



INTOSAI-Donor Cooperation: Strategic Discussions on SAI Independence

Goal 1 of the IDC strategy 2020-30 is Independent, Professional, Capable, Transparent and Well-governed SAIs. Under this goal, the first strategic priority is to increase and sustain SAI Independence.

With this in mind, the INTOSAI-Donor Steering Committee (IDSC) held its first strategic discussion on SAI independence. The objective was to build on the existing dynamic and to raise the awareness on the existing tools and gather the interest of the donor community to engage with INTOSAI partners to strengthen SAI independence.

The Steering Committee discussed four specific topics, summarised below.

1) What more can INTOSAI and the Donor community do to build capacity of donor staff at the country level to engage effectively on SAI independence?

Donors noted that development staff engaged in this area may not always be experts on PFM and SAIs, hence support to raising awareness and developing capacity was essential. This could be taken forward using the following possible mechanisms:

- On the INTOSAI side, clarifying the definitions, rationale and guidance on SAI independence contained with the Lima and Mexico declarations in a way that would be easier for development partner staff to understand and apply.
- Producing/enhancing guidance and communication materials to demonstrate the importance and benefits of SAI independence, in a way that speaks to wider audiences, perhaps focused to different stakeholders. These may include ambassador level, country economists, sector advisors etc.
- Consider developing training for donor staff on SAI independence.
- Enable and encourage INTOSAI regional bodies to reach out to development partners to facilitate improved understanding of SAI independence.

2) How can we ensure SAIs are included in coordination and policy dialogue fora and ensure SAI independence is on the development agenda?

All participants emphasised the importance of facilitating SAI engagement in coordination and policy dialogue fora, and establishing such mechanisms where needed. The ideas discussed in topic one above were seen as essential to ensuring independence remains on the agenda. Participants agreed it is especially important to communicate the benefits of SAI independence to a wider audience, beyond SAIs and donor staff directly engaged in the topic.

3) How can INTOSAI and Donors best work together to support SAIs when independence is threatened, and create early warning mechanisms to stay alert to emerging risks at the country level?

INTOSAI participants recognised the important role of donors in supporting SAI independence efforts through policy dialogue and the political role some donors can play. At the same time, donors noted that they often need to support of INTOSAI on this area to ensure what they are pushing for is seen as credible. All recognised that we are stronger together, and that creating, coordinating and



supporting coalitions on SAI independence, who work together behind the same core messages, was key.

Some participants noted that it was often difficult for INTOSAI collectively to advocate for SAI independence given that some INTOSAI members themselves were not yet given full independence, and that some members may be reluctant to engage politically in other countries.

The participants recognised the benefit of working together to create powerful and nimble coalitions to support SAI independence, and that this was a crucial strategic topic for the Cooperation moving forward.

Participants also noted that the INTOSAI and Donor communities, as well as the stakeholders mentioned under topic 4, below, were essential in the role of advocating for SAI independence. Further, they can help provide eyes and ears on the ground as part of an early warning mechanism to help the Cooperation stay alert to emerging threats to SAI independence at the country level.

4) Which additional stakeholders (beyond INTOSAI and development partners) can best help unblock the political resistance against SAI independence?

The INTOSAI and Donor community can leverage on Civil Society Organisation as well as involve parliamentarians into the SAI Independence advocacy role.