflict of interest if partners are encouraged to submit their own proposals for STDF funding; (iii) the comparative advantage of the STDF, given the existence of other SPS capacity building programmes established by the partners since the STDF's creation; (iv) whether partners would each cover the costs of the proposed secondments; and (v) tensions (if any) between expanding the STDF's knowledge / thematic work and the grant mechanism.

9. Donor representatives' requests for clarification centred on the following: (i) the proposed additional technical body and whether this would be additional to the Working Group and Policy Committee; and (ii) cross-cutting issues in the context of the recommendations. Several participants, including developing country experts, highlighted the need for further clarification and thinking regarding implementation of the recommendations, including financial implications. Some asked how resources for the thematic work and for the Secretariat can be increased in a way that did not comprise or reduce the resources available for projects and PPGs, and how to enhance the sustainability of STDF PPGs and projects.

10. Nathan Associates responded to the questions, confirming that the STDF's uniqueness and value were highlighted in discussions with STDF partners, even if partners generally recognized that STDF was not a core part of their regular work. A clarification was provided that the proposed new body should be a small expert group focused on scientific and technical issues (outside of the Working Group which is focused primarily on coordination).

11. Nathan Associates also explained that some developing countries see the STDF as a funding mechanism to address SPS challenges that affect trade, and that they are less interested in aspects related to knowledge and innovation. In response to a question on cross-cutting issues, it was noted that information is limited on the linkages between SPS measures and cross-cutting issues (especially gender, as highlighted in the Working Group discussion on this topic in October 2018), and further analysis is needed to consider how to integrate cross-cutting issues in a meaningful way. Nathan Associates suggested this could be an STDF thematic topic in the future. Following this discussion, Nathan Associates left the meeting.

#### **4 DISCUSSION ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

12. After the coffee break, Policy Committee members discussed the key findings and recommendations of the evaluation in detail.

13. Key points discussed focused on: (i) how to strengthen the role of partners in the STDF (raised in at least four sub-recommendations) with some reservations expressed about the need for an additional layer (proposed technical body) and the overall need for better preparation by all Working Group members prior to meetings; (ii) the proposal to include IPPC and Codex as partners in their own right; (iii) how to increase synergies between STDF projects and PPGs and other initiatives and programmes supporting developing countries; and (iv) the cost implications of adding additional human resources to the Secretariat. Some members viewed that some recommendations had gone beyond the terms of the evaluation and cautioned that the recommendations should be seen in the context of the STDF's objective and size.

14. The WBG emphasized that at least five of the evaluation's recommendations had major resource implications and suggested considering the financial aspects of the various recommendations, in order to ensure that the focus remained on maximizing STDF resources for developing countries. In view of the STDF's size, the WBG cautioned against a shift to substantially increase knowledge work and a major trajectory change. The WBG reiterated its view that the STDF can have the most impact through continuing to focus on the grant mechanism (with funding focused on innovative and pilot projects), knowledge work and active outreach, communications and dissemination (including with greater support from members of the partnership).

**Recommendation 1 (Focus all deliverables on the same key issues)**

15. The OIE expressed the view that the STDF was in a unique position to work on cross-cutting knowledge topics (e.g. PPPs) of relevance for SPS capacity, in collaboration with partners, and to develop recommendations and good practices in this space. The OIE recalled how the STDF's PPP work had informed the OIE's work, which has recently issued detailed guidelines focused on animal health PPPs. The OIE suggested that it would be useful to have additional discussions on how to set up this process to improve delivery and outcomes, linked to recommendation 1(i) on thematic task forces.

16. Participants generally disagreed with recommendation 1(ii) to limit calls for proposals for all PPGs and PGs to agreed thematic areas. There was consensus that all innovative, demand-driven project applications, which respond to specific needs and meet the STDF eligibility criteria, should be considered.

17. In the context of expanding the STDF Secretariat, some members considered whether the STDF's funding target should increase and noted that it would be important to ensure that the annual resource target for the STDF Trust Fund reflects the STDF's ambition and strategy. Some participants raised questions about the costs of operating the STDF, compared to the funds available for projects and PPGs. Sweden commented that the evaluation's recommendations were very ambitious in increasing resource allocations, noting that further thought would need to be given to the financial requirements to run the STDF programme, as part of the ongoing STDF strategy development process.

18. Some partners expressed reservations against the recommendation to allow STDF partners and the Secretariat themselves to develop projects and PPGs as a test bed for innovative ideas.

19. Participants agreed on the importance of adequate attention to cross-cutting issues, particularly gender and climate change, and agreed that STDF should continue to address cross-cutting issues as part of its new strategy.

**Recommendation 2 (Re-engagement and commitment of real resources and inputs from founding partners)**

20. Linked to recommendation 2(ii), members discussed how to ensure that the future STDF strategy and work plans explicitly link to elements within founding partners' own strategies and plans. There was recognition that capacity building programmes of STDF partners (and other members) have changed over time and that, during the ongoing strategy development process, it would be important to consider how the partnership could fully leverage the capabilities of members. The OIE proposed to map the SPS capacity building landscape and clarify the space occupied by the STDF, as part of the new strategy development process. Members agreed on the recommendation to re-engage the founding partners to establish clarity of purpose linked to their own strategic objectives, and to find linkages with strategies of individual donor members. Some donors reiterated that it would be essential to ensure that the new STDF strategy clearly reflected and fit the needs of developing countries to ensure accountability.

21. Participants discussed recommendation 2(iii) to "establish a mechanism for the founding partners to guide the Secretariat in technical direction". The WBG raised questions about the value of creating a separate and additional mechanism to the Working Group (also in terms of the resource implications for partners), advocating for more and better preparation by partners and other members, in advance of Working Group meetings, so that they can engage appropriately and at a level where they can make decisions on technical matters.

22. Some partners supported recommendation 2(iv) to make Codex and IPPC as full partners in the STDF in their own right, including making them full members of the Policy Committee. The WHO recalled the difference in the status of Codex (i.e. a joint programme, subsidiary to FAO and WHO) and the IPPC. The WHO further noted that the Codex and IPPC Secretariats were already key members of the Working Group and questioned the need and value of changing their status in

the STDF to be equal to that of their parent organizations. It emphasized that such a decision would need to be reviewed by the legal offices of WHO and FAO.<sup>1</sup>

23. Several participants expressed reservations and concerns against recommendation 2(v) for each of the founding partners to second an official to the STDF Secretariat, which shall pay their salaries and related expenses. Some participants questioned the resource implications of this recommendation and regretted that the evaluation had not provided an analysis on the financial requirements to implement this recommendation. The WTO pointed to the logistical challenges (limited office space) related to the proposed secondments.

**Recommendation 3. Further improve communications and monitoring & evaluation**

24. Members agreed on the importance of further improving communications and monitoring and evaluation within the STDF, while recognizing that most organizations could improve in these areas and raising some issues related to the budgetary implications (see below).

25. To improve STDF's communications and outreach, including the provision transfer of knowledge to ultimate beneficiaries in developing countries, some partners highlighted that all partners (and other members) need to actively disseminate and use STDF materials, and that this recommendation should not be seen as targeted at the STDF Secretariat.

**Recommendation 4. Build the STDF's required operational capacity**

26. Participants generally agreed with parts of recommendation 4 on building the STDF's operational capacity. Some partners expressed their agreement with recommendation 4(i) to increase the STDF Secretariat's resources, including increased staff and budgets, for communications and monitoring and evaluation, noting that this was justified. Some donors recognized the need to increase the Secretariat's capacity on communications and noted that a reasonable increase in the Secretariat's operational budget would need to be considered as part of planning for the next strategy period.

27. The FAO expressed the view that STDF's work should continue to focus on its "facilitation role" and cautioned against expanding the Secretariat's technical resources. With regard to recommendation 4(ii) on expanding and improving the knowledge platform, the FAO noted that while searchable knowledge management systems were ideal to have, they were not sufficient in and of themselves to deliver change on the ground.

28. Following a discussion on the Secretariat's staffing needs and costs, there was agreement to WTO's suggestion to increase the Secretariat with two additional staff, one covering communications and the other Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

29. While there was agreement that the STDF needed to have more regional outreach, and that it would be valuable to create potential for STDF "knowledge multipliers" at the regional level, there was limited support for recommendation 4(v) to finance the participation of representatives of 13 regional organizations in the Working Group. Participants discussed how best to achieve regional outreach and concerns were expressed that some of the organizations proposed in the context of this recommendation were not fully functional. In this context, developing country experts offered additional suggestions to strengthen their role and contribution to the STDF, for instance, to use them to publicise STDF's work in countries (e.g. through logistical support to facilitate increased participation of developing country experts in regional events).

**5 OTHER BUSINESS**

30. The Secretariat proposed to organize the next meeting of the Policy Committee after the Working Group has finalized its work on development of the new STDF strategy for the next period (2020-2024). The Secretariat welcomed expressions of interest from STDF partners to host the next meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> On 18 June, the WHO communicated to the Secretariat - based on legal advice obtained in FAO and WHO - its wish to maintain the status quo and continue with the current practice, whereby a representative of the Codex Secretariat participates fully in the STDF Working Group in its own right and can participate in the STDF Policy Committee as an observer. No further clarification was provided by the FAO related to its position on IPPC's status.

31. The chairperson thanked all members and observers for their active participation and invited participants to join a cocktail reception offered by the WTO. The meeting was adjourned at 18.00.

**ANNEX 1**  
**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Country/Organization</b>	<b>e-mail address</b>
Kaviraj APPADU	SIDA/Sweden	<a href="mailto:kaviraj.appadu@sida.se">kaviraj.appadu@sida.se</a>
Betsy BAYSINGER	USDA	<a href="mailto:Betsy.Baysinger@fas.usda.gov">Betsy.Baysinger@fas.usda.gov</a>
Monique BOUMAN	The Netherlands	<a href="mailto:mm.bouman@minbuza.nl">mm.bouman@minbuza.nl</a>
Eamon CASSIDY	Nathan Associates	<a href="mailto:ECassidy@nathaninc.com">ECassidy@nathaninc.com</a>
Catherine CONSTANT	France	<a href="mailto:Catherine.Constant@agriculture.gouv.fr">Catherine.Constant@agriculture.gouv.fr</a>
Sanjay DAVE	Developing Country Expert	<a href="mailto:Sdave.codex@gmail.com">Sdave.codex@gmail.com</a>
Eleonora DUPOUY	FAO	<a href="mailto:Eleonora.Dupouy@fao.org">Eleonora.Dupouy@fao.org</a>
Henk EGGINK	The Netherlands	<a href="mailto:Henk.Eggink@minbuza.nl">Henk.Eggink@minbuza.nl</a>
Julie EMOND	Canada	<a href="mailto:Julie.Emond@international.gc.ca">Julie.Emond@international.gc.ca</a>
Benoit GNONLONFIN	Developing Country Expert	<a href="mailto:Bgnonlonfin74@gmail.com">Bgnonlonfin74@gmail.com</a>
Carl Christian HASSELBALCH	Mission of Denmark	<a href="mailto:carhas@um.dk">carhas@um.dk</a>
Mark HELLYER	Nathan Associates	<a href="mailto:markhellyer@me.com">markhellyer@me.com</a>
Marlynne HOPPER	STDF Secretariat	<a href="mailto:Marlynne.Hopper@wto.org">Marlynne.Hopper@wto.org</a>
Kerstin JONSSON CISSÉ	Sweden	<a href="mailto:kerstin.jonsson.cisse@sida.se">kerstin.jonsson.cisse@sida.se</a>
Edwini KESSIE	WTO	<a href="mailto:Edwini.Kessie@wto.org">Edwini.Kessie@wto.org</a>
Sol KIM	WHO	<a href="mailto:skim@who.int">skim@who.int</a>
Brent LARSON	IPPC	<a href="mailto:Brent.Larson@fao.org">Brent.Larson@fao.org</a>
Markus LIPP	FAO	<a href="mailto:markus.lipp@fao.org">markus.lipp@fao.org</a>
Kelly McCORMICK	USA (US FDA)	<a href="mailto:Kelly.McCormick@fda.hhs.gov">Kelly.McCormick@fda.hhs.gov</a>
Kazuaki MIYAGISHIMA	WHO	<a href="mailto:miyagishimak@who.int">miyagishimak@who.int</a>
Gillian MYLREA	OIE	<a href="mailto:g.mylrea@oie.int">g.mylrea@oie.int</a>
Rogério PEREIRA DA SILVA	Developing Country Expert	<a href="mailto:rogerio.silva@agricultura.gov.br">rogerio.silva@agricultura.gov.br</a>
Lorraine RONCHI	World Bank Group	<a href="mailto:lronchi@worldbank.org">lronchi@worldbank.org</a>

Name	Country/Organization	e-mail address
Ameha SEBSIBE	Developing Country Expert	<a href="mailto:ameha.sebsibe@igad.int">ameha.sebsibe@igad.int</a>
Melvin SPREIJ	STDF Secretariat	<a href="mailto:Melvin.Spreij@wto.org">Melvin.Spreij@wto.org</a>
Matthew STONE	OIE	<a href="mailto:m.stone@oie.int">m.stone@oie.int</a>
Hans Peter VAN DER WOUDE	The Netherlands	<a href="mailto:Hp-vander.woude@minbuza.nl">Hp-vander.woude@minbuza.nl</a>
Alan WOLFF	WTO	<a href="mailto:Alan.Wolff@wto.org">Alan.Wolff@wto.org</a>
Christiane WOLFF	WTO	<a href="mailto:Christiane.Wolff@wto.org">Christiane.Wolff@wto.org</a>
Naoko YAMAMOTO	WHO	<a href="mailto:yamamoton@who.int">yamamoton@who.int</a>