

MEETING OF THE INTERIM GOVERNING BODY OF THE IFT VIRTUAL MEETING, 20 AND 22 FEBRUARY 2024

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND ACTION POINTS

This note presents the main conclusions and action points from the Interim IFT Governing Body, as recorded by the co-Chairs and the Secretariat. In brief:

- **Item 1.** The Secretariat gave an overview of the steps taken to establish the IFT, notably the responses received so far from members and observers of the TOSSD Task Force regarding the formal approval of the Forum's Terms of Reference (ToRs) and the follow-up actions planned over the next few months. The Secretariat also presented and invited comments on i) a list of countries and organisations that had either inquired about or could be reached out to regarding IFT membership, and ii) the IFT launch plan as a one-year activity for both the Secretariat and the TOSSD Community. Participants supported the Secretariat's work on the transition to the IFT and reaffirmed their political and material support to the IFT. The first General Assembly and Steering Group meetings were tentatively scheduled for the week of 20 May 2024.
- **Item 2.** The Secretariat presented the preliminary results of the data collection on 2022 activities and participants shared their experiences with reporting. The Secretariat will update tossd.online in March and make available the Artificial Intelligence tool online after training it with the 2022 data.
- **Item 3.** The Secretariat presented the recipient profiles developed in 2023, as well as its findings and lessons learned from the joint work with Senegal. The co-Chairs highlighted the potential of these profiles to foster donor co-ordination, data triangulation and quality analysis and suggested the Secretariat to put them online and disseminate them appropriately. In the next in-person meeting of the IFT, the Secretariat will present a first proposal for operationalising the recipient data review mechanism.
- **Item 4.** Participants expressed overall support for the proposed Communication and Outreach strategy and suggested ways they could support its implementation. The Secretariat would update results indicators to make them consistent with the level of ambition of the overall strategy.
- **Item 5.** Participants discussed the Forum's 2024 Budget and Work Plan, expressed broad support for its content, made some suggestions and asked for some clarifications. The co-Chair concluded the session by noting that there was general agreement with the Budget and Work Plan although further details may be needed, and that the Secretariat would update the document and circulate it for approval under the written procedure. The Secretariat will also prepare a draft Budget and Work Plan for the 2025-26 biennium. Depending on how much the 2025-26 Budget and Work Plan differs from the approved 2024 Budget and Work Plan, the Secretariat will either organise a meeting to discuss the document or launch another written procedure for its approval.
- **Item 6.a.** The IFT would revisit the Secretariat's proposal on applying the multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) as a criterion for including additional SIDS in the list of TOSSD recipients once the United Nations officially approves the MVI. As regards further work on the recipients list more generally, a crucial question was whether the objective is to expand or establish the list. The co-Chair concluded the discussion by emphasizing that no approvals would be made in the next two to four



months and that initial decisions on the TOSSD recipient list would therefore be made by the Steering group. It also noted that the IFT could serve as a forum to delve into areas with slower progress by the international community, such as establishing multidimensional criteria for the countries that moved or might move from UMICs to HICs. The General Assembly of the IFT could establish a working group dedicated to this specific issue. Participants were invited to contribute to further discussions on this matter.

- **Item 6.b.** The co-Chair concluded by stating that there was general support for adjusting the definition replacing the word “in” by “of” in section 1.1 of the Reporting Instructions and clear consensus on the deletion of the word “substantial” when referring to benefits to developing countries in section 2.3 of the Reporting Instructions. There was also general agreement about the splitting of pillar II into two sub-pillars II.A and II.B as well as the classification criteria, except for the issue of core contributions, which would need to be discussed again. The Secretariat will prepare a revised paper for the first meeting of the Steering Group in 2024. More in-depth discussions will be held during 2024 with the aim of reaching an agreement on further adjustments to the Reporting Instructions at the end of 2024 or early 2025, for the reporting of 2024 activities.

Introduction and welcome

The co-Chairs welcomed participants to the meeting of the IFT Interim Governing Body. The co-Chair from South Africa chaired the meeting on 20 February and the co-Chair from the EU on 22 February.

Item 1. Transition towards the International Forum on TOSSD (IFT)

The Secretariat gave an overview of the steps taken to establish the IFT, notably the responses received so far from members and observers of the TOSSD Task Force regarding the formal approval of the Forum's Terms of Reference (ToRs) and the follow-up actions planned over the next few months. The Secretariat also presented and invited comments on: i) a list of countries and organisations that had either inquired about or could be reached out to regarding IFT membership, and ii) the IFT launch plan as a 2024, one-year activity for both the Secretariat and the TOSSD Community.

Several participants expressed their support for the Secretariat's work on the transition to the IFT, reaffirmed their political and material support for the IFT, and made the following comments and proposals.

- A participant suggested opening an easy way for countries and organisations to submit membership applications, for example directly on the website. **The Secretariat will prepare an online IFT membership application form and post it on TOSSD.org.**
- Participants asked about: the criteria for becoming an IFT member; the expected financial contributions from IFT members and whether the OECD would be open to discussing providing financial support; and whether contributions from IFT members were obligatory. The Secretariat replied that: i) requirements for membership were outlined in paragraph 6 of the ToRs; ii) contributions could be financial or in-kind, and were an expectation rather than an obligation, however, the Secretariat stressed the importance of financial contributions given that the Forum was independent from the OECD and could thus not receive its financial support. The co-Chair reminded participants that financial contributions were not obligatory but were a strong factor for membership in the Steering Group, and that other members of the Steering Group would be appointed annually by the General Assembly to ensure its balanced composition as set out in the ToRs.
- There were no comments on the list of countries and organisations that had either inquired about or could be reached out to regarding IFT membership¹. **The Secretariat will liaise with these countries to encourage them to apply for IFT membership.**
- There were no comments on Spain's request for membership. **The Secretariat will therefore confirm Spain's membership in writing.**

¹ Countries and organisations listed:

- Request received: Spain.
- Inquired about membership procedure: Italy, Peru and Organisation of American States.
- Expressed interest in the work on TOSSD: Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia and Switzerland.
- Countries and organisations to reach out regarding IFT membership (Secretariat's proposal): Argentina, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Comoros, Cook Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Georgia, Korea, Mauritius, Samoa, Thailand, Togo, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, Green Climate Fund and the World Health Organisation.

- Participants inquired about the **dates and venue of the first IFT General Assembly and Steering Group meetings**. The Secretariat responded that it had checked the availability of the co-Chairs and the times of major international events before **tentatively scheduling the meetings for the week of 20 May, but the venue was not confirmed - a few options were being explored**. Canada offered to host the meetings should these offers fall through but could not pay for participant travel. The CSO representative expressed his hope that the IFT meetings would have space for side events and consultation meetings, to generate extra interest in different stakeholder groups such as CSOs.
- **Several participants committed to supporting the IFT launch plan** through broad dissemination of TOSSD-related content in social media and with key audiences.

Item 2. Preliminary results of the 2023 TOSSD data collection on 2022 activities

The Secretariat presented the preliminary results of the data collection on 2022 activities. Data were considered preliminary as a few countries were expected to provide further data and **tosssd.online would be updated in March 2024**.

Four participants intervened, thanking the Secretariat for its efforts and sharing their own experiences with reporting. The representative from the EU informed the meeting of the improvements to their data extraction mechanism for reporting on TOSSD, their outreach to other potential reporters to increase the coverage of TOSSD, and the enhancement of data quality (especially on pillar II) thanks to the Secretariat challenging the eligibility of some reported transactions. Another participant explained that the country is incrementally expanding pillar II reporting, paying attention to the eligibility criteria so that their data remain credible and robust.

Two participants commented on the artificial intelligence (AI) tool to review or assign the SDG focus of reported activities. **The Secretariat informed that the AI tool will be made available online, after training it with the recently released 2022 data**. Canada informed that they are developing two AI tools to be used for quality assurance of sector codes and the SDG focus, and that the latter will replace their current mapping between sector codes and SDGs.

On the synergies between TOSSD and CRS data, a participant (US) asked whether the independence of the IFT would impact the possibility of the Secretariat to provide coordinated feedback to reporters. The Secretariat reassured that maintaining the synergies in data processing and avoiding increasing the reporting burden are its key objectives and that a concrete plan had been elaborated to this effect. The chair of the OECD Working Party on Development Finance Statistics (WP-STAT) stressed the willingness of the WP-STAT to contribute to keeping the current synergies between CRS and TOSSD.

Item 3. TOSSD recipient profiles

The Secretariat presented the recipient profiles developed in 2023, as well as its findings and lessons learnt from the joint work with Senegal on piloting the product.

The co-Chairs highlighted the potential of these profiles to foster donor co-ordination, data triangulation and quality analysis, and suggested that the Secretariat puts them online and disseminates them appropriately.

The Secretariat added that the production of the profiles is automated, so their maintenance is not very resource intensive. The profiles could be of interest to statisticians in events such as the World Data Forum. **In the next in-person meeting of the IFT, the Secretariat will present a first proposal for operationalising the data review mechanism.**

Item 4. Communications and outreach outcomes in 2023 and strategy for 2024

The Secretariat provided an overview of the communication and outreach initiatives conducted in the past year, notably in terms of their outcomes and lessons learnt. It also presented the new proposed strategy for 2024 which included suggestions for the participation of the TOSSD community (IFT Members and Observers, and TOSSD reporters) in its execution.

Participants expressed overall support for the proposed strategy and commended the Secretariat for the thorough presentation and good work.

- **Several participants suggested ways for them to support the implementation of the strategy.** The representative of SESRIC suggested enhancing communication with countries of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) by jointly organising a webinar to introduce TOSSD and to promote the IFT, and by extending an invitation to the Secretariat to the annual session of the OIC statistical commission scheduled for Q4 2024. Several participants committed to supporting TOSSD in key international conferences and social media and fostering TOSSD data use in communication products and reports. One participant highlighted a [recent report](#) mentioning TOSSD as key for the discussions on measuring contributions to International Public Goods, which is gaining international attention, as well as its plans to promote TOSSD at the World Data Forum. The Secretariat expressed its thanks for these concrete actions and proposals and emphasised the critical role of collaboration and strategic actions in advancing TOSSD's objectives.
- A few participants appreciated mentions in the strategy to foster TOSSD data use in developing countries, one of them proposing the measurement of the usage of TOSSD by developing countries for monitoring the implementation of the strategy. The Secretariat responded that it could provide information on the number of users per country and could thus include these figures for reference when presenting the results of the 2024 strategy. **Noting the challenges of engaging recipient countries, the Secretariat would seek IFT members' assistance to establish connections with some of these countries.**
- A participant inquired about priorities and chronological sequencing among the planned activities. The Secretariat responded that it maintained a communications calendar, which flagged the critical months, and which was updated throughout the year for specific deadlines, such as the timing of capacity-building seminars.
- The co-Chair expressed strong interest and support for the presented plan but noted a “lack of ambition” in the proposed results indicators. He also expressed scepticism about the organisation of events that specifically focused on TOSSD data and proposed instead **a strategy to emphasise the use of TOSSD data in relevant events and discussions** to achieve a more impactful recognition. The Secretariat stressed that, apart from including TOSSD data in relevant events, **IFT members and TOSSD reporters can organise internal events in their organisations with relevant colleagues**, to raise awareness on TOSSD reporting and data use. The Secretariat stated that **the result indicators will be updated to make them consistent with the level of ambition of the overall strategy.** Furthermore, it stressed the importance of integrating TOSSD into broader thematic

events and advocated for members' collaboration in relevant discussions, such as UN conferences and events hosted by MDBs.

Item 5. 2024 Workplan and budget for the International Forum on TOSSD

Participants appreciated the proposed Budget and Work Plan, generally agreed with its content, and made the following comments and suggestions:

Maintain and improve the TOSSD statistical standard

- A participant requested an example of “new areas of financing and priorities for sustainable development where TOSSD could be of benefit to the international development finance community”. The Secretariat responded by referring to previous Task Force discussions on possible TOSSD satellite indicators. It noted that while there are no concrete ideas at this stage, the Financing for Development (FFD) process could, for example, introduce new financing modalities or instruments that the IFT would wish to reflect upon and work on their potential identification in TOSSD.

Collect and analyse TOSSD data, continuously improve their quality

- A participant proposed mentioning “high quality” when referring to TOSSD data. **The Secretariat will incorporate this wording into the Work Plan.**

Actively promote TOSSD and the use of TOSSD data within government agencies and internationally

- A participant noted that mentioning a more robust recognition of TOSSD in the FFD outcomes is desirable. However, given that FFD outcomes do not include a monitoring framework and indicators per se, this item should be edited to refer to a broader recognition of TOSSD (without pushing for indicators that some members might not support). **The Secretariat will reword this item to refer to making efforts to include references to TOSSD and enhance TOSSD data use.**
- A participant noted that **the Work Plan could be more ambitious with regard to the maintenance of the website** and include improvements such as the recipient profiles that would go live in 2024. **The Secretariat will implement this proposal.**
- A participant asked for clarification on the migration of the TOSSD websites to the new OECD content management system, flagging that communication on TOSSD would be complicated if TOSSD could only be accessed through an OECD website. The Secretariat explained that the migration was necessary as the current content management was being replaced, but reassured everyone that the TOSSD website would not look as though it were part of the OECD website.
- In response to a question from a participant, the Secretariat clarified that the “event to launch the Forum” referred to a promotional event, not the General Assembly meeting.

On the work plan overall, a participant noted their appreciation of the combination of outreach, core functions and transition activities. Another participant requested a more detailed work plan with a stronger



emphasis on results, as the document could serve as a basis for reporting by the Secretariat to the Steering Group. They also requested a greater focus on the use of TOSSD data.

Regarding the **budget**, participants:

- asked whether the budget included salary increases and additional staff positions. The Secretariat confirmed this was the case.
- requested clarification on the line ‘intellectual services’. The Secretariat explained it covered the costs of consultants to update tossd.org and tossd.online.
- asked whether additional funds would be needed for the organisation of the General Assembly. The Secretariat clarified that the country hosting the meeting is expected to cover the costs of the meeting e.g. room rental, and that, as per the TORs, participants are expected to fund their own travel. For these reasons, no additional event expenditures were included in the budget.

One participant expressed concern over the financial stability of the Forum if it did not receive any funding from the OECD. In their view, funding by the OECD would be in line with the hosting of the Secretariat by the OECD, and the importance the OECD places on SDG indicator 17.3.1 of which IFT is a co/custodian. They further noted that contributions from non-OECD members should be encouraged to ensure financial stability.

The Secretariat clarified the relation of the IFT Budget and Work Plan vis à vis the OECD Programme of Work and Budget (PWB). As the IFT is hosted by the OECD, it must appear under an OECD output area, in this case, output area 5.1.1 “Development Co-operation”. However, the IFT is not part of the budget of the Development Assistance Committee. The IFT budget is approved by the IFT’s own governing body, the Interim Governing Body (or the Steering Group as from its first meeting), prior to its inclusion in the OECD PWB at the end of April 2024. Funding of the IFT is entirely through voluntary contributions, and the implication of the independence of the Forum is that it will not receive any OECD Member assessed contributions.

The Secretariat stated that it encouraged contributions from non-OECD members and noted that some were already at the commitment stage. Given that funding might be an issue for some dual providers-recipients, in-kind contributions such as secondments and organisation of meetings could be explored.

The co-Chair added that the Memorandum of Understanding on the hosting of the IFT by the OECD had been required precisely because the OECD was not responsible for financing the Forum. Moreover, the prospects in terms of expected contributions were encouraging, so the Forum should meet, and could even exceed, the budget as new members join.

On the potential increase in the budget, the Secretariat clarified that the IFT follows the financial rules of the OECD so, should the operational budget increase over a certain ceiling (EUR 250K or 20%, whichever is the lower), the Secretariat would need to ask for a formal revision of the budget, firstly from the IFT Steering Group (or Interim Governing Body), then from the OECD Budget Committee.

The co-Chair concluded the session by noting that there was wide agreement on the Budget and Work Plan although further details may be needed, and that the Secretariat would update the document and circulate it for approval under the written procedure. The Secretariat will also prepare a draft work plan for 2025-2026 for approval by the Interim Governing Body by the end of April 2024. Depending on how

much it differs from the approved 2024 work plan, the Secretariat will either organise a meeting to discuss the document or launch approval by written procedure.

Item 6. TOSSD statistical standard and methodology – Roadmap for 2024

a) TOSSD Recipients List

The Secretariat presented the proposal to update the list of TOSSD recipients using the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), as proposed by the High-Level Panel of the MVI under the call of the UN Secretary-General. The following summarises key points made by the participants:

On the proposal to apply the MVI to Small Island Developing States (SIDS):

- A participant sought clarification on the governance process for approving changes to the list and inquired whether the base list of recipients (i.e. the list to which apply the criteria) was the current list of ODA recipients or the TOSSD list of recipients. The participant also mentioned that in the case of expenditures in provider countries e.g. for refugees, developing countries are not 'recipients' but rather 'beneficiaries', and that further clarification of the Reporting Instructions was needed on this aspect.
- Several participants acknowledged the merit of the proposals and the value of the MVI as an indicator. There was consensus on the need for collective consideration and decision-making among members while staying aligned with the UN process in this area.
- A participant, while appreciative of the proposed extension of the list to include additional SIDS, called for a broader consideration of the process. Given that the IFT is a relatively new entity, there could be reputational risks associated with moving ahead with the MVI should the UN at the end decide to proceed differently. Other participants supported these comments, emphasising the need for consensus, consistency, and technical robustness in the criteria to be used as well as stability, avoiding frequent changes.
- One participant supported keeping the current list and advocated for the less restrictive option of using the MVI.
- The Secretariat acknowledged the importance of not hastily adopting standards and that this issue warrants further exploration. It clarified that the proposal in the paper was intended to initiate the conversation at the IFT on considering multidimensional criteria in the definition of the list of TOSSD recipients.
- **The co-Chair summarised the discussion by noting an eagerness among the participants to revisit the Secretariat's proposal with a positive outlook, particularly concerning SIDS, once the United Nations officially approves the MVI.**
- **The co-Chair emphasised that no approvals would be made in the next two to four months and that initial decisions on the list of recipients would therefore be made by the Steering Group. A crucial question was whether the objective is to expand or establish the list (as there is a significant distinction between the two) and the discourse on multidimensional vulnerability needed to be acknowledged. While the IFT aims to maintain stability in statistical practices, there is a recognition of the need for an agile system that can effectively respond to reporting and data requirements.**



On the use of multidimensional criteria for the entire list of TOSSD recipients:

- One participant acknowledged progress in addressing the needs and claims of SIDS but expressed dissatisfaction with the narrative in the Secretariat’s paper, which appeared focused on expanding the list rather than reformulating it. The participant emphasised that a multidimensional approach needed to be integral in the TOSSD narrative.
- Two participants highlighted the absence of a proposal for further guidance regarding Middle-Income Countries (MICs) based on existing data, presenting their willingness to further discuss the issue to ensure it remains on the agenda. The importance of achieving greater stability and improvement in the criteria adopted for the recipients list was underscored. The Secretariat mentioned that, according to the data analysis, many MICs would surpass the threshold of the MVI proposed by the high-level panel, so it had not considered this option.
- Two participants shared experiences from their institutions actively participating in discussions on country classifications. One of them proposed considering the criteria used for their development strategy as an option for updating the list of TOSSD recipients. The same participant suggested that TOSSD should be an inclusive standard and questioned whether IFT should merely follow the UN or spearhead discussions on indexes.
- The co-Chair recalled the Secretariat’s intent to receive feedback on a specific proposal and emphasised that the forum is a space for this type of discussions, whether the implementing a UN standard or progressing beyond existing standards. The IFT’s structure allows for various approaches, the working group format being one of them.
- **The co-Chair concluded the discussion by noting that the IFT could serve as a forum to delve into areas with slower progress by the international community, such as establishing multidimensional criteria for the countries that moved or might move from UMICs to HICs. Noting that the General Assembly of IFT could establish a working group dedicated to this specific issue, he invited participants to feed into the future Steering Group discussion on this matter.**

b) Delineation of TOSSD pillar II

The Secretariat presented its proposal to increase the coherence and comparability of activities reported under Pillar II. A few participants requested clarification on the approval process, since the decision was important, and the formal bodies (General Assembly and Steering Group) had not yet been formed.

The CSO representative expressed concern over a reduction of the focus of TOSSD on developing countries and the increase of the scope of pillar II activities. Most participants stated they understood the concerns but still expressed the need for a broad measure of support for sustainable development to provide more transparency on regional and global expenses for sustainable development. TOSSD also fills an existing data gap as no other statistical framework gathers data on support for international public goods at the international level. The Secretariat reassured the civil society that the intention is not to reduce the focus of developing countries or broaden the scope but rather to keep consistency between the current scope and the wording of the Reporting Instructions. A participant suggested strengthening the narrative so that it is clear to the international community that TOSSD is still a measure focused on developing countries.

Several participants intervened to support the proposed clarifications by the Secretariat to the Reporting Instructions (i.e., the replacement of the word “in” by “of” in the TOSSD definition in section 1.1. and the removal of the word “substantial” when referring to benefits to developing countries in section 3.2 Specific



eligibility criteria for Pillar II). Some participants had found the word “substantial” difficult to apply and, for most of them, using a softer term could induce confusion.

There was also broad agreement for splitting pillar II into two sub-pillars II.A and II.B (although the Secretariat might include a numeric code such as 21 and 22 for technical reasons in the database). Participants broadly supported the inclusion of peacekeeping operations in pillar II.A by default. Regarding the **classification of health-related research** into II.A or II.B, a participant asked for clarification of whether a list of diseases that are specific or not of developing countries would be developed. **The Secretariat will investigate this.**

As regards the proposed classification of core contributions to multilateral institutions in pillar II.B by default, opinions diverged. Two participants supported it and thought it was robust while three other participants found it problematic, at least in the provider perspective and for contributions to organisations focused on developing countries. Another participant expressed that pillar II.B could be acceptable for UN entities and global organisations with a political mandate, while II.A would be more appropriate for multilateral development banks and international financial institutions with operational activities in developing countries. The Secretariat reiterated that a default solution would need to be agreed upon since there was no capacity to conduct an assessment about the focus on developing countries and issues related to developing countries of every contribution. **The Forum will continue discussing this issue.**

The co-Chair concluded by stating that there was general support for adjusting the TOSSD definition by replacing the word “in” by “of” in section 1.1 of the Reporting Instructions and clear consensus on the deletion of the word “substantial” when referring to benefits to developing countries in section 2.3 of the Reporting Instructions. There was also general agreement on the split of pillar II into two sub-pillars II.A and II.B as well as the classification criteria, except for the issue of core contributions, which would need to be discussed again.

The Secretariat will prepare a revised paper for the first meeting of the Steering Group in 2024. More in-depth discussions will be held during 2024 with the aim of reaching agreement on further adjustments to the Reporting Instructions at the end of 2024 or early 2025, for the reporting of 2024 activities.