



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

THE GLOBAL FUND'S UPCOMING VIRTUAL BOARD MEETING FEATURES A STREAMLINED AGENDA TO SUIT THE NEW FORMAT

For the first time in the Global Fund's history, its biannual Board meeting will be held virtually, instead of gathering together the hundreds of people who combine to make up the Board's 20 voting constituencies and 8 additional seats. This will mark a major change from the usual two-day meeting held in person, not least that the usual 'pre-meeting' day, during which less formal updates and discussions are usually held, is at the moment absent from the proposed agenda.

The meeting, which will take place on 14-15 May through a video conferencing mechanism, comprises just two sessions – one per day, in the afternoon – and will have a streamlined agenda in order to adjust to the virtual meeting format, the Board's leadership has told constituencies.

The draft Indicative Agenda for the meeting, which was shared with constituencies on April 23, will focus on five priorities. The priorities are: updates from the Global Fund's Executive Director and the Inspector General, the COVID-19 situation and response, an update from the Technical Review Panel including remarks related to the first 'window' of applications for funding from the 2020-2022 allocations, discussion about the processes to develop the next version of the Global Fund Strategy, and governance-related priorities.

However, not all topics will have a virtual session, with some topics to be considered in writing, only, in the form of an online discussion. Constituencies have been informed that the Secretariat will respond to items discussed in the online forums by 22 May, which is one week after the meeting ends.

Board Leadership has highlighted in addition a number of 'key themes', inviting constituencies to address

these in discussion, presumably either in virtual sessions where there is a topical link (notably relating to the development of the Global Fund's next strategy), or in the online discussion forum that is being set up. These topics include the CRG annual report, the Secretariat's response to the OIG advisory review on human rights, monitoring and evaluation, and the challenges and risks to domestic financing for health, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Board meeting will as usual take formal decisions (all to be taken under the existing Electronic Decision-Making procedures), and undertake routine reporting such as briefings from the leadership of the three Committees (Strategy, Audit and Finance, Ethics and Governance), and annual reports from departments including CRG, Ethics, and risk management.

Constituency concerns

From what Aidspan and the GFO have heard from constituencies and implementers, there is a shared concern among constituencies that this Board meeting place greater emphasis on the impact that COVID-19 is having on Global Fund operations – on programs for each of the three diseases, on measurement of the impact of the Global Fund's COVID-19-related interventions (notably the Fund's new COVID-19 Response Mechanisms, C19RM), and on human-rights-related measures taken in the context of COVID-19.

In addition, many constituencies would also like to see the Board meeting dedicate more time to discussion of issues relating to Challenging Operating Environments, existing under-absorption of funds, procurement and supply chains, communities, and health workers.

Apart from direct COVID-19-related concerns, Aidspan understands that some constituencies would wish to have, during this meeting, 'standing' agenda items (absent from this agenda), such as updates on Resource Mobilisation and on Sustainability, Transition and Co-financing. The absence of an agenda item dedicated to financing has also been noted. One comment made to the GFO related to the question of whether donors are considering converting their pledges into contributions ahead of schedule, in light of the financial crises many countries are experiencing as a result of the coronavirus.

Board meeting practicalities

There will be a number of changes to the usual Board meeting modus operandum: virtual sessions will begin with discussion in order to maximize the shorter-than-usual session time, presentations will be pre-recorded and will be shared with constituencies in advance; and constituencies are to submit their questions and comments for the virtual sessions through an online discussion forum, which will close a few days before the meeting begins.

Given the nature of the virtual meeting, with presentations to be shared in advance and discussion to take place in online forums, the GFO asked the Global Fund how it would ensure the security and – where necessary – the confidentiality of the Board meeting. Director of Communications Seth Faison told the GFO by email that the Global Fund's IT team, which is operating the virtual convening of the Board meeting, "is taking appropriate precautions aimed at achieving an effective and secure meeting".

"As people all over the world have suddenly learned," Faison said, "meeting remotely is both highly achievable and somewhat unpredictable. We will do our best."

Details regarding live interpretation of the sessions have not yet been shared with constituencies, but the Office of Board Affairs is expected to explain in due course how this will work in the video conferencing system.

The GFO will report more fully on the 43rd Global Fund Board Meeting in the next edition, which will be published after the Board Meeting concludes, on 15 May 2020.

