Aidspan

Independent observer of the Global Fund

Global Fund Committees are meeting this week

Over a four-day period this week, between 9 and 12 October, the Audit & Finance Committee (AFC), Ethics & Governance Committee (EGC) and Strategy Committee (SC) have been meeting to finalize the documents for November's Board meeting. Here we outline the highlights of the three Committee agendas which will give you a flavour of what's coming up in the November Board meetings. Our next GFO issue 439 will cover some of the issues discussed in more depth, including stakeholders' feedback.

Agenda for the 23rd Strategy Committee meeting

The SC was preceded by a Pre-call on 3 October, for discussion of Decision items of which there were four: one for SC recommendation to the Board and three for SC Decision:

- Quality Assurance (QA) policies (for recommendation to the Board)
- TRP workplan and budget
- Annual evaluation workplan and budget
- Evaluation Publication Procedure.

The in-person SC meeting started on Monday 9 October. Following approval of the agenda and quorum

and Declarations of Conflict of Interest, an overview of the meeting agenda was provided and was followed by a discussion on setting the meeting's expectations. Thereafter the majority of the morning was spent discussing Country Funding and TRP Observations based on two documents provided for information:

- Country Funding update including bi-annual Strategic Initiative reporting
- Technical Review Panel (TRP) matters – TRP observations on Window 1 and 2, which GFO covered in earlier issues. And you can read those articles here, here, here and here.

After lunch, the SC moved on to the Strategic Performance Report which will eventually be a key basis of the forthcoming Board discussion on how well the Global Fund has performed. Following this discussion on the paper, which at this stage was for information only, the Committee went on to discuss the first item For Decision, Evaluation Matters. This was informed by a presentation on the Update on Evaluation Matters paper and two others, the Annual Evaluation workplan and budget, and the Evaluation Publication Procedure. The final discussion of the day was on Quality Assurance Policies, For Recommendation to the Board.

On Tuesday 10 October, the day started with the second item For SC Decision, the TRP Workplan and Budget. After the break, the SC listened to a summary of what happened at the UNGA High Level Meeting on Tuberculosis; Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response (PPPR) and Univeral Health Coverage (UHC). Our previous GFO, 437, carried two articles on the UNGA 23 meetings, which you can read here and here. This was followed by an Update on the work of the informal CCM Working Group for information only. But do please read our article in this GFO about the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report on Country Coordinating Mechanisms which will give you a very good idea of the key issues regarding the CCM Evolution Strategic Initiative and some of the main issues that would have been discussed.

The afternoon was largely taken up with thematic discussions, the first on the Community, Rights and Gender Annual Report and the second on Climate and Health. The final session of the day finished with an update on Engagement with the Pandemic Fund.

The final day, Wednesday 11 October, launched with a two-hour discussion on resilient and sustainable systems for health, RSSH. This is an important agenda item because, as you will see from our various articles on the TRP observations reports, countries have struggled with RSSH in the first two Windows of the funding application cycle. After lunch the Committee went on to discuss Malaria, before the SC meeting finished and an Executive Session took place.

Agenda for the 23rd Ethics & Governance Committee meeting

This meeting was held over the two days 10 and 11 October, its first day being held concurrently with the SC meeting. The meeting was opened on Tuesday 10th with a welcome to Committee Members by the

EGC Leadership, Declarations of Interest, an overview of the agenda and expected outcomes, and update on the EGC work plan and the Committee Self-Assessment Results from the previous EGC meeting. The Committee then launched into a discussion on the Governance Action Plan 2.0 and Risk Matters based on two documents, the Governance Action Plan 2.0 – update on governance strengthening initiatives and a Governance Risk Matters update. The morning's final session was on Strengthening Global Fund Board Representation

After lunch, members discussed the preparations and lunch for the 2023-2023 Governance Performance Assessment and Governance Culture which was For Input and included a presentation on the Culture of Trust, Collaboration and Accountability. The day finished with an Executive Session.

On Wednesday 11 October the EGC started with an Update on the Ethics Officer Recruitment Process which led into a session on Ethics and Integrity Matters. The 2024 Ethics Budget and Work Plan was For Decision and an Ethics Function progress update was provided For Information, including Ethics Risk Matters. These debates were based on three background documents, Ethics Function 2023 Budget and Work Plan (including the Ethics Function Progress Update), the Semi-Annual Risk Management Report and the Agreed Management Actions Update. The Constituency Funding Annual Report and Update was then discussed before the break for lunch.

The afternoon sessions started with a discussion For Input on the Governance Performance Assessment Framework to incorporate Advisory Bodies, then Sanction Panel Matters based on the annual report of the same name, followed by Legal Matters. This discussed the Privileges and Immunities Advisory Group Terms of Reference and an update on other legal matters. The final session of the day was an update on the informal, joint SC-EGC CCM Working Group deliberations. Day 2's closing session comprised the EGC Self-Assessment, the meeting's key take-aways and next steps/closing remarks.

Agenda for the 23rd Audit & Finance Committee meeting

The AFC met on 11 and 12 October in Geneva, having been preceded by a closed Executive Session on 18 September which discussed Interim Financial Statements and Update from the External Auditor. There were two items for discussion to be presented at the AFC meeting itself For Decision: (i) the 2023 Interim Financial Report, including the 2023 Condensed Interim Financial Statements following the limited review by the external auditor; and (ii) the Expanded Audit Scope and additional fees for Input and an Update from the External Auditor, including a feasibility assessment. On 4 October there was a Pre-Call regarding Risk Management and a New Assurance Approach for Blended Financing Transactions.

Meeting overview at a glance

The AFC meeting started on Wednesday 11 October and is being run in parallel to the SC meeting. It

covered the following topics:

Strategic Performance Reporting was first discussed For Input, based on a presentation on the Update on 2022 KPI results against targets (based on the 2017-2022 KPI Framework), and this was followed by a People and Organization Update. The afternoon sessions started with a Closed Executive Session, which was followed by a session on Office of the Inspector General matters. For Decision (approval during the 2024 OPEX Budget session) was the OIG's 2024 Work Plan, KPIs and Budget; For Input there was an Update on OIG Operational Progress; and For Information an Update on Agreed Management Actions. The afternoon's final session was about the Assurance Approach to Blended Financing Transactions, at which a Proposal of a new assurance approach for blended financing transactions was recommended.

Day 2, Thursday 12 October, will start with Financial Matters and a presentation for Information on Financial Performance Oversight on Sources and Uses of Funds, including COVID-19 Response Mechanism. This will be followed by the 2024 OPEX Budget and Corporate Workplan covering, For Decision, the OIG's 2024 Work Plan, KPIs and Budget and, For Recommendation, the 2024 OPEX Budget (including OIG Budget) and Corporate Workplan.

After lunch, the AFC will discuss Risk Matters. For Recommendation is the Amendment to the Risk Appetite Statements (Malaria program quality risk timeline) with input from the Strategy Committee meeting which finished the day previously, and For Input the Semi-Annual Risk Management Report, with inputs from SC and EGC on risks related to their respective mandates. The next session, on Resource Mobilization, is For Input and covers an Update on Resource Mobilization, including lessons learned from the Seventh Replenishment. The Committee then moves on to discuss Engagement with the Pandemic Fund and its closing session will recap the main Action Points from the AFC23 meeting, and the AFC workplan.

Commentary

We would like to take this opportunity to raise our concerns yet again about how the Global Fund continues to be less transparent than it used to be. It is not just a case of some of the grant documents being removed from the website, as we have mentioned several times previously. In 2022, the Strategy Committee was given an extended decision-making mandate as outlined in the Charter of the Sttrategy Committee, which states that the Strategy Committee shall exercise the following decision-making powers (page 3):

1. Approval of and/or modifications to frameworks for the implementation of strategic policies adopted by the Board, including reprogramming of grant programs and funding in order to align investment decisions with strategic policies and optimize impact.
2. Approval of and/or modification to the Terms of Reference for the Technical Review Panel (TRP) and the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP), or any other advisory bodies of the Global Fund under the oversight of the Committee, in accordance with the Board-approved mandate for such bodies.

3. Appointment and removal of members to the TRP and IEP, or any advisory bodies of the Global Fund under the oversight of the Committee.
4. Joint recruitment of the head of the evaluation structure of the Secretariat, with the IEP and the Executive Director of the Global Fund.
5. Approval of the strategic priorities, guidelines, evaluation criteria, processes, work plan and procedures of the TRP and IEP.
6. Approval of the strategic priorities and the annual work plan for the evaluation structure of the Secretariat, considering IEP advice.

This is followed on page 4 by an even longer list of oversight functions.

Given this huge and important mandate it is baffling to us that these workings of the Committees are shrouded in so much secrecy. The Charter states that the Strategy Committee is only accountable to the Board. Stakeholders are still not privy to its discussions that result in the decisions being taken, which are also not shared with the public unless they become Board-approved. The Global Fund is very good at urging countries to adhere to the principle of more transparency and accountability at country level through freedom of information and involving a wide range of stakeholders: but its own house still needs to be put in order.

We don't ask for much. Just that these docuents be available to anyone who wants to see them. We can understand the embargo on documents for Board meeting discussion before the Board meeting but not afterwards; and certainly not when it relates to the Committees' and other documents that lead to these decisions being taken.

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