EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2015 WHO Global Perception survey was carried out in August/September 2015 as a follow-up to the 2012 survey to evaluate and benchmark the effectiveness of WHO’s communications. The views of 1039 external stakeholders were confidentially collected. The questions were designed to capture and assess respondents’ attitudes and views according to five (5) critical criteria:

- general awareness and perception of WHO;
- WHO’s work and performance;
- WHO’s leadership;
- WHO’s communications; and
- WHO’s independence.

WHO recognises and appreciates most warmly the support of all those who participated in the surveys, and is grateful for the time they invested and the honest feedback they gave. Here is a summary of the key findings:

WHO is seen as an essential leader to improve global health outcomes
The percentage of external respondents who find WHO either indispensable or important for the work of their organization has risen from 82% to 88% between 2012 and 2015. Moreover, compared to 2012 the number of respondents who ranked WHO as either of limited importance or irrelevant have dropped. In addition, 72% of external respondents would speak positively about WHO, with 41% doing so “spontaneously’. The fact that almost 90% of respondents view WHO as either “important” or “indispensable” demonstrates that it is still highly respected and relied upon throughout the world.

WHO is perceived as the most effective organization at influencing policy for improving people’s health at the global level
Stakeholders still consider WHO to be the most effective organization at influencing policy for improving people's health at the global level.

A majority of external stakeholders commended WHO’s leadership of the EVD outbreak but confidence in WHO’s ability to manage future public health threats has been challenged
About two in three external stakeholders view WHO’s leadership of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak as either good or excellent. However, a comparison with 2012 results also shows a decrease in stakeholders’ confidence regarding WHO’s ability to manage public health threats in the future. 67% of respondents declared that it was “excellent” or “good” in 2015, as compared to 79% in 2012.

WHO’s information is perceived as reliable, accurate and useful, but timeliness can be improved
While the reliability, accuracy and usefulness of WHO’s information consistently scored high in 2012 and 2015, over one third of external respondents felt that the timeliness of WHO’s communications could be improved.

75% of external respondents base their perception of WHO on first-hand experience
An overwhelming majority (91%) of respondents are familiar with WHO. This demonstrates the reliability of the results of this survey. The majority of respondents were basing their views on first-hand experience, rather than second-hand reports or rumours, hence the survey findings are credible.
A majority of respondents commended WHO’s work across its six priority areas
More than half thought that WHO’s performance in each of its six areas of responsibilities was either “excellent” or “good”.

In terms of stakeholder categories, Ministries of Health are particularly supportive of WHO
There are variations in the way different stakeholders perceive WHO and its standing compared to other stakeholders. Ministries of Health are a critically important stakeholder for WHO and stand out as one of the most supportive stakeholders amongst the respondents to the survey. Between 2012 and 2015, academic institutions and publications, as well as private philanthropy and media, have clearly risen in importance according to external stakeholders.

WHO’s independence is recognized by the majority of people yet it is called into question by one in five of respondents
The percentage of respondents who believe that WHO guarantees the independence of its public health experts did not significantly change in the past few years. In both 2012 and 2015, the proportion of respondents who believe that WHO guarantees the independence of its public health experts was around 70%.

Perceptions vary depending upon geographical location
Regional breakdowns of answers show that the regions are broadly supportive of WHO’s work across its different areas of responsibilities but that opinions differ from one WHO region to another, and these differences vary depending on the topic. As examples, respondents in the African region tend to be the most positive, particularly when it comes to assessing WHO’s response to the Ebola outbreak, whilst respondents in South-East Asia and Europe are also particularly positive when it comes to assessing WHO’s ability to influence policy.

These full survey findings are shared broadly and transparently with all WHO stakeholders, and serve as a reference for WHO’s Communications Department together with WHO leadership, to inform future decisions and actions, as relevant. A future benchmark survey is planned to take stock of how any eventual changes will have shifted perceptions.

A large number of stakeholders (65%) responded to the open question “What do you like/dislike about WHO?” This was slightly rephrased in comparison to 2012 when respondents were asked “what do you value the most about WHO?” The high number of responses to this question reflects stakeholders’ commitment to provide feedback and their overall engagement in the work of WHO.

The five key strengths of WHO as identified by stakeholders were: Leadership, Professionalism, Technical expertise, Support & capacity building, and Information sharing.

The five key issues to be addressed, as identified by stakeholders were: Bureaucratic & slow, Operates in silos, Lack of independence, Lack of coordination, and WHO’s response to the Ebola crisis.