

MONDAY 16 MAY 2022, G2H2 POLICY DEBATE, 15.00-16.30 CEST
NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY INTERACTION WITH WHO

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT OF A WHO CIVIL SOCIETY COMMISSION

What is it, and where are we with it?

Lucile Hermant, Action Contre la Faim
Member of the civil society interest group





THE PROJECT OF A WHO CIVIL SOCIETY COMMISSION

What is it?

- Project to set up a permanent body, representative of civil society in all its diversity, to provide strategic advice to the WHO on how to improve its engagement with civil society;
- Initiated by an informal civil society group (14 international and national organisations and networks)
 - Dialogue series between WHO Director-General Dr Tedros and civil society on social participation and accountability within and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic (Oct 2020)
- Outline sent to WHO Secretariat in January 2021, proposing:
 - Mandate: Monitor and strengthen the state of civil society relations and civic space in WHO and all WHO and global health governance processes and fora
 - *through advice, relaying initiatives and requests, development of instruments, supporting mutual accountability*
 - Composition:
 - Mixed; co-chaired by civil society representatives; with members of Secretariat and WHO Executive Board;
 - Requirements: balanced in age, gender, regional and constituencies' representation;
 - Modalities of work:
 - Coordination by a Bureau reporting to a larger network
 - Concrete leverage (working groups, experts, public hearings, consultations...)
 - Support from WHO on agreed administrative and budget issues
- Based on previous relevant initiatives (WHO civil society initiative, task team and dialogue meetings)

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How has the WHO Secretariat engaged with it?



- **High-level interest and approval by WHO Director General**
 - October 2020 then August 2021 - Dr Tedros
“Let us create this mechanism together”
- **Sustained engagement and technical and tactical support from WHO Secretariat**
 - Convening of follow-up dialogue meetings (August and November 2021)
 - Translation of the civil society outline into official WHO Terms of Reference format
 - Advice on positioning of the Commission within WHO governance structure



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Where are we with it?

- Current state since December 2021: draft Terms of Reference
- Aligned features
 - Vision and goal:
 - Advancing public health outcomes
 - Diverse, inclusive, transparent and accountable Commission
 - Advice on WHO *strategic* engagement with civil society at all levels (global, regional, national)
 - Possibility for CSOs to contribute to WHO governance processes
 - Commit to mutual learning
 - Structure and means:
 - WHO's budget for Secretariat support and day-to-day operations
 - Goal to establish mechanisms to strengthen WHO collaboration with CS (focal points, dialogue platforms...)
 - Creation of outcome-oriented working groups

- **Asks for reconsideration shared by selected CSOs in December 2021 (letter + alternative draft):**
 - **Process: more legitimacy**
 - Proper consultation of civil society at large
 - **Mandate and principles: achieving actual joint decision-making**
 - Inclusive membership (gender, age, geography, income settings, health status, level of formality)
 - Proper advisory body > consultative entity
 - **Governance, structure: better suited means to achieve participatory ambitions**
 - A Commission, referring to a broader representative Network and led by a Steering Committee
 - Composed of members identified by the network and ratified by WHO
 - A Secretariat supporting the Commission in its administrative tasks (not overseeing)
 - Managed both by WHO (host) and CS co-chairs
 - Resources: support of Commission's members' and co-chairs' positions?
 - **Commission's activities: sufficient room for manoeuvre**
 - Publications, set of instruments, guidance, etc.
 - Adequate pace of work (regularity of meetings, etc.)
 - **WHO prerogatives: to clarify**
 - Right not to consider CS commission's inputs: specify conditions

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Thank you!

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