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The Global Fund's 46th Board meeting to meet virtually for the fourth time since the onset of COVID-19: Is the time adequate enough for the level of debate required?

From 8 to 10 November, the 46th Board meeting will be held virtually, for the fourth time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with two pre-Board meetings taking place on the afternoon of Wednesday 3 November and Thursday 4 November.

This article is based on the indicative agenda for the Board meeting.

Meetings are scheduled to take place over four and a half hours in the afternoon, Geneva time; this corresponds with later evening in South-East Asia but early morning in the Americas. As with the previous 'virtual' Board meetings, the shortened time for discussion means that Board members have to focus on the topics up for discussion and be mindful of the short time allowed for comments. But, as we noted in our article on the 45th Board meeting earlier this year: is the time allowed really sufficient, given the magnitude of some of the items to be discussed? We are thinking in particular of the draft Strategy Narrative which will be presented for a decision.

The first Pre-Board meeting on 3 November includes an information session on: (i) COVID-19 and Business Continuity, including the COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM); and (ii) an Update on Supply Operations (SO), including Market Shaping. The second, on 4 November, covers, firstly, a Governance and Committees Update for information: (i) an update from the three Committees meeting early in October (Audit & Finance, Ethics & Governance, and the Strategy Committee); (ii) an update on the Board Leadership selection process; (iii) an update on Committee selections; and (iv) an update on the Ethics Officer recruitment. Thereafter there will be information sessions on: (v) an overview of

Eligibility and Allocation; and (vi) Risk Appetite.

Board discussion topics by day, therefore, are divided up as follows:

Day 1 sessions cover the Report of the Executive Director, followed by a 75-minutes session on the Global Fund Strategy Development: The Strategy Narrative, which is for Board decision. The timetable below reminds us of the process that we will have gone through to reach this point:

- 5 to 6 October: 17th Strategy Committee Meeting to recommend the Global Fund Strategy (Narrative) to the Board.
- 19 October: Distribution of decision document on the Global Fund Strategy to the Board
- 19 October to 8 November: Discussions with constituencies on Strategy Narrative, including the Pre-Board Call.
- 4 November: Deadline for submission of constituency statements, and also the deadline for submission of any amendments (48 hours before the start of the Board meeting).

It is to be hoped that this time is sufficient for presentation and discussion on this critical issue for Global Fund stakeholders.

The day finished with an update on Draft Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) & Key Performance Indicators (KPI) 2023+ Framework Development.

The second afternoon starts with a decision to be made based on the Allocation Update and Disease Split. This is followed by a session on the Risk Appetite Framework for decision, and the Risk Management Report for information.

The third day starts with a presentation on the 2022 Corporate Work Plan and Operating Expenses Budget for decision, followed by the independent Evaluation Function also for decision, and ends with an information session on the Seventh Replenishment Action Plan.

The GFO will give a full report on the Global Fund Board Meeting in an extra Special Edition of the GFO, which will be published after the Board meeting concludes, on 11 November 2021. This will be preceded by a Special Edition of the GFO to be published on 28 October 2021, with articles of interest relating to some of the topics that will be discussed at the Board meeting.

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