# Draft minutes CBC Work Stream SAIs in Fragile Situations – skype meeting 29 May, 2018

## Participants

Liberia: Micah-Tebah Belleh

Netherlands: Andrea Connell

Norway: Øivind Berg Larssen

Jorild Skrefsrud

Sierra Leone: Adama Renner

Sudan: Mohamed Elhafiz Nasr

Sweden: Johanna Gårdmark (chair)

## Excuses:

IDI : Jostein Furelid Tellnes

Afghanistan: Hamidullah Faqairi

Sudan: Mohamed Elhafiz Nasr

1. **Opening remarks – approval of agenda**

The chair opened the meeting and took the opportunity to remind participants that Oskar Karnebäck will be on parental leave until January 2019, but will attend the CBC meeting.

The agenda was approved with one previously announced issue for discussion under “any other business”: The issue of referring to “fragile situations” in our name.

1. **Work plan**
   1. **Discussion paper (Sweden)**

As the report has been published and shared the task is considered as completed.

* 1. **Short stories (IDI/Liberia)**

Micah-Tebah Belleh provided an update on the progress made in the gathering and sharing of short stories. 14 stories have been received and considered by the Liberia-IDI team. Eight stories are being further processed for publication in two batches of four stories each. The story batches are to be shared with approximately two months in-between each publication. The team then expects to resume collecting more stories to be shared on a semi-regular basis.

Andrea Connell asked about the structure of the stories and suggested a standardized text at the end, identifying key challenges and key success factors. Such an approach would make it easier to learn from the experiences of the SAI sharing the story. She also shared her experiences from a similar exercise, at a previous job, and promised to share those stories as a source of inspiration.

The chair had questions along the same lines and asked the team to consider how we can help others replicate the ideas we are sharing.

Micah-Tebah recognized that there would be some value in providing a general structure, some questions or perhaps a good example, when sending out the next round of requests for stories.

* 1. **(Advocacy)**

Øivind Berg Larssen shared information about an upcoming meetings of the AG of Norway with the Auditor General, the Public Accounts Committee and the Minister of Finance of Myanmar. While the meetings are not part of the workstream they are a form of advocacy for the issues the workstream deals with.

* 1. **Forum for experience sharing – Johannesburg (Sweden)**

The chair thanked all participants who attended the forum in Johannesburg, and who contributed to interesting discussions and fruitful sharing of experiences.

Some comments were received regarding the report prepared by the consultant. Most comments were supportive of the event and of the report, but a few corrections will be made. When the report is finalized, we will publish the final version on the CBC website. It was generally agreed that not all appendices should be included in the official version.

The chair noted that the workstream’s biggest challenge now would be managing – and trying to meet – very high expectations that were the result of a successful forum. As the workstream has limited resources the chair encouraged members to consider if/how we can pick up on some of the suggestions from participants to continue with experience sharing in person or via video. The reflection from the forum that SAIs may have more similar issues to discuss with other SAIs in their own region, so the workstream needs to consider how to meet different needs in different parts of the world.

The chair invited suggestions by all members.

* 1. **Guidance for SAIs in fragile situations (Norway)**

Øivind Berg Larssen informed the membership that SAI Norway would like to resign responsibility for this issue in the work plan. The international department is in a transition phase and need to adjust to more limited resources for the time being.

The issue about the need for guidance was discussed and it was suggested that we reconsider the wording in the workplan to open up for different ways of addressing issues relating to ISSAI implementation in particularly difficult circumstances, i.e. not just guidance.

The chair reminded participants that SAIs who do not have an Auditor General who is a professional accountant and who do not have strong support from their region may still be in need of support, even though some find that the ISSAIs themselves are sufficient.

Andrea Connell advised the workstream that there may be some work already initiated by the PSC through the Financial Audit and Accounting Standards Subcommittee, and the chair promised to contact Khalid Hamid from SAI UAE on the matter.

As the issue was raised as a result of the interviews conducted by David Goldsworthy and Silvia Stefanoni in preparation for the workstream, and in drafting the paper *State building in fragile situations – the role of Supreme Audit Institutions and their international partners,* the chair will also discuss the issue with David before proposing a way forward.

A question was asked, whether the issue of guidance in ISSAI implementation might be more for the benefit of those SAIs supporting others in their ISSAI implementation, i.e. “providers”. Andrea Connell promised to consider whether this may be a topic for discussion at the EUROSAI seminar planned for early next year, for SAIs providing support to others in capacity development.

* 1. **Update CBC guide with fragility focus (Liberia)**

As the guide has been translated and is being finalized this is not currently an issue, but IDI and Liberia are considering how the short stories may be used to supplement the guide in the future.

1. **Any other business, and next meeting**

The chair introduced the topic by providing the following background for the discussion:

The international discourse among researchers, development professionals and the donor community has now for some years focused on the issue of fragility. Initially the term “fragile state” was used to describe states which lived up to certain criteria. The criteria was initially focused on conflict/post-conflict situations but in the last few years the discussions has broadened in two ways, partially as a response to the reaction from some of the states classified as fragile, and some of those not included in the definition.

The concept of fragility has broadened to now include other aspects of fragility, in total five: violence, justice, institutions, resilience and economic foundations. This definition was developed by the OECD and is generally accepted in the international community (meaning researchers, development professionals and donors, but possibly not those living up to the criteria). Environmental issues have also been added to the discussion since the OECD originally developed its definition – at the request of countries in the PASAI region, for example.

The term used is no longer “fragile state” but rather “fragile situation” (or sometimes “fragile context”) to demonstrate that fragility is a fluid concept, not limited by borders, and not static over time.

In the discussions preceding Agenda 2030, it was concluded that, while extreme poverty (people living on less then USD 1.25/day) is generally decreasing in the world, the percentage of the world’s extreme poor living in fragile situations is rapidly increasing. Between 2015 and 2030 the share of the world’s poor living in the 50 states and economies currently affected by fragility is expected to rise from 43% to 62%. As a result, this is an area prioritized by donors in their funding priorities, and why we see the INTOSAI-Donor Cooperation developing a Tier II for the Global Call for Proposals.

When the workstream was created we chose to use this terminology for two reasons:

* We wanted to use existing definition/criteria developed by someone else so that we (the CBC) were never put in a position where we had to develop our own criteria.
* The focus of the criteria is on the context, and a lot of the development discourse is about how a multitude of complex issues affect the development of institutions and society in such a context, which is also what interested us.

The purpose of the workstream was to address issues that are unique to SAIs working in the type of context that is affected by a multitude of issues, whether it is violence, political instability or other environmental or societal issues. In the research done before we launched the workstream it was clear that, in this context, there are both strong SAIs with very competent leadership and SAIs with a weak mandate and weaker leadership – much like in any other context. We were very clear in the term of reference that the issue for the workstream to deal with was the context and never the relative strength of the SAIs in the context.

In other words, any term we chose to replace fragility with needs to live up to the same general criteria:

* Ideally be an existing definition (by someone else) that is easily understood and clearly distinguishes the target group.
* Keeps the focus on the context, not the SAI, and does not require (or create the appearance of) any type of ranking or prioritizing by the CBC of different SAIs and their needs.

As the we know that the terminology used has kept at least one SAI from participating in our activities and we have received a letter from AFROSAI-E, asking us to change the name, we need to consider this issue very carefully. In the letter AFROSAI-E proposes the term “SAIs with urgent development priorities”. However, as that expression implies that the CBC (or the workstream) have made an assessment of all SAIs’ development needs and decided which to prioritize, the chair suggested the workstream considers other alternatives.

Adama Renner shared some of the discussions from the AFROSAI-E Governing Board meeting in Kigali, where the issue was discussed and resulted in the letter. It was a broad discussion which resulted in a general consensus that the terminology needed to be addressed.

Andrea Connell raised some concerns with deviating from the terminology generally used in the international community but recognized the need to be sensitive to the issues raised by AFROSAI-E.

No workstream members had concrete suggestions to alternative terminology that would still be in line with the terms of reference of the workstream so it was agreed that all workstream members would be invited to provide their inputs in writing and we would then consider the need for another skype meeting.

The chair promised to confirm that the CBC Steering Committee had the mandate to change the name of the workstream and what procedure might need to be followed.