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DAC Temporary Working Group on Refugees and Migration

Main Highlights from Brown Bag Lunch with Civil Society Organisations

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**DAC Temporary Working Group (TWG) on Refugees and Migration
Main Highlights from Brown Bag Lunch with Civil Society Organisations**

Dear Members, Participants, and Colleagues,

An informal Brown Bag Lunch on the clarification of statistical reporting directives on in-donor refugee costs was held with representatives from Civil Society Organisations on 9th March 2017. The lunch was well-attended, with approximately 35 participants including representatives of 13 DAC members. The CSO community was represented by Oxfam and ONE France in the room. Concord Sweden, UK Aid Network, Save the Children Denmark and ONE UK participated by video-link.

The meeting was opened by the DAC Chair, Ms. Charlotte Petri-Gornitzka. She noted that there were high expectations from the public for positive outcomes from DAC TWG's work on clarifications to the reporting of in-donor refugee costs. Ms. Brenda Killen, the Deputy Director of the Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD), provided an update on the processes leading to the development of draft proposals for the clarification of the Reporting Directives and highlighted collaboration with the civil society community to date. She stressed that the draft proposal adopts a pragmatic approach and provides logical guidance within the existing parameters of the Reporting Directives. The clarifications seek to align reporting practices and provide a clear way of valuing each country's contribution to refugee support beyond simply counting the number of arrivals. She also emphasised that the clarifications will address divergences in reporting practices and contribute to internal policy coherence and better coordination between members in their responses to refugee movements.

The Co-chair of the TWG (EU) then opened the floor for comments. CSO representatives re-affirmed their previously stated preference for the gradual phasing out of reporting on in-donor refugee costs. They also expressed concern about increasing in-donor refugee costs which in their view may considerably impact ODA flows to developing countries. Nevertheless, they noted that they were positive about the potential for the DAC TWG to contribute to the process of increasing transparency and consistency around ODA. They raised the need for more clarity regarding the eligibility of certain categories of cost items including administrative costs and a clear line between temporary sustenance and integration. They further requested access to updated information on members' expenditures to enable the CSOs to perform their oversight functions.

The Secretariat noted that the paragraphs on the reporting of in-donor refugee costs should not be read in isolation but should be interpreted in the context of definitions established within the existing Reporting Directives. Some DAC members stated that, while they understand the concerns of CSOs, it is also important to acknowledge the substantial efforts made by many members to respond to the refugee crisis. They underscored that several members have made efforts to increase their ODA levels, rather than diverting assistance from developing countries to cover in-donor refugee costs. Some members also indicated that they have sought to enhance transparency by ensuring that expenditures on in-donor refugee costs are publically accessible online.

By way of summary, the DAC Chair asked participants to reflect on 'what a different reality would look like'. She flagged ongoing discussions on DAC reform, re-emphasised the need for quality aid and reminded participants that the DAC was mandated to work for developing countries, and for people in developing countries. In his closing comments, the DAC TWG Co-chair (Japan) reacted positively to the common position expressed by both DAC members and CSO representatives on the need for clarity, transparency and consistency. He acknowledged that this is a complex, and by no means easy process, but once again reminded all present about the need for accountability to all stakeholders. The clarifications process is anticipated to conclude in August and the resulting proposals will be presented to the DAC High Level Meeting at the end of October 2017.