



Club du Sahel  
Club du Sahel

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**CLUB DU SAHEL**

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**Strategy and Policy Group**

**DISCUSSION NOTE FROM DONOR CONSULTATIONS**

**Prepared for the meeting of the Strategy and Policy Group of the Club du Sahel**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. From February 5th through March 16th the Club du Sahel Presidency and Secretariat consulted with the thirteen bilateral agencies participating in the Club du Sahel to determine whether there was sufficient interest in continuing with the Club du Sahel and if so, on what basis. This note summarises the results of the process and attempts to clearly state those issues for which there is agreement and those issues where agreement still needs to be reached. This will enable the nature of the new mandate of the Club du Sahel and implications for the governance structure and other issues to be defined. Some clarifications have been set out in the attached Annex, in terms of what the club is and what it is not.

2. All donor agencies expressed appreciation for the way that the Presidency was seeking to resolve the problems encountered by the Club du Sahel and trying to move the Club forward in response to changing circumstances on the ground. The original motivation for the Club's creation was clearly no longer relevant. Everyone consulted appeared to be willing to turn the page on the past and look to the future based on joint ownership and responsibility from stockholders (aid agencies) and stakeholders (southern partners). The meeting of 2, 3 and 4 April should lead to a decision as to whether or not there is a future for the Club du Sahel and, if so, what is the level of commitment of those participating.

## **II. FOCUS AND VALUE-ADDED**

### *Areas of Agreement*

3. The Club needs to provide the space for informed, lively, forward-looking debate and dialogue between the north and the south based on opportunities and constraints that are identified by the actors from the sub-region. Debate should be focused and issues under discussion well documented based on observed dynamics from the field level. This would prevent the Club from becoming a tribune or a « talk shop ».

4. The potential force of the Club is its « intellectual force and originality ». This means that partners should be equal and consensus does not need to be reached. It does not get involved in negotiations but rather contributes to « pre-policy » thinking and the testing of innovative practices. Conclusions or outcomes should reflect the real tone of discussions without undue regard for political correctness. There should be no more large capacity-consuming meetings around statutory requirements of various institutional partners or networks.

5. A unifying theme of Club work could be the use of the spatial analysis tools and the study of the impact of geographic, demographic, migration and settlement patterns that were pioneered at the regional level under the WALPS study and applied to the local level under the ECOLOC programme. The strength of this approach is that it focuses on observed realities and does not rely exclusively on official statistics which clearly fail to capture important dynamics, especially change processes and tensions linked to these processes.

6. The Club needs to facilitate the emergence of original African thought and innovative approaches to structural development questions in the region. This would bridge the artificial but frequently expressed distinctions, for example, between English-speaking and French-speaking, Sahelian and coastal countries, urban and rural areas, nomadic and sedentary peoples by presenting challenges and opportunities in the spatial and multi-dimensional (sociological, economic, cultural, ethnic, financial, political) way in which people tend to experience them.

7. In this context, the Secretariat should focus its role on being a « knowledge broker » and a facilitator. This means keeping apprised of new knowledge being generated from the sub-region and encouraging new ways of thinking about the sub-region through the drafting of provocative notes and the management of knowledge from the sub-region and on the sub-region. It also implies being in contact with relevant applied research centres in OECD countries and experienced development practitioners and facilitating the circulation of innovative ideas and approaches between the north and south. This means as well that the Club is not involved in projects nor in activities like fund-raising on behalf of southern partners.

8. Finally, as a logical result of the above, the Club du Sahel should help generate and sustain interest in OECD countries for the sub-region and help forge a regional approach to the opportunities and problems of common interest in West Africa which bridge the heterogeneous and diverse nature of the sub-region.

### *Areas Needing Agreement*

9. **The relative weight of reforming aid practices in the Club's agenda.** Many donors have expressed the view that this is being adequately covered in other forums and that the Club is not intended to be a decision-making body or to lobby for specific policies or practices. Others feel that the Club has a unique role of introducing the southern perspective on aid practices and policies into donor forums such as the DAC and the SPA.

10. In the proposed 2001-03 work programme, aid reform is treated as a cross-cutting issue rather than a separate issue and the basis of analysis is expanded to include other forms of international co-operation such as trade and investment. Is this acceptable to donor agencies ?

11. **The relative weight of joint work programmes with southern partners as compared to the Club's proposed analytical work.** Although these two categories may not necessarily be mutually exclusive, the Secretariat is proposing to allocate about 40 percent of its resources to joint work programmes with major institutional partners and networks and 60 percent to the analytical and knowledge brokering function around the three proposed themes of prospective analysis and operational studies on regional integration and local development. Is this acceptable to donor agencies?

12. **The balance between operational studies that address specific constraints and prospective analysis to identify emerging strategic issues.** The Secretariat is proposing a work programme with a prospective component that would be gradually built up over the three-year period and two operational studies in the areas of regional integration and co-operation and local development and de-centralisation. Southern partners have regularly expressed their need for longer-term analysis and projections to guide their selection of shorter-term priorities. Choices will need to be made as all donors agreed that the current work programme proposal was overly ambitious. According to donors, what are the Club's core business and value added?

13. **The extent to which thematic issues should be pre-determined.** If the particularity of the Club is to pursue an agenda that is set by the Africans in the sub-region then the areas of concentration should depend upon the priorities emerging from discussions with the actors. This means that traditional areas such as natural resources management, desertification and food security will be viewed not in isolation but as factors along with others affecting structural development. Many donors felt that a dormant capacity in the Club to co-ordinate emergency food aid to the region in case of a widespread drought should be maintained.

### III. WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND THE NORTH-SOUTH PARTNERSHIP

#### *Areas of Agreement*

14. The weight of Club membership should be determined in terms of the intellectual capital and commitment that can be brought to the forum and not in terms of financial contributions. In this respect, donors have been deficient and will need to explore ways of correcting the situation through more involvement of aid agencies' field personnel, research institutions and civil society and private sector groups active in or studying the sub-region. The weight of stakeholders in determining the Club's work programme priorities should be fully recognised. The donors should explore ways of contributing to the Club without adding to the complexity of its financial management.

15. Creative ways need to be found to provide space for an African agenda and to encourage African leadership and proposal capacity. Northern partners need to develop a listening mode and to avoid imposing their fashions, concepts or political sound bytes on southern participants in the Club forum. This can be achieved partly by emphasising south-south co-operation, capitalising on work done in the region such as the geographical information system established by AGRHYMET and using African and northern consultants grounded in African realities rather than in Western theories.

#### *Areas Needing Agreement*

16. **Partnership modalities.** While there has been a good deal of discussion about partnership there is as yet no real agreement on its implications for the role of southern partners in the governance and agenda-setting of the Club du Sahel. Are the donors willing to accept the idea that southern partners (stakeholders) have the main role in setting priorities and determining what they see as the value added of the Club? If so, then the role of donors would be a more restricted one of financing the Club. Under these conditions we need to agree on a governance structure that reflects these respective roles.

17. **The nature of southern partners.** The Club has never been a forum where countries of the sub-region have been represented as such. All donors value the broad range of partners as being one of the major accomplishments of the Club that should be maintained in the future. The southern space currently consists of representatives of regional organisations, the Ministerial Lobby Group and various regionally-based professional and thematic networks. Should this composition be formerly agreed upon and reflected in the governance structure of the Club or should more flexibility be permitted without seeking to build in "representation" as a basis for the Club's governance?

18. **Modalities for opening up to civil society and private sector groups from the north.** While donors agree that more inputs from a wider range of actors from the north is desirable there is not yet a precise idea of how this could be done in a meaningful and sustainable way. What types of arrangements should be made and to what extent should this be reflected in the agenda-setting and governance of the Club? In addition to confirming that the Club should put more effort into building a more diversified intellectual constituency from the north, donors are asked, once the work programme has been accepted, to propose specific names of persons and institutions or networks potentially interested in being involved in Club activities.

19. **Options for the Strategy and Policy Group (GOP).** (i) Maintain the GOP as a donor agency group with authority in budget and financial areas while recognising that the composition of the work programme would need to be decided jointly with Club stakeholders in a wider forum; (ii) Transform the GOP into a group comprised of donor agencies from the north and the GMAP from the south. The GMAP could be expanded to include other opinion leaders from Club networks; (iii) Transform the GOP into a

group that reflects the new composition of the Club with representatives from the north and south and from governments, civil society organisations and the private sector.

#### IV. GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

##### *Areas of Agreement*

20. Geographic coverage should be extended to include the West African space but the special focus on the weaker economies of the Sahel region should be maintained. As the forum will be an issues-based forum, there should be some flexibility in determining the precise geographic scope depending on the relative importance of the countries and regions for the issues under discussion. For example, in some respects the north-south and east-west axis with the Mahgreb and Sahara regions are key.

21. The geographic coverage should not be extended to regions such as the Great Lakes and Central Africa.

##### *Areas Needing Agreement*

22. **Possibility of a new name for the Club to reflect the changing scope and nature.** The suggestion most frequently mentioned was to refer to the *Club of the Sahel and West Africa*. Others noted that the word Club may or may not convey the new degree of openness of the forum. Still others feared that the word “forum” could be equated with open tribune rather than informed debate.

23. **The positioning of Nigeria in the Club.** The concern expressed is that the Club forum should not be dominated by this regional power that has more extensive intellectual capacity and influence than its neighbours. The Secretariat expressed confidence that working with regional networks and inter-governmental regional organisations would help allay these concerns.

#### V. STRATEGIC ALLIANCES, INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND NEW DONOR AGENCIES

##### *Areas of Agreement*

24. As a small structure the Club Secretariat needs to forge strategic alliances with other institutions and networks active in the sub-region or in key technical areas such as information technology and systems, and knowledge management. This should also limit duplication or unnecessary overlap.

25. The Club needs flexibility to identify strategic alliances and institutional partners in relation to the issues under study and discussion. Partnerships should be inclusive and not exclusive. For example, in areas such as local development and decentralisation and private sector development, groups in addition to the traditional partners of the Club should be invited to participate. The determining factor should be the level of interest and quality of contributions. (See also points 16 and 18)

26. The expanded geographic coverage and new topics for the Club would require expanding partnerships with regional organisations such as ECOWAS and WAEMU. This should be done pragmatically and be based on areas of common interest and comparative advantage.

27. The Club should welcome new donor agencies or more active commitment from some that are already members to reflect the impact of the proposed extended geographic coverage. In this context,

Japan and the United Kingdom have expressed cautious optimism and some of the Nordic donors such as Sweden have expressed interest in joining.

*Areas Needing Agreement*

28. Implications for the relationship between the Club and the CILSS still need to be clarified further. Clearly in areas of common interest there will be a strong motivation to work together. In addition, there will be a joint work programme where specific support from the Secretariat is requested. Can we now conclude that the CILSS will have primary leadership in areas covered by its mandate ? Donors that provide direct support to the CILSS are co-operating as the « Group of Ouagadougou ». Can we agree that this should be the focal point for all direct relationships between the CILSS and donors, and that attention should be paid to improving the effectiveness of this arrangement while the Club need not be further involved ?

**VI. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND RELATIONS WITH OECD**

*Areas of Agreement*

29. Based on the new format and mandate of the Club, the governance structure and respective roles and accountability of the Presidency, the relevant OECD Deputy Secretary-General and the Director of the Secretariat need to be clarified.

30. An important point is the mandate and composition of the Club's Strategy and Policy Group (GOP). The establishment of the GMAP, ministerial group of animation and proposal, has created some confusion regarding its relationship to the GOP and seems to have created a partner that is perceived by some as being more equal than the others.

*Areas Needing Agreement*

**31. Options for the Presidency.**

- Rolling 2-year presidency among the thirteen bilateral aid agencies that currently fund the Club Secretariat. Many donors expressed support for this option amounting to the status quo ;
- A co-presidency with one from the south and one from the north based on prior agreement as to eligibility requirements and the selection process, to reflect the principle of equal partnership.
- Introduction of a board structure with eminent personalities from the north and south that would assume the presidency function or complement a more « hands off » presidency.

**32. Options for Relations with OECD.**

- Maintain and clarify in writing the current relationship with OECD whereby the Club remains autonomous in terms of funding and determining its work programme. OECD would have primary responsibility with respect to administrative and financial matters. In addition, greater synergies with areas of analytical excellence at the OECD would be developed and agreed upon in a joint work programme. Most donor agencies support this option ;

33. **Composition and Profiles of the Secretariat**

The analytical, knowledge management and technical skills of the Secretariat need to be strengthened and the recruitment process opened to ensure that the most qualified personnel available is selected. Profiles for the Secretariat will tend to be significantly different from those generally found in development co-operation agencies. The focus on field realities and African intellectual leadership would militate in favour of opening the Secretariat to African expertise.

## ANNEX

WHAT THE CLUB IS OR DOES	WHAT THE CLUB ISN'T / DOESN'T DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Is a facilitator and a thinker</li> <li>-- Is a knowledge broker capitalising on knowledge/info from Africa</li> <li>-- Is a source of ideas, original thinking</li> <li>-- It influences through intellectual creativity and the force of ideas</li> <li>-- Facilitates inter-connection of actors / regional networks around issues of common interest</li> <li>-- Provides visibility in the north for West African issues and helps promote networking between northern “constituencies” and southern partners</li> <li>-- Works on constraints / opportunities identified by the stakeholders on the ground</li> <li>-- Participation can be selective and must be based on conviction not convention</li> <li>-- Tracks, synthesises and disseminates information</li> <li>-- Laboratory for experimenting with concrete approaches</li> <li>-- Place to ask / address difficult questions outside of the realm of the politically correct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Is not a doer or implementer</li> <li>-- Does not co-ordinate donor programmes or projects</li> <li>-- Does not mobilise funds for southern institutions or networks</li> <li>-- It is not a lobby group</li> <li>-- Does not provide operational support to southern partners</li> <li>-- Is not a space for negotiation or consensus-building</li> <li>-- The Secretariat is not the primary generator of information</li> <li>-- Not a forum for promoting donor “sound bytes” and development co-operation agendas</li> <li>-- Does not execute projects / programmes</li> <li>-- Is not a donor</li> <li>-- Is not a decision-making body</li> </ul>