



Unitaid Executive Board Meeting
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Organised via teleconference

Agenda item 3

Minutes of the 33rd Session of the Executive Board
(EB33)
(19-20 November 2019)

Geneva, Switzerland

For Information For Review and Advice For Approval

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Executive Summary

- Minutes of the 32nd meeting Board were adopted (UNITAID/EB33/2019/2).
- The Executive Director updated the Board on key highlights from Unitaid's activities in 2019 and priorities for 2020 (UNITAID/EB33/2019/3), and informed the Board of his intention to step down from his position in the coming months.
- The Chair of the Project Review Committee reported on the committee's recent work, reviewed its workload during 2019 and reflected on some of the questions for 2020.
- The Board adopted a framework to pilot an agility mechanism (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R1). The first call for proposals under this mechanism will be for diagnosis and treatment of Chagas disease. The pilot's results will form part of reflections ahead of the next Unitaid strategy cycle.
- Revisions to the key performance indicators were agreed, to take into account experience since their adoption in 2016 (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R2).
- Portfolio highlights were discussed with the Board, including an overview of the active portfolio represents approximately US\$ 1.3 billion of investments, with 48 active grants at the time of the Board meeting, up from 28 in 2014.
- The impact of these investments is realised through working with a wide range of partnerships, which was presented to the Board. As well as the Global Fund, the Unitaid engages with governments, implementers, funding partners, technical partners, civil society, private sector and other global health institutions.
- The coherent strong portfolio, demonstrated results and measurable impact, and established frameworks for collaboration with countries and key partners form the basis of a strong resource mobilisation case for Unitaid. The Board agreed a two-prong approach for the near-term and for the preparation of the next strategy cycle.
- The Board adopted a new Area for Intervention in the area of malaria chemoprevention, focusing on intermittent preventive treatment in infants, or IPTi (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R3).
- The operating budget for 2020 of US\$ 20 million was adopted by the Board; this includes a staff headcount of 93 full-time-equivalent staff members (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R4).
- The Board approved the appointment of the chairs and vice-chairs of the FAC and PSC (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R5), as well as the members of the two committees (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R6), as of the beginning of 1 January 2020.
- The Board extended the mandate of the Governance Working Group for a further two years beginning 1 January 2020, in addition to approving the appointment of its chair and members (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R7).
- The Executive Board amended the Board Operating Procedures relating to the majority required for electronic votes (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R8).
- Japan announced its interest in continuing to contribute to Unitaid and its wish to join the Executive Board.

1. Opening remarks from the Chair

New Board members and other participants were welcomed to the first Executive Board meeting chaired by Ms Marisol Touraine.

The Chair highlighted her desire for the Board to focus its work to develop strategic guidance and support for the secretariat. Noting that Unitaid is well-recognised in the global health ecosystem, the Chair emphasised that the organisation needed to continue to assert its unique role and strategy. This will include an active engagement to support Unitaid in the preparation of the next strategy cycle, as well as reinforcing the Board's governance.

2. Agenda of the EB33 meeting

The Board adopted the agenda of the meeting (UNITAID/EB33/2019/1/Rev.2).

3. Minutes of the EB32 meeting, 19-20 June 2019

The Board adopted the minutes of the 32nd Executive Board meeting of 19-20 June 2019 (UNITAID/EB33/2019/2).

4. Report from the Executive Director

Looking back at recent achievements, the Executive Director highlighted that Unitaid will finish 2019 with some 50 grants representing not just a set of projects, but a powerful coherent portfolio (UNITAID/EB33/2019/3).

Totalling an investment of US\$ 1.3 billion, these grants are producing tangible and innovative outcomes and delivering impact in the global health response. Examples include price reductions that will lead to access to dolutegravir for an additional 5 million people every year, increased availability and acceptability of HIV self-test kits, negotiated price reduction for rifapentine for tuberculosis (TB) treatment in one hundred low- and middle-income countries, and key advances in the prevention of malaria such as the development of new bed nets and indoor residual spraying solutions, as well as prevention and treatment options with seasonal malaria chemoprevention and vaccine trials.

An important development in Unitaid's strategy has been the move to more integrated healthcare approaches, such as the cervical cancer projects linked to organisation's work in the area of HIV and the combination of health services for children looking at fever management, HIV and TB.

Unitaid as an organisation ends the year in a strong institutional position, having been recognised by the UN General Assembly, both the G20 and G7 meetings, and participation in the *Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All* that brings together 12 multilateral agencies responsible for one-third of all development assistance to health.

Looking to 2020, priorities include supporting new high potential innovations, driving scalability, strengthening implementation through partnership, preparing the ground for the new strategy, and reinforcing the effectiveness of Unitaid as a team.

The Executive Director informed the Executive Board of his intention to step-down from his position in the coming months after five years in the role, to allow the selection of a successor ahead of the next strategy cycle.

The Board acknowledged the transformation of Unitaid under the leadership of the Executive Director over the course of his 5-year tenure, and thanked him for the delivery of impressive results during this time. They welcomed the advanced notice that will allow the Board, working together with WHO, to follow a managed process for the identification and appointment of a successor. The Board decided they will appoint the Deputy Executive Director as Acting Executive Director in 2020 pending completion of the selection process.

5. Report from the Chair of the Proposals Review Committee

In addition to reviewing the input of the Proposals Review Committee (PRC) to the increased number of proposals and grant agreements in 2019, the PRC chair also spoke on the role of the committee to provide independent expertise in the Unitaid operating model.

The committee continues to work through virtual meetings, with just one face-to-face meeting in 2019. It reviewed 22 proposals – an increase compared to 2018 – with reviews of 10 grant agreement packages. The Board welcomed news that process improvements had resulted in shorter review times for grant agreements in 2019. The role of the committee in providing feedback on proposals was also noted.

Looking ahead, the PRC will play a role in the agility mechanism that will be piloted in 2020, as well as discussions on the composition of the PRC, including the need for complementary areas of expertise.

6. Report from the Policy and Strategy Committee (PSC)

- Update on disease narratives

The Board noted that revisions to diseases narratives for malaria, TB, HIV and hepatitis in the context of HIV coinfection are planned for publication in 2019. Work is ongoing to revise the strategic narrative for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH), with publication planned for 2020.

PSC support for the development of a proposal for Intermittent Preventative Treatment for infants (see agenda item 11) was also noted.

- Framework to pilot an agility mechanism

Following discussions at the PSC, the Board approved a framework to pilot an ‘agility mechanism’ that will allow for a streamlined process for supporting projects that meet certain strategic and operational principles. Sitting within Unitaid’s mandate and alongside the current operating model, the pilot will allow accelerated approval by the Executive Director of projects that meet these principles. The agility mechanism will support, among others, innovations with transformative potential that address global health needs in low- and middle-income countries (UNITAID/EB33/2019/4).

The Board allocated up to US\$ 20 million in the 2020 investment plan for the pilot, which is expected to include 2 to 3 projects. The first call for proposals for new projects to help eliminate congenital infection of Chagas disease through better diagnosis and treatment will be published shortly, with another call planned in Q1 2020 for smaller projects to support transformative innovations.

An update will be made at the June 2020 Executive Board meeting, with discussions at the joint meeting of the Board’s committees in October 2020 on inclusion of a refined budget for the mechanism in the Investment Plan. The results of the one-year pilot will form part of the Board’s reflections ahead of the next strategy cycle for 2022-2026. The Board adopted the proposal, with one vote against (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R1).

- Review of key performance indicators

The Board adopted revisions to the Unitaid operational key performance indicators (KPIs) (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R2). The revisions, which had been reviewed by the PSC, take into account experience of implementing the KPIs since their adoption in December 2016 and to improve their fit for purpose over the remainder of the 2017-2021 strategic period.

Some KPIs are now more precisely defined, some are adjusted to better take into account data collected since 2017, and some have been supplemented with additional targets. A colour-coding scheme was also agreed to better identify the performance range for various KPIs (UNITAID/EB33/2019/5-Rev.1).

The Board will continue to monitor KPI performance regularly, including the effectiveness of revisions made relating to grantees, resource mobilisation and staff motivation.

7. Portfolio highlights

Building on the Executive Director’s report, the Board heard highlights from Unitaid’s portfolio of projects. The current portfolio represents approximately US\$ 1.3 billion of investments, with 48 active grants at the time of the Board meeting, up from 28 in 2014.

These grants support more than 60 new products, and are being realised by 127 grant implementers. Two important developments of note are that over 60% of the portfolio is focused on antimicrobial resistance issues, and the increased diversification of implementers between northern

and southern hemisphere partners, big and small, and a widening profile including academia, NGOs and product-development partnerships.

8. Update on Unitaid partnerships

Representing less than 1% of global investment in HIV, TB and malaria prevention, treatment and eradication, the impact of Unitaid investments comes through creating and working through a wide range of partnerships.

One of the key partnerships is with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. A new strategic framework was signed in 2019 to formalise the relationship and facilitate forward planning. Data generated together with the Global Fund suggests that Unitaid investments accelerates access to treatment and healthcare interventions for some 100 million people, helping the Global Fund to hit its target for reducing deaths from HIV, TB and malaria 3 years faster.

Unitaid's partnerships include formal and informal engagement with governments, implementers, funding partners, technical partners, civil society, private sector and other global health institutions. It is through the power of these partnerships that Unitaid delivers its impact.

The Board recognised that this impact through partnerships, for example accelerating the Global Fund's objectives, is a significant part of the investment case for Unitaid.

9. Update on resource mobilisation strategy

The coherent strong portfolio, demonstrated results and measurable impact, and established frameworks for collaboration with countries and key partners form the basis of a strong resource mobilisation case for Unitaid. This is reinforced through its clear strategy, clear institutional positioning and increasing recognition as part of the global health ecosystem.

The Board acknowledged the vital role of current donor partners, and in particular the importance of predictable multi-year commitments, but it remains important to assure future donors. The Board supported a proposed two-prong short-term and longer-term approach that rests on the efforts of both the secretariat and Executive Board, with political engagement of civil society and parliamentarians.

In the near-term 2020-2021, a targeted approach will be supported by developing an impact case of the Unitaid portfolio complemented by investment briefs on specific areas that will be shared with current and potential future donors. The second part of the approach targeting 2021 onwards will be developed in parallel, and seek to integrate resource mobilisation into the next Unitaid strategy for 2022-2026.

The Chair highlighted her commitment to resource mobilisation through her activities, and the support of the Secretariat, by engaging in high-level visits to current donor countries, potential new donors and low and middle-income countries.

10. Closed session

11. Area for Intervention: malaria chemoprevention, focus on intermittent preventive treatment in infants

The Board adopted a new Area for Intervention in the area of malaria chemoprevention, focusing on intermittent preventive treatment in infants, or IPTi (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R3). This complementary expansion to existing chemoprevention investments will target infants in their first year of life, aiming to cut the number of malaria cases in this most highly-impacted age group by 30%.

Coming at a time when the global malaria response is stalling, it was acknowledged that civil society will have a key role in ensuring the success of any project approved under the Area for Intervention, as well as integration with national malaria strategies.

Calls for proposals will be published on the Unitaid website in the coming months.

12. Report and recommendations from the Finance and Accountability Committee (FAC)

- 2020 budget

Further to the FAC recommendation, the Executive Board approved the operating budget for 2020 of US\$ 20 million; this is unchanged from the 2019 budget and includes a staff headcount of 93 full-time-equivalent staff members (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R4). Despite increases in certain non-discretionary costs, the Board welcomed the efficiency gains in the budget and noted efforts in 2020 to further reduce travel costs. This is despite the growth in the number and complexity of grants being managed by the secretariat during this period.

The Board also adopted the budgets to support the activities of the Chair, and the NGO, Communities of patients living with the diseases, and African countries constituencies.

- Five-year model for operating expenses

The FAC had initial discussions at its 16 October 2019 meeting on a proposed model to provide a strategic framework for discussing potential impacts of future resource requirements. The secretariat will continue its work, including development of a range of scenarios against which impacts can be modelled, as well as refinement of some of the underlying assumptions used.

- 2019-2021 investment plan and update on funding forecast

The Board noted the status of the investment plan, which includes a number of areas that could be considered in 2020 and 2021 depending on the availability of additional or unused funds. The link to resource mobilisation funding forecasts was welcomed since this helps the Board understand the trade-offs and choices being proposed by the secretariat.

- Risk management

One year after the adoption of the risk policy in December 2018 the Board welcomed that none of the risks on the 'heat map' had increased, but noted that none had decreased including some which are currently above their target such as grant management.

As part of the FAC role to provide assurance to the Board about secretariat operations, it was noted that the 2020 external audit would include a review of performance measurement strategic planning.

13. Governance issues

The Executive Board approved the appointment of the chairs and vice-chairs of the FAC and PSC (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R5), as well as the members of the two committees (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R6) for periods beginning 1 January 2020.

The Executive Board extended the mandate of the Governance Working Group for a further two years beginning 1 January 2020, in addition to approving the appointment of its chair and members (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R7).

The Executive Board amended the Board Operating Procedures relating to the majority required for electronic votes (UNITAID/EB32/2019/R8).

14. Any other business

- Japan

The representative of Japan declared that Japan is committed to the Unitaid Constitution and, pending yearly budget approvals, wishes to continue to contribute to the organisation and join the Executive Board. The Secretariat was asked to continue to discuss this issue with Japanese representatives.

- Communities retreat

The Communities Living with the Diseases delegation updated the Board on their annual meeting in Tanzania on 13-15 August, including their engagement with local civil society and community organisations. The delegation continues to work on developing a communities engagement framework, with the aim of guiding local communities to be more engaged and active.

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