

Proposed Action Plan in Response to Independent Review of Allegations of Racism and Misconduct at the Stop TB Partnership

Statement from the Stop TB Partnership Board

20 November 2020

At the direction of the Board, under the guidance of its Executive Committee, the Stop TB Partnership released the following statement:

In summer 2020, the Stop TB Partnership Coordinating Board (Board) learned of additional details related to allegations of racism and misconduct at the Stop TB Partnership (Partnership) between 2015-2017 that had previously been investigated and action taken by UNOPS, the administrative host of the Partnership. Based on additional details, the Executive Committee of the Board put in place a number of processes including:

- commissioning an independent external review (by 4N6 Factory) to:
 - review and assess the Board, Secretariat, and current hosting organization's anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies;
 - review processes of how allegations of misconduct and the responses to those allegations by the Partnership and the current hosting organization are handled, to inform lessons learned going forward; and
 - provide concrete recommendations to the Board, the Secretariat, and the current hosting organization to prevent and address discrimination and harassment.
- requesting UNOPS to contract an independent third-party Staff Survey (by PwC) to assess the current work environment and identify ways to support immediate and future staff needs and inform further action.
- supporting UNOPS and the Secretariat to implement enhanced diversity, equity and inclusion training for all Secretariat staff.

The full independent review findings and staff survey summary are available as part of the Stop TB Partnership 33rd Board meeting documents here ([Independent Review](#), [Staff Survey](#)).

In October 2020, the UNOPS independent Ethics & Compliance Office agreed to undertake a review of allegations and investigations previously conducted in 2015 and 2017. The Executive Committee has been briefed on summary findings of this review, which is not publicly available so as to ensure that United Nations duties of confidentiality are respected. Please see the appendix below.

Based upon the information provided by each of these processes, the Board maintains confidence in the capacity of the host organization, UNOPS, to execute against its framework for reporting and investigating allegations of racism and misconduct. The Board affirms the decision of UNOPS that the Partnership's Executive Director should retain her leadership position of the Secretariat, with the expectation from the Board that she leads and ensures progress on the actions outlined below that relate to the Secretariat in partnership with the Board.

Any form of racism or workplace misconduct is unacceptable and inconsistent with the values of the Stop TB Partnership. The Board is committed to working to eliminate racism and harassment in any form in the Stop TB Partnership and in the global TB response. Where any of us fall short in this, the fight against TB suffers.

Through this process, actions have been identified to improve the performance of the Executive Committee, the Board, and the Partnership. These actions will be overseen by the Board and Executive Committee in collaboration with UNOPS (and the Partnership's future host), the Executive Director, and the Secretariat, to further improve the work environment of Secretariat staff, the efficiency and effectiveness of the Board, and the Partnership's role in a more equitable global TB response. The Board is committed to supporting the rapid execution of these recommendations, including working to identify funding to support their execution; the transition from the current to a new host is being addressed in a separate process which is currently underway.

The Board is grateful to a range of civil society and community leaders and global partners who have publicly shared proposals and suggestions that have helped to inform this action plan, as well as the staff who have shared their experiences and feedback.

The Board welcomes recommendations on additional actions through an open public comment period through December 11, 2020. Please provide input by email to ec@stoptb.org.

The Path Forward

Commitment to a Safe and Equitable Work Environment:

- **Develop a Values Charter with a Zero Tolerance Policy:** While the current host organization has an anti-discrimination policy that applies to Secretariat staff, the Board will partner with the Secretariat to develop a staff-driven values charter with a zero tolerance discrimination policy specifically for the Secretariat and the Board. We will ensure that any future host organization is aligned with this values charter. The development of the charter will be participatory and led by staff. It will be incorporated into the Board Governance Manual.
- **Create a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Leadership Position in the Secretariat and Expand Anti-Discrimination and Safe Workplace Training for All:** Currently, the Secretariat consists of individuals from more than 40 countries. In order to bridge cultural differences, prevent racism and all forms of discrimination and harassment, ensure that each person is respected, has a safe work environment and is protected against retaliation, the Secretariat, Board and host organization will expand and enhance training on cultural awareness, diversity, inclusion, and anti-discrimination, which will be required for all staff annually, at a minimum. The Board is committed to participating in and supporting this effort. To ensure this work is mainstreamed and prioritized, a senior Secretariat position will be created to bring expertise in diversity, equity and inclusion to its leadership team.
- **Ensure Ample Staff Support Mechanisms:** It is essential that staff drive the process to determine support mechanisms that are best positioned to meet their needs and address their priorities. The Board is committed to ensuring that any host organization provides such staff-determined support mechanisms to ensure and maintain a safe and equitable work environment.

- **Create Channels for Staff Representation at and Engagement with the Board:** A representative of the Secretariat, chosen by the staff, will be provided a voice on the Board and Executive Committee, in an ex-officio capacity, to increase transparency of Board decisions and raise awareness, among Board members, of issues that affect the staff. The Board Governance Manuals will be updated to formalize this role.
- **Strengthen Team Cohesion:** Based on feedback from the staff survey, the Board will support the Secretariat to expand team building efforts within and across teams to help create cohesion and understanding of the importance of all members of the team in contributing to the overall objectives of the Secretariat and the Partnership. Leadership roles in these team building efforts should draw from a diverse group of staff members across race, gender, age and other dimensions of diversity.
- **Conduct Regular Staff Surveys:** The Board will request that the current and future host organization conduct annual independent staff surveys tailored to the Secretariat, in order to provide a confidential voice to all staff, monitor progress, and improve performance. The surveys will include both standard baseline questions to reflect trends, as well as any relevant points that may need to be addressed. A review will be undertaken to update key performance indicators of organizational effectiveness, to ensure accountability in areas identified by the staff survey.
- **Increase Transparency and Accountability of Reports of Misconduct Through Regular and Timely Notification to the Board:** UNOPS, as part of its hosting responsibilities, provides a solid framework for reporting and investigating allegations of misconduct. In addition, the Board will request that the host organization provide a report at each Board meeting, notifying the Board of any allegations of misconduct (while protecting those involved), processes triggered, as well as a timeline for investigation and response. The Board will review ethics and compliance matters at each of its meetings, so that it is updated regularly on any new developments and is able to take any necessary actions.
- **Routinely Revise Operating Procedures:** The Board Governance Manual and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will be urgently reviewed to provide guidance on recognizing and reporting misconduct, and to direct individuals to the appropriate resources and channels, including those provided by the host organization. SOPs will be evaluated on an ongoing basis and updated at least annually to ensure that they remain relevant and responsive. This effort will be supported by annual training of all Board members on these issues.
- **Enhance the Performance Evaluation of the Executive Director:** In the first quarter of 2021, the Board will conduct an enhanced and comprehensive evaluation of the Executive Director, over and above the annual review conducted as per the hosting agreement with UNOPS and the Board Governance Manual. The performance evaluation will be a prerequisite for the Board recommendation on contract renewal, and will provide input into the UNOPS performance assessment process. The process related to performance evaluations of the Executive Director will be part of negotiations with the new host, to ensure that the annual reviews are consistent with the principles articulated in Board Decision Point 32-10 (the “Ottawa-Jakarta Principles”).

Commitment to an Inclusive and Effective Global TB Response:

- **Review the Board and Executive Committee:** The independent review has outlined the limitations of the Board, given its status as a non-legal entity and its large size. In practice, the Board functions as a high-level advisory committee on strategy, finances, and technical issues to the Secretariat. As such, the current Board and Executive Committee are committed to restructuring to be better fit for that purpose, and will initiate a comprehensive review to improve Board capacity to fulfill its duties, with a focus on representation from high-burden TB countries and affected communities. In order to quickly identify and address any future emerging issues, the Executive Committee and Board will also acquire additional administrative and managerial support.
- **Expand Anti-discrimination Efforts in the TB Response:** The Stop TB Partnership is a leader in addressing stigma, discrimination, and gender issues through its TB programming in high-burden TB countries around the world. The Board will steer the strategic vision of the Partnership to expand, monitor, and prioritize funding for this work and to include an emphasis on social justice to promote equity and equality, as appropriate to each country's context. Grassroots input will be critical to inform and guide this work.
- **Promote Leadership Roles of Affected Communities and Civil Society:** As a partnership of more than 1,500 organizations representing almost every country in the world, the Board will actively seek to promote affected communities and civil society organizations in leadership positions and decisions. The Partnership will develop a policy that directs its financial and technical resources toward local organizations first and foremost¹. Only in cases in which there is insufficient capacity, sole source capability, or poor risk assessment/strong evidence of potential risk, will the Partnership's support organizations that are not registered in a high burden TB country.

Continuing to Listen

The Stop TB Partnership is hosted by UNOPS, which provides administrative, human resource and management services, including those related to investigating any allegations of misconduct by personnel. The Board is committed to working transparently and expeditiously with UNOPS to support their investigations of allegations and efforts to ensure a work environment that is safe, equitable and free of discrimination, including racism in any form. UNOPS and the Partnership continue to welcome any information that can help the Partnership live up to its values. We encourage anyone with information to use the following channels:

- The [Speak Up Hotline](#) is UNOPS's confidential mechanism for individuals (UNOPS personnel and people outside UNOPS) to report misconduct. The hotline is managed by an independent service provider on behalf of UNOPS to protect confidentiality. This service can be reached at speakup@unops.org or by phone in Switzerland at +41 800-562907. It can be accessed worldwide and free of charge.
- The Internal Audit and Investigations Group receives allegations of fraud and financial irregularities, forgery, theft, misuse of resources, conflicts of interest, assault including sexual assault, sexual exploitation and abuse, and violations of local laws. Contact: investigations@unops.org

¹ Given the specialized and technical nature of its work, Global Drug Facility procurements and operations will maintain current policies and practices and are excluded from this recommendation.

- The Internal Grievances team handles any form of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority. They also investigate improper recruitment processes. Contact: internalgrievances@unops.org
- The Ethics and Compliance Office is entrusted with managing concerns of retaliation against UNOPS personnel for reporting misconduct or cooperating with an audit, investigation or other duly authorised fact-finding activity. Contact: ethicsofficer@unops.org
- The Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes helps employees to address workplace concerns and resolve conflicts through informal means, such as identification and review of options, conflict coaching, shuttle diplomacy, and mediation. The work of the ombudspersons and mediators is based on the principles of confidentiality, neutrality and impartiality, independence and informality. Contact: fpombudsman.org or ombudsmediation@fpombudsman.org.

Incidents brought forward through UNOPS channels will be afforded due process within the United Nations system, and the Stop TB Partnership Board will receive information on UNOPS planned actions from any findings. Whistleblowers' confidentiality will be protected.

Appendix:

In October 2020, the UNOPS independent Ethics & Compliance Office agreed to undertake a review of allegations and investigations previously conducted in 2015 and 2017. UNOPS has provided the below:

When UNOPS was made aware in June 2020 of further details of past allegations of misconduct at the Stop TB Partnership, its Ethics and Compliance Office was commissioned to undertake a further review of these cases.

The review confirmed that the conduct of individuals in these cases fell short of UNOPS commitment to a respectful, inclusive working environment. However, it found that overall the sanctions and series of disciplinary and management actions issued in relation to these cases were appropriate.

UNOPS has since taken steps to strengthen and improve the way misconduct is addressed as part of its commitment to regularly review policies and procedures based on experience, in order to become a better organization. UNOPS strives to ensure that all individuals feel free and safe to report concerns, are provided with the necessary support and protection, and are confident that disciplinary and administrative measures are appropriately imposed.