Second informal consultation on WHO’s engagement with non-State actors

27-28 March 2014

Summary report

1. In response to a request of the Executive Board, at its 134th session, under agenda item 5 on WHO reform (EB134/8), the Director-General convened the second informal consultation among Member States on WHO’s engagement with non-State actors on 27 and 28 March 2014.

2. The consultation was chaired by the WHO’s Special Envoy on engagement with non-State actors, Professor Thomas Zeltner. Nearly 200 Member State’s representatives participated in person or virtually.

3. In his opening remarks, the Chair emphasized that this consultation was intended to guide the further development of the Framework of engagement with non-State actors. Hence, Members States were encouraged to present their comments and views, and also their support and concerns about the proposal made by the Secretariat in the background document.

4. The discussions were meant to assist the Secretariat in redrafting the “overarching Framework on WHO’s engagement with non-State actors” and the draft policies and operational procedures to be submitted for the consideration of the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly in May 2014 through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board.

5. The meeting was structured in three parts: a round of general comments, followed by detailed comments section by section and a final debate on the process to be followed after this consultation.

6. The participants welcomed the work done by the Secretariat on the development of the Framework and the policies and presented their views and recommendations. While recognizing the tangible progress reached compared with the last version of the document, they emphasized the need for the Organization to establish a robust Framework for engagement that will present the appropriate balance between preserving WHO from undue influence while enhancing its engagements with non-State actors so as to achieve its goals in the global health agenda.

7. There was consensus among participants about the need for two additional policies that will address, respectively, WHO’s engagement with philanthropic foundations and WHO’s engagement with academic institutions. In this regard, Member States requested the Secretariat to develop these policies and their operational procedures so as to have one composite draft document.
8. There was general agreement that the overarching Framework and the policies should be linked to the reform of WHO financing and the introduction of a financing dialogue. Member States also requested a better articulation of the added value for WHO to constructively engage with non-State actors at global, regional and country levels.

9. The participants also requested the Secretariat to clarify some specific issues presented inter alia concerning secondments, the definition of international business associations, the public accessibility of the proposed register of non-State actors, the difference between sessions of the governing bodies and other WHO meetings, the constitutional basis of WHO’s engagement, non-compliance with the Framework, and similarities and differences between the policies.

10. The structure of document was also debated and Member States agreed on both the need to strengthen the overarching Framework and to keep the specific policies separate within a single composite paper.

11. Member States had differing views on the process to be followed for the draft Framework. Finally agreement was reached to submit the Framework for consideration by the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly in May 2014, which will decide on the way forward.

12. In his closing remarks, the Special Envoy congratulated participants for their kind guidance and significant inputs to the debate. Based on feedback received during the meeting, he indicated the actions that the Secretariat will be leading before the World Health Assembly in May 2014:
   • Member States are welcome to send comments to the Secretariat not later than 3 April 2014;
   • The draft overarching Framework for engagement with non-state actors, the four policies and operational procedures will be submitted for the consideration of the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly in May 2014 through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board;
   • In accordance with existing arrangements, and once the paper is published, Member States, through their respective regional groups, may request an information session by the Secretariat on WHO’s engagement with non-State actors. However, such sessions will not provide an opportunity to modify or amend the paper presented to the World Health Assembly.