

Engagement with non-State actors

Report by the Director-General

1. In January 2017, the Programme Budget and Administration Committee at its twenty-fifth meeting and the Executive Board at its 140th session considered and noted an earlier version of this report.¹ The Committee and the Executive Board provided further guidance on the implementation of the Framework including training and orientation for WHO staff on the Framework, support from the Secretariat to the Committee in overseeing and reporting on implementation to the Executive Board, vigilance to avoid conflicts of interest, and finalization of the register of non-State actors and the guide for staff before the Seventieth World Health Assembly. This updated version of the report takes into account the discussions at those Committee and Executive Board sessions, and provides further information on the implementation of the Framework.
2. 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.²
3. 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 interaction (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.

¹ See documents EB140/41 and EB140/5, and the summary records of the Executive Board at its 140th session, seventeenth meeting, section 2.

² Resolution WHA69.10 (2016).

4. 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,¹ providing greater transparency and accountability.
- (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 interaction: 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 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

5. Resolution WHA69.10 defined the timelines and mandates for the implementation of the Framework. The Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly requested 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;

¹ A pilot version of the WHO register of non-State actors is available at: <http://apps.who.int/register-nonstate-actors/home.aspx> (accessed 6 April 2017).

- (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.

6. The Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly also requested 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”.

7. 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.¹ 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.

8. The WHO register of non-State actors and the electronic workflow have been built and are currently being piloted and rolled out. This work is being integrated into an information management platform for global management of engagements, which also supports 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 being finalized and will be published before the start of the Seventieth World Health Assembly. These documents will be regularly updated in the light of the experience gained in the implementation of the Framework and will be made available on the WHO website. In addition, a change management plan, communication plan, and training materials for staff are being developed.

9. Taken together, these steps should allow the Organization to achieve the full, coherent and consistent implementation of the Framework at the three levels of the Organization in accordance with the timeline set out in resolution WHA69.10, which requested full operationalization within a two-year time frame.

10. Pursuant to the Health Assembly’s request,² 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 A70/53.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

11. The Health Assembly is invited to note the report.

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¹ Resolution CD55.R3 (2016).

² Resolution WHA69.10, paragraph 3(8).