

Comments on WHO's Draft Overarching Framework for Engagement with Non-State Actors and associated Policies and Operation Procedures documents

AUSTRALIA

Australia thanks the Secretariat for its continued work on developing the *Framework of Engagement with non-State Actors*. Australia appreciates that our previous comments regarding competitive neutrality and evaluation, have been positively addressed in the revised Framework and welcomes the opportunity to provide further comments.

Australia continues to support a framework of engagement with non-State actors which provides WHO with sufficient flexibility to work with all global health actors as appropriate, while protecting the Organization's integrity and its fundamental role in setting global norms and standards.

Australia welcomes the addition of an evaluation mechanism which will facilitate continuous improvement and refinement of the overarching framework and the supporting documents, if required. The evaluation process, combined with strengthened oversight through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee and the inclusion of a mechanism to discontinue official relations with a non-State actor, should the need arise, provides assurance that the Framework should be implemented.

Australia also welcomes the strengthening of sections relating to managing conflict of interests and conducting due diligence, recognising the value of these in increasing transparency.

Regarding the WHO Executive Board's decision at its 136th session to invite Member States to submit proposals for amendments, inclusions or deletion of text from the Framework, Australia holds reservations in relation to the non-acceptance of secondments from non-State actors (paragraph 46 of the draft overarching *Framework of Engagement with non-State Actors*).

Australia considers that this exclusion may restrict WHO's platform of engagement and potentially limit the expertise available to WHO. We are particularly concerned that prohibiting secondments from non-State actors may impede WHO mobilising the world's best technical experts, whether they come from non-government organisations, academia or elsewhere, when the need arises.

Australia considers that the Framework's proposed conflict of interest and due diligence processes will sufficiently increase transparency and reduce actual or perceived conflicts of interest, making the prohibition of secondments from non-States actors unnecessary.

Australia proposes that paragraph 46 be removed from the Framework and replaced with a paragraph which specifies that secondments will be managed in accordance with the policy and operational procedures for each non-State actor group.

- As a safeguard, clear criteria, as was included in previous iterations of the policy documents for non-government organisations and academic institutions, (which describe the circumstances under which WHO can accept secondments), should be included in each of the relevant policy and operational procedures documents.

- Australia also supports secondments from philanthropic organisations and is open to considering secondments from the private sector, on the condition that robust arrangements for managing conflicts of interest are in place.

The suitability of secondment provisions can then be reviewed as part of the Framework's evaluation process (refer to paragraphs 70-71 of the Framework).

Australia has no further concerns with the remainder of the Framework or supporting policy or operational procedural documents. Noting the importance of this work, Australia supports the need to finalise the framework and associated documents as a matter of urgency.

Australia strongly supports the adoption of the draft overarching *Framework of Engagement with non-State Actors* at the 68th World Health Assembly.