



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

Global Fund board gets used to a new chair - and vice versa

The Global Fund's fifth board meeting took place in Geneva on June 5-6. It was the first board meeting to be chaired by Tommy Thompson, who also serves as head of the US delegation to the Fund and as US Secretary of Health and Human Services, one of the largest departments in the US government.

The general consensus after the board meeting was that Mr. Thompson had been an unexpectedly effective chair. Delegates, including some from NGO delegations, commented that he ran the meeting efficiently, he showed no obvious favouritism towards the US delegation, and he made effective use of humour.

Things didn't start too smoothly on the first day. The Fund's by-laws say that board decision-making will be by consensus, with voting to take place only if consensus appears impossible. In addition, for a vote to pass, it must be approved by two thirds of the donor group and two thirds of the developing country group. Mr. Thompson appeared not to be aware of this, seeking to keep the meeting on schedule by calling for votes – without considering the need for a 'double majority'. Furthermore, he ran most of the meeting by 'Robert's Rules of Order', a procedure widely used in large English-speaking organizations but with which the majority of board members were unfamiliar.

By the second day, however, the board and its chair were getting used to each other, and things ran more smoothly.

A senior UN official commented afterwards, 'I'm very excited about this board meeting. Things are coming together; people will go out with renewed energy. Fundraising for the Fund will be easier as a result. The question that potential funders must now ask is 'Why not?' rather than 'Why?'

Some of the key issues that were discussed at the board meeting but not fully resolved included the

following:

- If, when the board considers Round 3 proposals in October, there is not enough money to pay for all the proposals recommended by the TRP, what should be done? Should some be rejected? Should all be approved, with some then placed in a "queue" awaiting the receipt of additional funds? Or should all be approved, but with all receiving less funding than they requested?
- Can the Fund reduce the impact of the above problem by "borrowing" some of the money it is sitting on for Round 1 and 2 grants but that may not be needed for two years, and possibly not even then? Or can it "borrow" against money that it has been promised will come in during the first year of the Round 3 grants?
- Should the Fund accept in-kind gifts of various products and commodities and, in particular, of drugs offered by major pharmaceutical companies?

These issues will be reviewed by board committees and/or the Secretariat, with decisions then to be made at the October board meeting.

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