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**Summing Up by the Acting Chairman  
General Data Dissemination System  
Executive Board Meeting 97/125  
December 19, 1997**

Executive Directors welcomed the report provided in SM/97/275 and the staff proposal for the establishment of the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS). They recognized that the establishment of the GDDS was an important step for all Fund members not only in providing guidance in the provision of data to the public, but also in encouraging improvements in the quality and accessibility of economic, financial, and socio-demographic data.

In light of the above considerations, the Executive Board approved today the establishment of the GDDS, whose scope, operational characteristics, and mode of implementation are set forth in the revised draft Annex V of SM/97/275, Correction 1.

Executive Directors generally agreed with the purposes and orientation of the GDDS. In particular, Directors supported a system that recognized that for many countries improvements in data quality were a necessary precursor to enhanced dissemination of data to the public. The GDDS was seen as a useful framework for development of a broad range of statistics, including major macroeconomic and financial data, as well as socio-demographic indicators.

Directors endorsed the staff's proposals concerning implementation by countries of the General System. They agreed that participation in the GDDS should be voluntary, and they supported the three elements of participation: commitment to use the GDDS as a framework for statistical development; designation of a country coordinator to work with the Fund; and development of metadata. The metadata were considered important as a means for identifying strengths and weaknesses in existing data systems, developing plans for improving data, and providing users with a means for assessing countries' practices and developmental plans against the objectives recommended by the General System. As the GDDS was recognized as a long-term exercise for many countries, the metadata were also seen as useful for tracking countries' improvements over time. The recommendation in the GDDS to focus primarily on a set of core frameworks and indicators, supplemented by encouraged data systems and

categories, was viewed as useful, as it made the General System relevant to a very broad range of countries and provided a clear set of links between the GDDS and the SDDS. These links would be particularly helpful to countries that wished to use participation in the GDDS as a step toward subscription to the SDDS.

A few Directors suggested a number of additions to the core data specifications of the GDDS, including in the areas of national accounts, and more fiscal data, including off-budget transactions, and the accounts of local and regional governments. The staff will explore these suggestions and report in the context of the next review of the GDDS.

Most Directors supported inclusion in the GDDS of a set of socio-demographic indicators because of the importance of these data in assessing economic developments in many of the likely participating countries. However, some Directors reiterated that the responsibility for development of social indicators should be left primarily to other international organizations, and some expressed doubts regarding the appropriateness of inclusion of these data in the GDDS. Directors agreed that there should be close cooperation with regional and other international organizations.

Directors acknowledged the importance of the access and integrity dimensions of the GDDS, as aspects of openness and transparency. The principles embodied in these dimensions were not yet standard practice in many countries, and it was therefore considered appropriate that the GDDS focus on the development of these dimensions in the practices of data compiling and disseminating agencies.

Most Directors supported a phased approach to the implementation of the GDDS that focused first on education and training through development of appropriate documentation and presentation of seminars and workshops. It was recognized that the GDDS was a very ambitious project, both for the Fund and for countries that might wish to participate, and many Directors agreed that a longer-term approach to implementation was appropriate in recognition of the substantial resource costs to the Fund and the resource costs to, and absorptive capacity of, participating countries.

Executive Directors agreed with the staff's proposal to begin the compilation of metadata on participating countries' statistical practices and plans for improvement. Most Directors endorsed the proposal that the Fund disseminate these metadata to the public through an electronic bulletin board, as the most efficient means. However, Directors agreed not to preclude other means of communication, given the different situations of members. Directors also pointed out the need to clearly distinguish between the bulletin boards for the GDDS and the SDDS.