

Report of the Coordinating Group In-Person Meeting

Monday, 13 June 2016

19.00-21:00 CET

Purpose

This report summarizes the discussions held at the in-person meeting of the Coordinating Group (CG). The report is organized based on the agenda items as follows:

- CG role and expectations/priorities for the CG tenure
- Prioritized Action Plan to Accelerate Management for Impact
- Prioritization of resource allocation within Portfolio Optimization workstream
- Committee oversight and follow-up on recommendations/AMAs

Introduction

1. The Coordinating Group (“CG”) is composed of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Board and its standing committees. The CG in-person meeting of 13 June 2016 was the fourteenth in a series of regular CG meetings to take place following the appointment of the current Board Chair and Vice-Chair. The meeting focused on several key topics fundamental to the efficient and effective functioning of the CG in fulfilling its role under its Terms of Reference (“TORs”), with a particular emphasis on Prioritized Action Plan, oversight of risk and Agreed Management Actions, and resource allocation within Portfolio Optimization workstream. Participants are listed in Annex 1.

Agenda item 1: CG role and expectations/priorities for the CG tenure

2. The Chair of the Board introduced this topic by expressing his own vision of the role of the CG which consists of collecting issues for discussion and oversight and ensuring that they get addressed by specific committees. He said that Board meeting minutes contain a lot of items labelled as “This is important”, “This is crucial”, yet, we are not sure how these items are followed up on by the committees. The Chair of the EGC emphasized the role of the CG in liaising with all Board committees and ensuring that different workstreams logically link together.

3. CG members discussed ways to ensure that topics discussed/prepared by the committees are not re-discussed by the Board or that the Board suggests a different way of handling a matter than suggested by a committee. The Vice-Chair of the Board welcomes an open discussion by the Board on any matter, and considers that committee leadership should not be defensive about their positions, i.e. “we have already discussed it and that’s it”. Yet, opening up a discussion at the Board would involve the risk of the Board making amendments without full knowledge of all detailed implications and consequences of such a decision. The Vice-Chair of the EGC considers that the Board can always suggest amendments but in that case, the document has to be returned to the committee for amendments, instead of being adopted right away at the Board meeting in

a possibly sub-optimum version. CG members also discussed the possibility to offer more decisions via EDP, with the necessary preparatory work being done via phone calls.

4. The Vice-Chair of the AFC emphasized the importance for the CG to look at longer-term strategic issues, such as country ownership and other funding principles of the GF. She mentioned that the Board has had a good debate about transition.

5. CG members mentioned the volume of documents, updates and presentations “inundating” committee meetings, to the extent of giving the feeling that the committees are “reacting” to the work of the Secretariat instead of being more creative and suggesting strategic topics for discussion. The Chair of the Board encouraged the committee leadership to come up with ideas and strategic vision, to set the tone for the style of documents, and to be the “masters” of committee agendas. According to the Chair of the Board, the Board should not only be a governance and oversight body but also a “think tank” about the strategic direction of the GF.

6. The Chief of Staff mentioned that the Secretariat reduced the size of the GAC report with links to more detailed background documents provided. However it received so many questions from the Board that the report gradually is expanding in size again. The Chair of the AFC acknowledged the difficulty to set the right balance for requirements of detail between “old” and “new” Board/Committee members.

Agenda Item 2: Prioritized Action Plan to Accelerate Management for Impact

7. The Chief of Staff spoke about the Project Management Office at the Secretariat which meets on a monthly basis to oversee various projects and make sure they inter-link and progress is monitored, and get embedded in mainstream operations where applicable (ITP). She emphasized the commitment, by the MEC, to closely follow the implementation of the Prioritized Action Plan (PAP).

8. CG members provided their feedback about the PAP: the paper has to be simplified and include a problem statement, as well as a diagram of how various initiatives link together to resolve the problem stated. The document should state what our biggest risk is and what we are doing to mitigate it, and how the various initiatives of the Secretariat are addressing it. According to the Vice-Chair of the EGC, the biggest risk is at country level, but it is not reflected as such in the document. The Vice-Chair of the AFC added that only 4.5 out of a total of 20 action items target country-level implementation. Also, the document includes a variety of action items, specific and vague, short-term and long-term, which makes it difficult to track progress. Also, roles of various oversight bodies (PMO, ERC, ORC, MEC)¹ are described in different parts of the paper, but it would be good to see this internal oversight structure described in one place.

9. The Chief of Staff clarified that the “managing for impact” exercise saw the birth of different initiatives –they were meant to address repetitive bottlenecks flagged in OIG reports. These initiatives were then included in the workplan and budget of the Secretariat. Many initiatives date back to the last year. AIM project responds to complaints from the countries that our systems are complex and require repetitive data entries. Difficult to get programmatic data out from the systems, to inform planning and satisfy stakeholder’s queries. A lot of work went into defining the key information needs. The internal oversight mechanism of these initiatives is robust and can be reassuring to the Board.

10. After committee inputs, the PAP will be revised, looked at by the Communications Department, and will be sent to the Board at the end of June. The Vice-Chair of the SC requested that the revised document be seen by the committees prior to it being submitted to the Board.

11. CG members then discussed their overall expectations from the Secretariat in terms of reporting on progress with mitigating actions. The Chair of the Board said that in order to establish trust with the Board,

¹ The Chief of Staff clarified to the CG members that MEC is the overall oversight body, ORC is more operational for high risk countries, the ERC succeeded the Risk and Assurance Committee, but it did not represent all MEC members. Currently, ERC represents all MEC members plus others, and also takes deep dives in certain topics, like PSM.

the Secretariat has to report on progress in a more nuanced and specific manner, by providing concrete examples, cases, and reasons for not solving a problem. He admits that not all projects might be successful, but it is important to know why they have “failed”. The Chair of the AFC also said that it is important to know the context and challenges, in order to judge whether the mitigating actions have been properly framed.

12. The Vice-Chair of the SC pointed out that program impact is a raising challenge in committee/Board discussions. There is a presumption that the things that are being done result in program impact. But before saying so, we need to make sure that there is a step-wise progress. She mentioned the example of ITP implementation, and said that the committees/Board just need to hear whether the implementation is going into the right direction, and after being reassured, the Board will ask for less details.

13. The Vice-Chair of the AFC underlined the overwhelming reporting on “process” which is insufficient to judge whether we are getting to the point where we need to get to. Perhaps, “process” description is due to the aim not being clearly defined. She said that the GF always grows bigger and more complex, which makes it difficult to steer and select a few strategic items for priority action. Going back to the PAP, she pointed out that the paper contains responses to problems that were known for a long time (CCMs knowing that PRs in Nigeria had problems), and that we have not been addressing them, but the paper does not say anything that would make one confident that the same problems will not occur again.

Agenda Item 3: Prioritization of resource allocation within Portfolio Optimization workstream

14. CG members enquired about the current status of resource allocation within the Portfolio Optimization workstream. The Chief of Staff clarified that the FOPC had decided upon the amount of money for allocation and the Board has already approved this reallocation to early applicants and shortened grants. Going forward, resource allocation will be a split responsibility between the AFC (for the remaining amount) and the SC (criteria for priority setting). The TRP should validate the prioritization of funding allocations, including UQD as some priorities for some countries expressed in 2014 might have evolved. The criteria should be endorsed before the allocation process in October.

15. The Vice-Chair of the EGC said that we need to identify areas where we can spend more money, and present those to the Board for steer and decision. The Vice-Chair of the SC emphasized that the spending capacity will affect the next allocation amount, therefore we need to be careful not to give too much money to countries that will eventually get less at the next allocation cycle. It is better to await the replenishment amount and discuss the implications in October committee meetings. In order to properly prepare the discussion, there will be phone calls held before October.

Agenda Item 4: Committee oversight and follow-up on recommendations/AMAs

16. The Chair of the AFC expressed his concern about the number of overdue AMAs and asked for a clear commitment from the Secretariat and the OIG as to when they are expected to be cleared. He is of the opinion that AMA implementation should be tracked as a KPI, with clear reporting about AMAs going overdue. The Chief of Staff clarified that most of AMAs pertain to the Grant Management and FISA, and that long-overdue AMAs are those that are either very complex or obsolete.

17. The Chair of the Board encouraged the AFC to alert other committees or the CG about red flags appearing in implementing AMAs.

Action Items

01. The revised PAP document has to be sent to the Board committees for additional review before submitting it to the Board.

02. The next CG virtual meeting will be scheduled shortly, considering CG members' availability during the summer.

Annex 1: Participation

Board Leadership

Norbert Hauser (Board Chair)
Aida Kurtovic (Board Vice-Chair)

Committee Leadership

Greg Ferrante (AFC Chair)
Beatrijs Stickers (AFC Vice-Chair)
Mohamed Salah Ben Ammar (EGC Chair)
Jan Paehler (EGC Vice-Chair)
Dorothee Kinde-Gazard (SC Chair)
Julia Martin (SC Vice-Chair)

Secretariat and Support

Marijke Wijnroks (Chief of Staff)
Carole Presern (Head, Office of Board Affairs)
Sandra Irbe (Board Chair Advisor)