

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper is **an update on the IMF's external communications strategy**, prepared in response to the Executive Board's request, expressed at its March 5, 2003 meeting, for more regular discussions on this topic. A further review of communications strategy may be warranted within a year or two to take into account the implications of the strategic review of the IMF's future directions that is currently underway.

This paper addresses a broad range of communication objectives and activities related to the IMF's core functions and responsibilities. **The main thesis is that an important means of further strengthening the IMF's external communication in the period ahead will be better coordination and integration of communication with the IMF's policies and operations**, especially in country work and for major policy initiatives and issues. Options for implementing the IMF's existing external communications strategy that can be accommodated within existing budget limits are highlighted for discussion.

Transparency and communication have become central to the IMF's mission. The IMF has greatly increased the transparency of its own policies and operations in recent years, with the IMF's external website being the primary vehicle for dissemination. In addition, the IMF has increased its emphasis on effective communication as a factor in engendering national ownership of policy programs and in enhancing the persuasiveness—vis-à-vis the public as well as officials—of the economic policy advice that the IMF provides. Good communication is also a tool for learning through listening. Nearly everyone associated with the IMF shares responsibility for considering the communications implications of IMF policy decisions and IMF policy advice to members, and participating in and fostering communication to support its decisions and counsel.

Policy development—IMF staff increasingly reach out to diverse groups when preparing policy proposals and reviewing policy experience. IMF management's engagements with legislators, CSOs, the private sector, and others contribute to mutual understanding and learning on major policy issues. The communications effort may need to focus more in the near term on the extensive policy and country work for the benefit of low-income members and how the IMF's work contributes to progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The IMF is committed to **publishing staff research** on the international monetary system and other topics—the *World Economic Outlook* and the *Global Financial Stability Report* are the main vehicles through which the IMF publicizes its global surveillance findings and draws attention to analyses related to critical policy issues. **Communication about the role and functions of the IMF remains important** because the mission of the IMF is still not as readily recognizable or understood as that of development banks and some other international organizations.

Country and regional surveillance—public understanding of the role of surveillance remains limited and surveillance policy messages reach only a few people, although publishing of documents related to surveillance is already extensive. Outreach has increased and is becoming an integral part of the country and regional surveillance process.

Outreach is perhaps most essential in the context of IMF-supported programs. Staff should aim to discuss communications issues with the authorities as part of the country dialogue aimed at promoting country ownership of economic policies. Staff recognize the need to do more to encourage country ownership of IMF-supported programs in Africa, to increase understanding of IMF policy recommendations, and to redress the sometimes unfavorable image of the IMF. Recently, the African Department, in consultation with the External Relations Department, formulated an external communications strategy for the region.

Standards and codes (S&C) assessments feed into the surveillance process and are also useful for identifying technical assistance (TA) needs. The principal communication effort with respect to S&C is devoted to encouraging awareness and implementation in member countries.

Statistics and data dissemination—the IMF has stepped up publication and distribution of statistical manuals and guides in multiple languages in order to promote standardized methodologies and policies. Demand from external audiences for statistical data is also significant and increasing.

Capacity building and effective communication are mutual reinforcing—training of member country officials contributes importantly both to capacity building and to facilitating Article IV consultations and program negotiations. One- or two-day seminars or short courses to familiarize legislators, CSOs, and the media with the analytical frameworks that underlie the IMF’s policy analysis and advice can often have a large payoff.

The IMF has improved its **internal communication** since 2002, including between management and staff. Better “horizontal” communication could be achieved across departments, and between headquarters and resident representatives and other IMF offices overseas.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. For more than thirty years following the Bretton Woods Conference in July 1944, the IMF's approach to external communication can fairly be described as "communicate as little as possible." The IMF published little apart from research papers, legal volumes, and its *Annual Report*, and had just one press officer. As the IMF faced new challenges and controversies in the 1970s in responding to oil price shocks to the global economy and persistent macroeconomic and structural problems in many member countries, the merits of communication became better appreciated. The first staff report on the *World Economic Outlook* (WEO) was published in 1981, and a small External Relations Department (EXR) was formed the same year for the purpose of expanding and improving the IMF's media relations and publications.

2. The late 1990s brought a sea change as the IMF embraced transparency, particularly in the wake of emerging market crises of 1994-98, and began publishing voluminous data, documents, research, and explanatory material, especially on the Internet. Press conferences and interviews were held much more often. Discussions with civil society organizations (CSOs), labor union representatives, and others outside of government or academic circles, which had been infrequent, became common. Following the Asian financial crises of 1997-98, during which the IMF was closely followed (and frequently criticized) in the mass media and elsewhere, the Executive Board in 1998 held its first-ever meeting on the IMF's external relations strategy. The discussion prompted the IMF to retain an outside consulting firm to make recommendations on ways to improve the IMF's public image and broaden understanding of its responsibilities and achievements. A second Board discussion on external relations, focused on budgetary issues, was held in 2000.

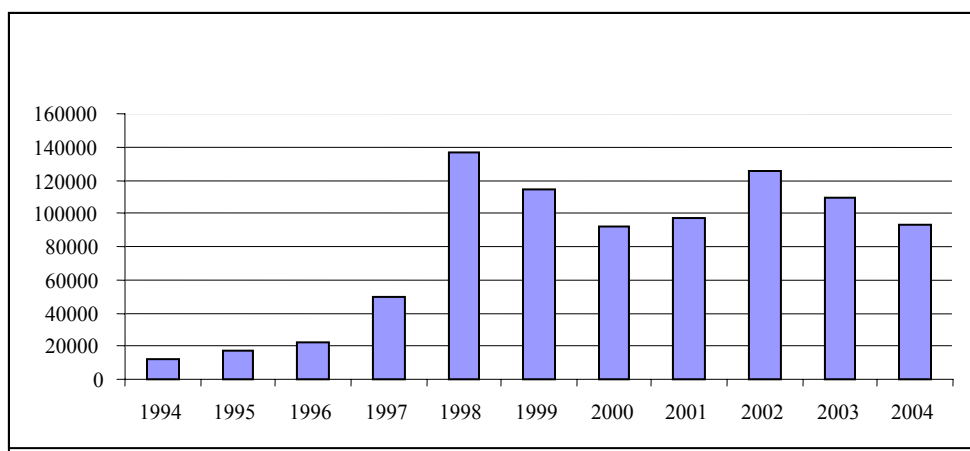
3. External communications strategy was reviewed by the Board in detail in 2003 on the basis of a paper prepared by EXR. As a further mark of increasing IMF transparency, the paper and a Public Information Notice (PIN) summarizing the Board discussion were posted on the IMF's external website (www.imf.org).¹ This paper responds to the Board's request, as noted in the PIN, for regular discussions of the IMF's external communications strategy and its implementation. The paper is largely an update on implementation, recognizing that a more extensive review may be useful following completion of the strategic review of the IMF's future directions that is underway.

4. The IMF's external communications challenges have changed, but not necessarily diminished, since the first Board discussion was held in 1998. Public interest in the IMF (as measured by media reports, for example, in 2004—see Figure 1 below and Section III of the accompanying Background Paper) remains higher than before 1998, but is well below the

¹See the paper at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/docs/2003/021303.pdf> and the PIN at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2003/pn0333.htm>.

peaks reached in 1998-99 and 2002. In the current environment **the challenges at the global level are (1) how to publicize and encourage dialogue regarding the core work of the IMF** in support of financial stability, open economies, sustainable economic growth, high employment, and poverty reduction—work which, by its nature, is seldom headline-grabbing—and **(2) how to explain the IMF’s role and responsibilities when world attention is diffused** across a myriad of national, regional, and global issues. **The challenges at the country level are (1) how to present IMF analysis and explain policy advice clearly and persuasively to those who are not specialists, and (2) how to participate effectively** (but selectively, given resource constraints) **and enhance the dialogue on policy issues with those who are not government officials.** This paper is intended to facilitate Executive Board discussion of these topics by describing and reviewing ongoing communications work within the framework provided by the classification of IMF staff activities for internal budgeting purposes. The paper highlights options for implementing the IMF’s existing external communications strategy that can be accommodated within existing budget limits. Depending upon the conclusions of the overall IMF strategic review, consideration might be given to undertaking a more fundamental review of communications strategy within a year or two.

Figure 1. References to the IMF in Publications



Source: Factiva. Keywords used for the search were “FMI” or “IMF” or “IWF.”

II. OVERVIEW OF IMF COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND GOALS

5. **The way the IMF works has changed. Transparency and communication have become central to the IMF’s mission.** The IMF and its members have found that greater transparency and more effective communication form part of the basis for efficient markets,

good governance, national ownership of policies, and sound policymaking.² For its part, the IMF has greatly increased the transparency of its own policies and operations in recent years. In addition, the IMF has increased its emphasis on effective communication as a factor in engendering national ownership of policy programs and in enhancing the persuasiveness—vis-à-vis the public as well as officials—of the economic policy advice that the IMF provides through its surveillance, program design, technical assistance, and research work. Good communication not only transmits information and policy positions, but is also a tool for learning through listening.

6. **Outreach**—especially establishing constructive dialogue beyond the circle of economic and financial officials—**can build trust and increase mutual learning between the IMF and its many interlocutors.** An example of this at the **global level** is interaction between the IMF's relatively new International Capital Markets Department (ICM) and market participants and analysts. A key objective of ICM is to bring information and judgments about capital market developments to bear on the IMF's surveillance and crisis management work. This requires maintaining liaison with private capital market participants, national authorities, official forums, academia, and the general public, with the aims of information gathering, debating issues, explaining IMF staff assessments and the Board's policy views, and building support for the IMF's policy decisions and proposals. Another example is the outreach entailed in the IMF's effort, led by the Monetary and Financial Systems Department (MFD), to strengthen its financial sector surveillance work, including the Financial Sector Assessment Program (FSAP) conducted jointly with the World Bank, Financial Soundness Indicators (FSIs), Offshore Financial Centers (OFCs), and the Anti-Money-Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) initiatives.

7. At the **country level**, the IMF is increasingly recognizing the benefit of engaging a wide variety of groups in order to better inform its analysis, to communicate the goals of its operational work, and to promote support for sound policies. The African Department (AFR) recently developed a strategic approach that will incorporate external communication into the department's day-to-day operations. The strategy involves delivering messages on the IMF's role in low-income countries as well as supporting the implementation of sound policy at the country level. AFR's strategic approach recognizes that a substantial change in culture and attitude toward external communications is required to make it an integral part of country work. Although AFR's strategic approach is still in its early stages, it may offer a model that could be applied more widely in the IMF.³

8. **Improving IMF external communication should be understood as part of the job of nearly everyone associated with the IMF, from Governors through the Executive**

² Interestingly, a number of international organizations, central banks, and finance ministries in emerging market and developing economies have sought advice from the IMF on how to improve their external communications, mainly in the areas of media relations and use of the Internet.

³ For more information on AFR's strategic approach, see paragraph 46 below.

Board to management and staff, and not just EXR's responsibility. Governors, Executive Directors, and country authorities have critical roles not only in the policy dialogue and in building support for sound policies, but also in supporting the IMF publicly within their countries and constituencies, including by helping to correct impressions created by erroneous reports about IMF activities. The Managing Director is the IMF's primary spokesperson, and his frequent public speeches, press briefings, and media interviews establish overall direction and tone for all IMF communications.⁴ The Deputy Managing Directors complement and reinforce the IMF's messages through their own speaking engagements and media contacts. EXR's main role is to serve as a strategic communications advisor and facilitator for the Board, management, and other departments. EXR has the expertise and tools to help (see Section II of the accompanying Background Paper on "Integrating IMF Communications and Operations: Responsibilities of the External Relations Department (EXR)"), but nearly everyone associated with the IMF shares responsibility for considering the communication implications of IMF policy decisions and IMF policy advice to members, and for participating in and fostering communication to support its decisions and counsel. This sharing of responsibility also highlights the importance of effective internal communication and coordination for raising the effectiveness of external communication.

9. **Effective communication requires, among other things, careful planning, clear assignment of responsibilities, and coordination of both substance and process.** The IMF's efforts to strengthen its external and internal communications is in line with a global trend in large organizations. Such organizations have increasingly recognized that good communication is a strategic management function that contributes to, and is often essential for, success. Focused external and internal communications that convey critical information and priorities clearly can contribute to tangible improvements in an organization's productivity, cost-effectiveness, and institutional reputation. Strengthening external and internal communications at the IMF to align them with best practice will require making communication planning an integral part of the work programs of the Board, management, and departments.⁵

10. An important means of further strengthening the IMF's external communication in the period ahead will be **better coordination and integration of communication with the IMF's policies and operations, especially in country work and for major policy initiatives and issues.** This goal bears consideration in the IMF's **medium-term strategy and its resource planning and allocation.** This paper suggests some ways in which communication can be incorporated more systematically into the IMF's plans and operations,

⁴ The Managing Director's press briefings and interviews are supplemented by biweekly press briefings at IMF headquarters by the Director of EXR.

⁵ Among the steps taken recently by the Executive Board to increase its engagement on communication issues are the report of the Board's Working Group on Enhancing Communication with National Legislators; the establishment of a Board committee on the IMF *Annual Report*; and the formation of a working group to study publication of documents and information on the IMF's external website in multiple languages.

but **does not request that additional resources be provided for communications purposes in the IMF's administrative budget**. The working assumption of this paper is that communication can be improved through reallocations of resources and through the greater efficiency that better communication planning should yield. If departments face shortfalls or mismatches between available resources and communication plans, they may need to reconsider and rebalance priorities (including communication priorities) and/or resolve the issues in their annual business plans and budget submissions.

III. A FRAMEWORK FOR REVIEWING IMF COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

11. For planning and budgeting purposes the IMF groups its **primary outputs** and activities into **five categories**:

- **Policy development, global (or “multilateral”) surveillance, and operation of the international monetary system, including research related to these topics;**
- **Country (“bilateral”) and regional surveillance;**
- **IMF financial support for policy programs (“use of IMF resources”);**
- **Standard setting and statistical information; and**
- **Capacity-building services—mainly training and technical assistance.**

12. The IMF's **communication activities** (which are “intermediate” outputs) are of four general types:⁶

- **Media relations**—communicating through the media via articles and letters-to-the-editor as well as briefings, interviews, and other contacts with journalists;
- **Publishing**—encompassing both electronic (mainly websites) and hardcopy products;⁷
- **Outreach**—communicating with legislators, civil society organizations (CSOs), the private sector, and the general public;⁸ and

⁶ See the accompanying Background Paper for more detailed information about each type of activity.

⁷ Publishing policies and an IMF-wide publications budget are overseen by an interdepartmental Publications Committee. For additional information on publications, see Section V of the Background Paper.

⁸ In common parlance, “outreach” often includes media and publishing as well as more direct, targeted forms of communication, but the narrower definition of “outreach” activities used in this paper is more helpful for considering communication priorities and resource costs. “Outreach” as used here is broader, however, in one respect: it can include government officials outside of the ministries of finance, central banks, and planning and budget offices with whom IMF missions usually meet; it could include, for example, officials in foreign ministries and aid departments in donor countries, and ministries of health and education in program countries.

- **Internal communication**—comprising internal communication that contributes both directly to good external communication and indirectly by increasing efficient management of the IMF and the productivity and motivation of its staff.⁹

13. **Different types of communication have special characteristics bearing upon their effectiveness and cost.** They **include both direct and indirect communications**—an article published by the IMF in one of its own outlets, for example, is direct (the text is fully controlled by the IMF), but a press briefing is indirect (what appears in the media depends upon the reporter and editor). **Some types of communication are more readily targeted** to specific recipients/respondents than others—information posted on a public Internet site is untargeted, whereas an e-mail to a selected addressee is a targeted communication (although it may be forwarded to others). The **cost per reader/listener of communication activities varies greatly**—it is generally lowest for website postings (excluding authoring, editing, and translation costs), followed by most forms of media relations (a single op-ed, press release, or briefing can potentially reach millions of people), followed by print publication costs and, at the most costly end of the scale, most forms of face-to-face outreach, including conferences, seminars, and meetings, which often include high travel costs for the IMF as well as staff time. But **effectiveness also varies by communication type, and often directly with cost**—generally, more learning takes place in face-to-face interactive meetings supplemented by print materials, as the experience of the IMF Institute (INS) and other training programs attests. By contrast, information that is posted on a website may not attract many readers, and, like many mass media items, may not have much impact if the reader is not keenly interested in the topic. There are **major tradeoffs, therefore, among directness of communication, targeting, cost, and effectiveness.** This paper will highlight some of the tradeoffs that should be considered when setting IMF communication priorities and allocating resources across and within the primary output categories.

14. **The next five sections of this paper examine how external communications activities—media relations, publishing, and outreach—contribute to the IMF’s five primary outputs.**¹⁰ **Internal communication** is then **examined in a separate section** (Section IX). The concluding section (Section X) summarizes issues identified in the previous chapters and suggests ways to improve and prioritize communication efforts in order to better serve the medium-term goal of close coordination and integration of

⁹ The primary purpose of improving internal communication is to improve the quality and efficiency of the staff’s work. Good internal communication, even on purely “internal” matters, such as human resources decisions, administration, security, etc., can help promote high morale and foster an esprit de corps that strengthens the external communication effort. This paper does not review the regular, large flow of internal communications, mainly from the Human Resources Department (HRD) and the Technology and General Services Department (TGS), aimed at informing staff of various developments.

¹⁰ The topics covered under the primary output headings vary slightly, however, from the taxonomy applied internally by the IMF for time reporting and cost accounting purposes.

communication activities with the IMF's policies and operations, within resource constraints.¹¹

IV. COMMUNICATION ABOUT IMF POLICIES, GLOBAL SURVEILLANCE, AND RESEARCH ON THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY SYSTEM

A. Policy Development

15. IMF staff increasingly reach out to diverse groups when preparing policy proposals and reviewing policy experience:

(a) The 2004 Biennial Surveillance Review (BSR) made extensive use of outreach activities, including interviews, surveys, and workshops with country authorities, market participants, think tanks, other nongovernmental players, and the media (as well as web-based interviews of mission chiefs).¹²

(b) An extensive and systematic program of outreach has been undertaken in support of the **work to define the role of the IMF in low-income countries**. IMF staff have participated in a variety of outreach activities, including conferences and seminars where IMF policies or policy initiatives have been the focus of discussion. Examples include two IMF-sponsored conferences in Africa on the review of IMF program design and IMF participation in seminars on debt sustainability in Accra, Berlin, and Paris. A recent innovation is the organization of events for CSOs in connection with the Annual Meetings.

(c) In the area of **tax policy**, the **International Tax Dialogue (ITD)** is an Internet-based initiative by the IMF, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and World Bank to encourage and facilitate cooperation on tax matters among governments and international organizations. The institutions share good practices and their knowledge bases while also making them available to country authorities and researchers. The ITD will also facilitate the coordination of

¹¹ Two important aspects of IMF communications have been excluded from this paper in order to keep the scope more manageable and focused. One is information technology (IT): TGS has pointed out the importance of the technological underpinning for better communications (both internal and external) that can allow the linking of internal operations—authoring, storing, retrieving, dissemination—to external use of the IMF's storehouse of knowledge and information. As TGS notes, information needs to be easily found, retrieved, and repurposed for different audiences, internally and worldwide. The second is the language dimension: multiple languages (not only translation and interpretation, but also language training for staff) are important for achieving the IMF's communication objectives. Publishing in languages other than English was reviewed extensively in the 2003 Board paper, and a working group comprising Executive Directors and senior IMF staff is being formed to study further a key aspect: web posting of documents and information in multiple languages. Accordingly, it seems appropriate to postpone discussion of multi-language publishing pending the outcome of the working group's deliberations. (See also Box 1 in the Background Paper.)

¹² See <http://www.imf.org/external/np/pdr/surv/2004/082404.htm>.

tax policies, avoid duplication of efforts, and allow input from developing countries in the way tax programs are constructed and international tax issues debated. As part of this effort, the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department (FAD) has been involved with the other sponsors in arranging conferences on specific tax issues, and developing and providing content for the ITD website.

16. **IMF management's engagements with parliaments, CSOs, the private sector, and others contribute to mutual learning on major policy issues.** A prime example is the "Town Hall" meetings between CSO representatives and the heads of the Bank and the IMF—involving also the Chairs of the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) and the Development Committee—that have been a feature at the last two Annual Meetings. Another is the biennial high-level encounter between leaders of the global labor union movements and staff and management (see Subsection VI.B.2 in the Background Paper). Recently, the IMF, World Bank, and World Council of Churches (WCC) have been engaged in a dialogue on global economic issues (see Subsection VI.B.3 in the Background Paper). These meetings also serve to highlight policy issues and problems that arise in the context of country operations.

17. With support from Executive Directors and country authorities, **IMF management and staff have been meeting more frequently with legislators from various countries** to discuss national and international economic issues and IMF policies.¹³ The IMF interacts both with umbrella groups—such as the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB), the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), the InterParliamentary Union (IPU), and others—and with national groups of legislators. In particular, the IMF has a well-established relationship with the PNoWB, with IMF management and staff participating in their annual conference and staff taking part, when possible, in PNoWB regional events and field visits.

18. **Major conferences often serve multiple objectives related to policy development.** For example, the *Middle Eastern Finance Ministers' Conference on Public Finance Issues in the Region*, organized by FAD jointly with the Lebanese Ministry of Finance and held in Beirut in May 2004, served regional surveillance and technical assistance objectives, and EXR staff facilitated an interchange with the media.

19. **The IMF's Transparency Policy has led to the release of a vastly increased volume of policy papers and related information**, with the IMF's external website being the primary vehicle for dissemination. Virtually all papers on general policy issues discussed by the Executive Board are published, together with a PIN.¹⁴ The IMF also issues **numerous**

¹³ See the Report of the Executive Directors' Working Group on Enhancing Communication with National Legislators at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/ed/2004/ecnl/index.htm>.

¹⁴ The IMF Archives, open to the public since 1996, serves as a valuable information resource to journalists, and other researchers by offering a wide range of material documenting the IMF's operations, activities, and relations with member countries over time. Public availability of the IMF's archival material demonstrates

(continued)

publications in key policy areas and helps to shape the policy agenda by publicizing books on selected topics, for example, the recent books entitled *Who Will Pay?* and *The Macroeconomics of HIV/AIDS*.

20. **Informing journalists about policy issues is crucial.** Press briefings and interviews given by the Managing Director and the Deputy Managing Directors are widely reported in the media. They are supplemented by biweekly press briefings by the Director of EXR at IMF headquarters, which give additional opportunities to release information, add details, or correct misreporting. EXR's Media Relations Division maintains contact with several thousand journalists worldwide who cover the IMF, as well as thousands more who occasionally report upon IMF-specific issues and subjects. Because journalists often have tight deadlines leaving little time to digest complicated issues, EXR launched a password-protected electronic Media Briefing Center in March 2004 to bring documents and other important information to the attention of journalists in advance of publication and give them more time to digest the material and prepare stories. More than one thousand journalists have registered for this service. The IMF also uses the opportunity offered by the op-ed pages and letters to the editor sections of newspapers to reach influential audiences on relevant policy issues.

21. **Some policy areas of crucial importance for the IMF in terms of delivering messages involve a cross-section of issues.** Failure to communicate adequately on these "mega-issues" could diminish the IMF's capacity to perform its core functions. A prime example of this is the focus being brought to bear by a broad section of the international community—ranging from governments to CSOs—on mobilizing the international effort necessary to make 2005 a "make or break year" for progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (see Box 1). The IMF is committed to helping countries make progress toward the MDGs, but faces skepticism in many quarters about its role. The IMF should plan and closely coordinate its communications about its extensive policy and country work for the benefit of low-income countries and its commitment to the goals of the 2005 review of progress toward achieving the MDGs.

B. Global Surveillance

22. **The *WEO* and the *Global Financial Stability Report (GFSR)* are the main vehicles** through which the IMF publicizes its global surveillance findings and some of its most significant analytical work.¹⁵ The publication of the *WEO* and *GFSR* is heralded and promoted to the media via press briefings, media interviews, and responses to individual

openness and transparency regarding the policies and decisions of the IMF and contributes to improved knowledge and understanding of the IMF and its role in the world economy.

¹⁵ Another IMF publication that deserves mention here is the *Annual Report on Exchange Arrangements and Exchange Restrictions (AREAER)*, which is used regularly in business and academic institutions.

journalists. IMF op-eds placed in major newspapers are also used to publicize these flagship publications.

Box 1. A Critical Year for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The UN summit on the Millennium Declaration in September 2005 will cap a year marked by international efforts to make 2005 a “make or break year” to achieve the MDGs by 2015. The Managing Director has committed the IMF to participating in the Millennium Summit and the activities leading up to it.

After considerable debt relief and five years of PRSPs and Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) programs, and one year after the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) assessment of these programs, the international community will be asking what changes the Bretton Woods institutions are making that will contribute to achieving the MDGs. CSOs view the year as critical, and are organizing a loose coalition for a “Global Call to Action Against Poverty.” In particular, UK groups, in an effort to make the most out of that country’s presidencies of the Group of Eight (G-8) and the European Union (EU) during 2005, are stepping up their efforts and their campaigns, including “Make Poverty History” and “Education for All” week-long actions.

IMF-supported programs will be scrutinized to see, for example, if there is sufficient fiscal flexibility regarding health and education spending. In particular, the IMF will be asked to explain how its policies affect the increased aid flows needed to reverse the HIV-AIDS pandemic. The IMF will also be urged to follow up, on a country-by-country basis, its call for more Official Development Assistance (ODA), by seeking commitments from donors to make timely disbursements that will help each country to achieve the MDGs.

Against this backdrop, the IMF needs to communicate better in order to correct perceptions that it is not doing its part. The IMF should show: (1) how the IMF’s work fits into the overall efforts by the international community to achieve the MDGs; (2) how the IMF has sharpened its focus in low-income countries on the goals of growth and poverty reduction; (3) how the programs that the IMF has supported in specific countries through the PRGF and Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative are essential to the fight against poverty; and (4) how the new debt sustainability framework will contribute to ensuring that financing in support of the MDGs will be used in a sustainable manner. And throughout the year, the IMF will need to communicate its support of the Monterrey Consensus, urging the developing countries to undertake the policies, including the reforms needed, to strengthen their economies and urging the donor nations to ensure that they deliver the financial resources in the amounts and with the consistency needed to realize the MDGs.

23. **Communication on IMF global surveillance aims not just to** showcase the data and the projections but especially to **draw attention to analyses related to critical policy issues**. To this end, the two analytic chapters of the *WEO* (Chapters II and III) are now released a week ahead of Chapter I, and a separate press briefing held with interested journalists. The *GFSR*, through increased emphasis on writing in direct language and focusing on policy recommendations, has increasingly sought a wide external audience of market participants, analysts, and policymakers. In order to target specific messages, individual papers from the *GFSR* (for example, on the insurance industry, pension funds, and hedge funds) are published as stand-alone documents, such as Occasional Papers and Working Papers.

24. The IMF's global economic and financial surveillance work and policy views can often be explained most effectively through **face-to-face dialogue**. To this end, the Research Department (RES) routinely holds a series of regional briefings shortly after the publication of the *WEO* with the goal of explaining the staff's projections, analysis, and policy prescriptions, usually with a special focus on the region concerned. RES staff also attend and make presentations to various forecasting conferences (such as the United Nations' Project Link) and meet on a regular basis with people interested in the global outlook (policymakers, private sector economists, journalists). Another important communication vehicle is the *WEO* section of the external website, which offers data, publications, and other relevant information. The *WEO* database has been made more user friendly in recent years. Between September and November 2004, there were over 280,000 requests to the *WEO* section of the website.¹⁶

25. Likewise, ICM conducts press conferences, media interviews, and regional briefings, and provides press briefings shortly after the publication of each *GFSR* to publicize and explain the key findings and policy recommendations. ICM also conducts a continuous dialogue with a broad range of market participants, not only in conjunction with the *GFSR* but also as an integral part of its broader work program. Recent ICM studies on investment climate and risk management issues have involved meetings with and explaining the relevance of the IMF's work to a wide range of market participants who have not previously had great awareness of the IMF and its work. In addition to systematic day-to-day interaction with key market participants, ICM takes part in multilateral meetings, committees, and working groups involving both the private and public sectors, through groupings such as the IMF's Capital Markets Consultative Group (CMCG), the Joint Forum (the bank, insurance, and securities regulators of the Group of Ten (G-10)), and various OECD, Bank for International Settlements (BIS), and G-10 and Group of Twenty (G-20) committees covering a wide variety of systemic issues.

C. Research on the International Monetary System and Other Topics

26. **Publishing staff research on the international monetary system and other topics requires a significant commitment of institutional resources** to authorship, editing, publication, and dissemination. Staff research is published in *IMF Staff Papers*, IMF Working Papers, books, Occasional Papers, and other publications. Research is summarized in the *IMF Research Bulletin*, *Finance and Development (F&D)*, and the *IMF Survey*. Important topics are addressed in language suitable for nonspecialists in the Economic Issues

¹⁶ **IMF website statistics count only page views (page impressions) not "hits."** When a user clicks on a link, or types a URL in the address line of a browser, a request is sent to a server for a page. A page usually equals many hits, as the page may contain multiple elements such as HTML text, images, etc., many of which would count as separate hits. In contrast, page views (page impressions) count only the number of pages viewed and do not count the supporting graphic files and other elements of a page. For more information about IMF website statistics, see Section IV of the Background Paper.

series (see, for example, Economic Issue 6, *Why Worry About Corruption?* and Economic Issue 25, *Controlling Pollution Using Taxes and Tradable Permits*).

27. **Outreach in conjunction with the IMF's research program** includes the IMF Annual Research Conference, run by RES, the most recent of which had over 200 submissions from academics and policymakers in 37 countries (papers are posted on the IMF's external website). Many IMF departments host other research conferences, and operate visitors programs—an important part of academic outreach. Many staff members also go to universities, central banks, and other institutions to present research at conferences and seminars.

28. **Media interest in IMF research is usually limited** to the more specialized economic and financial outlets (the *WEO*, *GFSR*, and such books as *Who Will Pay?* and *The Macroeconomics of HIV/AIDS* are exceptions). EXR's Media Relations Division routinely handles inquiries from journalists about research topics and works with departments in publicizing conferences and critical research work.

D. Communication About IMF Roles and Functions

29. Communication about the role and functions of the IMF remains important because the mission of the IMF, while more widely known than it was just a few years ago, is still not as readily recognizable or understood as that of development banks and some other international organizations. Providing journalists with accurate basic information about the IMF in clear language is essential. Press officers at IMF headquarters respond to many questions from journalists who do not cover the IMF regularly, and journalists who have Internet access often glean information through the IMF's external website (www.imf.org). Journalists also use IMF print publications or call upon IMF resident representatives or regional offices to provide general information.

30. **The public also learns about the IMF on the Internet**, often through accessing www.imf.org. In addition to providing a ready source of published IMF documents, the IMF external website features an increased amount of expository material—such as factsheets and Issues Briefs—explaining key aspects of IMF operations and policies. The external website is increasingly being organized on a thematic basis to help visitors find information that corresponds with their interests. The IMF also provides information through other websites, including a plethora operated by CSOs. One objective of outreach to CSOs—discussed in more detail in Section VI of the Background Paper—is to encourage more accurate, balanced portrayal of the IMF in CSO communications, including on their Internet sites. The IMF is also publishing op-eds on websites that serve various audiences, such as students.

31. **Publications and other material intended to explain IMF policies and activities in accessible language** include:

- Pamphlets such as *What Is the IMF?* (produced in several languages);

- The IMF's *Annual Report*—possible changes to which are to be considered by a new Board committee;
- The *IMF Survey*, which reports biweekly on IMF activities, and *IMF In Focus* (formerly the *IMF Survey Supplement*), which is intended to provide once or twice a year a clear, concise, picture of how IMF policies and operations have evolved;
- The quarterly *F&D*, which focuses on major issues and developments facing the IMF, its response to policy challenges, and changes in the international monetary system (the December 2002 issue on *Facing Crises* covered IMF progress in developing early warning systems and new techniques for preventing and resolving crises);
- Op-eds in publications that reach large generalist audiences and speeches published on the external website, which offer broad overviews of the IMF and its policies;
- Videos about the work of the IMF, produced in several languages—for example, the Office for Asia and the Pacific (OAP) has produced (with EXR support) a video in Japanese on the role of the IMF, which is being distributed to interested media, educational institutions, and social organizations, and used in recruitment activities; and
- Educational material available from the IMF Center and/or through material posted at <http://www.imf.org/econed>.¹⁷

32. EXR organizes and conducts, with participation from Executive Directors' offices and other departments, **briefings and meetings at IMF headquarters with a wide variety of groups from around the world**, including legislators, business representatives, academics and think tank staff, students, and the general public. Outreach to universities and leading research and policy institutes near IMF headquarters helps the IMF to learn from their expertise as well as providing a platform to explain IMF policies. Altogether, these headquarters-based outreach activities reached about 17,000 people directly in 2004 (see Section VI of the Background Paper).

33. **Similar activities are conducted by the IMF's overseas offices and resident representatives.** OAP, for example, holds seminars in Japan during campus visits made with other departments for recruiting purposes. OAP also makes periodic visits as part of its role in operating the Japan-IMF scholarship program and at times delivers public presentations on the IMF. The activities of the Office of the Special Representative to the United Nations also include outreach: to CSOs, often in the context of UN meetings; to the business sector, to the extent that it interacts with the UN; to academic institutions, including through briefings for students in New York; and to parliamentarians to the extent that they interact with UN forums or hold their meetings in the UN context. The IMF Office in Europe (EUO) organizes and participates in seminars and meetings with both fairly broad and highly specialized audiences on a host of IMF-related issues. EUO has markedly increased its contacts with

¹⁷ See also <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/center/index.htm>.

CSOs throughout Europe in recent years, with apparent success in increasing understanding of IMF views.

34. **The IMF receives and provides substantive responses to thousands of direct queries annually** from a wide variety of interest groups and individuals asking about specific aspects of the IMF's work. Most queries arrive through the IMF's public affairs e-mailboxes—recently enhanced by the creation of addresses for country-specific queries—or via mail or fax services.¹⁸

V. COUNTRY AND REGIONAL SURVEILLANCE

35. The IMFC Communiqué of October 2, 2004, called upon the IMF to “strengthen communications to markets and the public of the IMF’s policy messages while preserving its role as a candid and confidential advisor.” The 2004 Biennial Surveillance Review (BSR) emphasized increasing the “persuasiveness” of IMF surveillance. One of the main BSR findings is that active dissemination efforts have raised the visibility of surveillance in recent years, but **public understanding of the role of surveillance remains limited and surveillance policy messages reach only a few people, even in countries that publish IMF documents**. The BSR suggested, among other things, that (1) the role in the IMF’s dissemination strategy of the Board’s summings up of its discussions could be reconsidered, together with potential changes to existing communication vehicles (especially PINs); (2) there may be benefits in developing a more active outreach program to explain to various audiences the broad purposes and modalities of surveillance and disseminate the key findings of individual surveillance rounds (e.g., through events organized in partnership with local research institutions);¹⁹ and (3) best practices on communication activities could be disseminated more actively within the institution. It should also be noted, however, that even the most sophisticated communication strategies cannot compensate for a shortage of pointed messages in some of the surveillance documents themselves.

36. **Publishing related to surveillance is already extensive.** The IMF publishes about 75 percent of country papers on its external website (www.imf.org).²⁰ Books, papers, and articles containing information related to country surveillance are also published. Often monographs are published based upon documents originally prepared for the Executive Board. Region-specific pamphlets are sometimes produced (for example, the six on Middle

¹⁸ The e-mailboxes for queries from the public are publicaffairs@imf.org and, for country-specific queries, xxxContact@imf.org, where xxx = the country abbreviation used by the IMF. The fax number is 1-202-623-6278.

¹⁹ This could also include more extensive use of speeches, lectures, op-eds, and articles for popular and technical publications after the conclusion of an Article IV consultation (with the associated publication of documents and press notices).

²⁰ Publication of most types of papers is “presumed” but still requires the country’s consent.

Eastern and North African regional topics produced in English and Arabic in 2003 for the Dubai Annual Meetings). The *IMF Survey* publishes country-specific articles based on staff reports or selected issues papers. Articles have appeared on, for example, Belgium, China, Germany, Spain, and the United States. *F&D* carries major overviews of regional economies (for example, the Middle East in the March 2003 issue, Latin America and Africa in September 2003, and Europe in June 2004) as well as spotlighting individual economies (for example, China in December 2003, and the United States in March 2004). The paper *Managing Oil Wealth: The Case of Azerbaijan*, which was translated and published in Russian, is an example of reaching out to readers in non-English-speaking countries. The paper provides policy advice based upon the experience of various countries in managing oil revenue, and should prove useful for other oil-producing countries in central Asia.

37. **A working group of Executive Directors and staff is being established to examine the issue of non-English-language publication.** It will reconsider the criteria used to select material to be published in non-English languages on the website, and the resource requirements for the translating, reviewing, and posting that would be involved in any change in current practices. This working group will examine the results of a recent pilot project that involved the offer by EXR to post certain key country-related material (PINs, country reports, and mission concluding statements) in languages other than English on the external website, provided that this would not involve additional translation costs, has elicited little internal demand for postings, and little usage of the material posted (see Box 1 in Section IV of the Background Paper). A survey recently conducted on the website also indicated that additional material in languages other than English was not an especially high priority for users (see Table 4 in Section IV of the Background Paper). EXR will review how to go forward after the working group reports.

38. **Outreach has also increased and is becoming an integral part of the country and regional surveillance process**—in both nonprogram and program countries. While the focus of Article IV consultations is on communication between member country officials and staff mission teams, interaction with legislators, the private sector, labor unions, faith-based organizations, and other CSOs has become more important for improving the IMF's understanding of specific issues as well as for explaining IMF views. The Western Hemisphere Department (WHD), for example, reports that missions to and resident representatives in most Latin American countries now meet frequently with legislators and CSOs during the Article IV process. MFD staff also have extensive contacts with private bankers and market participants in member countries when conducting financial sector assessments and in other financial sector surveillance activities. In some instances—for example, interactions during 2004 by European Department (EUR) staff with labor union federations in Bulgaria, France, and Serbia and Montenegro—Article IV reports have spurred contacts and thus enhanced dialogue.

39. **Country-specific and regional seminars and workshops with national legislators** provide an opportunity to discuss the IMF's policy recommendations and country and regional situations. Examples include a seminar in Yaoundé in March 2003 for Cameroonian legislators; a seminar in Accra in April 2003 for Ghana's parliamentarians; a seminar in

Beirut in March 2004 for parliamentarians from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and West Bank and Gaza Strip; seminars for legislators from Lao PDR and Vietnam in March 2004; a seminar at the Joint Vienna Institute (JVI) in April 2004 for parliamentarians from transition economies; and a seminar in Abu Dhabi in December 2004 for parliamentarians and members of consultative councils from countries belonging to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). IMF-sponsored **public events** on country-specific and regional surveillance issues also offer a way to engage policymakers, think tank representatives, private sector actors, the general public, and CSO representatives.

40. **Broadening outreach remains a challenge in some countries.** While IMF departments have developed relationships with various nonofficial interlocutors in many countries, there remain many others where such interaction is limited. EXR has taken steps in recent years to assist area departments in their outreach efforts. A ***Guide for Staff Relations with Civil Society Organizations***²¹ was prepared with extensive input from CSOs. Looking ahead, there is a need to broaden outreach systematically in close consultation with country teams and departments' immediate offices. A first step would be for departments to devise their own external communications blueprints, in consultation with EXR, and to identify immediate needs that can be met with current resources.

41. **Mission concluding statements, press conferences, press releases, and PINs** are used to publicize and explain surveillance operations and inform markets. The IMF's Media Briefing Center is used to disseminate web-streamed press briefings accessible only to journalists, press briefings/statements at the conclusion of Article IV missions, and PINs issued following the completion of Article IV consultations by the Executive Board. EUO maintains relations with the European media, as does OAP with the Japanese and other East Asian media. Op-eds and letters to the editor are often employed by country teams to explain country-specific and regional issues—recent examples have included Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Uruguay, and Zambia.

42. **Training staff** (primarily area department mission chiefs and resident representatives) **in media relations** has contributed to more effective communication with journalists in many countries and, staff believe, to more accurate reporting on surveillance and other IMF activities. Such relationships have also facilitated placement of IMF-authored op-eds. EXR continues to work closely with HRD on staff training in media relations and other important communications skills. Given innovations in how information is delivered to the general public, including through the broadcast media, staff training is likely to evolve as effective outreach calls for new skills. Staff media relations training, which is presently restricted to mission chiefs, resident representatives, and other staff involved in high-level interaction with external communities, could usefully be extended to other staff designated by departments, if resources permit. Its scope could, moreover, be broadened to cover communications beyond media relations.

²¹ The text of the Guide appears at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/cso/eng/2003/101003.htm>.

VI. COMMUNICATION IN THE CONTEXT OF IMF-SUPPORTED PROGRAMS

43. **Outreach is perhaps most essential in program countries.** The 2002 Conditionality Guidelines²² indicate that staff should urge and assist country authorities to broaden ownership of policies. In low-income PRGF countries, the process of preparing a PRSP provides a mechanism for public consultation by the authorities, although that mechanism should be strengthened in some PRGF countries. In countries drawing upon the IMF's General Resources Account (GRA), there is no established mechanism for such consultation, and practice varies greatly. In all cases, if a country's authorities fully own their program, they should be expected to explain measures and their rationales to the public themselves; if, by contrast, ownership is weak, the authorities may not welcome the transparency needed for the IMF to take the lead in explaining measures to the public. The tension between confidentiality in policy discussions and transparency is particularly acute during program negotiations and in other situations where the authorities may be especially reticent and the public may demand more frequent and candid information.

44. Staff should aim to discuss communications issues with the authorities as part of the country dialogue aimed at promoting country ownership of economic policies. Mission teams and resident representatives (see Box 2) increasingly devote time and resources to outreach as programs evolve—especially in low-income countries, in the context of the PRSP process. These staff members are in a position not only to explain IMF views and policy advice, but also to listen to the concerns of nonofficials and to help shape IMF conditionality in a way that strengthens country ownership of programs, and they can also identify and sometimes mobilize domestic support for constructive institutional changes (e.g., reforms of certain regulations or laws) that are not required as part of IMF conditionality.²³ Outreach in the program context requires an ability for rapid response as well as sensitivity to the evolving situation, and comprehensive follow-up over time. In many instances, the most effective way to reach a broad audience is through articles in major newspapers, but preparing timely articles can be difficult because the macroeconomic and policy context can change as a program evolves. Direct contact with nonofficials can be especially difficult for program

²² See <http://www.imf.org/External/np/pdr/cond/2003/eng/050803.htm> and <http://www.imf.org/External/np/pdr/cond/2002/eng/guid/092302.htm>.

²³ EXR helps in various ways—see the Background Paper for more information. In individual countries, EXR's involvement tends to be consultative—offering advice on the tenor of interaction with specific groups; facilitating contacts; writing and editing background material; preparing and placing newspaper articles and letters to the editor; and monitoring and responding across a range of media. EXR also plays a role in facilitating contacts between missions and CSOs that operate outside of individual countries; meetings are regularly arranged on a broad range of countries. EXR also arranges seminars for legislators and CSO representatives from individual program countries as well as groups of countries.

negotiating missions to fit into their schedules. Consequently, a steady outreach effort—often involving a resident representative, if present in the country—is often necessary.

Box 2. Communication Activities of IMF Resident Representatives

IMF resident representatives are expected to know well both the economy and the politics of the countries to which they are assigned. They can deepen their knowledge through contacts with a range of social sectors and organizations. Resident representatives are also called upon to advise and assist the authorities to strengthen country ownership by communicating to the media, legislators, civil society, private sector, and others about the IMF-supported economic program and the IMF's policy advice. Outreach by IMF resident representatives can help to build relationships and deepen trust in the IMF, as well as facilitating media relations and outreach by visiting staff and management. Among the ways in which resident representatives can improve communication and contribute to the IMF's work are:

- maintaining ongoing contacts with influential members of the legislature, including key committees on economic and financial matters;
- identifying issues for, and initiating, op-ed articles and letters-to-the-editor, as well as establishing relationships with local journalists and providing interviews and background briefings in order to raise the quality of media coverage of the IMF and of issues related to the IMF's work;
- identifying, in consultation with the authorities, and contacting the most important CSOs and others for IMF outreach (for participation in briefings, seminars, conferences, and workshops, for example);
- improving the accessibility of IMF materials by: (1) identifying and arranging for translation into a local language (when cost-effective); (2) regularly updating and improving the resident representative sections of www.imf.org; and (3) distributing or placing hard copies of IMF-publications in libraries, especially in countries where access to the Internet is limited; and
- representing the IMF in regional conferences when appropriate and when it is not feasible to send someone from headquarters.

Resident representatives need training and support if they are to play their communications role successfully, and they need assurance that the rewards for communicating effectively will outweigh the risks inherent in communicating more extensively. AFR's working group on communication noted that "resident representatives play a central role in external communications in many African countries and so the effectiveness of their selection and training is critical." But the group also found that **resident representatives (and mission chiefs) felt that the incentives for communication were not commensurate with the risks.**

A recent review of the resident representative program found that the primary determinant of effectiveness was personal characteristics including diplomatic, interpersonal, and outreach skills (knowledge and understanding of economics, and of the IMF and host country, was second). The review observed that "with the emphasis in recent years on transparency and achieving broader understanding of the IMF and its policies, those skills and characteristics that enable excellence at outreach activities have become increasingly crucial for IMF mission chiefs and resident representatives." The review also found that resident representatives are devoting more time to outreach and capacity building, but believe they need to spend even more time on these functions, perhaps by spending somewhat less time on surveillance and monitoring work, especially in countries where more of the latter work could be accomplished through direct communications between IMF headquarters and the country authorities.

45. Implementation of policies needed for program success often depends upon legislative actions.²⁴ Country and regional seminars and workshops with legislators provide opportunities to discuss the program and contribute thereby to a better understanding of the issues by legislators and IMF staff and to strengthening national ownership of adjustment and reform efforts and the adoption of related legislation. In October 2004 EXR representatives joined with staff from other departments to conduct a seminar in Tanzania that allowed for extensive exchanges on country-specific questions (see Box 3).

46. The IMF has been conscious of **the need to do more to encourage country ownership of IMF-supported programs in Africa, to increase understanding of IMF policy recommendations, and to redress the sometimes unfavorable image of the IMF.** Outreach has been extensive in Africa (see Box 4). The Managing Director and his two predecessors, and the Deputy Managing Directors, have made many visits to Africa to explain the IMF's policies and solicit the views of the authorities, legislators, the private sector, and CSOs. Recently, AFR, in consultation with EXR, formulated an external communications strategy for the region. The strategy will be guided by a number of principles that will be used by AFR in developing region-wide messages and by country teams as the context for country strategies. While some of the principles were specific to the particular needs of the region, many are relevant to or could be adapted for use in other regions. In summary, the principles included:

²⁴ In line with the recommendation of the Executive Directors' Working Group on Enhancing Communications with National Legislators to increase IMF communication with legislators, EXR has drafted guidelines for staff, which are currently being reviewed by departments.

Box 3. Macroeconomic Policy Seminar for Parliamentarians, Civil Society, and the Media in Tanzania

On October 14-15, 2004, the IMF and the Tanzanian Parliament's Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs sponsored a macroeconomic policy seminar for the country's legislators—the first of its kind in the country. A workshop was held for representatives from CSOs and the media the following day. Both events, which took place in Bagamoyo and drew, respectively, some 30 parliamentarians and 20 representatives from local think tanks, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the press, focused on Tanzania's reform efforts under President Benjamin Mkapa to step up the pace of development and poverty reduction.

The discussions focused on the IMF's work in general, its policy advice in Tanzania, and key economic policy issues where the role of the Tanzanian parliament is especially important, such as fiscal transparency, public expenditure management, financial sector reform, structural reforms to foster private sector growth, and poverty reduction.

There was broad agreement among participants that Tanzania's reforms, supported by the IMF and the World Bank, have helped the country make a successful transition from a state-controlled to a market-oriented economy. In recent years, Tanzania has enjoyed high annual economic growth (around 6 percent), low inflation (around 4 percent), robust reserves, increasing capital inflows, improved revenue collection, and sound expenditure management. This performance is in stark contrast to the previous 30 years when growth averaged about 2 percent a year (less than the rate of population increase) and annual inflation averaged more than 30 percent. The country's strong reform efforts have attracted substantial support from the international community, including \$3 billion in debt relief under the IMF-World Bank HIPC Initiative, and aid is expected to increase significantly in 2004/05 to \$1.4 billion (13.3 percent of GDP).

However, participants also agreed that much remains to be done if Tanzania is to meet the MDGs. Participants pointed to the fact that poverty and disease are still widespread, the country continues to be dependent on donor assistance, development efforts remain constrained by a narrow export base and regional instability, and the benefits have not been evenly spread—with 90 percent of the poor living in rural areas. Parliamentarians asked that the benefits from debt relief under the HIPC Initiative be used to improve social services and increase expenditure for the poor. Representatives of local NGOs and media wondered whether the poor would benefit from macroeconomic stabilization.

The authorities, represented by Deputy Minister of Finance Festus Limbu, reiterated the government's commitment to reforms, noting that only nationally owned reforms can fully succeed. IMF Executive Director Peter Ngumbullu said that the country's challenges must be addressed through ambitious and consistent reforms, keyed in particular to improving the business environment and bolstering the agricultural sector.

Another major concern was access to information and the need for an open dialogue. Parliamentarians said that, as elected representatives of the people, they had not been sufficiently involved in the formulation and decision-making process regarding the development of Tanzania's poverty reduction strategy, the budget, and other important economic policy issues. They emphasized their role in ensuring that the voices of the people are heard in the major policy debates, including conveying to the IMF the social dimensions of its policy advice. For that reason, they greatly welcomed the two-day workshop. Njelu Kasaka, Chair of the Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs of the Tanzanian Parliament, noted that recognition of legislators as "an important interlocutor of the IMF is a commendable turnaround." Marie Shaba, with the Tanzania Media Women's Association, said that "this is really a milestone for us," adding that "anti-IMF ideas may be there because previously there had been no interaction."

- External communications will be an integral part of the department's operational work and performance in communications will be reflected in assessments of staff.
- External communications is an investment that, over time, boosts public understanding of, and support for, sound policies and enriches staff understanding of issues and country

circumstances. Reflecting this, external communications will be conducted on a proactive basis, and staff will be prepared to respond to criticism in a timely manner.

- AFR will take the responsibility for external communications *within* Africa drawing on the expertise of EXR. This responsibility encompasses communications with all groups—whether local or international—operating in the country and on all issues raised by these groups.
- The department and country teams will listen to the views of interest groups—both official and unofficial—and will respond to those views by establishing substantive dialogue.
- An AFR external communications team will coordinate the department’s strategy. Significant external communications events will be conducted within a departmental framework to ensure adherence to departmental priorities, consistency of messages, and the allocation of adequate resources.
- The country mission team will be the primary organizational unit to integrate external communications into economists’ work. Country external communications strategies will be coordinated within the departmental framework.
- Country teams will discuss with the national authorities the importance of communicating their reform strategies and policy measures including through the PRSP process.

Box 4. IMF Outreach in Low-Income Countries in Africa

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**, outreach activities have involved intensive contact with news media (television, radio, and newspapers—including the international press), with press briefings organized at the beginning and end of each mission, and interviews being given after each meeting with senior officials. The mission chief has also participated in televised economic forums. The mission chief and the resident representative have met with the President and members of the National Assembly, trade unions, NGOs, religious leaders, representatives of the private sector (foreign and domestic chambers of commerce); and the political opposition parties. The IMF mission and the resident representative have also worked very closely with the diplomatic and international donor community in Kinshasa, and have held meetings with government and central bank officials in Paris, Brussels, Geneva, New York, and Washington. In particular, the mission chief has been a member of the UN Planning and Management Task Force on the DRC that was created at the request of the UN Secretary General in 2001 and has met regularly with the head of the Mission des Nations Unies au Congo (United Nations Mission to Congo) (MONUC) in the DRC.

The resident representative holds quarterly meetings with NGOs and trade unions and participates in economic forums and academic conferences. Also, on a quarterly basis, he discusses the business environment with directors of large enterprises who are members of the Private Initiative for Africa. Since August 2004, the IMF office in the DRC has had a section on www.imf.org which offers access to public documents on the DRC's program and other IMF papers of interest to the DRC; see <http://www.imf.org/external/country/COD/rr/index.htm>.

In **Liberia**, a recent joint Bank-IMF mission, visiting Monrovia to discuss slippages in financial management, used several outreach tools to disseminate correct information about the mission's purpose and result and to inform the wider public about the Bank-IMF position regarding the need for stronger financial management and transparency. The tools used were (1) a press conference at the beginning of the visit; (2) a press release and radio interview at its end; and (3) a meeting with representatives of civil society. The events were widely covered by the press, and the press release was published in the local papers.

In **Uganda**, outreach efforts were developed especially for the visit of the Managing Director in early August 2004, including a Kampala-Washington video conference in advance of the visit; a meeting with press on his arrival; and press participation in a town hall meeting with civil society. Representatives of the international press also traveled with the Managing Director. Press coverage of the visit was extensive.

More generally, the senior resident representative has met with journalists from the two main dailies and from international media to respond to their interests in macroeconomic and structural issues, including financial sector reform, state pension reform, and governance. These meetings were reflected in press reports and broader interview-type stories.

In **Zambia**, IMF missions and the resident representative in Lusaka meet routinely with representatives of civil society including NGOs, trade unions, and the private sector. These meetings serve as an opportunity for policies to be discussed and concerns to be raised. IMF missions and the resident representative have also used these and other meetings to reinforce the government's advocacy of the policies supported under the PRGF, and to explain the IMF's role. In recent meetings, discussions have focused on the rationale for fiscal restraint, including the need to control the government wage bill, progress in implementing the trigger conditions for Zambia to attain the completion point under the HIPC Initiative, and the fiscal implications of reaching the completion point. The staff is supporting these efforts with communications in the Zambian press, including statements issued jointly with the government at the end of missions. Staff have also met with prominent NGOs in Washington to discuss their recent publications on issues in Zambia and, as necessary, have issued public responses to arguments made in these publications.¹

¹ For example, *A Response to the Global Campaign for Education, Oxfam International and Voluntary Service Overseas on Zambia*, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/vc/2004/111804.htm> and *A Response to ActionAid International and Other Organizations*, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/vc/2004/093004.htm>

47. **Outreach in the PRGF countries presents particular challenges, as well as opportunities**, because interaction with legislators, labor unions, the private sector, and CSOs takes on special significance in the context of the PRSP process. The participatory process of the PRSP is predicated on close interaction between the member government and civil society. IMF staff should show willingness to be an active partner in areas of IMF expertise, such as explaining the options for macroeconomic policies and encouraging civil society groups to get involved in the PRSP process, while at the same time taking care to respect and preserve the leadership of the country itself in the process. Too active an involvement may be seen as too intrusive and interpreted as an effort by the IMF to impose its preferences on the process. Too little involvement, and the IMF may be criticized for being unwilling to accept civil society input on the crucial macroeconomic aspects of the PRSP. In general, outreach activities will be more extensive in PRGF countries than in other countries, with a large part of the burden of this work being borne by the resident representative. Staff should be prepared to engage early in the PRSP process and demonstrate a willingness to discuss macroeconomic options and alternative policies in an open and receptive manner.

48. **Many documents related to country programs are posted** on the IMF's external website under the IMF's Transparency Policy. **Many print publications also cover aspects of country programs supported by the IMF.** The *IMF Survey* often carries country policy stories. The IMF's 2004 *Annual Report* presented for the first time summaries of how the IMF had helped particular member countries through policy advice, use of IMF resources, and technical assistance.

VII. STANDARD SETTING AND STATISTICAL INFORMATION

A. Standards and Codes

49. Standards and codes (S&C) assessments feed into the surveillance process and are also useful for identifying technical assistance (TA) needs (discussed in Section VIII below). Documents setting out standards and codes are published on the IMF's external website, and some are available in hard copy as well. **The principal communication effort with respect to S&C is devoted to encouraging awareness and implementation in member countries.**

50. Many departments participate in communication and follow-up educational efforts related to S&C (as part of an interdepartmental task force in place since 1999 to facilitate coordination on S&C matters, a working group was formed in 2004 to focus on how to make S&C communications, including outreach, more effective). Area departments have conducted outreach activities in some countries that are lagging behind in implementing S&C initiatives to encourage their greater participation. Functional departments have conducted meetings with country officials and private sector participants to discuss more specialized and technical aspects of individual standards and assessments of their observance. For example, MFD has worked in close collaboration with reserve managers from a broad range of member countries and international institutions in a comprehensive outreach process, including regional meetings in Abu Dhabi, Basel, Gaborone, Mexico City, Singapore, and

Washington. FAD held a seminar for senior officials at the JVI in February 2004 on fiscal transparency and fiscal reform in Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. FAD is leading an extensive collaborative effort to disseminate widely the Draft Guide on Resource Revenue Transparency aimed at promoting transparency in oil-producing countries.

51. FAD is initiating a series of seminars with area departments, combined with regional seminars for member countries, to help identify ways in which S&C work can be better integrated with area department consultations and better directed at specific issues that are important for each region. The first such seminar was held with the Asia and Pacific Department (APD) in December 2004, with particular emphasis given to issues of off-budget activity. This will be followed by a conference with country representatives at the Singapore Regional Training Center in March 2005. Efforts have also been made to solicit feedback on the S&C initiative and its effectiveness. For example, in October 2004, the IMF (MFD, APD) cosponsored a “listening and learning” conference in Malaysia on the FSAP and the experience of countries in Asia that have participated in the process.²⁵

52. Similarly, MFD conducted two roundtable sessions reviewing information sharing and data dissemination in relation to the staff’s work with OFCs. In the area of combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT), IMF staff have worked closely with the World Bank, the standard setters, and authorities in many regions and countries to disseminate standards and best practices. In addition, staff have organized the training of an international corps of assessors in order to build AML/CFT capacity. To date, 14 training sessions for assessors have been held, reaching all the regions of the world.

53. **Outreach in support of S&C assessments could be improved.** The following measures have been suggested regarding Reports on Standards and Codes (ROSCs), for example: (1) *more outreach related to individual country ROSCs* (e.g., media briefings; persuading the authorities to translate where necessary, publish, and disseminate ROSCs; and publishing a plain-language press release alongside the ROSC when it is published on the IMF’s external website); and (2) *broader outreach*, including more regional seminars for high-level officials similar to those undertaken by FAD for EU accession countries and the CIS, and more seminars for parliamentarians and local NGOs (e.g., in combination with fiscal ROSC missions).

B. Statistics and Data Dissemination

54. **The IMF’s external website provides a venue for experts outside the IMF to contribute to the IMF’s work on statistical issues.** Drafts of statistical manuals are posted

²⁵ As part of the communication effort on S&C assessments, there is a need to flag the *limitations* of what S&C assessments can do. Although they can provide a useful framework for identifying potential weaknesses in members’ policies, such S&C assessments can only go so far in diagnosing problems. Above all, regulators and policymakers should not consider positive S&C assessments as substitutes for developing an in-depth understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities in their respective systems.

for comment, and discussion groups are hosted on statistical topics such as the treatment of nonperforming loans and pension schemes in macroeconomic statistics.

55. In recent years, **the IMF has stepped up publication and distribution of statistical manuals and guides in multiple languages in order to promote standardized methodologies and policies** (for example, the *Producer Price Index Manual*; the *External Debt Statistics Guide*; the *Guidelines for Public Debt Management*; the *Guidelines for Foreign Exchange Reserve Management*; and the *Compilation Guide for Financial Soundness Indicators*.) The *IMF Survey* has featured accessible, nontechnical stories on, for example, best practices in statistical revisions and the *Producer Price Index Manual*.

56. The Statistics Department (STA), in collaboration with EXR and TGS, publishes and disseminates a broad range of statistical compilations and yearbooks, in hard copy and electronically. **Demand from external audiences for statistical data is significant and increasing.**²⁶ In early 2005, STA, in collaboration with EXR, will initiate two consulting studies: one will review the content of the statistical publications with key groups of users to assess the usefulness of the information published, and the other will aim to determine best practices in the on-line dissemination of statistical information. These will inform decisions on how to move ahead with a system that will benefit users of the IMF's statistics products.

VIII. CAPACITY BUILDING AND COMMUNICATION

A. Training

57. **Training of member country officials contributes importantly both to capacity building and to facilitating Article IV consultations and program negotiations.** Country officials who sit on the opposite side of the table from the IMF have often taken courses offered by the IMF Institute (INS) and the regional training centers and programs and have become familiar with the analytical frameworks that underlie IMF surveillance and program design. The value of INS training has been documented by external surveys and is widely recognized outside the IMF. The demand for training courses provided by INS, the regional centers and programs, and other departments (including FAD, MFD, and STA) far exceeds the IMF's capacity to provide them.

58. **One- or two-day seminars or short courses to familiarize legislators, CSOs, and the media with the analytical frameworks that underlie the IMF's policy analysis and advice can often have a large payoff,** particularly in countries where the IMF has difficulty obtaining buy-in to its policy advice. EXR, INS, and other departments have collaborated in

²⁶ Terms related to data and statistics were consistently in the top 10 queries performed with the search engine on www.imf.org. "More statistical data" was the overwhelming first choice when users were asked which improvements they would most like to see on www.imf.org. For more information, see Section IV of the Background Paper.

offering such events (most prominently for the transition countries of Europe and Asia). INS has also made space for parliamentarians in some of its high-level seminars.

59. National governments and international organizations are increasing their support for providing **learning opportunities for journalists, particularly in developing countries**, to enhance coverage of economics and global economic developments. WHD, for example, organized a seminar in Montevideo in September 2004 with the local chapter of the Interamerican Association of Economics and Finance Journalists (AIPEF) to help local journalists become better acquainted with procedures and documentation for country programs supported by the IMF. Similar seminars have been held by EXR, in collaboration with other IMF departments and regional offices and training centers, for journalists in Africa, Asia, and Europe.

B. Technical Assistance

60. **Outreach can be instrumental in capacity building.** Conferences often substitute for direct technical assistance, particularly in the larger countries such as China and India. Similarly, during 2003-04, seminars in lieu of technical assistance have been held for Iraqi officials on key budget, tax, and intergovernmental issues. At the same time, interaction with government agencies (beyond the finance ministry and central bank) and CSOs in recipient countries can underscore the role that the IMF plays in assisting policymaking for long-term development as well as stabilization policies. Interaction with donors and other TA agencies is essential in ensuring that TA is well coordinated and focused on the country's needs.

61. Material published on IMF TA ranges from a basic pamphlet on TA policies in six languages (*IMF Technical Assistance: Transferring Knowledge and Best Practice*) through information on IMF TA published in *IMF In Focus* and in the *IMF Survey*, to publications intended mainly for officials, such as *Taxing the Financial Sector: Concepts, Issues, and Practices*, and *Suppressing the Financing of Terrorism: A Handbook for Legislative Drafting*.

62. **People in many countries often perceive greater value in technical assistance and training programs than in other aspects of the IMF's work (perhaps partly because recipients bear little or no direct cost but receive clear immediate benefits), but this area receives limited attention in the media.**²⁷ The importance of capacity building has been a central component of the IMF's message in several countries, including most notably China, but there is a need for greater attention to this work. Regionally, media attention to capacity building has focused on Africa recently, where the launch of two IMF regional technical assistance centers in Africa (AFRITACs) provided an opportunity to elicit newspaper reports in several African countries about IMF technical assistance. Additionally,

²⁷ TA is unlikely to receive much public attention, no matter what communications efforts are undertaken, as long as technical assistance reports are not published, or made more widely available to the IMF's interlocutors.

EXR's Video Project team continues to work closely with TA-providing departments to craft video material that can be broadcast to the general public.

IX. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN SUPPORT OF EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

63. **The IMF's attention to internal communication has increased since 2002**, reflecting management's interest in, and the Board's support for, strengthening internal communication with staff as well as the coordination of external communications.²⁸ This effort was further encouraged by the results of a Staff Survey conducted in 2003.

64. A new **Office of the Managing Director (OMD) website** to be located on the Intranet is in preparation. The new website will contain pages for each of the four members of management that include their biographical information, speeches, press releases, and messages to staff. The new website will also have a channel for staff to send feedback and suggestions to Management. Management has also sought opportunities to interact informally with IMF staff in various forums, as well as increasing its messages to staff on key issues.

65. **Internal communication includes preparing and disseminating information tailored for staff.** Several departments circulate reports and summaries of external developments of interest for staff. ICM's *Global Markets Monitor*, for example, provides Executive Directors, management, and staff with a daily summary of market developments together with features on topics of interest. *Morning Press* provides Executive Directors, management, and staff with a daily early morning summary of media reports of news and commentaries of interest to the IMF. *Current Account* and *Staff News* are internal newsletters prepared by EXR for IMF staff (see Section VII of the Background Paper). *Questions in the News* was developed and is maintained as a resource for staff to provide easily accessible responses to topical questions on IMF policies and country operations (it has also been adapted for public use, and is available on the IMF's external website).

66. Although the IMF has improved its internal communication, including between management and staff, much remains to be done. **Better "horizontal" communication within the IMF could be achieved: (1) across departments**, so that staff have a better understanding of emerging policy issues and relevant activities in other countries and regions (for example, briefing sessions on selected topics could be organized by functional

²⁸ EXR was charged in July 2003 with coordinating management's internal communications, as chair of an interdepartmental Internal Communication Group (ICG), with TGS and HRD as its other members. To better understand how large international organizations conduct internal communications, the ICG conducted a survey in November/December 2003. The survey found, among other things, that international organizations recognize that they have to develop and convey a unified message so that staff can fully understand and endorse organizational goals and policies. The ICG has initiated and been actively involved in the preparation of a number of communications from management to staff. For example, immediately after the August 1, 2004, announcement of an elevated security threat, the ICG sent several IMF-wide e-mails on the evolving situation and arranged a town hall meeting on August 2 for management to address staff's security concerns.

departments for staff in area departments as needed);²⁹ and (2) **between headquarters and resident representatives and other IMF offices overseas**, perhaps using audio-visual communication tools more extensively than at present.

X. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

67. **The thesis of this paper is that a key medium-term objective of the IMF's communication strategy should be better coordination and integration of communication activities with the IMF's policies and operations, especially for country work and major policy issues.** This review of how communication contributes to the IMF's policy development and research, surveillance, country programs, and capacity building has identified some steps that could be taken, beyond what is already being done, to achieve this goal. As noted in the Introduction, the outcome of the strategic review of the IMF may have implications for the objectives and modalities of the communications strategy. Accordingly, Executive Directors may wish to revisit these questions in a year or two.

68. **Developing and implementing regional and country communication plans:** area departments and EXR would collaborate on both design and execution, consulting and drawing upon other departments and Executive Directors as appropriate. AFR has taken the initiative to develop a comprehensive regional external communication plan and is putting in place a structure and process, with EXR participation, to ensure its implementation (see paragraph 46 above). Other area departments have taken less comprehensive but significant steps in the same direction. For example, WHD, in close coordination with EXR, developed in late 2003 a country communications strategy for Uruguay, which was implemented in 2004; the strategy was intended to serve as a pilot experience for establishing a more disciplined and effective approach to communication. **Do Executive Directors support the proposal to encourage area departments to develop regional and country communication plans, drawing upon the examples set by AFR and WHD?**

69. **Communication planning for surveillance:** Do Directors agree on the importance of planning by area departments, with EXR, FAD, ICM, MFD, RES, and others, to convey surveillance findings more effectively within their regions as part of communication plans (such plans could highlight the topics/issues/geographical locations that the IMF intends to focus on within a time period, what dialogue/messages are proposed for specific groups, and the role to be played by different departments)? Do Directors consider that the IMF's global and regional surveillance focuses sufficiently on gathering information and views, relative to explaining the IMF's own positions? **Do Executive Directors agree with the suggestion to place additional emphasis on communication related to the IMF's global, regional, and country surveillance, relying primarily upon IMF missions and resident**

²⁹ The Policy Development and Review Department (PDR) has provided briefings for EXR staff on current policy issues and developments, and EXR has provided more general briefings on IMF issues for staff in some support departments—these practices could be adopted more widely.

representatives, supported by EXR? What role do Executive Directors see for themselves in disseminating surveillance messages within their constituencies?

70. **Communication in the context of IMF-supported country programs: Should additional outreach be undertaken in program countries, and, if so, how, given resource constraints?** Additional media relations and outreach seems especially needed in program countries, and within program countries to legislators, labor unions, and leading NGOs, as well as journalists, but such efforts are likely to require resident representatives and/or IMF missions to expend additional resources. Emphasizing such outreach may mean, therefore, that other types or levels of communication, or other IMF work, would need to be scaled back in order to free up resources. **Do Directors agree that media relations and outreach in program countries should be increased? Would Executive Directors support reallocation of resources to support more communication activity of this nature? What roles do Executive Directors see for themselves in communications in program countries? Do Executive Directors consider that it would be useful, resources permitting, to monitor and report systematically upon IMF outreach in program countries?**

71. **Developing and implementing communication plans for the IMF's major ongoing policies and special policy initiatives:** departments and EXR would collaborate on both design and execution, consulting and drawing upon other departments and Executive Directors as appropriate (explicit early identification by management and the Board of communication objectives and related themes for specific issues). This has been done on an ad hoc basis in some cases (see paragraph 15 above). **Do Directors agree that a coordinated IMF communications initiative should be undertaken in conjunction with the review of progress toward achieving the MDGs (see Box 1)? In general, should a section on communication activities be included in all major policy papers presented to the Board?**

72. **Strengthening mutual learning through outreach: fostering open but structured dialogue on key issues** with a wide range of interested parties and following up on such dialogue systematically. **Do Directors agree that the current level of communications effort devoted to dialogue with most global CSOs is appropriate, but that more focus on dialogue at the national level would be desirable, particularly with legislators, including umbrella groups of legislators?**

73. **Communicating better internally in support of external communication:** "vertical" communication between management and staff is improving, although more work on this still seems needed, and greater effort also appears needed to improve "horizontal" communication across departments. **Do Executive Directors agree that improving "horizontal communication" is a priority for the period ahead? How do Directors see their own participation in this effort?**

74. **Changing the incentive structure:** staff (especially resident representatives and mission chiefs) should think of external communication as "part of the job," not a marginal,

risky activity to be avoided when possible. Notwithstanding media training, mission chiefs and resident representatives are probably excessively cautious when talking to the press for fear that minor misstatements could adversely affect their careers. **What types of measures would Executive Directors support to give greater incentives (or fewer disincentives) to staff to undertake effective communication in the field?**

75. **Communication related to IMF research, statistics, standards and codes, training, and technical assistance.** Should the IMF maintain approximately the current level of communications (including publications) related to these areas, or is there a case for somewhat more (or less) in particular areas? For example, **do Directors consider that the IMF's TA missions and experts should undertake more outreach activities? Should communication training for IMF staff be broadened, as suggested in Section VIII.A? Could fewer resources be used in some areas, perhaps in publishing, and reallocated to other communications work?**

76. **Communication about IMF roles and functions:** Most of the publishing activity related to explaining the IMF in general is not new work but updating material to reflect changes. Responding to queries from journalists, CSOs, and the general public and conducting briefings for visitors to headquarters absorb significant resources. Economies can be, and are, realized in various ways, including by posting frequently requested information on the external website. **Do Directors consider that the IMF devotes about the right amount of effort to providing general information about the IMF globally, or should some reduction be considered, in order to reallocate resources to higher priority communication work?**