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The Chairman's Summing Up of the Discussion
of the Role of the Fund in Assisting Members with
Commercial Banks and Official Creditors
Executive Board Meeting 85/132 - September 4, 1985

General Remarks

The procedures relating to enhanced surveillance that have been discussed by Directors were developed in response to the need to help members make progress toward addressing their debt problems and improving their relations with their creditors in an orderly manner and in a broader framework.

It was noted by many Directors that by adapting some of its policies, the Fund had played a central role in helping to limit the disruptions associated with the debt crisis and in promoting a normalization of debtor/creditor relations. Most Directors, however, observed that the practice of enhanced surveillance that had developed involved some risks. Some Directors stressed the risk of a possible weakening of Fund conditionality. Others feared that the Fund might tend to become too deeply and too specifically involved in relations with the commercial banks, and that generalized reliance on the Fund's judgment by the international community could affect the Fund's credibility and interfere with the normal functioning of the markets, which should rely eventually on the banks' own assessments. In other words, enhanced surveillance in the view of most Directors should not become a substitute for stand-by and extended arrangements and should not "crowd out" or "dilute" the Fund's normal procedures and transform the institution into a kind of universal credit-rating agency. In that vein, a majority of Directors, while recognizing the usefulness of the practices that have evolved, considered that enhanced surveillance should be used on a limited basis under the guidance and control of the Executive Board, essentially to help promote MYRAs (multiyear rescheduling arrangements), although all MYRAs might not be associated with enhanced surveillance.

Criteria and Procedures

a. Criteria for the adoption of enhanced surveillance

While several Directors insisted on the need for flexibility and on the importance of avoiding too rigid criteria, most Directors felt that enhanced surveillance could be undertaken when the four following conditions are met:

First, at the request of a member country, who must initiate the procedures;

Second, in cases where a good record of adjustment has been shown;

Third, in cases in which a MYRA is needed to normalize market relations and to facilitate the return to voluntary or spontaneous financing;

Fourth, in cases where the member is in a position to present an adequate quantified policy program in the framework of consultations with the Fund staff, which are part of the procedure of enhanced surveillance.

b. Length of the Fund's involvement

Directors thought that, on the whole, the early cases of enhanced surveillance had covered rather too long periods. They felt that in the future the Fund should try to limit the procedure to about the consolidation period of a MYRA. I would suggest that we should retain some flexibility and remain open to the possibility of extending enhanced surveillance a little beyond the consolidation period. If the Fund were to cut off enhanced surveillance at the end of the consolidation period, the communication of reports to the banks would be halted at a delicate time in the normalization of relations between the country and its creditors; i.e., at the time when the country will need more voluntary financing to meet external payments falling due. While we should try to limit enhanced surveillance as much as possible to the consolidation period, there might be occasions when an extension of enhanced surveillance into the period after consolidation may be necessary and warranted.

c. Trigger mechanisms

A number of Directors feared that staff involvement in the design and the negotiation of trigger mechanisms between the commercial banks and the member country risked diluting the banks' responsibility in the monitoring process under MYRAs and risked engaging the Fund in providing on/off signals to the banks. Most Directors felt that the staff should not negotiate or take responsibility for designing and assessing trigger mechanisms. But, if the member wished, the Fund staff would not refuse to give its views on the purely technical merits or drawbacks of such mechanisms. It is important to emphasize that the Fund should take no active part in the negotiation of the design of these trigger mechanisms.

d. Contents and distribution of staff reports

Directors stressed the need to ensure that staff reports to be issued to creditor banks under the policy of enhanced surveillance continue to provide full and frank assessments of the policies and economic prospects of member countries. While a number of Directors were of the view that staff reports should be made available to creditor banks under the enhanced surveillance procedures only after the Executive Board had met to discuss the reports, most Directors agreed that countries would be authorized to release these staff reports to their creditor banks not earlier than two weeks after their issuance to the Executive Board. The majority of

Directors were of the view that authorization to release staff reports should be provided by a general decision pertaining to all cases for which enhanced surveillance is agreed rather than by an individual decision in each case. The reports to be released to creditor banks would reflect only the staff's views and would not contain any reference to the discussions and views of the Executive Board. No amendments to the staff report other than the deletion of references to Board discussions would be made.

e. Involvement of the Executive Board

I understand that the procedure would be as follows: First, request by a member for enhanced surveillance; second, management assesses the case in accordance with the policies agreed by the Executive Board today and determines whether to submit the request for the endorsement of the Board. In cases where the criteria raise delicate problems of interpretation, management would continue to consult informally with Executive Directors at the earliest opportunity.

f. The Colombian case

The view was expressed that the Colombian arrangement had been useful and could be extended to other cases, in particular, cases of prolonged use of Fund resources. However, the majority of Executive Directors considered that the arrangements with Colombia were not a case of enhanced surveillance and that their extension to other countries was unlikely and undesirable. The usefulness of precautionary stand-by arrangements was mentioned by a number of Directors in this regard.

g. Review of the policy on enhanced surveillance

A number of Directors suggested that in view of the need to assess changing circumstances and the possible effects of the procedures for enhanced surveillance on the Fund and its policies, the Board should engage in a periodic review of the policy of enhanced surveillance, with an initial review to be held in about one year.