



Summary of consultations conducted by the Special Envoy on WHO's engagement with non-State actors

1. At the request of the Director-General, Professor Thomas Zeltner (Switzerland) agreed to serve, on a pro-bono basis, as Special Envoy on WHO's engagement with non-State actors from August 2013 to July 2014. The mandate of the Special Envoy followed on from the request of the Executive Board, in decision EB133(2), to advance the work proposed, taking into account the deliberations of the Executive Board at its 133rd session, particularly in relation to transparency, risk and conflict of interest, towards the development of a more detailed framework of engagement with non-State actors for consideration by the Board at its 134th session in January 2014.
2. The mandate of the Special Envoy was to advise the Director-General on the further development of WHO's policy on engagement with non-State actors, in particular, the development of rules of engagement and the identification of mechanisms to increase transparency and manage risks, including conflicts of interest.
3. Between September and December 2013, the Special Envoy held consultations with Member States, representatives of relevant intergovernmental organizations, and non-State actors, including nongovernmental organizations, private sector entities, academic institutions and philanthropic foundations. An understanding was in place that sources of comments forthcoming from the consultations would not be disclosed. This report summarizes the feedback given by the Special Envoy to the Director-General on the outcomes of the consultations with Member States and non-State actors.
4. The outcomes of the consultations confirmed the general agreement that the global health landscape had changed, and on the importance of WHO's role in global health governance. There is recognition that non-State actors play a critical role in supporting WHO's work to fulfil its constitutional mandate, and that although WHO's role is as a convener, inclusiveness and dialogue with all stakeholders are key to its engagement with non-State actors.
5. There was strong agreement that WHO's reputation, credibility and integrity, as well as trust in the Organization, should be preserved and safeguarded in any engagement with non-State actors. Risks, including conflict of interest, should be mitigated or avoided. In that regard, representatives requested WHO to establish measures to safeguard its norms, standard-setting and policy-making to avoid undue influence and to ensure that its work and priorities were not jeopardized.
6. Some representatives considered that WHO should adopt an approach that is more receptive rather than defensive, and apply a risk-benefit assessment when engaging with non-State actors so as to advance public health issues without endangering its normative mandate and reputation. Others called on WHO to be more cautious in its engagement with non-State actors, especially with those actors considered to have vested interests in engaging with WHO.

7. Representatives agreed unanimously on the importance of transparency as the key safeguard to underpin and lead WHO's engagement with non-State actors. Clear rules of engagement were requested in order to increase the transparency and quality of engagements.

8. There was general support for the establishment of an online, publicly accessible register disclosing information on non-State actors and the nature of their engagement with WHO. As proposed, the register would require all non-State actors wishing to engage with WHO to disclose a defined set of basic information about their organizations to the public. Representatives called for the joint work plans of nongovernmental organizations in official relations with WHO to be made publicly accessible so as to pinpoint the added value of WHO's engagement and to map their activities, and also for declarations of interest for experts to be disclosed, and their guidelines to be strengthened.

9. It was emphasized that coherence and harmonization should prevail across the three levels of the Organization (headquarters, regional and country levels) when engaging with non-State actors. It was reported that WHO was not consistent in its approach and interactions with non-State actors at headquarters and regional levels; the majority of representatives requested WHO to take the necessary measures to ensure global coherence and harmonization and to avoid inconsistency.

10. Some representatives expressed concern at the Organization's practices in engaging with nongovernmental organizations in official relations with WHO. It was mentioned that statements made by nongovernmental organizations during the Health Assembly and sessions of the Executive Board and the regional committees had been submitted for clearance by WHO in advance, and that access to documentation submitted to the Board's Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations was restricted. WHO was requested to make this information publicly accessible. For the purpose of transparency, WHO was also invited to publish on its website during the Health Assembly and sessions of the Executive Board and the regional committees those statements made by nongovernmental organizations in official relations with WHO.

11. There were differing views and some confusion among representatives about the current process of improving WHO's engagement with non-State actors, as well as discussions on the development of draft terms of reference for a global coordination mechanism for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases, and on the financing dialogue with Member States and key non-State contributors.

12. The Special Envoy also chaired the second informal consultation on WHO's engagement with non-State actors (Geneva, 27 and 28 March 2014), which had as its main purpose the discussion of a draft framework of engagement with non-State actors to be submitted to the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly in May 2014.

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