Note for the record
Meeting of the “Friends of the Resolution”
Chaired by South Africa and the United States of America
21 July 2015

Background
Further to resolution EBSS3.R1, adopted by the Executive Board when it convened in Special Session on 25 January 2015 and to the decision adopted by the Health Assembly on 26 May 2015, WHO is undertaking a considered and thorough review and reform of its capacities in emergency risk management and response to emergencies with health consequences. This reform is guided by the Report of the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel, requested in EBSS3.R1 and released on 7 July 2015.

The purpose of the Friends Group is to provide the Secretariat with a mechanism to consult informally with all interested Member States as the reform of WHO’s work in emergencies progresses.

Summary of Discussion
The discussion was structured around three areas: (1) an update on the establishment of the Director-General’s Advisory Group on Reform of WHO’s Work in Outbreaks and Emergencies with Health and Humanitarian Consequences; (2) steps the Secretariat has taken in the reform process and follow up to the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel Report; (3) specific areas of work (i.e., the Contingency Fund, Global Health Emergency Workforce, IHR Review Committee and recently convened High Level Partners Meeting on Building Health Security Beyond Ebola).

Director-General’s Advisory Group on Reform of WHO’s Work in Outbreaks and Emergencies with Health and Humanitarian Consequences
In response to Participant questions regarding the status of the Director-General’s Advisory Group on Reform of WHO’s Work in Outbreaks and Emergencies with Health and Humanitarian Consequences (AG), the Secretariat announced that Dr David Nabarro, the Secretary General’s Special Envoy for Ebola, will be the Chair and detailed the list of confirmed members. It was noted that the membership of the AG reflects a mix of public health, outbreak and humanitarian response experts, with the mandate to provide the Director-General with strategic advice and technical expertise.

The Secretariat will be launching a web portal to keep Member States abreast of the work of the AG and to encourage and enable broad consultation and engagement. The Chair has emphasized the need for this process to be undertaken in a public way, with full transparency and accountability. Participants welcomed the establishment of the AG, and did not expect the DG to immediately create a Board as recommended in the interim assessment report, as this should be the prerogative of the governing bodies.

Steps taken to forward the reform of WHO’s work in emergencies agenda and follow up to the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel Report
Participants noted the release of the Report of the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel, and thanked the Organization and the Panel for the briefing provided earlier in the month. As not all Participants were able to attend the 7 July briefing, the key recommendations of the Report were reviewed.

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1 EBSS3.R1 Ebola: ending the current outbreak, strengthening global preparedness and ensuring WHO’s capacity to prepare for and respond to future large-scale outbreaks and emergencies with health consequences. Available at http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EBSS3-REC1/EBSS3_REC1.pdf?page=12
Following a series of questions on concrete steps being taken, the Secretariat described the newly established Project Management Team (PMT) and introduced Dr Daniel Kertesz as the Project Director. The role of the team and its relationship to the AG was discussed in detail. The PMT will be responsible for implementing the reform, according to a workplan reviewed and approved by the Director-General, in consultation with the AG. The AG will provide oversight to the PMT and Dr Nabarro will work closely with Dr Kertesz to ensure that the reform fulfils the mandate of the Member States and takes into consideration the recommendations of the Report of the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel.

In response to questions regarding the timeframe for implementing the reform, the Secretariat noted that the mandate from the Member States, as reflected in EBSS3.R1 and WHA68(10), is clear and with the Report of the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel finalized and published, the Organization is in position to effect the necessary structural, systems and culture changes.

Participants raised the option of a new agency, perhaps affiliated with WHO, but it was agreed that there was both no political appetite for this approach and that this would conflict with the recommendations of the Report of the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel, so was not an item for further discussion.

**Specific streams of work**

**Contingency fund**

Participants requested information on the status of the Contingency Fund. The Secretariat confirmed that the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE) has been established and that a circular letter would be sent to all Member States encouraging contributions, indicating the account information and including a generic contribution agreement. In response to a question, the Secretariat acknowledged that pledges had been received from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and India, but that no other firm pledges had been received.

Participants asked about the relationship between the CFE and other financing mechanisms, especially the World Bank’s proposed Pandemic Emergency Facility (PEF). The Secretariat indicated that the World Bank was visiting WHO this month to discuss its plans for the PEF, and to best determine how to make it complementary to the WHO CFE. WHO and the World Bank are organizing a stakeholders meeting on pandemic financing, with the goal of coming up with a view on what the global pandemic financing architecture of the future should look like, and articulating how the WHO’s Contingency Fund and the PEF would fit into this and complement each other.

**Global Health Emergency Workforce**

Participants requested an update on the work of implementing the Director-General’s plan for a Global Health Emergency Work Force. The Secretariat confirmed that registries for Foreign Medical Teams and GOARN were underway, and that the four WHO partnership mechanisms were holding a series of meetings to rationalize and streamline their approach and work.

**International Health Regulations (2005) Review Committee**

Dr Ruediger Krech, who leads the Secretariat for the IHR (2005) Review Committee established pursuant to the request of the Health Assembly, provided a briefing to the meeting. Participants asked for information regarding the membership of the panel, timing of the first meeting and expectations for reporting to the Governing Bodies. Dr Krech confirmed that the terms of reference would be those adopted in decision WHA68(10), and also in accord with the decision, that the first meeting would be in August. He confirmed that meetings of the Committee are open to Member States who wish to attend. A report on that meeting and one anticipated to be held in November would be included in the documentation submitted to the Executive Board for its consideration. He noted that the membership of the Review Committee was still to be finalized. Candidates have been contacted and are reviewing their availability. As soon as the Committee members are confirmed, Member States will be advised.
**High Level Partners Meeting on Building Health Security Beyond Ebola**

Dr Rick Brennan briefed the meeting on the High Level Partners Meeting on Building Health Security Beyond Ebola, held earlier this month in Cape Town, South Africa, which brought together a broad range of partners and countries to strengthen collective action towards improved national and global health security. The goal and objectives of the meeting were to (a) develop a common framework of action on “health security preparedness” and an associated road map; and (b) secure commitments from donors and other partners to coordinate with and support WHO in its leadership role on promoting global health security.

Key themes arising from the conference included the acknowledgement of a lack of national and global preparedness for a major pandemic, the affirmation of the International Health Regulations (2005) as the global framework for increasing capacities to detect and respond to disease outbreaks and the recognition of the Global Health Security Agenda as a powerful political framework for accelerating preparedness. The final outcome was a Draft Points of Agreement document that proposes a multi-stakeholder initiative “to support a more collective, coherent and synergistic approach among international and national stakeholders in strengthening and sustaining the critical health system (and other) capacities needed to implement the International Health Regulations.” The initiative will be for an initial period of 5 years and will begin in Africa, with subsequent expansion to other regions.

**Next steps**

Participants suggested that it would be useful for Member States if Secretariat could do the following:

- Prepare and provide Member States with a formal management response to the Report of the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel
- Provide a mechanism for Member State feedback to the Report and the Secretariat’s management response
- Prepare and post a presentation summarizing the meeting and the work being done on reforming WHO’s work in emergencies to the emergencies reform webpage

Member States also suggested that the Friends group produce a newsletter for distribution to Member States, with the support of the Secretariat.

The next meeting of the Friends will take place possibly in margins of the first meeting of the IHR Review Committee in August. Otherwise, it is anticipated that a dedicated meeting will take place in September, date TBD.