

**Statement by Medicus Mundi International  
on behalf of the Democratizing Global Health Coalition  
to the Sixty- first Session of the WHO – Regional Committee for Europe  
on agenda item 8: *WHO Reform for a healthy future*  
delivered by Dr. Remco van de Pas, Wemos**

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the opportunity of addressing the distinguished members of the WHO- Regional Committee for Europe, on behalf of Medicus Mundi International and the Democratizing Global Health Coalition, a network of public interest groups and individuals that are committed to the realization of the right to health worldwide.

We congratulate you on the discussions that took place during the last World Health Assembly, in particular on your taking a strong position in favour of a more inclusive and Member State-driven reform process for the WHO. We consider the reform process a historic opportunity for WHO to rediscover its multilateral identity in a globalised world.

Regrettably, we find that the WHO reform process raises several concerns.

1. Firstly, the justification for a reform is not grounded on an in-depth situational analysis of the world's health challenges in relation to WHO's constitutional role and objectives.
2. Second, and linked to the previous one, the 5 concept papers circulated by the WHO Secretariat are sorely vague and ambiguous, despite a level of details on procedures of some elements of the proposals.
3. Finally, it is inconceivable that the reform challenges and the serious structural problems of the WHO can be addressed in the short timeframe suggested to Member States in the current proposal. A much greater degree of public mobilization and political dialogue is needed to generate consensus for a credible and legitimate reform.

We urge you to give consideration to the following four proposals;

**Firstly**, there is **no need for an expensive World Health Forum or meeting on global health and the WHO** until there is a neater sense of its relevance, structure, mandate, and ground rules for membership. Instead of creating a new peer structure like the World Health Forum, we propose to establish an independent, multi-disciplinary commission. This commission would be charged with proposing a set of reforms. It would be mandated to consult a wider range of actors through transparent and properly resourced **public hearings**. The Commission should be free of conflicts of interest.

**Secondly, the scope of the evaluation must be broadened**, so as to relevantly inform the reform process on key structural issues, well beyond the HSS programme suggested today. We recommend that the **Joint Inspection Unit of the UN System**, completed by a group of experts, should lead the process as a guarantee of a standard, public interest-based, evaluation. Consulting agencies shaped around the market values and the dynamics of the private sector are not fit for dealing with an intergovernmental agency like the WHO: we have seen that already.

**Thirdly**, we call for a revision of the WHO's current policies on interaction with external actors. As announced in paragraph 24 and 25 in the proposal on WHO managerial reforms, we validate **WHO's efforts to develop an ethical framework for the interaction with external actors**, and guidelines for identifying and managing conflicts of interests. We urge to improve the relations with public interest NGOs by **re-launching the Civil Society Initiative** and resuming regular dialogues with them.

**Lastly**, Member States must tackle the funding crisis head on; all countries should balance **both assessed and voluntary contributions to WHO**, in such a way that the **proportion of full and highly flexible income** is increased to **50 %** by 2015. We strongly **discourage Member States from allowing WHO to solve its financial difficulties through greater private financing**.

We sincerely encourage all Member States, through this reform, to recognise and reassert the unique mandate of WHO and particularly its treaty making powers.

We hope that you will conduct the reform process in the direction of strengthening the authority and the leadership of the World Health Organisation, which is all the more needed in a fragmented world health scenario that calls for more accountability, in the face of the mounting complexity of health problems.

Thank you for attention.