

# **Global Health and Peace Initiative**

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

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Member States adopted decision WHA76(12) on the Global Health and Peace Initiative, which took note of, and requested the Director-General to report on progress made on strengthening the Road Map<sup>1</sup> for the Global Health and Peace Initiative, as a living document, through consultations with Member States and Observers and other stakeholders to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly through the Executive Board at its 154th session.

### **CONSULTATIONS ON THE GLOBAL HEALTH AND PEACE INITIATIVE**

2. On 18 September 2023, the Secretariat commenced consultations with Member States and Observers on how to strengthen the Road Map through a global, virtual information session. It was attended by 47 Member States and four Observers, all of whom had the opportunity to gain further information on the proposed development process and provide initial input on how to strengthen the Road Map as a living document. Member States and Observers were also invited to submit additional comments on how the Secretariat could strengthen the Road Map as a living document by 30 September 2023.

3. At that stage of the consultation process, Member States and Observers requested:

- clarification regarding the scope of the Initiative and if/how it would impact WHO's work;
- more concrete examples of the Health and Peace approach and its advantages compared to other approaches;
- further information about what would constitute success under such an approach and how such success might be measured;
- clarifications regarding any risk of the health agenda being influenced by political or security concerns through the implementation of Health and Peace programming; and

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<sup>1</sup> The Road Map, as noted by the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly, is available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/roadmap-for-the-global-health-for-peace-initiative--draft> (accessed 11 October 2023).

- clarification regarding how the application of the Global Health and Peace Initiative is distinct from other work undertaken by the WHO health emergency programme as well as other health programmes in conflict-affected areas.

4. In response to those requests, the Secretariat proposed drafting a background paper on practical approaches to Health and Peace programming, to explain key concepts and offer concrete examples of the Health and Peace approach.

5. On 31 October 2023, a consultation was similarly held with non-State actors and United Nations entities to provide clarification on the proposed development process and call for input on how the Secretariat could strengthen the Road Map as a living document. The 27 participants made the following main comments:

- overall, strong support was expressed towards the Initiative;
- the importance was stressed of monitoring the implementation and assessing the impact of Health and Peace programming, especially in sensitive contexts;
- it was suggested that health care workers should be empowered to apply the principles of the Health and Peace approach in their work and their progress monitored;
- the importance of examining pitfalls and risks, especially in the most sensitive contexts was stressed;
- it was requested that the health of young people should be better integrated into medical curricula, together with the Health and Peace approach.

6. A hybrid consultation was subsequently held for Member States and Observers on 13 November 2023. Sixty Member States and two Observers attended. An outline of the background paper on practical approaches to linking health and peace was presented; four stakeholders presented illustrations of connecting health and peace in practice (Colombia, the WHO Country Office in Cameroon, Interpeace and the International Council of Nurses); and answers were provided to key questions raised at the previous consultation with Member States and Observers. The discussion was then opened on the strengthening of the Road Map as a living document. Participants made the following main comments:

- appreciation was expressed for the examples shared during the meeting and in the forthcoming background paper, which made it easier to understand how the Initiative would function in practice;
- information was requested on how the Global Health and Peace Initiative could be linked to other WHO initiatives and tools that contribute to peace and trust building;
- the Secretariat was invited to clarify the different types of peace outcomes the Initiative can contribute to, depending on the type of context;
- information was requested on the Global Health and Peace Initiative's added value for WHO's work and in comparison with other humanitarian stakeholders' work and collaborations.

7. Points included in the Secretariat's response to questions raised on the Global Health and Peace Initiative are set out below.

- Health outcomes will always remain the priority, including in contexts that are, or have been, affected by violent conflict.
- The Health and Peace approach to programming focuses on the community level. Rather than dealing with political solutions, it is concerned with examining the following matters: social cohesion; trust; resilience to violence; equity; and inclusion. In so doing the hope is that it may contribute to improvements in those areas.
- The Global Health and Peace Initiative does not reflect in any way an effort to politicize health care; rather, it exemplifies a deep commitment to protecting the space for impartial health care.
- The Health and Peace approach embodies key principles of medical ethics and humanitarian assistance.

8. The Global Health and Peace Initiative's added value for WHO is to be found at various levels. At institutional level, the Initiative formally recognizes the links between health and peace and helps the Secretariat to institutionalize (but also document and improve) WHO's contributions to peace through its health programmes. The Global Health and Peace Initiative Road Map provides a transparent framework for WHO to operationalize the Global Health and Peace Initiative according to its mandate, with the ultimate aim of strengthening WHO's health programmes and activities.

## **OTHER EFFORTS UNDERTAKEN SINCE THE SEVENTY-SIXTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY THAT CONTRIBUTE TO STRENGTHENING THE ROAD MAP FOR THE GLOBAL HEALTH AND PEACE INITIATIVE**

### **Evidence generation through research and analysis**

9. A series of country-level illustrations have been developed to document health and peace programming within WHO. They have been designed to capture practical examples of real-world contexts where the Health and Peace approach has been used by WHO and its partners. These country illustrations will be used for both learning and awareness-raising purposes; some of them have already contributed to the drafting of the background paper mentioned above.

10. An expanding repository of relevant academic and grey literature has been compiled to inform future research and analysis.

11. Research as well as monitoring, evaluation and learning efforts are under way. Such work will continue to be refined with a view to documenting best practice and providing further evidence of how the Health and Peace approach is contributing to both strengthening the prospects for peace and for universal health coverage, especially in challenging contexts.

### **Mainstreaming the Health and Peace approach**

12. WHO and its partners have continued to implement health and peace-focused projects in Burkina Faso and Cameroon, both of which are due to conclude by the end of 2023. The WHO Secretariat has provided technical support throughout the project implementation process upon the request of the WHO country offices.

13. In 2023, the WHO country office in Guinea Bissau started implementing a project on strengthening social cohesion through promoting inclusive and effective public health sector governance, management and administration, to which the Secretariat is providing support where needed.

14. These projects have been designed and implemented in partnership with national governments and WHO's local and international partners, with the financial support of the Peacebuilding Fund.

### **Dialogue with key stakeholders**

15. The Secretariat has been engaging with key stakeholders within and outside the United Nations system to explore where expertise can be pooled and to identify possible areas of cooperation.

16. The Secretariat cooperated closely with The Lancet Commission on peaceful societies through health equity and gender equality throughout the drafting process of its research report,<sup>1</sup> which was launched in September 2023. WHO shared its research and knowledge of the vast relationship between health and peace. Discussions held across the three levels of the Organization contributed to shaping the conceptual framework, implementation agenda and policy recommendations of The Lancet Commission's report. The report contains evidence that improvements in health equity can also contribute positively to conflict transformation and serves as an important resource to supporting the work of the Global Health and Peace Initiative.

### **Capacity-building**

17. Technical support has been provided to WHO country offices in the design and implementation of their health and peace programming, mainly in the African Region.

18. Video recordings and resources of a forthcoming webinar series on the Health and Peace approach in practice will be made available as training resources on WHO's online learning platform,<sup>2</sup> as tools to assist learning and capacity-strengthening efforts on the Health and Peace approach.

19. A handbook on health and peace programming is being finalized in light of the consultations on the Global Health and Peace Initiative that were held with Member States and other stakeholders in the period 2022–2023. The Secretariat intends to finalize and publish the handbook in 2024.

### **Strengthening communication and awareness about the Global Health and Peace Initiative and the Health and Peace approach to programming**

20. A global webinar series on practical ways of linking Health and Peace has been designed by the Secretariat for launch in late 2023. It aims to raise awareness and promote discussion among various stakeholders about the practical links between health and peace; and good programming practices and their outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> The report of The Lancet Commission on peaceful societies through health equity and gender equality is available at: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(23\)01348-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(23)01348-X/fulltext) (accessed 12 October 2023).

<sup>2</sup> See <https://openwho.org/> (accessed 12 October 2023).

21. The Secretariat has reviewed and updated the Global Health and Peace Initiative webpage<sup>1</sup> to make it simpler to navigate and access all relevant information pertaining to the various aspects of the Initiative.
22. External outreach and engagement activities are ongoing. The Secretariat has taken part in various events to talk about the Global Health and Peace Initiative.
23. On 26 May 2023, a side event to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly was organized by Oman and Switzerland, entitled “Global Health and Peace Initiative – examples from country-level programmes”, to which the WHO Secretariat contributed. High-level participants from Member States shared their experiences and expertise to illustrate the relevance and possible impacts of the Health and Peace approach.
24. In the intersessional period between the 152nd session of the Executive Board and the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly, the Institute for Economics and Peace and the World Health Innovation Summit invited representatives from WHO headquarters to speak at a peace and health webinar held on 24 February 2023. On 4 May 2023, representatives from the WHO country office in Cameroon and WHO headquarters, along with representatives from IOM, the in-country implementing partner, spoke at the Alliance for Peacebuilding’s PeaceCon 2023 in Washington, DC. On 16 May 2023, representatives from the WHO country office in Somalia and WHO headquarters were similarly invited to a roundtable session at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute’s 2023 Forum on Peace and Development, an event at which they spoke about building resilient health systems for countries affected by war, conflict and fragility.

## **ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

25. The Board is invited to take note of the report. In its discussions, the Board may wish to focus on providing guidance in respect of the questions set out below.
- What priorities should the Secretariat follow in its implementation and strengthening of the workstreams of the Global Health and Peace Initiative?
  - What national experiences and/or needs and opportunities should be borne in mind when linking health and peace in the specific contexts of Member States?

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.who.int/initiatives/who-health-and-peace-initiative> (accessed 12 October 2023).