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**Policy Dialogue 2: Accountable and
transparent development cooperation: how
can we build more equal partnerships?**

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Part One: The Vienna Symposium

The Vienna Symposium on "Accountable and Transparent Development Cooperation: Towards a More Inclusive Framework" (12-13 November 2009) was a true multi-stake-holder event and brought together policy-makers from North and South, members of parliaments, the civil society as well as regional and international organizations.

The Vienna Symposium highlighted the importance of strengthening national ownership and leadership.

It emphasized that it was necessary to ensure active engagement of all relevant stakeholder groups. The deliberations in Vienna zeroed in in particular on the crucial role of national parliaments in the mutual accountability process. Parliamentarians drew attention to the fact that it is often difficult for them to access information in a timely manner.

Involvement of all stakeholders in mutual accountability will occur realistically only if stakeholders have sufficient capacity to engage; thus capacity development and empowerment of institutions responsible for mutual accountability needs to be given due attention and funding.

Aid information needs to be made more transparent and accessible and exchange of experiences and peer-learning processes should be promoted.

The Vienna Symposium saw a number of highly relevant policy messages emerge from the discussion which are contained in the Report on the Symposium. I invite your attention to that Report.

Part Two: How do we in Austria attempt to practice the principles of mutual accountability in our own development cooperation practice ?

Austria has formulated an Action and Implementation Plan 2009 – 2011 to give effect to the Accra Agenda for Action. I should like to point to three deliverables from the Mutual accountability and results reporting section:

- the design of a system of managing for results at programme and strategic level: work is ongoing; we have started to incorporate results-based programming in all new country programs and we have anchored this system in the rolling strategic Three Year Program the Austrian Development Cooperation is mandated to submit each year to the Council of Ministers who forwards it to Parliament;

- the Austrian Development Cooperation supports the participation of all stakeholders at policy and development cooperation level; we also actively participate in joint reviews;

- the Austrian Development Cooperation participates in joint efforts to strengthen accountability platforms in ADC partner countries and builds capacity of Parliaments,

civil-society organisations and courts of audit with a view to a strengthened domestic accountability;

With regard to this last point I should like to refer to a recent initiative of INTOSAI, the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions which has the vision of promoting good governance by helping to improve i.a. performance, transparency, accountability, credibility.

INTOSAI recently held a conference in the Austrian Parliament on its work in the context of aid effectiveness. It focussed on the role of Supreme Audit Institutions in accountability processes in development cooperation. INTOSAI contributes to mutual accountability by strengthening the role of Parliaments, facilitating parliamentary oversight by implementing greater transparency in public financial management, including audits. INTOSAI engages in significant training and capacity building, often in collaboration with UN-DESA, and in all seven INTOSAI regions, in particular developing countries. The Austrian Development Agency is one of 15 donor organisations which have so far entered into MoUs with INTOSAI.

Part Three: What future role do I see for the DCF on mutual accountability ?

The Report of the Secretary General contains a number of very interesting proposals. Let me briefly comment on a few of them.

My general sense is that work on mutual accountability is best done at the country level where the specificity of the situation can be best taken into account. I therefore do not see the immediate value added of annual global assessments. Rather to learn from successful national situations, sharing of best practices and joint learning should be promoted.

Thought should be given mutual accountability mechanisms at the regional level. Regional integration, e.g. in Africa, is seen by many as an important driver for development; the EU bases its trade cooperation with Africa squarely on a regional footing with the EPAs (Economic Partnership Agreements). In this context the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is an important self-monitoring mechanism (founded in 2003, so far 29 countries joined) which we welcome.

I strongly support the proposal contained in the Report of the SG to find ways to strengthen the gender dimension in exercises of mutual accountability. Austria believes that Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is an important instrument for effective gender mainstreaming into public finance. It is an analytic and planning tool for economists and government officials and it is a tool for transparency and accountability that can be used by women's organisations and human rights groups.

Mutual accountability is particularly difficult to implement in settings of fragility. Perhaps it is at the level of local government - municipalities, districts, provinces - that progress could be best achieved. International missions have major developmental implications and are frameworks which should also be screened with a mutual accountability lens.