



TERMS OF REFERENCE OF WHO Civil Society Commission (CSO Commission)

I. Mission

To strengthen dialogue, foster collaboration and provide recommendations to support WHO on its engagement with civil society at global, regional and national levels to achieve health for all and the objectives of the WHO General Programme of Work as well as to accelerate attainment of health-related SDGs.

II. Status

The WHO Civil Society Commission is a WHO network consisting of a Steering Committee, a general meeting and working groups. It is set up to provide information and recommendations that may inform WHO's work on key issues related to interactions between WHO and civil society with the aim of strengthening these, as appropriate, including in global health governance processes where WHO is engaged.

The WHO Civil Society Commission is not a separate legal entity and derives its legal status from WHO. Thus, it shall be administered and housed in WHO. The operations of the WHO Civil Society Commission shall in all respects be administered in accordance with the WHO Constitution and General Programme of Work, WHO's Financial and Staff Regulations and Rules, WHO's manual provisions, and applicable WHO rules, policies, procedures and practices including the WHO Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA)¹.

The initial duration of the CSO Commission is 3 years, which can be extended taking into consideration the outcome of the evaluation on its work and achievements.

III. Vision and Goal

The goal of the Civil Society Commission is, taking into consideration the civil society's voices available to WHO, to support WHO's efforts towards improving engagement between WHO and civil society at global, regional, and national levels, rendering it more systematic with the aim of advancing WHO's work and public health outcomes.

IV. Core Principles

The WHO Civil Society Commission is governed by the following principles:

¹ Framework of engagement with non-State actors https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/wha69/a69_r10-en.pdf .

- To be inclusive and diverse in participation and structure, ensuring representation from civil society representing different interest groups and themes, geographical regions, gender identities, age groups, income settings and health status;
- To engage on basis of trust, inclusion and mutual capability promoting the jointly agreed objectives;
- To ensure all activities align with WHO's norms and standards, and are in accordance with WHO's policies and mandate;
- To align activities with international human rights and gender equality norms, standards and principles;
- To be transparent and accountable in its processes and activities as well as on the implementation of agreed actions, commitments and instruments;
- To advance WHO's priorities;
- To create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning;
- To strengthen civil society participation by advancing interactions between WHO and civil society organizations and increasing alignment and coordination across the landscape of civil society, particularly within regions and countries.

V. Objectives

The WHO Civil Society Commission will advise and provide recommendations for WHO Secretariat's consideration on:

- innovative and existing strategic engagements with civil society organizations across all levels of the organization (global, regional, and country) and on relevant aspects of the General Programme of Work, Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant UN resolutions on health, as appropriate;
- identifying and proposing opportunities for engagements with relevant civil society organizations from health and non-health sectors in the context of potential collaborations;
- the elaboration and implementation of WHO engagement strategy with nongovernmental organizations, including grassroots community organizations, civil society groups and networks, faith-based organizations, professional groups, disease-specific groups, and patient groups as well as of indicators and targets for a results framework for the strategy;
- the preparations for dialogues with civil society organizations, including but not limited to, WHO DG dialogues, as appropriate;
- identifying and proposing new and innovative ways for civil society organizations to contribute in a meaningful way to WHO's governance processes, as and when appropriate, while mindful of the intergovernmental nature of WHO and the decision-making authority of Member States as set out in the WHO Constitution;
- promoting open, constructive institutional engagements between WHO (all levels) and civil society organizations, and when considering relevant initiatives, proposals and requests from international, regional, national and local civil society, as and when appropriate;

- development and monitoring of mechanisms, instruments and tools that may encourage and strengthen WHO Secretariat's engagement with civil society, such as:
 - launching of regular WHO - civil society dialogue platforms to facilitate input to WHO's work, as appropriate, by civil society organizations;
 - WHO's processes related to advancing social participation;
 - proposing incentive mechanisms that may support WHO's engagements with civil society organizations at all levels of WHO (headquarters, and country and regional offices);
 - ways that civil society may support WHO in collection of evidence, data, information and good practice;
 - supporting WHO in its efforts to include civil society inputs in the development of WHO norms and standards, as appropriate, including through more systemic use of public hearings and consultations.
- fostering innovation, as and when appropriate, and raising awareness on new initiatives relating to civil society and public health, aligned with WHO's mission and General Programme of Work;
- strengthening networking and knowledge sharing among different stakeholders to facilitate and increase communication between the civil society commission participants and other stakeholders.

VI. Governance and structure

The WHO Civil Society Commission is a WHO network of civil society organizations that comprises of a Steering Committee, a General Meeting and working groups. The WHO Civil Society Commission is not a decision-making body. The Steering Committee comprises of representatives of entities, and provides recommendations, input and strategic direction to the aspects relating to the work of the Commission. Working groups are set up to achieve specific tasks aiming at supporting the Commission's mandate and work and may be established by the Steering Committee based on need.

WHO serves as the Secretariat for the Commission, supporting their day-to-day operations.

Similar mechanisms may be established at regional level, depending on the interest by the WHO Regional Offices.

The establishment of the WHO Civil Society Commission does not have any impact on the role, rights and responsibilities of the non-State actors in official relations, including their participation in WHO governing bodies' meetings. It complements and strengthens the ongoing work to ensure the meaningful engagement of civil society at a governance and decision-making level, as and when appropriate, at WHO and do not replace these. The participants of the Commission comprises a wide range of civil society organizations and networks, which may include those in official relations with WHO.

6.1. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee comprises of up to 25 members, appointed by WHO. The Steering Committee is chaired by the Secretariat, which appoints two Steering Committee members as Vice-Chairs for a two-year term. The selection process of the Steering Committee members will strive for balanced representation of the WHO Civil Society Commission participants, in self-reported gender, age, geographical area, health status, income settings and type of the organization including representatives of different civil society groups.

The Steering Committee recommendations will be made on the basis of consensus.

Key responsibilities of the Steering Committee are:

- Provide overall strategic direction and main deliverables for the work of the WHO Civil Society Commission, including supporting the development of the overall WHO Civil Society Commission workplans and strategies, in consultation with the Secretariat;
- Jointly coordinate with the Secretariat the General meeting of the WHO Civil Society Commission, including development of relevant documentation and logistical support;
- Provide input to support the development of an annual report on the WHO Civil Society Commission activities by the Secretariat to be presented at the Commission's annual meeting;
- Advise WHO on applications to the WHO Civil Society Commission;
- Support the Secretariat in the coordination of the establishment and in the oversight of working groups, including their Terms of Reference and workplans, and oversee all working group activities; and Periodically review Commission participants compliance with the participation criteria.

6.2. Working groups

To accomplish its mandate, and in particular to inform the development of a core set of instruments for improving institutional relations between WHO and civil society, the Steering Committee may, as appropriate, propose to:

- convene working groups;
- hold public hearings.

Working groups may be established subject to Secretariat approval, informed by recommendations made by the Steering Committee. The area of focus of the working groups will be decided jointly by the Secretariat and Steering Committee. The Commission participants may propose the establishment of a working group through the Steering Committee.

The purpose of the working groups is to bring together Commission participants with similar interests, to share information and collectively work on specific activities that align with the WHO

Civil Society Commission's overall mission and objectives, in an outcome-oriented way. Upon request to the Secretariat through the Steering Committee, WHO Civil Society Commission participants may join the working groups, provided they have proven expertise in the specific area of the working group in question

Each working group will have a thematic and/or geographical/regional focus with corresponding terms of reference and workplan outlining its objectives, key outputs, priorities and methods of working, which are approved by the Secretariat, informed by the recommendation of the Steering Committee. The terms of reference for each working group may be up to two (2) years tenure, with possibility of extension.

The working groups propose two Co-Chairs to the Secretariat which will decide on their appointment in consultation with the Steering Committee.

Existing civil society organizations coordination groups in WHO may be proposed to become working groups of the WHO Civil Society Commission, provided the group(s) fit within the Commission's mandate. The Secretariat will facilitate interactions between the Commission and other coordination groups in WHO.

The working groups shall provide regular bi-annual verbal and written reports of working group progress and outcomes to the Steering Committee and the Secretariat as well as an annual report on the progress at the General meeting of the Commission.

6.3. The Secretariat

WHO serves as the Secretariat for the WHO Civil Society Commission. The Secretariat support will be provided as outlined in its key responsibilities and in accordance with WHO's rules, regulations, policies and procedures.

The role of the Secretariat is to oversee the day-to-day management of the work of the WHO Civil Society Commission, and the development and implementation of work plans with the Steering Committee and/or the working groups along with administration and budget management, if applicable.

More specifically, key responsibilities of the Secretariat are as follows, to be implemented in close collaboration with the Steering Committee and its two Vice-Chairs::

- Select and manage WHO Civil Society Commission participants in line with WHO rules and policies, including the Framework on engagement with non-State actors; aiming to apply principles of gender equality, equity and human rights in its composition, ensuring diversity and inclusivity;

- Coordinate the development, and management of the WHO Civil Society Commission, including its working groups;
- Oversee implementation of the WHO Civil Society Commission workplans;
- Serve as the formal Chair of the Steering Committee. The day-to-day management of the responsibilities of the chair can be delegated to the Civil Society Vice-Chairs;
- Monitor and evaluate activities and processes of the WHO Civil Society Commission, making amendments as necessary, in consultation with the Steering Committee, to optimize its overall functioning and impact;
- Coordinate correspondence with WHO Civil Society Commission participants, as required, to facilitate participation and collaboration of all participants;
- Coordinate the General meetings of the WHO Civil Society Commission, in collaboration with the Steering Committee, including development of the agenda and other relevant documentation and logistical support;
- Coordinate the development of the annual report on the WHO Civil Society Commission's activities, in collaboration with the Steering Committee Vice-Chairs, to be presented at the General meeting for feedback, and published with approved revisions thereafter;
- Inform on decisions, commitments and plans of the WHO Civil Society Commission to all of its participants 6 weeks after the General Meeting;
- Oversee and approve the establishment of working groups;
- Develop a WHO central platform serving as a repository for the WHO Civil Society Commission, to house all relevant documents and resources;
- Develop and regularly update a dedicated webpage (hosted by WHO) to make information about the Commission and its activities and progress available;
- Facilitate, as appropriate, the liaison between the Steering Committee and senior staff in WHO, including a proper briefing and support to navigate the procedures and policies within;
- In collaboration with the Steering Committee Vice-Chairs, periodically report to WHO senior management about the work of the Commission, including its recommendations for enhancing WHO's work at all levels of the organization to attain public health goals;
- Encourage resource mobilization efforts for the agreed activities in the Civil Society Commission workplan, when and as appropriate.

The Secretariat reserves the right not to implement WHO Civil Society Commission recommendations or proposed activities, especially if they are seen as giving rise to real or perceived conflict of interest or undue financial, legal or reputational liability or is contrary to WHO policies, regulations and procedures.

VII. Participation in the WHO Civil Society Commission

7.1 WHO Civil Society Commission participants

The WHO Civil Society Commission participants² consist of non-governmental organizations, including, for example: grassroots community organizations, civil society groups and networks, faith-based organizations, professional groups and patient groups.

All entities seeking to apply to participate in the WHO Civil Society Commission must meet the following criteria:

- The aims and purposes of the applicant entity should be consistent with the WHO Constitution and conform with WHO's policies;
- The entity should respect the intergovernmental nature of WHO and the decision-making authority of Member States as set out in the WHO Constitution;
- The entity should be considered a nongovernmental organization in line with the definition set in the WHO's Framework of Engagement with non-State actors³.
- The entity should contribute to the advancement of public health at international, regional, and national and local levels and to the objectives, vision and goal of the WHO Civil Society Commission.

Each WHO Civil Society Commission participant is expected to:

- Adhere to the Terms of Reference of the WHO Civil Society Commission ;
- Actively participate in and support the WHO Civil Society Commission, its purpose, goals, objectives, guiding principles, work and activities;
- Attend and participate actively and constructively at the WHO Civil Society Commission's regular General and ad hoc meetings;
- Take responsibility according to the division of labor, and make meaningful contributions, in connection with the work and activities of the Civil Society Commission and its working groups
- Act in the best interest of public health in alignment with WHO policies; and
- Ensure effective communication with the Secretariat and the Steering Committee related to activities relevant to its mission and vision.

Participants shall not make public statements about WHO Civil Society Commission's activities on behalf of the Secretariat without the prior written consent of the Secretariat acting in consultation with Steering Committee. Participants shall not use their participation in the WHO Civil Society Commission for own promotional purposes. The participation shall not be considered as a proof that WHO endorses the opinions, products and activities of the entities concerned.

7.2. Applications to participate in the Commission

² Individuals acting in a personal capacity are not eligible to participate in the WHO Civil Society Commission and/or its Steering Committee or Working Groups

³ Paragraph 9 of the Framework of Engagement with non-State actors (FENSA)

A standardized online application process will be developed by the Secretariat. The Secretariat may seek the Steering Committee's inputs on the applications and share the list of applicants as well as the outcome of their application with the Steering Committee for their review while the final decision on accepting a participant to the Commission will be made by the Secretariat. Following this, applicants will be notified of the approval (or otherwise) by the Secretariat. The participation to the Commission is not time-limited but may be discontinued as per paragraph IX below.

With the application, the applicant is required to provide information on the entity's name, membership, legal status, objective, governance structure, composition of main decision-making bodies, assets, annual income and funding sources, main relevant affiliations, and webpage address⁴, when and as applicable.

The entity shall also sign the WHO tobacco-arms disclosure statement.

Civil society networks, which may not have a formal legal status as a network, may also apply. However, the application will need to be submitted by the entity, which is coordinating the network on behalf of the network and is able to provide information on its entity as referred to in above paragraphs.

7.3 Steering Committee membership

The Steering Committee members are expected to meet the following criteria:

- be familiar with the WHO governance and operational modalities;
- be experienced in civil society activities in advancing health at global, regional, national or local levels;
- not present a potential or real conflict of interest.

Each member of the Steering committee should

- Adhere to the Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee;
- Actively participate in and support the WHO Civil Society Commission, its purpose, goals, objectives, guiding principles, work and activities, through the membership in the Steering Committee;
- Attend and actively participate at the Steering Committee meetings and WHO Civil Society Commission's General and ad hoc meetings.

7.4 Steering Committee membership applications

WHO Civil Society Commission participants may put forward a candidacy for a Steering Committee membership to the Secretariat. The Committee will comprise of up to 25 members

⁴ Paragraph 39 of the Framework of Engagement with non-State actors (FENSA)

representing civil society organizations, that are free from private or commercial interests, and who are selected and appointed by the Secretariat for an initial term of two (2) years, with the possibility of renewal once. The process and outcome of the selection will be presented to the Steering Committee to ensure transparency of the selection.

The Secretariat will develop a process and platform for the applications. The applications are to be received by the Secretariat at latest two months before the WHO Civil Society Commission General meeting, where the appointment of the new Steering Committee members will be announced. The Secretariat will aim to replace a maximum of half of the Steering Committee members every two years.

VIII. Meetings

8.1. General Meeting

The Secretariat of the WHO Civil Society Commission convenes an annual General Meeting for the Commission participants either in hybrid or virtual format; additional meetings may be scheduled as necessary. The General Meeting is open to all WHO Civil Society Commission participants. Each participating organization will be able to nominate a maximum of 2 delegates to attend in person or with virtual speaking rights. The Steering Committee members will be expected to attend in addition to the delegates from the Commission participants.

The aim of the General Meeting will be to:

- Review the annual reports on the activities of the Commission, the Steering Committee and the working groups;
- Review the Commission and Steering Committee proposed work plans;
- Serve as a platform for knowledge sharing and networking amongst participants;
- Discuss issues put forward by the Steering Committee and the Secretariat
- Put forward proposals for the consideration of the Steering Committee and the Secretariat.

8.2. Steering Committee meetings

The Steering Committee will meet at least four times a year (i.e. every three months) to report on progress of the working groups, discuss issues, agree on information and recommendations to be submitted to the WHO Secretariat for consideration, and review and revise the Commission workplan. It will document the proceedings of the meetings in a meeting report.

8.3. Working group meetings

Each working group will have meetings, attended by working group participants. The frequency of working group meetings will be determined by the Chair and Co-Chair of the respective working group.

IX. Termination and withdrawal

Each participant has the right to withdraw from participation in the WHO Civil Society Commission at any time, subject to providing one month written notice to the Secretariat and to the orderly conclusion of any ongoing activities, if applicable.

If a participant does not attend two consecutive annual Civil Society Commission meetings or working group meetings, with no justification, they will be deemed to have withdrawn.

The Secretariat has the right to terminate the participation of any participant at any time, upon providing written notice thereof to such participant. In such case, the Secretariat will inform the Steering Committee on the reasons for termination. Without limiting the foregoing, the participation of any entity in the WHO Civil Society Commission shall terminate if and when such participant: (a) no longer subscribes or adheres to the goals, objectives and/or guiding principles of the WHO Civil Society Commission, as described in these Terms of Reference; (b) engages in activities that are not compatible with WHO Policies, such as engagement with tobacco or arms industries and/or (c) ceases to meet the participation criteria for the WHO Civil Society Commission, as set forth in these Terms of Reference. In such instances, the decision to terminate involvement of a participant will be made by the Secretariat, with the Steering Committee.

X. The WHO Civil Society Commission evaluation

The Secretariat and the Steering Committee Vice-Chairs will monitor the overall processes and outcomes of the WHO Civil Society Commission, with the aim of optimizing the overall Commission functioning and impact. With the same aim, a consultation among the Commission participants will be conducted periodically to get their feedback on the overall processes and activities.

An external evaluation to analyze the functioning and impact of the Commission will be conducted after 2 years of its establishment. Taking into consideration the outcome of the evaluation, the WHO Director General will decide on the continuation of the Commission beyond 3 years.

XI. Communications

11.1 Visual Identity

To ensure that the WHO Civil Society Commission is communicating with one voice to external parties on topics of substance (principles, priorities, plans and actions, funding, and all confidential information, etc.), any communication in the name of the WHO Civil Society Commission will take place through the Secretariat in consultation with the Vice-Chairs of the Steering Committee..

The WHO Civil Society Commission may develop a visual identifier such as a logo according to the WHO's rules and regulations on visual identifiers which will help identify the network to its audience. The visual identifier will be accompanied by the statement "WHO hosted Network".

The right to use the logo, including on publications, may be granted to participants on a case-by-case basis with prior written approval of the Secretariat.

The Commission participants shall not use WHO's name, acronym and emblem. This includes, inter alia, the display of the WHO logo and name on any premises, equipment, as well as on any communication and/or training materials, social media tools or publications.

11.2 Publications

The WHO Civil Society Commission shall not produce publications, unless exceptional approval is given by the Secretariat. Any publication by the participants of the Commission, other than WHO, referring to WHO Civil Society Commission activities shall contain appropriate disclaimers as decided by WHO, including that the content does not reflect the views or stated policy of the participants.

The WHO Civil Society Commission participants must ensure that the work of the Commission is not misrepresented, and appropriate disclaimers are included where necessary. The WHO Civil Society Commission activities shall not include the development of normative documents or policy papers.

11.3 The WHO Civil Society Commission website

The WHO Civil Society Commission has a webpage that is housed within WHO's domain. The webpage includes a list of the Commission participants, subject to their consent.

XII. Finance

Participants will be responsible for their own expenses in relation to all WHO Civil Society Commission activities (including participation at meetings), unless agreed otherwise by the Secretariat. If participants receive third party funding to support participation in WHO Civil Society Commission meetings and activities, this must be disclosed to the Secretariat and the Steering Committee members.

The Secretariat support and related day to day operations of the WHO Civil Society Commission will be financed through WHO's budget. The Secretariat may also raise funds from other sources to support the work of the WHO Civil Society Commission, in accordance WHO rules and procedures, as appropriate. All Secretariat funds shall be received, administered and acknowledged in accordance with WHO's policies including its financial regulations, rules, and practices.

Grant applications made by the participants for raising funds in the name of the WHO Civil Society Commission require prior consultation with and endorsement by the Secretariat to ensure alignment with the goals and principles of the network. The Secretariat reserves the right to require

that the WHO Civil Society Commission name not be used in such grant applications. Contributions by participants including donations (in cash or in kind), will be acknowledged by the Secretariat in accordance with WHO's applicable rules, policies and practices.

XIII. Confidentiality

WHO Civil Society Commission participants may sometimes due to nature of the work be involved in activities which may necessitate confidentiality and in those cases will be required to sign a standard confidentiality undertaking using the form provided by WHO for this purpose.

XIV. Amendments

These Terms of Reference may be amended from time to time by WHO in consultation with the Steering Committee.