

Report of the Twenty Sixth Meeting of the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee (IEOAC) of the World Health Organization

(Manila, Philippines, 16 – 18 October 2018)

Item 1 – Opening and administrative matters

1. This was the third meeting of the IEOAC for the year 2018. The agenda for this meeting is attached as Annex 1 and List of Participants as Annex 2.
2. In attendance throughout: Dr Jeya Wilson (Chair), Bob Samels and Christof Maetze. Two of the members, Leonardo Pereira and Jayantilal Karia, could not attend the meeting due to last minute personal limitations. This was the last meeting for Bob Samels, as his term of office comes to an end in January 2019.
3. The Chair confirmed a quorum with three members present and all declarations of interest or updates duly submitted. No conflicts of interest were recorded. The agenda for the 26th meeting, 16 -18 October 2018, was adopted.

Item 2 – Introduction and Overview of the Region

4. The Committee was welcomed to the Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) by the Regional Director (RD), Director of Programme Management (DPM), Director of Administration and Finance (DAF) and other colleagues. The RD provided an overview of the WPRO region, its goals, objectives, priorities, challenges, and the organizational set up which supports the effective delivery of technical support to the countries of the region. WPRO is the only region with a health law team and there is a huge demand for from the fast-growing economies of the region. The IEOAC notes that this would be a good example for the sharing of best practices across regions.

Item 3 – Session with DPM and DAF

5. The IEOAC noted with satisfaction, details of the areas of work under the responsibility of the DPM and effective management and coordination between the Regional and Country teams, through the effective role of the Programme Committee. The technical programmes across the three levels of the Organization are working well through robust communication channels like the Category Area and Programme Area Networks.

The Regional Office and Country Offices have good control over the audit recommendations and have consistently provided timely responses on all audit reports. It is commendable that there have been no overdue DFC reports for the Region since 2015, and regular assurance activities are undertaken for direct financial contributions (DFCs) to strengthen compliance and accountability.

6. The Region is managing the Human Resources in a holistic manner and carries out a rolling forecast of resource requirements and follow a proactive approach in dealing with resource management.
7. The Committee is pleased to note that the Region has a strong compliance and risk management structure.

Item 4 – Visit to the WHO Country Office (WCO), Philippines

8. The WHO Representative (WR) to the Philippines welcomed the Committee and provided an impressive overview of the work of Organization at Country level.
9. The Committee commends the approach adopted by the WCO for the planning of its work in line with the structure outlined in the GPW13.
10. The WCO works effectively with the Ministry of Health to overcome some of the health challenges faced by the country and is aligned with the regional strategy on health law particularly in its application to universal health coverage.
11. The WCO is also working well in the area of Compliance, Risk Management and Internal Controls.
12. It was brought to the attention of the Committee the need for a unified language for the various technical terminologies used by different offices throughout the Organization.

Item 5 – Overview of the Global Service Centre (GSC) Kuala Lumpur

13. The Director of GSC along with his team provided an update on all GSC operations. The Committee is pleased with the way the Centre is functioning and appreciates the client-oriented approach of the GSC in general. The Committee also appreciates that the GSC will shortly be carrying out a client satisfaction survey to assess performance and identify areas that need further strengthening or improvement.
14. The Committee is also pleased to note that GSC has successfully achieved certifications from CIMA, ACCA and ISO9001:2015.
15. The Committee also noted that the GSC has been successful in achieving operational efficiencies as evidenced by the benchmarking against UN and other public-sector entities.

Item 6 – WHO Emergencies Programme in WPRO

16. The Committee received a comprehensive view of the Emergencies programme of the Region and recognizes the efforts of the team in running this programme successfully to support the countries in the Region, many of which face serious emergencies from time to time.

17. The structure and organization of the team and the alignment of roles and responsibilities allows for emergency situations to be managed effectively.

Item 11 – Transformation from a Regional Office perspective

18. The Committee was briefed in detail about the progress of the Transformation project at the Regional level. It showed a good level of understanding of the important aspects of Transformation and the Regional Office is supporting the countries to move the agenda forward through engagement and follow-up.
19. The subject was also discussed during the visit to the WCO, and the WR reiterated the strong alignment and clear understanding of the objectives between the Country Offices, the Regional Office and Headquarters. The Committee notes with satisfaction that Transformation works towards standardization of global public goods, the impact framework and internal control framework at all three levels of the Organization.
20. The Committee recognizes that there are many fast-growing economies in the Region that will become high income countries in the coming years, and hopes that as part of the Transformation project, the Organization will take into consideration this shift in realigning its strategy of support to such countries.

Item 12 - WHO Investment Case

21. The Committee received a comprehensive briefing on the WHO Investment Case and is pleased to note it articulates the goals and objectives of the five-year strategic plan with a Triple Billion target.
22. The Committee appreciates that while the normative role of WHO's continues, the plan lays sufficient emphasis on country focus, data, research and innovation. The Committee welcomes the WHO investment case.

Item 13 - Internal Oversight Services Matters

23. The Director IOS provided an update on progress of HR recruitments, the internal audit work plan and a report on conclusions from the current audits. In addition, the status of WPRO audits was also presented and the Committee is satisfied with the results.
24. The Committee is pleased to note that the 'Overdue Open' recommendations have reduced from 11.2% in July 2018 to 8.2% in October 2018.
25. The Committee took satisfactory note of the draft IOS work plan for 2019.
26. The Committee was informed that a total of 106 new cases of allegations of wrongdoing have been received by IOS up to 11 October 2018 compared with a total of 82 cases in the year 2017, and the members are pleased to note that 36 cases are at a closure stage.

27. A general discussion was held regarding the challenges of recruiting and retaining experienced investigators in the Geneva region. Since many of the new cases are in the regional or field offices, management should determine the operational and cost efficiencies of investigators residing in field offices.

28. The Committee also held a private session with the Director IOS.

Item 12 – Status update on Global Engagement Management (GEM) and Engagement with non-State actors

29. The Committee was provided with a status update on the GEM and on engagement with non-State actors, and notes that the Organization is aligning the framework and its systems with the transformation project.

Item 13 - Update on Evaluation

30. The DG Representative for Evaluation and Organizational Learning presented a status update on the completed and ongoing evaluations and the Committee is satisfied with the progress made so far.

31. The Committee is also pleased to note that Management is paying due attention towards the development of a systematic approach for the implementation of the recommendations identified during audits, evaluations and reviews.

Item 14 – Other Matters

32. The next meeting of the IEOAC is scheduled to be held from 8 to 10 April 2019 in Geneva. The Committee thanked the outgoing member Bob Samels and expressed its appreciation for his contribution to the work of the Committee.

33. The new member replacing Mr Samels, is Christopher Mihm who will start his tenure in January 2019.

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