
Sustainable financing: WHO investment round

Report by the Director-General

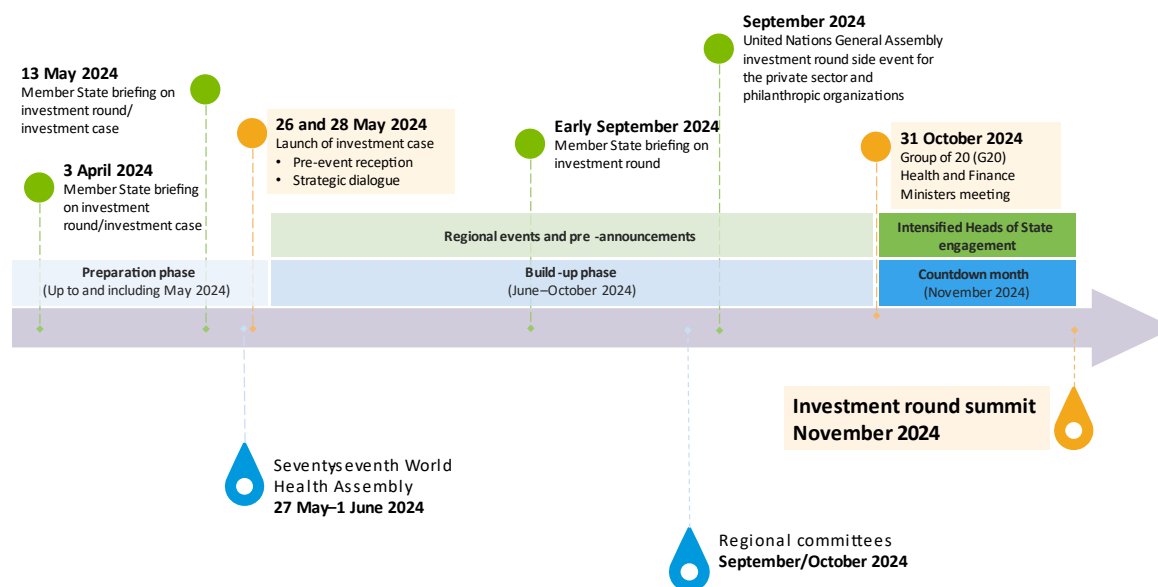
1. The present document is submitted in response to decision EB154(1) (2024) and provides an update on preparations for the WHO investment round. It covers progress with regard to modalities and the investment case, and financial elements and resource mobilization.
2. As outlined in document EB154/29 Rev.1, the WHO investment round aims to safeguard the global political momentum for health in order to rally stakeholders behind the Fourteenth General Programme of Work, 2025–2028 (GPW 14) and move the Organization's finances towards more predictability and flexibility.

MODALITIES

3. As requested in decision WHA76(19) (2023), the main investment round event will take place in the last quarter of 2024. The Secretariat continues to work with Member State co-hosts from all regions to organize the event that is expected to be attended by Heads of State and Government. In preparation for the event, the Secretariat is identifying key opportunities at the global and regional level to build momentum and offer opportunities to announce pledges and contributions.
4. The host for the investment round has been identified, along with three co-hosts. In addition, at the time of the finalization of the present document, a further four Member States are likely to agree to act as co-hosts. An oral update will be provided during the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly in May 2024.

5. Until the main event of the investment round in November 2024, the timeline set out in Fig. 1 below is envisaged.

Fig.1. Investment round roadmap



6. During the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly, the investment case, entitled “All for Health, Health for All”, will be launched with Member States and other contributors. The Secretariat is currently preparing the investment case, which will provide a strong and compelling narrative, giving donors a clear vision of why investing in WHO makes sense from an economic perspective. Building on the previously published return on investment for WHO of US\$ 35 for every US\$ 1 invested,¹ the investment case will further detail the contribution of WHO to saving lives during the period of GPW 14, and the pathways through which this impact will be achieved. Deep dives into specific topic areas will be used as examples of how WHO contributes to achieving results through three strategic shifts around leadership (including partnerships and agenda setting), technical products and the differentiated country support model. This will provide further specification about what WHO does, and where, to drive impact. Furthermore, the investment case will showcase the budget ask and estimated efficiencies of the new funding model, offering transparency and accountability to potential investors. External modelling groups and academic experts in economic analyses have been engaged to bring methodological rigour to the document.

7. The Secretariat is developing a dedicated investment round page on the WHO website, which will include relevant information and links to related pages, house the investment case report and generally serve as a “one-stop shop” for key aspects of the investment round. Additional aspects of internal and external communications are in development to ensure employee and stakeholder engagement with the investment round; communications risk-management approaches are being designed in parallel.

¹ A healthy return: investment case for a sustainably financed WHO. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/354372>, accessed 10 April 2024).

FINANCIAL ELEMENTS AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION APPROACH

8. The Secretariat is implementing its resource mobilization plan focused on strengthening relationships with sovereign donors, broadening the donor base and building longer-term, consolidated outcome-based collaboration with philanthropic organizations. The WHO Foundation is stepping up its efforts on the private sector side and in line with the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors.

9. During the 154th session of the Executive Board in January 2024, Member States requested the Secretariat to provide additional details on the budgetary envelope for GPW 14,¹ including breakdown by WHO results. This requires a fully developed results framework (outcomes and outputs), followed by consultations on priorities with Member States, and the respective costing of Secretariat work. At the time of preparing the present document, GPW 14 is going through the last round of consultations. While the Secretariat has launched the early development of draft outputs for the Programme budget 2026–2027, full prioritization and costing is not possible until the later stages of programme budget development. For this reason, the Secretariat is taking a two-tier approach:

- **By the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly (27 May–1 June 2024):** given that Member States have recently identified their priorities for collaboration with WHO as part of the Programme budget 2024–2025 development, these priorities hold significant relevance and validity. Consequently, they will serve as a foundation for preliminary budget estimates for GPW 14. The Secretariat will align these established priorities with the new results framework for GPW 14 and, by way of this alignment, will be able to present a preliminary budget by GPW 14 results for information to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly.
- **By the time of the investment round summit (November 2024):** the Secretariat will be able to provide the preliminary prioritization and costing of draft outputs for the development of the Programme budget 2026–2027. The costing of the Programme budget 2026–2027, informed by the prioritization of WHO results by Member States, will constitute a more accurate estimate that will provide further detail on the budget envelope for the investment round. Programme budget draft costing is set to be finalized by November 2024, in time for the investment round, and to comply with governing bodies deadlines for programme budget preparation.

ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES AND REPORTING TO DONORS

10. Following previous discussions with Member States and other partners, and in line with the purpose and vision for the success of the investment round, the Secretariat proposes adjustments to (a) the definition of thematic funding, (b) the allocation mechanism, and (c) the reporting of funds.

11. As discussed with Member States, the definition of thematic funding will be expanded to accommodate a higher degree of donor specificity and is expected to facilitate contributors' transition from earmarked voluntary contributions towards voluntary contributions with a higher degree of flexibility. The following levels of specification will be treated as thematic funding:

- contributions given at the global level with a programmatic specification up to and including output level;

¹ See the summary records of the Executive Board at its 154th session, second meeting, section 2.

- contributions with a geographical specification up to major office level and a programmatic specification up to outcome level;
- contributions with a geographical specification up to country office level and a programmatic specification up to strategic objective level; and
- the new definition of thematic funding will be applied with the launch of the investment round; that is, for any commitments made from the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly onwards for the period 2025–2028.

12. The Resource Allocation Committee transparently allocates thematic voluntary contributions across **programmatic outputs**, based on a three-level consultation process. The allocation of resources is done while fully respecting thematic earmarking made by donors as part of the agreement. The Committee relies on output delivery teams, which are technical networks representing the three levels of the Organization, to recommend the distribution of funding across the three levels within the programmatic outputs determined by the Committee. Membership of the Committee has been made more inclusive by strengthening representation from country offices. Procedures continue to be optimized to ensure the timelier distribution of thematic funds and to maximize impact. The process is fully transparent, and reporting is made available to donors according to what is defined in the donor agreement. Information about the distribution of Member State thematic funding is publicly available on WHO's web portal, and an adjustment of the web portal is being considered to display potential non-Member State thematic giving.

13. With regard to reporting requirements, the Secretariat is working with Member States to develop standardized reporting templates, as already included in the Secretariat implementation plan on reform.¹ The Secretariat currently analyses existing reporting requirements both within WHO and other relevant United Nations entities. Functional areas are being identified that may allow for harmonization and some individual donors have volunteered to champion a harmonization process and provide their input on reporting requirements. This will be further discussed with Member States as well as with donor groups for selected areas to solicit ideas/suggestions and inputs from Member States and other partners to further improve reporting.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

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

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¹ For more information, see the WHO dashboard for tracking Secretariat implementation plan (SIP) on reform actions ([https://www.who.int/about/governance/member-states-portal/tracking-secretariat-implementation-plan-\(sip\)-actions](https://www.who.int/about/governance/member-states-portal/tracking-secretariat-implementation-plan-(sip)-actions), accessed 24 November 2023).