



**Unitaid Executive Board Meeting**  
**35th Session**  
**17-18 June 2020**  
**Organised via teleconference**

**Agenda item 3**

**Minutes of the 34th Special Session  
of the Executive Board (EB34SS)  
(25 March 2020)**

Including notes from the Executive Board information session on  
COVID-19, 7 April 2020

Geneva, Switzerland

For Information  For Review and Advice  For Approval

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	3
<b>1. Opening remarks from the Chair and adoption of the agenda</b> .....	4
<b>2. Presentation by the Secretariat (analysis of the situation and proposals)</b> .....	4
<b>3. Comments by Board Members and Q&amp;A</b> .....	5
<b>4. Next steps</b> .....	6
<b>5. Closing remarks by the Chair</b> .....	6
<b>Ad hoc briefing of Executive Board members, 7 April 2020</b> .....	7
<b>List of Participants</b> .....	8

## Executive Summary

- The Board was asked to take action to help protect the most vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic, not just the communities living with HIV, TB and malaria but also those who do not.
- Most current Unitaid grantees are facing challenges to project implementation, including countries' health system disruptions, supply-side constraints, as well as general difficulties of stakeholder and partner engagement.
- It was noted that many grant activities and implementation are expected to be impacted by the pandemic, but that this will not necessarily result in savings; in some cases, it may mean increased costs. It is quite early to appreciate in detail the impact of COVID-19 but a careful analysis will be conducted over the next weeks. The importance of ensuring protection of grantee staff, healthcare professionals and people accessing services was underlined.
- The Board supported a range of proposals selected on the basis of ability to deliver impact in a six-month timeframe to October, that had clear added value for the vulnerable populations that Unitaid seeks to serve. These proposals focus on ongoing grant activities relating to clinical trials, diagnostics and medical and patient triage support tools.
- A draft Resolution will be proposed to the Board for adoption by electronic vote, to commit an initial funding allocation of up to US\$30 million for the expansion and reprogramming of a number of existing approved grants.
- The Secretariat was asked to begin exploring opportunities to develop additional initiatives; these should include issues related to price reduction for new medicines and technologies, whether via price negotiations, advocacy, or other measures within Unitaid's unique expertise. The Board will consider these additional proposals at a later stage with a view to approving a second tranche of funding.

## **1. Opening remarks from the Chair and adoption of the agenda**

The Chair opened the meeting recalling the mission of Unitaid to serve the most vulnerable populations, particularly those in countries with weaker health systems which are more likely to bear the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board is being asked to take action to help protect those populations, not just the communities living with HIV, TB and malaria but also others.

Unitaid's experience and adaptable operating model allows it to contribute to the overall global response, working with other international global health partners and in particular WHO.

The Board adopted the agenda of the meeting (UNITAID/EB34SS/2020/1).

## **2. Presentation by the Secretariat (analysis of the situation and proposals)**

The Executive Director ad interim highlighted that the pandemic is affecting most of the countries in which Unitaid operates and supports access to medicines and treatments. This creates the opportunity to re-programme some these interventions as part of the global COVID-19 response.

The Board heard that there had been proactive and regular interactions with grantees and key global health partners since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak to understand the challenges that arise from this situation, and their implications in terms of project implementation. Issues have been identified at many levels such as health system disruptions in countries, supply-side constraints, as well as difficulties in maintaining the level of stakeholder and partner engagement. In addition, the Secretariat underlined the importance of ensuring protection of grantee staff, healthcare professionals and people accessing services.

It was noted that the disruption of grant activities and implementation will not necessarily result in savings; some grants may require more funds than currently planned to restore their operations and deliver their expected outputs. The Secretariat will continue monitoring the situation regularly and systematically and will work with grant implementers to put in place mitigations and adjust plans as and when needed.

A range of potential opportunities of contributions to the global response were presented to the Board, with a focus on those that allowed Unitaid to be strategic, fast and efficient, and coordinated. Given the rapidly changing landscape, it was proposed to focus on actions that could deliver impact in the April to October timeframe, that had clear added value for the vulnerable populations that Unitaid seeks to serve (UNITAID/EB34SS/2020/2).

Proposals made leverage ongoing grant activities relating to clinical trials, diagnostics and medical and patient triage support tools. The recently-closed UnitaidExplore call on access to oxygen therapy was acknowledged, noting that this area has become even more critically important in the context of COVID-19; however, given the maturity of innovations that can be supported through the UnitaidExplore call, a quicker and more direct response was possible by leveraging existing grants.

### 3. Comments by Board Members and Q&A

Welcoming the range of proposals, Board members were keen to emphasize that any actions should focus on Unitaid's unique expertise and in-country networks, and not be duplicative of efforts that other partners might be better placed to make. They were also keen to ensure that there was appropriate sensitivity to and support of individual countries' needs.

It was agreed that attempts at a comprehensive mapping exercise would be almost immediately out of date given the fast-moving situation and the number of partners contributing to the response. It was noted that it was more important that Unitaid participates in the right conversations, acknowledging the respective roles and expertise of the very many partners.

Concerning the clinical trial proposals, Board members noted that the clinical teams and facilities were already in place and poised to contribute to the COVID-19 response, allowing them to move faster than studies requiring set-up. It was welcomed that the studies focus on the specific needs of people living with HIV, tuberculosis and related co-morbidities in low-resource settings.

Questions were raised on the proposal to procure SARs CoV2 testing kits and related commodities; specifically on whether the procurement budget would need to be fully expended if other funding partners were planning to reprogramming/program significant funding for SARs CoV2 molecular tests. The Secretariat clarified that the intention of the investment was to rapidly introduce and set-up SARS-CoV2 testing programs in the targeted L/MICs and engage, jointly with The Global Fund and other key partners (WHO, BMGF, Unicef), diagnostic manufacturers with meaningful catalytic volumes in hand to jump start supplies to these resource limited countries. The Secretariat clarified that the commodity budget requested was a ceiling amount and that commodity procurement would be phased, and if need be reduced, in the event that supplemental volumes financed by the Global Fund and others were ordered relatively quickly for the targeted 15 countries (and others).

The Secretariat was urged to ensure that an appropriate role was given to advocacy and empowering communities in the implementation of the proposals. It was also asked to look at other potential areas including intellectual property, including working with the Medicines Patent Pool to facilitate access and availability of therapies at affordable prices.

Questions were raised regarding the budget impact of COVID-19 on the overall portfolio. While it was quite early to have such an estimate, the secretariat is refining the methodology to conduct such an analysis and will come back to the board with further information over the next weeks.

There were questions over funding of the proposed activities, and the extent to which they could be funded from savings or whether additional budget was required. The Secretariat clarified that the \$30m would be additional budget. It was considered appropriate that the contribution of Unitaid should be included in the ongoing global conversations, including the G20 discussions, and Board members were encouraged to use their good offices to facilitate this.

#### **4. Next steps**

A draft Resolution will be proposed to the Board for adoption by electronic vote, to commit an initial funding allocation of up to US\$30 million for the expansion and reprogramming of a number of existing approved grants as presented in UNITAID/EB34SS/2020/2.

The Secretariat is asked to begin exploring opportunities to develop additional initiatives. These should include issues related to price reduction for new medicines and technologies, whether via price negotiations, advocacy, or other measures within Unitaid's unique expertise. The Board will consider these additional proposals at a later stage with a view to approving a second tranche of funding.

It was requested that the Board be updated during the Committees' meetings to be held on 7 and 8 April 2020.

The Chair of the Board and the Executive Director a.i. will write to the WHO Director-General to highlight the willingness of Unitaid to contribute to the WHO response, including the role of the Medicines Patent Pool relating to voluntary pooling of licences.

#### **5. Closing remarks by the Chair**

The Chair closed the meeting indicating that this was likely to be just the first step in the Unitaid contribution to the global response and emphasised the importance of working with and through partners.

## **Executive Board information session on COVID-19, 7 April 2020**

Following adoption of Resolution n°5-2020-e on support for measures for the global response to COVID-19 on 27 March 2020, Executive Board members met in the margins of the committee meetings held by videoconference on 7 and 8 April 2020, to review the status of the Unitaid response.

The Chair and Executive Director a.i. wrote to the WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on 25 March 2020 highlighting that Unitaid stood ready to contribute to the global COVID-19 response, including together with the Medicines Patent Pool concerning voluntary pooling of licences for COVID-19 related medicines and technology.

The Board welcomed the proposal to engage with the Boards of Gavi and of the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to signal to G20 leaders the readiness of the three organisations to work together for a coordinated response for the most vulnerable populations. It was noted that Unitaid, along with Gavi and the Global Fund, have been invited to participate in the 19 April 2020 G20 Health Ministers meeting.

Members heard an update on identification of existing projects to be expanded or reprogrammed as part of the initial funding tranche of up to \$30 million. An important theme of the response being prepared was to ensure equitable access to and supply of key medicines and technologies. It was noted that there are likely to be challenges, and Unitaid is working with partners to ensure a joined-up logistical and practical response that meets the needs of countries.

The Board also mandated the Executive Director a.i. to explore additional opportunities, and this is also progressing on the agreed principles of being strategic, fast and efficient, and focusing on concrete results that can be delivered in a short- to medium-term timeframe. The Secretariat is looking at new opportunities in existing grants and looking at new partnerships that might need co-funding or new calls, as warranted and appropriate.

Regular updates will be shared with the Executive Board, with a follow-up ad hoc briefing call to be scheduled in mid-May.

## List of Participants

<b>Executive Board Members and delegations</b>	
<b><u>EXECUTIVE BOARD CHAIR</u></b>	
<b>Marisol Touraine</b> Unitaid Board Chair	Email: <a href="mailto:tourainem@unitaid.who.int">tourainem@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Catherine Dauphin Llorens</b> Special Advisor to the Chair	Email: <a href="mailto:dauphinc@unitaid.who.int">dauphinc@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Marlon Camps</b> Advisor to the Chair	Email: <a href="mailto:campsm@unitaid.who.int">campsm@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b><u>AFRICAN COUNTRIES</u></b>	
<b>Precious Matsoso</b> Chairperson of the Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee (IOAC) of the World Health Organisation's Emergencies Programme	Email : <a href="mailto:mmoshanyana@gmail.com">mmoshanyana@gmail.com</a>
<b><u>BRAZIL (Vice-Chair)</u></b>	
<b>Maria Luisa Escorel de Moraes</b> Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative Permanent Mission of Brazil to the UN	Email : <a href="mailto:luisa.escorel@itamaraty.gov.br">luisa.escorel@itamaraty.gov.br</a>
<b>Leonardo Abrantes</b> First Secretary Permanent Mission of Brazil to the UN	Email: <a href="mailto:leonardo.abrantes@itamaraty.gov.br">leonardo.abrantes@itamaraty.gov.br</a>
<b><u>CHILE</u></b>	
<b>Luis Plaza Gentina</b> Minister Counselor, Deputy Permanent Representative Permanent Mission of Chile to the UN	Email: <a href="mailto:lplaza@minrel.gob.cl">lplaza@minrel.gob.cl</a>
<b>Daniela Ferreira</b> Permanent Mission of Chile to the UN	Email: <a href="mailto:dferreira@minrel.gob.cl">dferreira@minrel.gob.cl</a>
<b>Francisco Adriaola Santibañez</b> Coordinator of international Affairs Office for International Relations and Cooperation Minsitry of Health	Email : <a href="mailto:francisco.adriazola@minsal.cl">francisco.adriazola@minsal.cl</a>
<b><u>COMMUNITIES LIVING WITH THE DISEASES</u></b>	
<b>Kenly Sikwese</b> Programme Coordinator African Community Advisory Board (AFROCAB)	Email: <a href="mailto:ksikwese@gmail.com">ksikwese@gmail.com</a>



**Wim Vandevelde**

Liaison Officer  
Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+)

Email: [wvandevelde@gnpplus.net](mailto:wvandevelde@gnpplus.net)

**FOUNDATIONS (BILL & MELINDA GATES)****Greg Widmyer**

Director, Health Products, Programs, and  
Markets  
Global Delivery Programs, Global Development

Email: [greg.widmyer@gatesfoundation.org](mailto:greg.widmyer@gatesfoundation.org)

**Jessica Jones**

Associate Program Officer, Integrated Delivery  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Email: [jessica.jones@gatesfoundation.org](mailto:jessica.jones@gatesfoundation.org)

**Jamie Morris**

Divisional Chief Financial Officer - Global  
Development and Global Growth & Opportunity  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Email: [jamie.morris@gatesfoundation.org](mailto:jamie.morris@gatesfoundation.org)

**FRANCE****Stéphanie Seydoux**

Ambassador for Global Health  
Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs

Email: [stephanie.seydoux@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:stephanie.seydoux@diplomatie.gouv.fr)

**Joan Valadou**

Assistant-Director, Human Development  
Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs

Email: [joan.valadou@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:joan.valadou@diplomatie.gouv.fr)

**Jeanne Riqué**

UNITAID – Accès aux médicaments  
Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs

Email: [jeanne.rique@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:jeanne.rique@diplomatie.gouv.fr)

**Anne-Sophie Monceau**

Chargée de mission with the  
Ambassador for Global Health  
Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs

Email: [anne-sophie.monceau@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:anne-sophie.monceau@diplomatie.gouv.fr)

**Sana de Courcelles**

Health Counsellor  
Permanent mission of France to the UN

Email : [sana.decourcelles@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:sana.decourcelles@diplomatie.gouv.fr)

**NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS****Fifa Rahman**

Health Poverty Action

Email: [fifarahman@outlook.com](mailto:fifarahman@outlook.com)

**Rohit Malpani**

Health Action International

Email: [romalpani@gmail.com](mailto:romalpani@gmail.com)

**Courtenay Howe**

Liaison officer  
Stop Aids UK

Email : [courtenay@stopaids.org.uk](mailto:courtenay@stopaids.org.uk)

**Norway****Katja Christina Nordgaard**

Director General  
Department for Sustainable Development  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Email: [Katja.Christina.Nordgaard@mfa.no](mailto:Katja.Christina.Nordgaard@mfa.no)

**Lene Lothe**

Head of Section  
Section for Global Health  
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

Email : [lene.jeanette.lothe@norad.no](mailto:lene.jeanette.lothe@norad.no)

**Sissel Hodne Steen**

Senior Advisor  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Email: [sissel.hodne.steen@mfa.no](mailto:sissel.hodne.steen@mfa.no)

**Haitham El-noush**

Senior Adviser  
Global Health Section  
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

Email: [Haitham.Ali.Ahmed.El-noush@norad.no](mailto:Haitham.Ali.Ahmed.El-noush@norad.no)

**Republic of Korea****Heesun Shin**

Counsellor  
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea

Email: [hsshin02@mofa.go.kr](mailto:hsshin02@mofa.go.kr)

**Taejin Kim**

Political Attache  
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea

Email: [tjkim19@mofa.go.kr](mailto:tjkim19@mofa.go.kr)

**SPAIN****Teresa Barba**

Deputy Director-General for Multilateral and  
European Development Policies in the Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs, EU and Cooperation

Email: [teresa.barba@maec.es](mailto:teresa.barba@maec.es)

**Ander Ruiz de Gopegui Aramburu**

Counsellor  
Permanent mission of Spain to the UN

Email: [ander.ruizdegopegui@maec.es](mailto:ander.ruizdegopegui@maec.es)

**Miguel Casado Gómez**

Head of health team  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Email: [miguel.casado@maec.es](mailto:miguel.casado@maec.es)

<b><u>UNITED KINGDOM</u></b>	
<b>Sarah Boulton</b> Global Health Funds Team Leader Department for International Development, DFID	Email: <a href="mailto:s-boulton@dfid.gov.uk">s-boulton@dfid.gov.uk</a>
<b>Megan Crawley</b> Programme Manager, Family Planning and Market Shaping Team, Global Funds Department Department for International Development, DFID	Email: <a href="mailto:m-crawley@dfid.gov.uk">m-crawley@dfid.gov.uk</a>
<b><u>WHO</u></b>	
<b>Minghui Ren</b> Assistant Director General, Universal Health Coverage/Communicable and Noncommunicable Diseases	Email: <a href="mailto:renm@who.int">renm@who.int</a>
<b><u>Proposals Review Committee</u></b>	
<b>Andy Gray</b> Chair PRC	Email: <a href="mailto:graya1@ukzn.ac.za">graya1@ukzn.ac.za</a>
<b><u>SECRETARIAT</u></b>	
<b>Vincent Bretin</b> Director of Results	Email : <a href="mailto:bretinv@unitaid.who.int">bretinv@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>David Curry</b> Director of Finance and Administration	Email : <a href="mailto:curryd@unitaid.who.int">curryd@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Mauricio Cysne</b> Director of External Relations	Email: <a href="mailto:cysnem@unitaid.who.int">cysnem@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Philippe Duneton</b> Executive Director, a.i.	Email : <a href="mailto:dunetonp@unitaid.who.int">dunetonp@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Ivan Ginet</b> Facilities and administration assistant	Email : <a href="mailto:gineti@unitaid.who.int">gineti@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Janet Ginnard</b> Director of Strategy	Email: <a href="mailto:Ginnardj@unitaid.who.int">Ginnardj@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Marina Hue</b> Governance and Board Relations Manager	Email : <a href="mailto:huem@unitaid.who.int">huem@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Martin Harvey Allchurch</b> Team Lead Communications	Email : <a href="mailto:harveym@unitaid.who.int">harveym@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Sonia Hilton</b> Senior Legal Officer	Email: <a href="mailto:hiltons@unitaid.who.int">hiltons@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Oksana Koval</b> Governance Officer	Email : <a href="mailto:kovalo@unitaid.who.int">kovalo@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Robert Matiru</b> Director of Operations	Email : <a href="mailto:matirur@unitaid.who.int">matirur@unitaid.who.int</a>
<b>Sanne Wendes</b> Chief of Staff	Email : <a href="mailto:wendess@unitaid.who.int">wendess@unitaid.who.int</a>