**MINUTES OF BCOP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Thursday, February 6, 2020**

**Videoconference**

**Participated:**

1. Anna Belenchuk (Chair, Russian Federation)
2. Mladenka Karacic (Deputy Chair, Croatia)
3. Marina Tikhonovich (Deputy Chair, Belarus)
4. Ruzanna Gabrielyan (Armenia)
5. Alija Aljovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
6. Emil Nurgaliev (Bulgaria)
7. Vasile Botica (Moldova)
8. Ivan Rakovskiy on behalf of Nikolay Begchin (Russian Federation)
9. Naida Carsimamovic (BCOP Resource Team)
10. Iryna Shcherbyna (BCOP Resource Team)
11. Deanna Aubrey (BCOP Resource Team)

**Observers:**

1. Ksenia Galantsova (Secretariat)

**Agenda items:**

1. **Welcome, update on key decisions/discussions from November 2019 Steering Committee meeting, and Agenda overview**
2. **Acceptance of the minutes to the previous meeting**
3. **Update on the PEMPAL financing status**
4. **Status and needs for adjustments of BCOP FY20 Action Plan and Budget**
5. **Update on preparations and the budget for the BCOP 2020 Plenary Meeting in March 2020 in Brussels**
6. **Brief update on Working Groups:**
   * **Budget Literacy and Transparency Working Group**
   * **Program and Performance Budgeting Working Group**
7. **Update and Preparation for Cross-COP Meetings and PEMPAL Strategy Mid-Term Review**
8. **Other**

**Minutes:**

1. ***Welcome and Agenda Overview***

Ms. Anna Belenchuk welcomed participants, gave a brief overview of main discussions from the previous SC meeting, and gave an overview of the agenda for this meeting.

**2. *Acceptance of the minutes to the previous meetings******held in May 2019***

***Conclusion:***

* The Executive Committee accepted the minutes of the previous meeting held on October 10, 2019 via videoconference.

**3. and 4. *Update on the PEMPAL financing status and status and needs for adjustments of BCOP FY20 Action Plan and Budget (****discussions under these two agenda items were merged****)***

Ms. Iryna Shcherbyna reported about the unexpected delays in receiving the financial contribution to PEMPAL by the European Commission and from the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation. As a result, PEMPAL Team Leader has instructed all COPs to revert back to the lower budget scenarios for FY2020 (in the amount of 250,000 USD plus FY19 COP savings).

Ms. Naida Carsimamovic next gave a reminder overview of the BCOP’s Action Plan and Budget for FY2020 (circulated to the Executive Committee members in preparation for this meeting), which was approved by the SC in November 2019 and which included both lower and higher budget scenarios - lower budget scenario of 250,000 USD with FY19 BCOP savings of 54,000 USD and of the new higher budget scenario of 300,000 USD with the FY19 BCOP savings. She also reminded the members of the differences between those scenarios in terms of BCOP activities and reported that the final costs for Paris events form November were somewhat higher than the projected costs, as well as the costs on translation related to developments of knowledge products (as a result of additional inputs gathered from the members, expansion of knowledge products, and the translation of OECD Good Practices in Performance Budgeting). The current status of BCOP budget is that under the lower budget scenarios, budget for the activities until end FY2020 stands at around 150,000 USD. She also gave the current budget estimate for the BCOP plenary meeting in March 2020, noting that the event was shortened, and the number of participants and speakers were reduced in order to make some savings.

Ms. Shcherbyna explained that this new budget situation in terms of reverting to lower budget scenario for BCOP means that for the remainder of FY20, planned activities would need to be readjusted substantially to reduce the costs, given that the events and activities held in the first part of FY2020 took up significant budget and that the final cost for the November BCOP 2019 events and for translation of the various knowledge products/resources were higher than projected. Consequently, the activities for the remained of FY2020 would need to be sized down to fit into the lower budget scenario; this includes the plenary meeting in Brussels, finalization of drafting and translating the knowledge products and their professional editing and design, and the event planned for May in Sofia.

The Executive Committee members next held the discussion and voting on the choice between the activities related to finalization of drafting and translating the knowledge products and their professional editing and design, and the event planned for May in Sofia.

Mr. Emil Nurgaliev reported that the currently suggested, but not confirmed, dates for the OECD CESEE SBO meeting in Sofia are May 13-15, 2020. Mr. Alija Aljovic noted that the proposed dates for the meeting are during the month of Ramadan, which should be taken into account in terms of accommodation and other arrangements.

***Conclusion:***

* The Executive Committee unanimously voted that BCOP’s participation at the OECD CESEE SBO meeting should be the priority over the finalization of the knowledge products for the remainder of FY2020, in case of the lower COP budget scenario remaining in force for the remainder of FY2020. In this case, the work on final editing, design, printing, and distribution of the BCOP knowledge products is to be postponed to early FY2021.
* Mr. Nurgaliev will inform the Executive Committee once the final date for the OECD CESEE SBO meeting in Sofia is confirmed.

1. ***Update on preparations and the budget for the BCOP 2020 Plenary Meeting in March 2020 in Brussels***

Ms Carsimamovic gave a detailed overview of the event concept and agenda, which was circulated to the Executive Committee members in preparation for this meeting.

The first day of the plenary meeting will be devoted to the topics of the two BCOP working groups, with the morning devoted to BLTWG and the afternoon to PPBWG. In each of the half-days devoted to the working group topics, working groups leads will present the update and plans of the working group activities, the resource team and the working group leads will present the final content of the knowledge products developed by each group this year, as well as the plans on the next knowledge products for each of the group. WG’s partnering international institutions (OECD for PPBWG and GIFT for BLTWG) will then offer its reflections on the PPBWG knowledge products and also present the most recent information from their organization on the topics of knowledge products. Half-days devted to the working groups will conclude with a 90-minute interactive panel discussion, in which participants will have an opportunity to ask questions to all speakers, after which brief remarks will be delivered from representatives of each participating BCOP country on how they will use the recently completed knowledge product in their work and what they would like to see included in the next knowledge products.

The second day of the plenary meeting will be devoted in most part to the new topic for BCOP – methodologies for costing of reforms. Three sessions on this topic are planned, in which the World Bank will hold two presentations on different aspects and examples of methodologies for costing of reforms, while the third presentation will focus on specific practices and challenges in costing reforms by European Commissions and/or the Federal Public Service Policy and Support of Belgium. Following these sessions, a panel will be held in which participants will have an opportunity to ask questions to all speakers. In the afternoon, practical group work will be held. During that work, countries will discuss costing challenges in their countries and reflect on speakers’ presentations. The outcomes of group work/discussion will be presented to all participants by each group, followed by joint discussion to consider whether the participants would like to continue examining this topic further in future BCOP activities. The topics for group work will be based on the input gathered from all member countries within the pre-event survey. Ms. Carsimamovic explained that the Resource Team is still working to confirm the speakers from the EC, the Belgian Government, and possibly the Canadian Government and the Academy of the Ministry of Finance of the Netherlands.

She explained that the event had to be reduced in scope and size due to new budget situation and the savings needs, as previously mentioned. The adjustments were as follows: i. plenary meeting was shortened from 2.5 to 2 days, ii. the BCOP Executive Committee is planned to take in early morning of the second day of the plenary meeting instead of the day prior to the plenary meeting, iii. number of participants was reduced to 2 per each BCOP countries instead of usual invitation of 3 participants for Executive Committee countries, and iv. number of external speakers was reduced; and the Resource Team is negotiating with the speakers to ensure that some of the travel and accommodation costs of the speakers are covered by the speakers themselves rather than BCOP.

Ms. Deanna Aubrey reported that the Resource team reached out to the IBP to present the results of the 2019 Open Budget Survey, however, IBP informed that the survey results will not be available until April. Thus, GIFT is invited to speak in the BLTWG part of the agenda; however, a VC could be organized after April to get the IBP to present the survey results to the BLTWG.

***Conclusion:***

* The Executive Committee took note of the status of preparation for the 2020 BCOP Annual Plenary Meeting.

1. **Brief update on Working Groups:**
2. **Program and Performance Budgeting Working Group (PPBWG)**

Mr. Ivan Rakovskiy and Ms. Carsimamovic reported on the activities and plans of the BLTWG. The group has been focusing on finalizing and expanding the formal knowledge product *Performance Budgeting and Spending Reviews in PEMPAL Countries: Current Practices, Challenges, and Recommendations*.

Comments and updates from the member countries received during the Paris event and since the November 2019 event were incorporated, including the most recent updated from Croatia, Russia, and Bulgaria, as well as the additional information from the presentations from OECD countries from the Paris 2019 meetings. The knowledge product will also be sent to the OECD and the World Bank for their review and comments.

Ms. Carsimamovic also reported that PPBWG had an extensive discussion in Paris on the desired content and the approach for the preparation of the next PPBWG knowledge product on spending reviews and that additional information were also collected in written from the members after the Paris event. The discussion will be continued in the Brussels event in March.

1. **Budget Literacy and Transparency Working Group (BLTWG)**

Ms Deanna Aubrey and Ms. Anna Belenchuk reported on the activities and plans of the BLTWG. The group has been focusing on finalizing and expanding the knowledge product *Public Participation in Fiscal Policy and the Budget Process – Establishing and/or Strengthening Mechanisms in PEMPAL Countries*. Comments and updates from the member countries received since the November 2019 event were incorporated and the knowledge product was sent to the WB, GIFT, and IBP for their comments. After all comments are received the knowledge product will be finalized to add the results of 2019 Open Budget Survey.

***Conclusion:***

* The Executive Committee noted the progress and plans of the two BCOP working groups.

1. **Update and Preparation for Cross-COP Meetings and PEMPAL Strategy Mid-Term Review**

Ms. Aubrey briefed the participants on the work of the Organizational Committee for Cross-COP Leadership Meeting and thanked Ms. Anna Belenchuk, Ms. Marina Tikhanovich, and Ms, Mladenka Karacic, who represented BCOP in the meeting of the Organizational Committee for Cross-COP Leadership Meeting.

She reported the main outcomes of the Organizational Committee for Cross-COP Leadership meeting held on January 21, 2020, including a draft agenda for the meeting (to take place in Berne on July 6-8, 2020) and finalized concept Mid-term Review of the PEMPAL Strategy for the ToR for the external evaluator who has already started the work on the Mid-term Review of the PEMPAL Strategy. COP inputs for the Berne meeting include a presentation on COP’s activities, ideas for topic of the large cross-COP meeting, and the agenda for the separate COP meetings to be held on the last day of the Berne meeting. Finally, for the Mid-term Review of the PEMPAL Strategy, data will be collected from all members, as well as additional data for some selected country cases. Thus, the external evaluator will be in contact with BCOP members about the impact of PEMPAL and BCOP achievements.

***Conclusion:***

* Executive Committee took note of the plans for the Cross-COP Leadership Meeting and the deadlines for BCOP inputs for this meeting, as well as the plans for the Mid-term Review of the PEMPAL Strategy.

1. **Other**

Ms Shcherbyna reported that during the BCOP participation in OECD meeting in Paris, the World Bak team led by PEMPAL Team Leader Mr. Arman Vatyan held a meeting with the OECD management. It was agreed that an agreement/MoU for cooperation between BCOP and OECD would be signed. The Resource Team has prepared a draft and sent it to the OECD.

***Conclusion:***

* Executive Committee took note of the status of the agreement/MoU for cooperation between BCOP and OECD.