

**DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE  
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE**

**Summary Record of the 1136th DAC meeting held on 23–24 January 2024**

The Revised Draft Summary Record [DCD/DAC/M(2024)1/REV1] was approved under Item 1 of the Draft Annotated Agenda [DCD/DAC/A(2024)4], at the DAC meeting of 22 March 2024, and is now issued as FINAL.

The Committee also agreed to declassify this final version.

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## Summary Record of the 1136th DAC meeting held on 23–24 January 2024

### Session 1: Tuesday, 23 January 2024

#### Item 1. Adoption of the Agenda and Approval of Draft Summary Records

1. The DAC Chair invited the Committee to adopt the draft agenda, which they did without modification. The Committee considered the revised draft summary record from the November 2023 DAC High Level Meeting and the draft summary record from the 11 December 2023 DAC meeting. Members requested changes to both records, which they will submit to the Secretariat in writing, for approval by the Committee at a later time.

#### Item 2. Briefing by the DCD Director and DAC Chair

2. The Chair thanked delegates for their availability to meet with him in small groups to discuss follow-up to the High-Level Meeting and to consider how to formulate the future work programme. He announced revised dates for the February DAC meeting in light of shifting Council dates. The DAC meeting will now be held over a single day on 21 February 2024 in the Boulogne-Billancourt building. He also announced that the roadmap now includes dates for the second half of 2024, recognising that the Committee will need to remain flexible. He then shared his views on the launch of 2022 final ODA data held the day before and looked forward to the launch of 2023 preliminary ODA data in April.

3. The Director highlighted that the launch of final data surfaced the issues of the quality of ODA investments, the alignment of bilateral and multilateral investments, and the need for providers to transform their approach, which she encouraged the Committee to reflect on more. She then shared details on her recent mission to Japan, where she explored the possibility of adopting, at the 2024 Meeting of the Council at Ministerial Level (MCM), a roadmap for updating the OECD Strategy on Development since Japan will serve as MCM chair. The Director also informed the DAC that progress has been made in recruiting staff for the “4P” Joint Working Committee Secretariat. As soon as additional information is available on that Secretariat’s formation, she will share it with the Committee.

4. The possible organisation of a Senior Level Meeting (SLM) in 2024 was raised, with a number of delegates remaining doubtful of such an idea. The Committee will return to the issue of the timing and justification of future higher-level meetings of the DAC, also in order to maximise the impact of such meetings, once the scheduling of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4) is clear, based on the assumption that a High-Level Meeting (HLM) prior to FFD4 will most likely be warranted.

5. The delegate from Belgium spelled out the development co-operation priorities of her country’s presidency of the Council of the European Union (lasting six months from 1 January 2024), which include health justice, equitable access to primary health care, African health sovereignty, universal health coverage, localisation of humanitarian aid, and the humanitarian funding gap.

### Item 3. Sustainable Ocean for All

6. The DAC Chair opened the session by highlighting sustainable ocean economies as central to the sustainable development agenda and noting key synergies with policy agendas such as climate, biodiversity, and financing, while enabling DAC's outreach and support to a range of partner countries (e.g., Small Island Developing States as well as large key partners). The DCD Director recalled that the DAC has been working on the sustainable ocean economy since 2019 when the OECD Sustainable Ocean for All initiative was launched by the Secretary-General. The breadth of this work has grown over time in response to increasing demand and impetus for this work, which is part of the current PWB, and has been reinforced by the DAC Declaration on the New Approach to Align Development Co-operation with the Goals of the Paris Agreement. The workstream is well-placed to advance the priorities identified by the DAC High-Level Meeting Communiqué, namely tackling global challenges through an integrated approach, ensuring ODA integrity, enhancing the impact of development co-operation, and fostering strategic and inclusive partnerships.

7. Ambassador Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, Special Envoy of the French President for the upcoming United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC-3), addressed the DAC to present the ambitions and process for UNOC-3 in June 2025. He acknowledged the OECD DAC as a valued partner for UNOC-3, and a key member of the Blue Economy and Finance Forum (BEFF) Steering Committee<sup>1</sup>. The Ambassador highlighted the unparalleled technical expertise of the DAC on the sustainable ocean economy, in particular its unique data on development assistance for the sustainable ocean economy, tailored country-level evidence for integrated ocean management in developing countries, and work on guidance for effective development co-operation in this domain. He highlighted opportunities for the OECD DAC to be part of the International Panel for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS) and stressed that the OECD's commitment to hosting the 4P Implementation Committee Secretariat aligns with the ambitions for UNOC-3. Finally, he affirmed that collaboration with the OECD DAC should extend beyond technical expertise, representing a partnership for solutions and innovations, and invited the DAC to make a strong contribution to UNOC-3 and what will come after.

8. The Secretariat briefly presented the background paper for the session [DCD/DAC(2024)1], focusing on the proposed four main areas of sustainable ocean economy work that the DAC could leverage to make a strong contribution to UNOC-3, namely: (i) the Guidance for Development Co-operation in support of a Sustainable Ocean Economy; (ii) Blue Finance and Blue Economy Data and Evidence; (iii) the scale up of the Blue Recovery Hubs; and (iv) work on Plastics. A large number of members took the floor, signalling a growing momentum for ocean action. Members congratulated France and Costa Rica for their leadership on UNOC-3. Members expressed strong support for the Secretariat's work on the sustainable ocean economy and for a DAC contribution to UNOC-3 along the four areas of work identified, noting compelling reasons to enhance work in this area. Members appreciated the strong collaborations the Secretariat established on this work strand across the OECD and the broader international architecture, and suggested additional partners to engage with, such as regional institutions and the World Bank's ProBlue. Members expressed interest to expand the work's focus on innovative financing mechanisms, such as blue bonds, as well as to countries in varied geographical locations including Latin America. Finally, members also suggested to leverage more the sustainable ocean economy work for the outreach and engagement efforts of the DAC. In conclusion, while some members highlighted ocean as a specific priority in their development co-operation, others emphasised that the cross-cutting and far-reaching nature of the ocean agenda (touching on topics like innovative financing, skills, and science) brings natural synergies and makes work to promote sustainable ocean economies relevant for their development co-operation priorities and work. Several members expressed support for the Secretariat's proposal for a strong DAC contribution for UNOC-3 and requested a follow-up discussion at the DAC later in 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> An integral part of the UNOC-3 special events, the Blue Economy and Finance Forum (BEFF) will be held in Monaco on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2025.

#### Item 4. Update on AOSIS-DAC Task Force

9. The DCD Director provided an update on the work of the joint task force of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and DAC members. As requested in the DAC's previous Global Relations Strategy, the Secretariat organised technical and political dialogues on development co-operation with SIDS in New York<sup>2</sup> and Washington<sup>3</sup> in 2022. At the political dialogue, AOSIS and DAC members agreed to form this joint Task Force whose objective is to establish a new Partnership for Action to be launched at the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) in May 2024. The Director noted that this endeavour is very much in line with the calls at the HLM for a stronger push on outreach and that SIDS represent a very vocal, strategic grouping of countries not just in the UN but also in the G77.

10. The Task Force is composed of six SIDS from the AOSIS membership and six DAC members whose representatives are technical experts from capital. The DAC members are Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, Portugal, USA, and the UK (serving as co-chair).

11. That Task Force is identifying elements of a new Partnership for Action for the two constituencies. Five priority action areas have been identified for joint work, namely:

1. Support SIDS to strengthen data and statistics capacity.
2. Explore ways to catalyse technical assistance.
3. Support SIDS capacity to access and absorb official finance.
4. Consider how the UN Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) could be used in donor programming.
5. Increase support for the development and implementation of sustainable ocean economies.

12. A first draft of the partnership document has been prepared and will soon be circulated to the full DAC and AOSIS memberships, in parallel, for comments in a written consultation. The DAC is anticipated to review a revised version, for approval, at the March DAC meeting, ahead of SIDS4. The Chair assured the Committee that this topic will come back to the DAC to ensure that it has sufficient time to consider the proposals and expectations of SIDS partners and DAC members.

#### Item 5. Network Update: EVALNET

13. The DAC Chair reflected on his participation in the 40th anniversary celebration of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) in November 2023, noting the political significance of sharing timely and credible evidence to inform interventions. He acknowledged the network's valuable contribution on Ukraine to the DAC High Level Meeting and flagged how the summary of lessons from evaluation is particularly pertinent given the prominence of aid flows to Ukraine in the 2022 ODA data and the need to spend money as effectively as possible and avoid waste.

14. The Director expressed gratitude for members' active engagement and contributions to EvalNet's work and the Secretariat throughout 2023, including staff loans from Canada and Germany. Highlighting EvalNet's consistently high rank in terms of value-add and utility for members, other official providers, and partner countries, the Director noted its role in advancing the DAC's global engagement strategy.

15. The Chair of EvalNet addressed the Committee to update delegates on progress within the network across its three core functions: enhancing evaluation systems and capacities, strengthening evaluation quality, and communicating evidence effectively to decision-makers. He discussed the role of EvalNet in strengthening evaluation functions and supporting peer learning. He highlighted work on transforming knowledge into learning and mutual accountability and how evaluation can help restore trust and maintain legitimacy in the face of growing pressures on development co-operation and humanitarian assistance

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<sup>2</sup> Discussed in the September 2022 DAC meeting [paragraphs 34–36, DCD/DAC/M(2022)10/FINAL]

<sup>3</sup> Highlighted in the October 2022 DAC meeting [paragraph 3, DCD/DAC/M(2022)12/FINAL]

budgets. The Chair of EvalNet shared highlights of 2023, including ongoing data collection for the COVID-19 Strategic Joint Evaluation, the publication of a new guidance on Applying the OECD Criteria with a Human Rights and Gender Equality Lens, a study of member evaluation systems, and a trilingual 2nd Edition Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management (as well as a Mongolian translation). The update included highlights from the network's 40th anniversary celebrations, which featured lively discussions on the influence of evaluation evidence and the role of partners.

16. The Chair of EvalNet ended his intervention by presenting four key areas of work for 2024 and beyond: namely, the climate crisis, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and the future of evidence syntheses, engagement and partnerships, and the ongoing Strategic Joint Evaluation of the Collective International Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

17. In discussion, the DAC expressed support for this work, flagging the remarkable level of influence and deep engagement beyond the Network members. The Committee requested support from EvalNet with lesson learning to improve its responses in Ukraine, Gaza, on climate adaptation and with the next pandemic - and beyond. Delegates expressed their appreciation for the peer-learning and exchange opportunities convened by the Network and its pragmatic support, especially to newer DAC members. Several members also expressed interest in hearing about and responding to the COVID-19 Strategic Joint Evaluation. The work of EvalNet and the COVID-19 Evaluation Coalition were recognised as excellent examples of strategic outreach and as an area where the DAC claims a significant comparative advantage globally. Several delegates urged proper resourcing for the Network within the PWB.

#### **Item 6. Summary of Conclusions**

18. The Secretariat provided an informal overview of the decisions, action points, and next steps emerging from the meeting proceedings. The Secretariat circulated this overview to the Committee in electronic form.

### **Session 2: Wednesday, 24 January 2024**

#### **Item 7. Innovation and Scaling**

19. The Secretariat of the OECD i32 Group presented a background on innovation within the DAC, plans to develop Scaling Principles in 2024 (a joint effort with the DAC Network on Development Evaluation and the DAC Results Community), and an update on the group's work to advance strategic innovation across the membership. A draft of the Scaling Principles will be shared with DAC Delegates for consultation in Q2; the final draft will be presented for approval in Q4.

20. The Committee noted innovation's role in supporting more effective and impactful development co-operation. Many delegates highlighted the usefulness of the practical support provided by the i32 secretariat and the importance to further engage partners from low and middle-income countries in exchanges on innovation and to link the work further to locally led development. Delegates provided feedback to help shape the Scaling Principles and the future directions of the i32 Group, underscoring the need to incorporate innovation and digital into the new DAC narrative, and to further embed horizontality into this workstream. Several delegates expressed their appreciation for this work and its strong connections to innovation experts in DAC capitals as well as their desire to see more resources made available to this workstream, including through assessed contributions.

#### **Item 8. Outcomes of the 2023 DAC High Level Meeting**

21. Following an initial discussion in the December 2023 DAC meeting, the Secretariat presented a more streamlined and clustered approach to taking forward key actions in the HLM Communiqué. The session paper identifies a short list of actions that can move forward in 2024 because they are already work-in-progress under intermediate outputs in the 2023–24 Programme of Work and Budget (PWB). The

Director emphasised that no additional resources need to be raised for taking forward those actions. The paper also clusters together work that is new and which would need additional resources. Whether and how to take them forward can be considered in the upcoming PWB.

22. The Chair suggested that the DAC strategy and narrative could helpfully draw on the conclusions from the upcoming In-Depth Evaluation of the DAC, the OECD Strategy on Development, and reflections on the upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. He also asserted that outreach should be anchored in substance.

23. Members expressed that it was important to prioritise and sequence follow-up and to link this exercise with the PWB process. Top priorities include mainstreaming outreach and contributing to major international events; Africa and least developed countries; Ukraine recovery and reconstruction; policy coherence for sustainable development across the OECD; an updated DAC strategy and narrative; digitalisation; financing for development; poverty and inequalities; implementing the humanitarian–development–peace nexus and sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment recommendations; and developing guidelines on locally led development and recommendations on gender equality and responsible business conduct.

### **Item 9. Programme of Work and Budget 2025–26**

24. The Secretariat presented a draft description of the new DCD structure, a policy environment in which the DAC operates, and proposed framing and focus of the upcoming Programme of Work and Budget (PWB), based on members' stated priorities including in the HLM Communiqué and the DAC mandate. The Director asserted that the documentation issued by the Secretariat is intended to inspire Members' reflections on what to include in the next PWB and how to structure it. She affirmed that the Secretariat is here to support Members. She also said that the Secretary-General would soon issue his views and priorities for the PWB, which will also inform the DAC's PWB reflections. She then directed delegates' attention to the DAC Community Space where a detailed update on the mobilisation of voluntary contributions to the DAC PWB was recently posted<sup>4</sup>.

25. The Vice Chairs presented the outcomes from the informal PWB Meeting held on 19 January 2024. At that meeting, members discussed their overall expectations of the PWB process and gave some thought to the prioritisation survey. The PWB process should be transparent and inclusive and develop mutual trust. The PWB must reflect Member priorities, while respecting corporate requirements. Members want to avoid duplication between PWB meetings and the regular DAC meetings. The survey must have a clear purpose and deliver granular details on priorities. The survey timeline will be issued shortly, as will the survey itself for consultation. The Vice Chairs confirmed that they intend to collaborate with the Secretariat in undertaking the PWB process. Several members encouraged unearmarked funding to the PWB.

### **Item 10. Summary of Conclusions**

26. The Secretariat provided an informal overview of the decisions, action points, and next steps emerging from the meeting proceedings. The Secretariat circulated this overview to the Committee in electronic form.

### **Item 11. Any Other Business**

27. In his capacity as co-chair of the DAC External Relations Group (ERG), the delegate from the European Union directed the Committee's attention to the summary from the 15 January 2024 ERG meeting, recently issued by the Secretariat.

28. The delegate from France announced that the next DAC retreat would take place on 25–27 March 2024. The location will be shared later.

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://one-communities.oecd.org/community/dacpwbffunding/SitePages/Home.aspx>

29. In her capacity as co-facilitator of the DAC Major Policy Issues (MPI) group, the delegate from the United States announced that the next MPI meeting would be held on 28 February 2024. The topic will be DAC engagement in advance of the Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC). An MPI meeting on global public goods will be pushed into second half of the year to provide breathing space for PWB discussions.
30. In her capacity as co-facilitator of the DAC group on Subsidiary Body Oversight, the delegate from Hungary announced that a seat is still open for a MOPAN facilitator. She encouraged interested delegates to reach out to the Subsidiary Body Oversight co-facilitators (Hungary and Denmark).
31. The delegate from Ireland informed the Committee that Dublin is hosting the team working on locally led development this week. She expressed Ireland's appreciation for this work, which has helped the country sharpen its internal learning.
32. The DAC bid farewell to two departing DAC delegates (New Zealand and Slovak Republic). The Committee thanked them for their service to the DAC over the years.