

## **Engagement with non-State actors**

### **Report by the Director-General**

1. In May 2016, following extensive consultations and 17 months of intergovernmental negotiations, the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly adopted the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors.<sup>1</sup>

2. This overarching Framework covers all engagements with non-State actors at all levels of the Organization. It sets out the rationale, principles, benefits and risks of engagement, and defines four groups of non-State actors (nongovernmental organizations, private sector entities, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions) and five types of engagement (participation, resources, evidence, advocacy and technical collaboration). Management of conflict of interest and other risks of engagement are addressed through a process of due diligence, risk assessment and risk management, with increased transparency through the creation of a register of non-State actors. The Framework also: contains a set of specific provisions; explains its relation to WHO's other policies; defines the process of entering into official relations; and regulates the oversight of engagement, the handling of non-compliance, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of its implementation. The Framework is complemented by four separate, specific policies regulating engagement with nongovernmental organizations, private sector entities, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions. The Framework replaces the Principles governing relations between the World Health Organization and nongovernmental organizations and the Guidelines on interaction with commercial enterprises to achieve health outcomes.

3. Many aspects of the Framework confirm WHO's existing policies and practices of engagement. There are, however, some relevant changes, including the following:

(a) The Framework provides a common set of rules governing all different types of interaction and all different non-State actors, thereby giving significantly improved clarity and transparency to these rules.

(b) An online public register provides basic information on all non-State actors with which WHO engages,<sup>2</sup> providing greater transparency and accountability.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution WHA69.10 (2016).

<sup>2</sup> A pilot version of the WHO register of non-State actors is available at: <http://apps.who.int/register-nonstate-actors/home.aspx> (accessed 21 October 2016).

- (c) An electronic workflow, a process for due diligence, a guide for staff, and a dedicated coordination mechanism are all designed to ensure consistent implementation of the Framework at all three levels of the Organization.
- (d) Each non-State actor is assigned to one of four groups: nongovernmental organizations, private sector entities, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions.
- (e) The Framework differentiates five types of engagement: participation, resources, evidence and advocacy and technical collaboration.
- (f) The Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board replaces the Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations to provide oversight of the implementation of the Framework with non-State actors and to make recommendations to the Executive Board on applications for admission into, and review of existing, official relations.
- (g) The Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee reviews implementation of the Framework in accordance with its mandate and reports to the Executive Board through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee at each of its January sessions.
- (h) Official relations are open to nongovernmental organizations, philanthropic foundations and international business associations.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK**

4. Resolution WHA69.10 (2016) defines the timelines and mandates for the implementation of the Framework. The Health Assembly requests the Director-General:

- (a) to immediately start implementation;
- (b) to report annually to the Executive Board through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee;
- (c) to fully establish the register of non-State actors by the Seventieth World Health Assembly;
- (d) to fully operationalize implementation of the Framework within a two-year time frame;
- (e) to conduct an initial evaluation of the implementation of the Framework in 2019.

5. The Health Assembly also requests the Seventieth World Health Assembly “to review progress on the implementation at the three levels of the Organization, with a view to taking any decisions necessary to enable the full, coherent and consistent implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors.”

6. The Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee discussed the implementation of the Framework at its nineteenth meeting (Geneva, 27–29 July 2016) and at its twentieth meeting (Geneva, 18–20 October 2016) the Committee welcomed the adoption of the Framework. The Committee will provide oversight on the application of rules and procedures to assess if they are being applied in a uniform and effective manner across the three levels of the organization. It noted the request of the Health Assembly to include a section on implementation in its report to the Programme, Budget and

Administration Committee at each January session. The Committee advised not to look at “benefits versus risks” and “protection versus engagement” only from an either/or perspective. It considered that it was imperative that from the beginning systems are set up across all the offices of the Organization in a uniform manner and the application of rules for risk identification and management is done in a consistent and harmonized manner. It strongly advised the Organization to create only the two levels of due diligence and risk assessment foreseen by the Framework through its distinction of the regular process and a low-risk procedure.

7. The revised procedures for admitting into and reviewing the status of official relations of the Board, through the Programme Budget and Administration Committee, are set out in document EB140/42.

8. Following the adoption of resolution WHA69.10, most regional committees discussed the implementation of the Framework and all regional offices are actively planning for its implementation, for instance through briefings of heads of country offices and training sessions for staff. At the 68th session of the Regional Committee for the Americas, the 55th Directing Council of WHO/PAHO resolved to adopt and implement the Framework.<sup>1</sup> In response to a request by the Regional Committee for Europe, the Regional Office for Europe is finalizing a working document on partnership that is fully aligned with the Framework and developing a procedure for granting accreditation to the sessions of the Regional Committee in accordance with paragraph 57 of the Framework.

9. Focal points on engagement from all regions and clusters in the Secretariat met (Geneva, 21 and 22 September 2016) to strengthen coordination of implementation of the Framework and clarify their respective roles as primary support to technical units in their engagement and the documentation of engagement.

10. The development of the WHO register of non-State actors and the electronic workflow is progressing. The electronic workflow tool will be piloted in early 2017 and the register will be introduced before the Seventieth World Health Assembly. This work is being integrated into an information management platform for global management of engagements, which will also support coordination of resource mobilization and the management of declarations of interest of individual experts. A guide for staff and a handbook for non-State actors are also in preparation, with the aim of being finalized by January 2017. In addition to the drafting of documentation and clarification of roles, a change management plan and training material for staff are being developed.

11. Pursuant to the Health Assembly’s request,<sup>2</sup> the Director-General, in consultation with Member States, has prepared a set of criteria and principles for secondments from nongovernmental organizations, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions. They are set out in document EB140/47.

## **ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

12. The Board is invited to note the report.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution CD55.R3 (2016).

<sup>2</sup> Resolution WHA69.10, paragraph 3(8).