

Good governance starts at home

Honourable chair and members of the Executive Board,
Dear WHO member states represented in the current EB session,

Good governance starts at home. And in the case of WHO governance, “home” is you, as you are the owners and home of the World Health Organization. Having followed many sessions of the WHO Executive Board and many World Health Assemblies as head of the delegation of Medicus Mundi International, I appreciate your efforts undertaken in a series of informal consultations to come up with proposals to reform the WHO governing bodies, as published in [document EB144/34](#).

I do not need to repeat what Dr Chan and Dr Tedros – and some member states, too – have stated about the mess with the WHO governing body meetings, about the often useless and mainly promotional (how important the issue is, how engaged everybody is in addressing it) and repetitive talking, and about the urgent need for an effectively structured and really interactive debate. And beyond this, about the need to more meaningfully position and use the EB sessions and the World Health Assembly in the political and normative processes of the WHO – an effort still to be undertaken.

But with your recommendations, you do not address the core of the issue – because this would hurt you a bit, you would need to change a bit yourselves. And it looks as if you are not ready for this.

So you rather address some symptoms instead. I focus on the one that hurts us: With your proposals outlined under item E, page 10, as measures to “stimulate the participation of non-State actors in official relations in governing bodies meetings”, you will complicate, restrict or even hinder meaningful civil society engagement in WHO governing bodies. You will cause *us* a real problem, but you will not resolve *yours*.

Good governance starts at home. And the WHO depends on member states who take civil society involvement serious: not only at the governing body meetings, but in the whole political, regulatory and normative work to be done in addressing key global health issues.

So yes, please engage with civil society. Mainly do this at home, not only in shaping your domestic health policies, but also in shaping your positions in global health and in the preparation and composition of your delegation to the EB and WHA.

And yes, please talk with civil society. Listen to us, but not in token informal meetings as proposed in the document, but in proper hearings and really inclusive and transparent consultations. And make us feel that the richness and variety of civil society – and of civil society approaches and positions in global health – is really appreciated.

Thank you for your attention, and wishing you all the best for your work,

Yours sincerely,
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Read more here: Civil society engagement with the World Health Organization: Towards a new era of partnership or defending a shrinking space? <http://g2h2.org/posts/shrinking-space/>