

Meeting with WHO DG Dr Tedros, 20 November 2017:

## Civil society concerns: WHO Governing Body meetings; transparency and inclusiveness of WHO processes

There are practical issues regarding transparency, inclusiveness and “user friendliness” of WHO processes and meetings where G2H2 has the mandate to directly speak for our members. This is not at the top-level of our concerns regarding WHO governance, but nevertheless important.

We are happy to see that, over the last year, there has been considerable progress in organizing public hearings and webcasting WHO meetings (in particular: WHA, EB, technical meetings and plenaries of global conferences). But there is still room for improvement.

The following, non-exhaustive list of concrete concerns and proposals is based on input by G2H2 members. We encourage the WHO secretariat to assess them in the spirit of Dr Tedros’ pledge to work with civil society in an open and inclusive way:

- **Further improve the modalities regarding civil society statements to the WHO Governing Bodies.** Following an earlier 48 hours rule, NSA statements currently need to be submitted by email before 8 AM of the day when a particular agenda item is scheduled, and they are strictly limited to 300 words. Such a rigid mechanism does not allow proper interaction (reacting to the development of the discourse) and risks to be an alibi exercise. We encourage WHO to assess the respective modalities in other UN organizations where civil society can intervene during any debate, with representatives present in the same room and without having to submit a written statement hours before.
- **Make the PBAC meetings accessible for NGOs or at least webcast them.** PBAC has become more and more important for many governance processes (in particular: FENSA implementation), but currently takes place behind closed doors.
- **Provide NGOs in official relations with WHO a dedicated, self-governed space** in the Palais des Nations respectively at the WHO HQ for civil society meetings during the WHA and the WHO Executive Board.
- **Open up again the WHA Committee B for civil society observers.** The Palais des Nations was built explicitly with the vision and infrastructure of transparency. For “technical” reasons, during the last World Health Assembly, Committee B was not accessible for us anymore. Overall, seating for civil society delegates in the meeting rooms (or galleries) of the Governing Body meetings is much too limited.
- **Extend and improve public hearings.** Public consultations, e.g. on the draft GPW, are a key instrument for reaching out to civil society and overcoming shortcomings of processes involving only those who are at the table. The instrument of public hearings needs to be applied to all key WHO normative and policy-shaping processes, giving sufficient time for providing comments, publishing input received and reporting about how it was taken into considerations.
- **Set up a one-stop shop (outside Twitter) for announcing all current WHO consultations and upcoming meetings.** We have been promoting this through Twitter and have already received a first encouraging feedback.
- **Systematic use of webcast and in particular WebEx or similar interactive tools** must become basic standard for all WHO meetings and for the meetings of programmes and partnerships hosted by WHO. This is really important for civil society, as many of us do not have the means to come to Geneva (or Montevideo, Dublin, Moskow, Tokyo...).
- **A day of open doors at the WHO HQ** was discussed in the context of celebrating the jubilee of the Alma-Ata Declaration.