

Response on consultation

RE: Keep the World Safe, Improve Health, Serve the Vulnerable; Draft Concept Note towards WHO's 13th General Programme of Work 2019–2023

Building on the foundation of WHO of social justice, social protection and social determinants that the work programme draft so aptly remind us of, and the insight that the largest improvements in human health, as well as the largest threats, have come from developments outside of the realm of healthcare, one of the stated priorities of WHO for the period 2019-2023 should be social determinants of health. WHO should build on the report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health "Closing the gap in a generation" not only normatively and technically but, where possible, operationally and as part of governance for global health. Concerted and sustained work to prevent disease, suffering and inequities in health is an ethical imperative and a necessity for the world to cope with rising global health challenges and to free resources for the care of health problems that cannot be prevented.

In line with this, we suggest that the draft GPW's reference to the Sustainable Development Goals to, in addition to linking to the SDGs on poverty, environment, rights and equity, also link to SDG 16 "Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies". The links between health and quality of institutions, not only but perhaps most directly to the quality of the institutions of health care in terms of accessibility, fairness and equality, corruption and accountability, are important and need to be brought to attention. In this context, as well as in the context of intersectoral work of WHO, an awareness of and handling of conflicts of interests on health, often commercial interests, is needed. Because of the resources, influence and importance of such interest, and to safeguard the independence and accountability of WHO, there are reasons to refer to this also in the draft GPW.

We welcome the emphasis on outcomes and impacts in the draft GPW as well as the drive for a more operational role of WHO and agree whole-heartedly with the need to further implementation of strategic plans and action plans and not let them "sit on the shelf". Although the focus on outcomes and impact is commendable, operationalization is lacking in clarity in the draft GPW. This includes the lack of clear measurable and valid indicators of impact, including UHC, which is surprising given the newly appointed DG's priority.

In contrast to the beginning of the draft GPW, both the normative side as well as the operational side are indicated to be strengthened when approaching the end of the draft. However, it is not explained how this should be done successfully.

We see the strategic focus shift from regional offices to country offices to benefit WHO's work. Political leadership will be needed, however, the draft GPW lack a conceptual framework for that, and how to transform WHO. Here reference to SDG 16 and 17 would be helpful.

Emergencies and resilient health systems are well elaborated, as well as lists of SDG targets in some sections. However, discussion on importance of interlinkages between different SDGs, and possibilities to score these for decision-makers' investments given contexts, is absent.

The governance section could have benefited from elaborations on issues such as multi-level governance issues as well as global diplomacy relations to SDG 16 and 17, foreign policy for health and negotiation experiences. This would also relate to innovations, and mechanisms for much needed resource mobilisation.

To be successful in this endeavour, budget support from WHO member states is needed, especially for work with long-term, horizontal issues as social determinants of health. We also agree that work on public health conventions of frameworks should be developed, as one possible means to go from strategic plans to action.

The emphasis on where relevant country led processes and women leaders is commendable, and the appointment of the new senior leadership team has already shown that there is action behind the rhetoric. All taken into account, look forward to continue our partnership with the WHO in the years ahead.