Informal consultations on the Handbook to guide non-State actors in their interaction with WHO

05 May 2017

Summary report

1. In May 2016, the 69th World Health Assembly adopted the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA) as per resolution WHA69.10. As part of the implementation of the Framework, Secretariat was mandated to develop a handbook to guide non-State actors in their interaction with WHO. In order to enrich the development of the Handbook and assess needs of end-users, WHO Secretariat convened an informal consultation with non-State actors on Friday, 5th of May 2017. Representatives from more than 50 non-State actors participated in the consultation in person or virtually, via the WebEx platform.

2. The consultation was chaired by Dr. Isabelle Nuttall, Director of the Office of the Director General. In her opening remarks, Dr. Nuttall reiterated that the purpose of the meeting was not to reopen the discussion about the content of FENSA, which had already been adopted by the World Health Assembly, but to seek ways to improve understanding of its implementation. Participants were encouraged to provide views and comments in order to render the Handbook a reference that facilitate understanding the process of engagement with WHO.

3. The Director of the Department of Partnerships and Non-State Actors, Dr. Gaudenz Silberschmidt, made a brief presentation on FENSA highlighting elements such as the background of the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Framework, the types of non-State actors and interactions under the Framework, the purpose and process of engagement, and the WHO Register of non-State actors.

The consultation that ensued was divided into 5 segments, each corresponding to one general aspect to be addressed by the Handbook: (1) main elements to be included; (2) process of engagement; (3) conditions of engagement; (4) Official Relations and Collaborating Centres; and (5) format and user-friendliness.

4. When discussing the future elements to be included in the Handbook, the participants indicated the need to have practical guidance, including definitions, examples and illustrations as well as timelines and templates on key processes. The Chair acknowledged these contributions, while also recalling the challenge of providing examples and definitions without compromising what had been agreed in FENSA. Participants also emphasized other elements that should be present in the Handbook, such as clarification on the subject of “partnerships”, on the use of WHO’s name and emblem, official relations and on the WHO Register of non-State actors.

5. Participants called for the Handbook to be clear on the different steps to be followed by non-State actors in the process of engagement, for instance, through diagrams, flowcharts and checklists. requests for further information on the process of monitoring and continuing engagements over time, including procedures for handling non-compliance, were made by several participants.
6. On the subject of conditions of engagement, participants asked for the Handbook to mention red lines and criteria for rejection, and for the language to be consistent in the WHO Register of non-State actors.

7. Participants mentioned that they would appreciate if the Handbook provides information and clarification on the elements related to Official Relations and WHO Collaborating Centres. These may include inter alia the outlining the eligibility criteria and steps for application and renewal of each.

8. On the format of the Handbook, there was consensus about the need for a simple document, at the same time providing the possibility to expand on relevant information, through the use of technology, such as hyperlinks to sources of information. The call for simple and understandable language and for illustrative flowcharts, timelines, templates and models was reiterated. Participants agreed that a printed version of the Handbook would also be useful, but that the format could be different from that of the electronic version.

9. In her closing remarks, Dr Nutall reaffirmed that in the interest of time, the first version of the Handbook would not undergo any further process of drafting and feedback. Nonetheless, she reminded the participants that the Handbook would be a living document, and that there would be future opportunities to revisit its contents as more experience on FENSA implementation is gained.