

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

### **Report on the implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors**

**Report by the Director-General**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. In May 2016, the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA69.10 on the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors,<sup>1</sup> in which the Director-General was requested, inter alia, to take all necessary measures, working with Regional Directors, to fully implement the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors in a coherent and consistent manner across all three levels of the Organization, with a view to achieving full operationalization within a two-year time frame, and to report on the implementation of the Framework to the Executive Board at each of its January sessions under a standing agenda item, through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee. This document contains the fifth annual report.

2. In line with resolution WHA69.10, an initial evaluation of the implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors and its impact on the work of WHO was conducted in the year 2019 with a view to submitting the results, together with any proposals for revisions of the Framework, to the Executive Board in January 2020, through its Programme, Budget and Administration Committee. The report is contained in document EB146/3.<sup>2</sup>

3. A report on non-State actors in official relations with WHO, including proposals for admitting new entities, and on reviews of the status of existing official relations, is provided in a separate document.<sup>3</sup>

#### **INITIAL EVALUATION OF THE FRAMEWORK OF ENGAGEMENT WITH NON-STATE ACTORS**

4. As requested by Member States when adopting the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors, an initial evaluation of its implementation was conducted in the year 2019 in line with the

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<sup>1</sup> See document WHA69/2016/REC/1, resolution WHA69.10 and Annex 5.

<sup>2</sup> See also the summary records of the Executive Board at its 146th session, third meeting, section 2.

<sup>3</sup> Document EB148/34.

two-year time frame established for full operationalization of the Framework. Member States concurred with the six recommendations presented in the report on the initial evaluation at the thirty-first meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board<sup>1</sup> and at the 146th session of the Executive Board.<sup>2</sup>

5. The Secretariat, when introducing the report on the initial evaluation of the Framework and the report on implementation of the Framework,<sup>3</sup> informed the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee and the Executive Board that a full management response to the initial evaluation would be made available following consultation across the three levels of the Organization.

6. Many ambitious goals have been achieved since the adoption of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors. Enabling actions highlighted by the initial evaluation are critical to ensure full implementation of the Framework in an aligned, coordinated and systematic manner across the three levels of the Organization in order to maximize the value added from engagement with non-State actors. To facilitate implementation of the recommendations and in order to prepare the management response to the initial evaluation, a series of elements have been developed and consultations have been conducted across the three levels of the Organization.

7. The outcomes of the consultations have led to the preparation of a comprehensive management response document.

8. In response to the recommendation to maintain a critical mass of FENSA Focal Points and ensure the provision of support to this network to mitigate turnover and rotation challenges, the Secretariat has agreed to reconfirm the network of FENSA Focal Points. Under the current arrangement each Regional Director and Assistant Director-General reconfirms or appoints two staff members who coordinate and define the internal approval stages for engagement with non-State actors in accordance with their delegation of authority.

9. The reactivation of the network of focal points will ensure a corporate and streamlined approach to mitigate potential risks, facilitate learning exchange and disseminate good practices and innovative approaches across the three levels of the Organization in order to break silos. It will also foster the development of communities of practice to enhance understanding of the Framework's application closer to the point of need (region, country or technical unit).

10. In addition, the reactivation of the network of focal points will facilitate the response to the recommendations calling for a redefinition and clarification of the role and responsibilities of the specialized unit responsible for performing standard due diligence and risk assessment. While the focus of the unit would be redirected, in accordance with the terms of recommendation 3 of the report on the initial evaluation of the Framework, the focal points would be enabled and have both the necessary guidance on the simplified procedure and the support required to process engagements with non-State actors in a proactive and accountable manner.

11. The reactivation of the FENSA Proposal Review Committee, originally established in response to paragraph 35 of the Framework, is also of key importance in implementing recommendations 3, 5

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<sup>1</sup> Document EB146/3.

<sup>2</sup> Document EB146/38 Add.2; see also the summary records of the Executive Board at its 146th session, third meeting, section 2.

<sup>3</sup> Document EB146/34; see also the summary records of the Executive Board at its 146th session, third meeting, section 2.

and 6 of the report on the initial evaluation. The Committee would reaffirm its role as an arbitration body and enable high-level functions, demonstrating the strong steer from senior leadership as requested by Member States.

12. In line with the WHO transformation agenda, the original terms of reference of the Committee have been revised.

13. In order to proceed promptly with implementing the recommendations in particular those on improving and increasing communication, strengthening capacity and establishing enhanced learning mechanisms, a plan has been developed and approved, guided by the principles and tools of the WHO Project Management Centre of Excellence. The plan defines two major pillars: improving and increasing communication; and strengthening capacity and establishing enhanced learning mechanisms.

14. Recommendation 6 of the report on the initial evaluation calls for the development, finalization and implementation of an engagement strategy with non-State actors. In consultation with the three levels of the Organization, the Secretariat will develop a strategy and proposed plan for its implementation.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK OF ENGAGEMENT WITH NON-STATE ACTORS TO ADVANCE PUBLIC HEALTH OUTCOMES**

15. In line with the WHO transformation agenda, which advances the impact-oriented approach outlined in the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023, the Secretariat is, more than ever, endeavouring to enhance engagement with non-State actors to advance public health outcomes.

16. As an enabling policy, the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors provides a firm basis for strengthening engagement; it prioritizes the need to expand, deepen and strengthen engagements that will have a positive impact on public health, while balancing risks against expected benefits. Recognizing the importance of strategic engagement with non-State actors across the three levels of the Organization, the Secretariat has made significant strides in the context of WHO's transformation towards reinforcing a constructive and positive approach for such engagements in line with the provisions of the Framework, relevant policies and rules. Key related achievements across the three levels of the Organization are described below.

17. The Regional Office for Africa has recorded an increase in its engagements with non-State actors during the year 2020, in particular in the context of the pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). To ensure an effective implementation of the Framework, the Regional Office has undertaken a series of actions, such as providing biweekly updates to relevant staff through the Incident Management Support Team and conducting refresher sessions on the “What, How, Why, Where” of the Framework.

18. To further promote and advance the implementation of the Framework, the Regional Office for Africa has developed a set of guidance documents to support both technical units and country offices in their engagements with non-State actors. The guidance contains key documents related to the Framework in addition to standard templates to be used for each type of collaboration.

19. Building on its continued collaboration with non-State actors, the Regional Office for Africa included an item entitled “Engaging with Partners” on the agenda of the 60th Regional Program Meeting held in June 2020.

20. In order to foster dialogue, the Regional Office for Africa has initiated a procedure for the accreditation of non-State actors to participate as observers, upon invitation and without the right to vote, in the meetings of the Regional Committee for Africa and to submit written and/or oral statements, in accordance with paragraph 57 of the Framework. The procedure, which will be proposed for adoption by the Regional Committee at its seventy-first session, to be held in 2021, is application-based and concerns nongovernmental organizations, international business associations and philanthropic foundations that operate at the regional level and are actively involved with the Regional Office for Africa.

21. The Regional Office for Africa has reported the clearance and review of 69 projects of engagement with non-State actors.

22. As described in the report to its Executive Committee on engagement with non-State actors,<sup>1</sup> the Regional Office for the Americas/Pan American Health Organization has indicated that it is actively furthering the implementation of the Framework by, inter alia, developing and conducting training sessions for staff. Training materials are regularly updated and adjusted to take account of comments and experiences, including best practices and practical examples of engagements. The Regional Office has further confirmed that training sessions will continue to evolve iteratively, based on participant feedback.

23. The Regional Office for the Americas/Pan American Health Organization has also reported that over 200 standard due diligence and risk assessment reviews were conducted, an almost 70% increase over the preceding year, as well as hundreds of simplified reviews for low-risk engagements. The significant uptake of due diligence and risk assessment reviews is a result of continued engagement by the Regional Office for the Americas/Pan American Health Organization and outreach efforts by the FENSA focal points to ensure that the processes set out in the Framework are followed.

24. In order to more rapidly respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Regional Director for the Americas/Director of the Pan American Health Organization has exercised certain flexibilities in the application of relevant procedures set out in the Framework. Specifically, the Regional Director authorized a simplified process for any proposed engagement related to the response of the Regional Office for the Americas to the COVID-19 pandemic whereby non-State actors are asked to provide basic information. Using that information, the Regional Office conducts an expedited due diligence and risk assessment pursuant to the Framework if no risks or issues are identified. This was deemed necessary to ensure an agile process that promotes broad engagement in supporting the response of the Regional Office/Pan American Health Organization to the pandemic while preserving the Organization's integrity, independence and reputation.

25. Although significant efforts have been made and the Framework has been fully implemented by the Regional Office for the Americas/Pan American Health Organization, some challenges persist. There remains a lack of sufficient resources, both financial and human, required to fully develop, implement and maintain a due diligence and risk assessment system across the Organization, both for standard and simplified procedures. Resource constraints also make it challenging to implement a robust training programme that must continually evolve to ensure optimum effectiveness, and to monitor and update guidance and procedures to ensure ongoing relevance and applicability.

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<sup>1</sup> Document CE167/2 of the Regional Office for the Americas/Pan American Health Organization on engagement with non-State actors (<https://www.paho.org/en/documents/ce167-2-e-engagement-non-state-actors>, accessed 3 November 2020).

26. Since 2019, the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has been working on the implementation of the Vision 2023 strategy in which the Regional Director calls for enhanced engagement with stakeholders at the regional and country levels in order to contribute effectively to public health outcomes.

27. In support of the COVID-19 preparedness and response strategy, the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as heads of WHO offices in countries, territories and areas, have strengthened engagement with non-State actors.

28. Engaging with a variety of stakeholders is of key importance for the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. To that end, and building on constructive dialogue with non-State actors, the Regional Office has proposed a procedure for accrediting non-State actors to attend sessions of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean. The objective of this procedure is to enable regional non-State actors that are not in official relations but work closely with WHO to participate as observers, without the right to vote, in Regional Committee sessions and to submit written and oral statements. A resolution on the accreditation of non-State actors attending governing bodies meetings was adopted by the sixty-seventh session of the Regional Committee in October 2020.<sup>1</sup>

29. The Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean reported that in order to facilitate aligned implementation of the Framework, training and capacity-building initiatives have been conducted, information sessions and guidance have been provided, and press conferences and dedicated meetings with ministers, regional institutions, diplomatic representatives and academic experts have been held.

30. Several WHO country offices of the Eastern Mediterranean Region are engaging with local entities to advance WHO's agenda and priorities, including supporting and reinforcing humanitarian response plans and as part of the work of health cluster partners. Requests to engage and renew engagements have been reviewed and approved for proposals in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Information sessions and briefings have also been organized with regional and country teams on implementation of the Framework and on the procedures established for engagement with four categories of non-State actors. There is growing interest among Member States of the Region in the idea of increasing engagement with private-sector entities.

31. The Regional Office for Europe welcomed the recommendation to reactivate the FENSA focal points, which enables the responsibilities in reviewing proposals for, and maintaining engagement with, non-State actors to be divided across WHO headquarters and the regions, and accelerates the review process. The close collaboration with the specialized unit responsible for performing standard due diligence and risk assessment has also been highlighted and welcomed; this includes informal discussions, information sharing on an engagement and/or entities, and expert guidance on high-risk proposals for engagement.

32. The Regional Office for Europe reported that it has established an internal tracking mechanism for due diligence requests and confirmed that, as at August 2020, 190 requests had been reviewed and approved in the year 2020.

33. Briefings on the provisions of the Framework and updates on specific cases of engagement with non-State actors are regularly provided to staff at management meetings, and introduction sessions are conducted for new staff.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/EMRC6716-eng.pdf?ua=1> (accessed 3 November 2020).

34. In line with the procedure for accreditation of regional non-State actors not in official relations with WHO, the Regional Office for Europe recommended the accreditation of four new non-State actors to participate in meetings of the Regional Committee for Europe in the year 2020.

35. In the year 2020, the Regional Office for South-East Asia has increased its engagement with non-State actors. More than 50 proposals for collaboration with non-State actors have been reviewed and approved, which represents a significant increase compared with the previous year.

36. These engagements involve a wide range of stakeholders and cover the five types of engagement described in the Framework, in particular participation of WHO staff at meetings organized by non-State actors, technical collaboration with non-State actors to advance WHO's agenda and priorities, and joint publications on public health issues.

37. Building on the positive outcomes of its engagement with non-State actors, the Regional Office for South-East Asia is proactively supporting the WHO resource mobilization strategy while ensuring that WHO's rules and policies, such as the Framework, are duly considered and respected.

38. In line with established practice, the Regional Office for South-East Asia provides briefings and information sessions on the Framework during various meetings and events, including the Regional Director's meetings with heads of WHO offices in countries, territories and areas and technical departments in the Region. In addition, checklists and briefing documents have been prepared and shared with relevant units to ensure a smooth use and application of the Framework. In particular, staff in country offices have been briefed to ensure a common understanding of the principles and rationale that lead to the decision of engaging or not engaging with a particular entity.

39. The Regional Office for South-East Asia is taking a proactive approach to engagement with non-State actors and is fostering exchanges and interaction with all categories of non-State actors. Entities in official relations are invited to attend the sessions of the Regional Committee every year and are provided with an opportunity to deliver statements during the sessions. Engagements at the regional level have also yielded tangible results. The financial contributions from non-State actors to the Regional Office for South-East Asia in the year 2020 amounted to US\$ 18.18 million as at October 2020. In addition, in-kind contributions from non-State actors, up to October 2020, have been valued at US\$ 22.12 million. However, most importantly, engagements with non-State actors have enabled the Regional Office to achieve meaningful results in the areas of immunization, dengue and malaria control, lymphatic filariasis and visceral leishmaniasis and to support WHO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

40. The Regional Office for South-East Asia has also indicated that additional efforts are required to promote understanding of the Framework's principles and procedures among WHO staff in the Region so as to ensure that the policy is perceived as an enabling instrument for engagement.

41. The Regional Office for the Western Pacific is taking a proactive approach to engagement with non-State actors and is fostering dialogue and interaction with all categories of non-State actors, in line with the Framework. This approach is reflected in the multiple engagements that advance the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 and related programme budgets.

42. The Regional Office for the Western Pacific has proactively promoted collaboration and encouraged efforts among different health actors to respond to national and regional public health challenges. The Regional Office has also applied and supported country offices in applying the

provisions of the Framework while engaging with non-State actors in view of the important benefits they can bring to global public health.

43. In order to ensure continuous communication with staff, the Regional Office for the Western Pacific regularly updates its intranet site dedicated to the Framework and conducts briefings and information sessions for staff. It has also developed internal checklists to facilitate the submission of proposals for engagement.

44. To support engagements at the country level, the Secretariat has updated tools and guidance documents to strengthen awareness and better embed the provisions of the Framework and to support Heads of WHO Country Offices in their consideration of engagements with non-State actors.

45. The Secretariat continues to implement the Framework and the criteria and principles for secondments from nongovernmental organizations, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions, approved by the Health Assembly in the year 2017.<sup>1</sup> As in previous years, proposals submitted in the year 2020 have been reviewed for compliance through well-defined processes to ensure consistent and coherent implementation of WHO's policies. Further guidance, as well as a formal information note, have been developed to support staff in the assessment and management of secondments.

46. As requested by the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee in its report to the Executive Board, the Secretariat has been working on revising its policy on consultants, taking into account the provisions of the Framework. As part of the first stage of implementation of the revised policy, the Secretariat has developed guidance on contracting nil-remuneration consultants (whether paid or funded by a non-State actor or not) and introduced a well-defined clearance process involving different offices providing support functions. These new provisions are currently in the final stages of internal clearance and will be published and applicable before the end of the year 2020. The Secretariat aims to ensure a coherent application of, and improved compliance with, the provisions of the Framework regardless of the type of contract with the individual concerned. The goal is to ensure that the principles of the Framework are fully integrated in all direct or indirect engagements with non-State actors and that such engagements are aligned with WHO's mandate, while mitigating risks and preserving WHO's reputation.

47. The implementation of the Framework and the criteria and principles for secondments from nongovernmental organizations, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions have provided clarity for WHO on when and how to consider secondments from non-State actors. As in previous years, all proposed secondments from non-State actors in the year 2020 have been reviewed through a well-defined clearance process.

48. In line with resolution WHA69.10, the report on the initial evaluation of the Framework and the report on the implementation of the Framework,<sup>2</sup> enhancements to the WHO Register of non-State actors continue to be introduced in a phased manner to facilitate the efficiency and transparency of engagements with non-State actors in official relations. Enhancements made in the year 2020 include the establishment of a new section in the Register displaying "secondments from non-State actors".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Document A70/53; see also document WHA70/2017/REC/3, summary records of the fourth meeting, section 2.

<sup>2</sup> See also document EB146/38; see the summary records of the Executive Board at its 146th session, third meeting, section 3.

<sup>3</sup> See the WHO Register of non-State actors (<https://publicspace.who.int/sites/GEM/default.aspx#>, accessed 3 November 2020).

49. In the year 2020, the specialized unit responsible for performing standard due diligence and risk assessment conducted over 1200 reviews responding to requests from technical departments and units across the three levels of the Organization, as well as hundreds of reviews for low-risk engagements. The specialized unit has also facilitated and supported technical units at both the headquarters and regional levels when implementing or initiating WHO multistakeholder initiatives, including partnerships. Lessons learned will be captured and shared with staff to improve the process, facilitate engagements with non-State actors and address the needs of the technical units.

50. As reported separately,<sup>1</sup> the specialized unit has ensured follow-up of the update of non-State actors in official relations in the WHO Register and, in close collaboration with technical departments, has reviewed joint collaboration plans and annual reports on official relations outlining the progress of implementation and achieved deliverables. In the light of the intensive resources required and heavy workload generated, optimizing the process through an electronic workflow system would facilitate swift communication between non-State actors, relevant departments involved and the specialized unit.

51. Review and due diligence have been also performed by the specialized unit on 331 proposals for designation and redesignation of entities as WHO collaborating centres. The increasing volume of requests from non-State actors has generated a growing workload for the management and review of proposals. Dedicated resources to support and maximize the benefits from these productive engagements should be considered in order to meet the demand in line with WHO's policies and procedures.

52. The specialized unit has also been liaising with non-State actors in official relations and has been approached to facilitate communication and exchanges with technical departments. In their communications, non-State actors have exposed misconduct from some entities, such as misuse of WHO's name and emblem, non-compliance with WHO's policies, norms and standards, and/or links with the tobacco industry and entities furthering the interests of the tobacco industry. With regard to their participation at WHO meetings, non-State actors have expressed concern about the modalities governing their participation.

53. The Secretariat has participated in a number of virtual forums in order to raise awareness and advocate for its priorities and activities in a range of public health areas, including mental health, neglected tropical diseases, health promotion, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and ageing, sexual and reproductive health, health security and antimicrobial resistance, at the global, regional and country levels. To illustrate this purpose, and in a coordinated and Organization-wide effort, the Secretariat has further developed an initiative linking health to sports, with the aims to foster engagement with international sports federations and associations to promote public health messages.

54. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has observed an increase in its engagement with non-State actors. In this regard, as October 2020, 400 simplified due diligence reviews had been conducted, with more than 200 engagements confirmed to strengthen global collaboration in cancer research. While the majority of engagements were examined through simplified procedures, complex cases and those of higher risk were referred to the specialized unit responsible for standard due diligence and risk assessment.

55. The Secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products (Convention Secretariat) has been contributing to the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 and output 3.2.1 (countries enabled to develop and implement technical packages to address risk factors through multisectoral action) of the Programme

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<sup>1</sup> See document EB148/34.



budget 2020–2021. The hosting terms promulgated by the Director-General in October 2019 include a provision to recognize the application of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors in the activities performed by the Convention Secretariat, in conjunction with decisions and specific guidance from the Conference of Parties on the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

56. In line with the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors and its mandate on tobacco control from the Conference of the Parties and the Meeting of the Parties, the Convention Secretariat applied the provisions of paragraph 44 of the Framework and the specific guidance from the Conference of the Parties and the Meeting of the Parties to protect the integrity of the work of the Convention Secretariat and the work of the States Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry, as well as other interests relevant to the Protocol (in accordance with Article 5, paragraph 3, of the WHO Framework Convention, which is also applicable to the Protocol).

57. The Convention Secretariat also applies the provisions of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors when developing tools for implementing mandates from the Conference of the Parties and the Meeting of the Parties, including when mobilizing resources in accordance with the decision of the Conference of the Parties on the Convention Secretariat's fundraising efforts and collaborative work.<sup>1</sup>

58. The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research has embedded the provisions of the Framework and overall risk management approach in its operations, informed its staff of the established processes, shared tools and reference materials from the specialized unit with its staff, and comprehensively implemented the valuable recommendations and guidance provided by the specialized unit.

59. The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health has proactively applied the provisions of the Framework in its work and conducted simplified due diligence assessments by its Framework focal points who consult, when needed, the specialized unit for guidance and recommendations.

60. Building on its practical experience in implementing the Framework, Unitaaid has developed standard operating procedures and assessment forms to ensure that processes and procedures set out in the Framework are observed, assessment is planned early, the related scope and responsibilities are clear, and recommendations from senior management are provided. Assessments at three key stages of the grant-making process further strengthen Unitaaid's implementation of the Framework, resulting in the establishment of new grants catalysing access to health products globally.

## **EMERGENCIES AND THE FRAMEWORK OF ENGAGEMENT WITH NON-STATE ACTORS**

61. Since the first days of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO has set out three goals: to reduce transmission of the virus, protect the vulnerable, and save lives. By placing countries and communities, and delivery and impact at the heart of its work and actions, and in its response to the request made by Member States to engage more strategically with non-State actors during emergencies,

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<sup>1</sup> Decision FCTC/COP7(25) ([https://www.who.int/fctc/cop/cop7/FCTC\\_COP7\\_25\\_EN.pdf?ua=1](https://www.who.int/fctc/cop/cop7/FCTC_COP7_25_EN.pdf?ua=1), accessed 3 November 2020).

the Secretariat has established specific and instant modalities to expedite the review of proposals for engagement and advance multiple areas of the COVID-19 response.

62. The modalities call for a swift due diligence and review of proposals in less than 48 hours, a specific set of documents to be submitted by non-State actors and a specific legal arrangement to be developed. The Secretariat has engaged with more than 120 entities in different areas related to WHO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The engagements have also targeted expert entities on social media platforms and technologies to promote WHO's evidence-based information and public health messages on COVID-19, and to track and monitor both health behaviours and digital communication while limiting the spread of false information.

63. Building on expressions of global support for the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat established the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund as a mechanism for accepting financial donations from various stakeholders, including non-State actors and individuals, wishing to contribute to the global response. Contributions received are mostly used to provide grants to strengthen the response to the COVID-19 pandemic at the national and local levels.

64. The COVID-19 pandemic has also prompted a substantial increase in requests for engagement with non-State actors, including private sector entities. In addition to the expected increase in requests from actors in the health sector, many actors outside the public health sector have also approached WHO regarding potential engagement. Given that an effective response to COVID-19 requires cross-sectoral action, this increase in requests has had the benefit of bringing new entities to the global public health space, including entities involved in information and communications technology, artificial intelligence, digital applications and the financial services sector. To ensure that engagements are considered on a level playing field and do not confer a competitive advantage or privilege, or constitute an endorsement, and consistent application of the Framework's provisions and procedures has been emphasized.

65. The Secretariat has engaged significantly with non-State actors at the local, national and global levels for rapid review of technical guidance and publications on different subjects, including but not limited to infection prevention, information on COVID-19, health promotion and mental health. Supported by the Publications Review Committee, these technical engagements have been reviewed in line with the provisions set out in the Framework, including on the management of conflicts of interest.

66. At the same time, the WHO Information Network for Epidemics (EPI-WIN) platform seeks to promote healthy behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic and to mitigate harm from misinformation and disinformation by providing public access to timely, accurate and easy-to-understand advice and information from trusted sources on public health events and outbreaks such as the coronavirus disease public health emergency of international concern. The platform fosters engagement with different categories of non-State actors, in particular nongovernmental organizations and the public health sector, cities and local governments. The EPI-WIN initiative has resulted in a series of myth busters, fact-checkers, webinars and events specifically aimed at countering the flow of misinformation.

67. WHO is continuing to innovate in order to harness the power of new media to revolutionize the way in which it communicates public health messages to communities, at the same time as minimizing the potential of such platforms to create confusion and misinformation.

68. In April 2020, the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, a global, time-limited collaboration, was launched by WHO, the European Commission and the President of France, with the vision of creating a global solution to expedite the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ACT-Accelerator convenes leading global health organizations to leverage existing public health

infrastructure. The work of the ACT-Accelerator combines public and private expertise from research and development to in-country delivery and is organized into four pillars of work: diagnostics, treatment, vaccines and health systems strengthening.

69. WHO provides overall coordination of the ACT-Accelerator and leads the cross-cutting workstream on access to and allocation of resources. WHO also provides technical leadership in all pillars, supporting the development of applicable norms and standards, ensuring regulatory support/prequalification of new products, and providing relevant policy and technical guidance. In addition, WHO is hosting the ACT-Accelerator Hub, which is helping to coordinate work across the ACT-Accelerator. In this context, WHO ensures the implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors and applies its provisions in engaging with entities in the four pillars of work and cross-cutting workstreams.

70. WHO has received and continues to receive a significant number of offers, mainly from private sector entities, for pro bono services (i.e. services at no cost to WHO and with no further conditions or requirements for expenditure from the Organization) to support WHO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with paragraph 49(e)(i) of the Framework, a specific time-limited streamlined process for the review of proposed engagements related to offers of pro bono services has been established to enable technical units to leverage these contributions rapidly and in an accountable manner. Although this process has been significantly streamlined for the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it still requires the preparation of documentation needed for the review, as well as the review itself.

## **ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

71. The Board is invited to note the report.

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