

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services World Health Assembly (WHA)
Stakeholder Listening Session
HHS Humphrey Building, 200 Independence Ave, SW,
Friday, May 8, 2015, from 10:30-12:00 PM,

Talking Points

Good morning. Thank you for providing this opportunity to address an important issue coming up at the upcoming World Health Assembly; the WHO's draft Framework for Engagement with Non-State Actors.

The US Council for International Business welcomes the World Health Organization (WHO) decision to upgrade and update its procedures for the engagement of non-state actors – it is long overdue. The objective of this update should be to clarify how a range of actors can partner with and observe WHO in its mission to improve health outcomes. This reflects the fact that multi-stakeholder initiatives, such public-private partnerships, are now more than ever indispensable to addressing pressing transboundary health needs.

Given the scale and complexity of today's global health issues, it's challenging for one organization, one industry or even just one government — to make a material difference on its completely own! Instead, we must bring forward and catalyze partnerships that connect across what many call the “Golden Triangle” of business, government and civil society. USCIB and its members believe that this concept is key to addressing today's health challenges. As innovators, goods and service providers and employers, companies are only as strong as the communities that they work in and serve, and they are committed to offering solutions and actions.

For this reason, we are extremely concerned about aspects of the recently proposed Framework. As currently drafted, it will undermine the “Golden Triangle” concept by discriminating against and even banning business. While many intergovernmental organizations, governments, and NGOs are working successfully and with strong results with the private sector and/or looking for ways to further engage with it, the WHO draft framework seems to want to take a giant

step backward and in so doing, discourage public private partnerships and cooperation.

To underline the concept of how effective the “Golden Triangle” approach can be, I’d like to share two examples:

One of our members has a partnership (called Project Last Mile) with USAID, the Global Fund to Fight Aids Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the Gates Foundation to increase access to vital medicines in Tanzania. Leveraging their supply chain expertise, the public private partnership is helping Tanzania’s Medical Stores Department develop a new distribution strategy, redesign core processes and train more than 50 medical stores staffers. To date, Tanzania has increased active points of distribution from 500 to more than 5500 and reduced lead times of some medicines by as many as 25 days, and it has increased availability of medicines by 20 to 30% in some places. Tanzania is just the beginning! This type of program will be replicated in Ghana and Mozambique. These are the types of collaborations (businesses, governments and NGOs working together) that the WHO should be encouraging, rather than discouraging!

We all know that the WHO would benefit from more outside help. Indeed recently the WHO faced criticism for its Ebola response. Meanwhile many in the private sector stepped up. For example, a USCIB company with hundreds of employees in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, and that produces locally in all three countries, was extremely committed to helping address the Ebola crisis, both now and over the long term.

Its offices and manufacturing plants instituted preventive measures, including temperature testing using contactless thermometers, installing sanitizers at vantage points, restricting visits and providing instruction from healthcare specialists to associates. It contributed more than \$1.25 million to the Ebola response and relief efforts in West Africa and it engaged with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) to support education efforts to reduce the spread of the disease. These efforts include leveraging its marketing expertise to develop an effective communications plan.

These are just 2 examples of many, and they suggest the potential to amplify WHO’s effectiveness through private sector engagement. It is our view that the WHO Framework should offer all interested stakeholders opportunities to observe and appropriately inform its policy deliberations and to cooperate to combat

health challenges. In USCIB's view, HHS should insist that the Framework strengthens the ability of WHO to appropriately and meaningfully work with all NSAs, including the private sector, to deliver its mission, and reject any anti- or business-discriminatory elements.

The differential treatment set forth in the proposal is counterproductive to the WHO mission of improving health outcomes through evidence-based norm-setting and policymaking. It runs counter to initiatives that other UN agencies are doing to engage with the private sector and civil society. It also sets a precedent that will undermine health partnerships in other inter-governmental bodies, notably those concerned with the U.N. Post 2015 Development Agenda

We encourage HHS to ensure that the proposed framework as adopted and implemented will treat all non-state actors according to one set of rules in a consistent manner that reflects the value of multi-stakeholder initiatives and the so-called Golden Triangle.

The WHO is at a crossroads – to work collaboratively with non-state actors and “crowd in” business expertise and evidence to empower and strengthen its work OR to retreat further behind arbitrary and blanket restrictions, and treat business and other NSAs as guilty until proven innocent.

We believe that for the sake of effective global action on healthcare, they should choose the first option. This means the WHO NSA Framework should not:

- Explicitly ban industry sectors, or treat business and industry NGOs differently from other NGOs
- Apply the same rules of transparency to address conflict of interest for all non-state actors
- Not discriminate against or reclassify organizations that cooperate with business

The current mindset of the WHO framework is just not compatible with American concepts of fairness, transparency and freedom of expression that the USG should be promoting in intergovernmental organizations.

Thank you for considering our comments and requests.