

# **SUMMARY OF THE RETREAT OF THE BOARD OF THE PANDEMIC FUND**

March 20-22, 2023

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Pandemic Fund Board had its first Retreat, held in Washington, DC from March 20–22, 2023. The Retreat brought together over 100 participants, in person and online, comprising representatives from contributor constituencies, co-investor constituencies, civil society constituencies, non-voting members, observers, and guest speakers. The Retreat adopted Chatham House Rules. (See Annex 1 for the Agenda and List of Participants.)

2. The objectives of the Retreat were to: 1) strengthen working relationships; 2) make progress on a plan for how to allocate financing to proposals under the first Call for Proposals; 3) discuss strategy and resource mobilization; and 4) brainstorm on governance issues and working processes, build a shared understanding of the constituency system, and make progress in preparing for the Board reset in May 2023. This document summarizes the key takeaways and next steps.

## **II. CONTEXT**

3. In framing the discussions for the Retreat, the Board Chair, M. Chatib Basri, noted that this meeting was being held at an important point in time. Three years since the COVID-19 pandemic started, while the number of cases continues to remain a cause for concern, countries are emerging from the pandemic. Historically, this is the stage at which the world flips from a period of panic to a period of neglect and leaders turn their attention to other, often competing priorities. The multiple crises – climate, debt, food insecurity, rising poverty – confronting the world make it even harder to sustain the focus on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response (PPR).

4. Yet, if the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that there is a critical need to invest much more in prevention and preparedness, particularly in areas like early warning and surveillance, laboratories, and health systems capacity and human resources. In this context, the Chair noted that the very strong response to the Pandemic Fund's call for Expressions of Interest (Eoi)

provides grounds for optimism that countries recognize the need to invest more in PPR. Over a two-week period, the Fund received some **650 EoIs** with requests for grant financing of over **\$7 billion**, or about **24 times** the amount of funding available through the first Call for Proposals. This groundswell of demand underscores the need for the Pandemic Fund and the urgency of getting it operational, mobilizing more resources, and ensuring that countries have the capacity to spend the money wisely.

5. Further, the Chair noted that there were signs of a return to a fragmented PPR landscape, where actors operate in silos with little coordination. In this context he underscored the important role of the Pandemic Fund as the unifying driver for increased financing for PPR and noted that the Fund offered the promise of breaking the historic pattern of panic and neglect regarding pandemic threats. He thanked the Board and Secretariat for their tireless work in ensuring a robust governance and operating structure for the Pandemic Fund, and in getting the Fund off the ground with record speed.

### **III. REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE FIRST SIX MONTHS**

6. Participants had a rich and candid discussion on what's working well and areas for improvement in terms of working arrangements and processes, led by a panel comprising Board members (Kristen Chenier, Director, Global Affairs, Canada; Frank Anthony, Minister of Health, Guyana, and Elisha Dunn-Georgiou, President and CEO, Global Health Council) representing contributor, co-investor and CSO constituencies, respectively.

7. There was strong agreement among participants that the Pandemic Fund's robust structure presents the ingredients for success. Participants noted the Fund's inclusive governance, commitment to transparency, and an operating/implementation structure that leverages the strengths and capabilities of existing institutions, complementing their work, and providing incentives to implementing entities and governments to increase efforts to strengthen PPR.

8. Further, there was wide acknowledgment of the enormous amount of work that has gone into establishing the Pandemic Fund and getting it off the ground in a very short timeframe. Participants noted that they look forward to now moving into a more predictable governance rhythm.

9. There was a sense among participants that, going forward, it will be important to be intentional about ensuring that the Board's deliberations include a diversity of perspectives, In this context, participants from co-investor constituencies, in particular, noted several

challenges in engaging more fully in Board deliberations. These include very large constituencies and lack of capacity to organize intra-constituency coordination, and to review documents.

10. Participants offered several concrete suggestions to address these challenges. For example, it was suggested that the Secretariat could assist by providing onboarding to new members and by organizing pre-Board consultations to ensure that the issues, topics for discussion, and decisions points are clear. Similarly, there was a suggestion that the Secretariat could assist by convening de-briefing sessions to help co-investor and CSO Board members to keep track of deliverables and follow-up items. It was recognized, however, that this would require an appropriately resourced Secretariat. In this context, it was noted that the “stocktaking” exercise that will take place in the late summer/early fall will provide an opportunity to examine these issues in more depth and come up with solutions for the medium term.

11. More immediately, noting the amount of work facing the Board in the coming weeks and months, several participants expressed their interest in having the Board move towards a more regularized set of standing committees, in lieu of relying on *ad hoc* working groups.

- **Follow-up actions:**

- *The Secretariat will organize a series of conversations with co-investor and CSO constituencies over the coming weeks to help define a way forward (see also Item 12 below).*
- *The Secretariat will prepare a paper by June 1, 2023, that sets out options for standing committees of the Board of the Pandemic Fund.*

#### **IV. PLENARY PANEL**

12. A plenary panel that brought together three eminent guest speakers (Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Senior Minister, Singapore, Jeremy Farrar, incoming Chief Scientist, World Health Organization, and Mamta Murthi, Voce President, Human Development and Acting Managing Director for Development Policies and Partnerships, World Bank) helped ground the discussion. The panel echoed many of the opening messages delivered by the Chair. The panel expressed its appreciation for the hard work that has gone into establishing the Pandemic Fund so quickly. The emphasis on equity, inclusion, and transparency was noted.

13. The panel emphasized the important work that the Pandemic Fund is doing and brought attention to the high economic and social returns from investments in pandemic PPR. At the same time, the panel highlighted the challenges that the Fund faces, including the reality of pandemic fatigue, debt distress, and fiscal pressures facing many countries, alongside

competing global priorities. Highlighting the growing risk of pandemic threats, driven by climate change, deforestation, land use patterns, water shortages, urbanization, etc., the panel underscored the role that the Pandemic Fund can play in helping to sustain the focus and attention of the international community and national policymakers on investing in PPR.

14. It was noted that the Pandemic Fund is a testament to multilateralism in difficult times, and that it must continue to lend its voice in global discussions, including in discussions on how international financial institutions can do more to support global public goods (GPGs). The panel noted the important role of the Pandemic Fund in bringing additional resources, in helping to overcome fragmentation in global health financing by fostering coordination among actors, and in catalyzing resources and policy actions at all levels. The panel emphasized the benefits of “horizontal” approaches that integrate PPR investments into building resilient national healthcare systems.

## **V. THE EVOLVING PPR LANDSCAPE**

15. Recognizing that the Pandemic Fund does not exist in isolation and there is currently a lot of debate about the PPR architecture, the Retreat included a session on the evolving landscape. Presentations were made by representatives from a number of bodies invited to share their perspectives, including: the G20 India Presidency (Lav Agarwal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare); the G7 Japan Presidency (Takashi Suzuki, Ministry of Finance); the African Union/South Africa (Lwazi Manzi), focused on the medical countermeasures platform that is under discussion; the World Bank (Christoph Kurowski), covering advice and ongoing inputs to the G20 Joint Finance and Health Task Force, with additional comments from Italy (Francesca Manno), as co-chairs of the task force; and the WHO (Mike Ryan), focusing on the Inter-governmental Negotiating Body on the Pandemic accord.

16. Participants took note of the ideas and ongoing discussions taking place within these groups and agreed that the Pandemic Fund should stay updated on these.

## **VI. REVIEW OF EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (EOIS)**

17. The Secretariat presented an analysis of the EOIs received. Participants noted the impressive demand (650 EOIs from over 100 countries, with grant funding of over \$7 billion requested) for the Pandemic Fund's resources and indicated broad support for the possibility of slightly increasing the envelope for the first Call for Proposals (e.g., up to US\$350 million), if needed.

18. There was a sense, however, that the more stringent requirements related to submissions under the formal Call (e.g., detailed proposal, formal signoffs from ministries of health and finance, details on Implementing Entities (IEs), need to present concrete information on co-

financing and co-investment amounts) coupled with the efforts that are being made to coordinate and consolidate proposals within and among countries, and among IEs will likely result in fewer proposals in response to the Call than were received at the EOI stage. There was broad agreement that such a consolidation of proposals is desirable.

19. Meanwhile, it was noted that the EOIs have revealed the need to continue supporting applicants with clear guidance on the process to prepare full proposals. It was also noted that, in some cases, applicants could benefit from targeted technical assistance, for example, from bilateral aid agencies, to prepare full proposals.

## **VII. TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL**

20. The Retreat included a session that brought in the 20 TAP experts (virtually) to join a discussion with the TAP Chair and Vice-Chair. Participants appreciated that the TAP is an impressive group that will bring a lot of credibility to the Pandemic Fund.

21. The importance of clearly dividing responsibilities between the Board and TAP was widely acknowledged, with the TAP responsible for assessing the technical merit of proposals and the Board handling political questions such as those related to how to create a balanced portfolio of projects being funded.

22. The TAP Chair and Vice-Chair requested that the Board provide guidance on how to package technical recommendations to the Board. Board participants noted the importance of this and agreed that the Board would provide additional guidance to the TAP on this in the coming weeks.

23. The TAP Chair and Vice-Chair also identified key risks that could impact their ability to deliver, including the need to review a potentially large number of proposals in a limited timeframe, and any delays in the development of a robust electronic platform to support the review process. Board participants agreed that depending on the number of proposals received under the first Call, the timeline for the TAP to submit recommendations might need to be revisited.

- **Follow-up actions:** *The Secretariat will prepare an options paper by April 21, 2023, to inform the Board's deliberations on how the TAP could package its recommendations (as well as on funding allocation – see item 8 below). The Board will discuss and communicate to the TAP by June 16, 2023, clear guidance on how the TAP should package its recommendations.*

## VIII. BOARD'S FUNDING ALLOCATION TO PROPOSALS UNDER THE FIRST CALL

24. The participants had a productive discussion around how to prioritize among technically-sound proposals. There were lots of ideas on this, and comments were provided on the pre-read paper that had been circulated by the Secretariat ahead of the Retreat.

25. Most participants were in favor of an approach that was grounded in a clear goal and that was based upon clear criteria and indicators. The goal that was most commonly cited was the idea of using the first Call as an opportunity to learn lessons to inform the future work of Pandemic Fund. Participants emphasized that this required having a portfolio that was balanced across several key parameters (e.g., geographies, income levels, risks, needs, between single and multi-country/regional proposals, etc.). Participants emphasized the importance of a simple and transparent process.

26. Participants also discussed how to handle the challenge of technically sound proposals that do not end up receiving funding under the first Call. Suggestions were made on how to support such proposals, for example, by helping them to access funds from other sources, such as bilateral funding mechanisms.

27. Participants agreed on the importance of reaching a decision about prioritization before the TAP provides its recommendations to the Board and so there was widespread support for the Secretariat's proposal that it prepare an options paper grounded in the retreat discussion. Ideally, this would enable rapid decision-making by the entire Board, although there was recognition that it might be necessary to convene a working group to facilitate Board decision-making in light of the tight timeframe for the process.

- **Follow-up actions:** *The Secretariat will prepare an options paper by April 21, 2023, to inform the Board's deliberations on funding allocation principles as well as on how the TAP could package its recommendations.*

28. **Implementing Entity coordination for the first Call for Proposals:** The Implementing Entities (IEs), led by WHO, put together a joint statement on how they will coordinate to support countries, which has been circulated. A series of webinars will be organized by the IEs to facilitate this.

## IX. THE PANDEMIC FUND'S STRATEGY

29. The Board had a vigorous conversation about the big strategic questions confronting the Pandemic Fund, underscoring the need to stay focused on achieving impact. Participants agreed on the importance of continuing to be guided by the original vision statement and principles that defined the Fund. To complement this and to elaborate on some of the outstanding questions about what the Fund will focus on, where it will operate, and how it will achieve impact, participants generally agreed that it would be valuable to develop a strategic plan. This would also enable the Pandemic Fund to articulate its role in the ongoing discussions about the PPR architecture.

30. Given the uncertainties, though, most participants preferred a light, dynamic, shorter-term plan (rather than the full eight years of the Fund's current mandate). This would allow the flexibility to adjust, based on lessons learned and the changing external environment.

- **Follow-up actions:** *The Secretariat will prepare a paper by June 1, 2023, that sets out a process to develop a (light, dynamic) strategic plan for the Pandemic Fund.*

## X. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

31. The dialogue on resource mobilization was rich, and benefited from the experience of other multilateral funds, including the Global Financing Facility (lessons presented by Juan Pablo Uribe, Global Director for Health and Director for GFF, World Bank), Gavi (Marie-Ange Saraka-Yao, Managing Director), Global Fund (Harley Feldbaum, Head of Strategy and Policy), the Global Partnership for Education (Karen Schroh, Sr. Partnerships Officer), and other Funds (Jon Liden and Christoph Benn, Consultants), as well as from the analysis presented in the pre-read paper that was circulated by the Secretariat ahead of the Retreat.

32. Participants noted the strong demand for financing from the Pandemic Fund and need to mobilize additional resources and emphasized that resource mobilization will have to be front and center of the Board's discussions over the coming months.

33. Given the crowded global health financing landscape and competition for funds, participants underscored the need to think beyond ODA and explore innovative options. There was strong interest in examining ways to mobilize resources from non-ODA public sources (e.g., defense budgets) as well as from the private sector, philanthropies, etc. At the same time, it was noted that the Pandemic Fund should continue to work with the G20 to mobilize further support.

34. The need to start developing a clear and compelling narrative/investment case to underpin the Pandemic Fund’s resource mobilization efforts was highlighted, working towards a replenishment moment, possibly in 2024. Participants mentioned the importance of strengthening the Fund’s communications efforts, as well as building advocacy partnerships.

35. Finally, some participants stressed the near-term opportunities for leveraging the resources that partner organizations currently have available.

- **Follow-up actions:** *The Secretariat will prepare by July 1, 2023, an approach paper that sets out options for resource mobilization, including on new models for resource mobilization.*

## **XI. SOVEREIGN CONTRIBUTORS’ VOTING SEAT ALLOCATION**

36. The Trustee and Secretariat presented the status of pledges and contributions along with possible scenarios for seat allocation, with a view to encouraging contributors who have not yet signed their Contribution Agreements (CAs) to do so before April 30th, which is the cutoff date for signed CAs to be considered in the allocation of voting seats when the Board is reset in May.

## **XII. SOVEREIGN CO-INVESTOR AND CSO CONSTITUENCY RESET**

37. The Retreat included a couple of dedicated sessions for sovereign co-investors and CSOs to discuss the process of self-organization leading to the Board reset in May 2023. It was recognized that more work is needed, particularly on helping the sovereign co-investors to organize themselves. Some participants questioned whether it is feasible for all of the co-investor seats to turn over by May or whether it would be preferable for some members to stay on past this date, both to ensure some continuity in Board representation and to allow for a proper process, particularly for Board constituencies that comprise large numbers of countries. It was noted that CSOs have started to work on the reorganization process.

- **Follow-up actions:** *The Secretariat will organize a series of conversations with co-investor constituencies over the coming weeks to help define a way forward.*