

February 8, 2000

**Concluding Remarks by the Acting Chairman  
Strengthening the Fund's External Communications—  
Plans and Resource Implications  
Executive Board Meeting 00/12—February 4, 2000**

Executive Directors welcomed the opportunity to follow up on the Executive Board's discussion in July 1998 of the Fund's external communications policy in the context of the Fund's medium-term budget for FY 2001–FY 2003. They commended the External Relations Department (EXR) for the significant improvements in the Fund's communications policy since the last Board discussion. Directors agreed on the need to strengthen further the Fund's external communications, and to provide resources for implementing a strengthened strategy.

Directors noted that the external assessments of the Fund's external communications in 1999 undertaken by consultants on the advice of Directors had been valuable. They viewed the findings as indicative of the challenges that the Fund must address in order to communicate more effectively with the public. Most Directors broadly concurred with the overall conclusion of the various studies that the Fund suffers external communications problems and has a less favorable public image than those of comparable international organizations, and that these factors can undermine the effectiveness of its operational work. However, they recognized that the Fund's mandate inevitably places limits on its popularity. Directors generally agreed with the consultants' findings that the Fund's external communications problems can be addressed through broader, deeper, and more proactive efforts. They also recognized that the increased openness and transparency expected by the membership of the Fund will place even greater demands on the Fund's external relations function, and require improved coordination of external communications activities within the Fund staff. Indeed, Directors underlined the need for a Fund-wide effort to improve internal communication, including an important role for the Executive Board.

Directors considered that the plan of action proposed in the staff report reflected well the consultants' recommendations, the views of senior staff and Executive Directors obtained as feedback on the consultants' findings, and guidance from management. However, some Directors requested greater exposition about the links between the current and proposed use of resources and the consultants' recommendations. Directors welcomed many of the initiatives proposed in the plan. They regarded most of the proposed measures and actions as having the potential to contribute significantly to preserving and enhancing the credibility of the Fund, which Directors had singled out in July 1998 as the most important objective of the strategy to strengthen external communications. In particular, there was agreement on the immense public communications value of the Fund's external website, and on the need to increase the output of material for the print media and the public explaining and defending

the Fund's work, and to sharpen "the voice of the Fund." Among other valuable elements of an enhanced communications strategy, Directors referred to the need for greater outreach to civil society in conjunction with the national authorities concerned, a strengthening of the Fund's publications program, engagement of member countries' legislatures in coordination with the Executive Board, and improvement of relations with the private financial sector. They also underscored that the Fund's efforts should have as broad-based and wide-ranging an outreach as possible, especially in view of its near universal membership. Directors welcomed the fact that a number of the elements of the plan have begun to be implemented using existing resources, with positive results and feedback.

In support of the need to strengthen Fund communications, and in particular the various measures proposed by EXR, Directors agreed that an additional 10 positions could be added in EXR in FY 2001.

We have taken careful note of the many useful suggestions and comments made by Directors today, including the proposal by some Directors to consider including material on communications issues in policy papers and country staff reports. We will reflect further on these suggestions as we carry forward our efforts, and work toward strengthening a strategic approach for our external communications policies.