

An important potential benefit of targeted and periodic reporting on specialised topics for OGDs is that missions can build up networks of contacts on issues such as health and health policies which can be useful during times of crisis. The fact that the missions have developed a relationship with host government specialised prior to calling on them during a crisis situation can provide Canada with special access and a greater degree of cooperation that would otherwise be the case. This is especially important in regions such as Asia where personal relationships built up over time are particularly valued over one-off "transactional" encounters.

As much as possible, reporting for OGDs should be results driven, ie. feeding into a specific purpose or process. There is clear need for greater coordination among the geographic and specialised divisions on reporting with OGDs. As mentioned, there is already a significant volume of shared reporting, especially in narrow, technical areas (air transport regulation, areas of trade policy, for example). For our Departments, this new orientation to reporting would mean doing slightly less traditional political reporting, and more reporting on specialised topics.

It is important also to liaise closely with missions early in the planning process. In some cases, there should also be a direct dialogue between the mission and the OGD in identification of topics and clarification of the reports' parameters

NEXT STEPS:

This report should be circulated among missions in the region to solicit their feedback. A conference call with heads of mission to obtain their feedback and input into next steps would follow. Within geographic branches, divisions could select representatives to attend a planning meeting at the beginning of the autumn work cycle to identify OGDs with whom to partner.

Over the medium-term, also at the beginning of departmental "work cycles," ie. early autumn, the new year, etc. It would be useful to have brief coordination meetings involving representatives of geographics, specialised policy divisions and OGDs to provide input into reporting priorities and interests. On a selective basis, based also upon feedback from posts and post resources, the specialised topics would be included into the post reporting contracts. In many respects, this work is one of managing expectations of OGDs, headquarters, and missions.

An essential point is that our two departments need to take the initiative in contacting other departments and build relationships that will contribute to a wider audience for our reporting efforts.