

Inaugural World Health Organization Partners Forum

9-10 April 2019, Stockholm, Sweden
Report



World Health
Organization

Inaugural World Health Organization partners forum report, Stockholm, Sweden, 9-10 April 2019

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Executive Summary

On 9 and 10 April 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO), in partnership with the Government of Sweden, convened the Inaugural WHO Partners Forum in Stockholm, Sweden. The Forum offered a unique opportunity for a diverse range of current and prospective partners to learn more about WHO's impact and value for money, including the Organization's leadership on Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG3) through its Thirteenth General programme of Work 2019-2023 (GPW13).

The event also represented a first step in a longer term collaborative endeavor between WHO and its partners to address the quality and quantity of resources required to deliver GPW13 and, in doing, attaining the health-related SDG targets. Finally, the event was an important element of the vision of Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, of a WHO that is more open, transparent, collaborative, innovative and represented a tangible outcome of WHO's transformation process.

Participants and speakers

Over 200 participants attended the Forum, ranging from WHO Member States and United Nations and

programme partnerships, to foundations, corporations and civil society. Led by Dr Tedros and members of his leadership team and their Swedish Government colleagues, the Forum welcomed special guests at the ministerial and leadership levels of partner organizations.

Format, topics and objectives

Through keynote addresses and numerous collaborative opportunities, the day and a half meeting provided participants the opportunity to discuss WHO's impact and value for money, identify ways in which to strengthen partnerships and new opportunities for collaboration and to hear fresh perspectives.

One of the Forum's primary objectives was to explore opportunities for strengthening partnerships and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of WHO financing, with an emphasis on predictability and flexibility. In addition to the panels, discussion sessions and networking opportunities, attendees also exchanged ideas virtually through the WHO Event App. On the second day of the Forum, intensive work was undertaken in 36 case study sessions during which participants examined

individual WHO programmes and initiatives from the perspectives of effective partnership and financing.

Recommendations

In the area of *effective partnership*, participants recommended that WHO better enable countries to lead their health programmes and also take a stronger role in coordination, advocacy and communications, while also standardizing processes to reduce transaction costs. For partners, participants felt they should better define their added value, set objectives and project parameters in partnership with WHO and better coordinate with others and ensure sustainability.

In the area of *improving effective financing* of WHO, participants believed WHO should do more to define its impact and return on investment, look at new models to finance interventions, be a stronger advocate for greater domestic investment in health and focus on securing more flexible funding. The priorities that participants felt were important for partners included financing programmes that also address factors that impact health, pooling resources with others, leveraging other WHO values beyond funding and focusing more on national ownership

of health programmes and financing.

With regard to WHO's *longer-term collaborative endeavor*, wide appreciation for the Forum was expressed by participants throughout the event and in the online survey results. A majority of respondents were pleased with the Forum's content and interactive nature. Many felt the event represented a "good start" to a more collaborative and open approach by WHO and asked that the dialogue be continued in the months and years to come. For example, some participants suggested follow-up "touch points" on topics such as flexible funding, working with civil society and better engagement with the private sector.

The importance of an annual partners forum was also emphasized by many participants. A general desire was expressed for in-depth discussions and an opportunity to seek new perspectives. A significant number of participants proposed engaging additional existing partners and new partners, particularly the private sector, in an annual forum.

Outcomes

The meeting resulted in the following:

1. **An energized and diverse community of partners to further support WHO over the coming five years to secure the resources necessary to deliver GPW13;**
2. **Shared understanding of how to strengthen partnerships and improve the effective financing of WHO, with an emphasis on predictability and flexibility; and,**
3. **Enhanced trust and confidence in a transformed, impactful and value for money WHO.**

Inaugural World Health Organization Partners Forum: Detailed Report

Overview

On 9 and 10 April 2019, the World Health Organization in partnership with the Government of Sweden convened the Inaugural WHO Partners Forum in Stockholm, Sweden. The Forum offered a unique opportunity for a diverse range of current and prospective partners to learn more about WHO's impact and value for money, including the Organization's leadership on

SDG3 through its Thirteenth General programme of Work 2019-2023. (See agenda in Annex 1.)

The event also represented a first step in a longer-term collaborative endeavor between WHO and its partners to address the quality and quantity of resources required to deliver GPW13 and, in doing so, to achieve health-related SDG targets.

Finally, the event was an important element of Dr Tedros' vision of a WHO that is more open, transparent, collaborative, innovative and represented a tangible outcome – and sign of progress – in WHO's transformation process.

Participants

Over 200 participants attended the Forum, including WHO Member States, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations pooled funding mechanisms, global programme partnerships, international financial institutions, foundations, corporations and civil society.

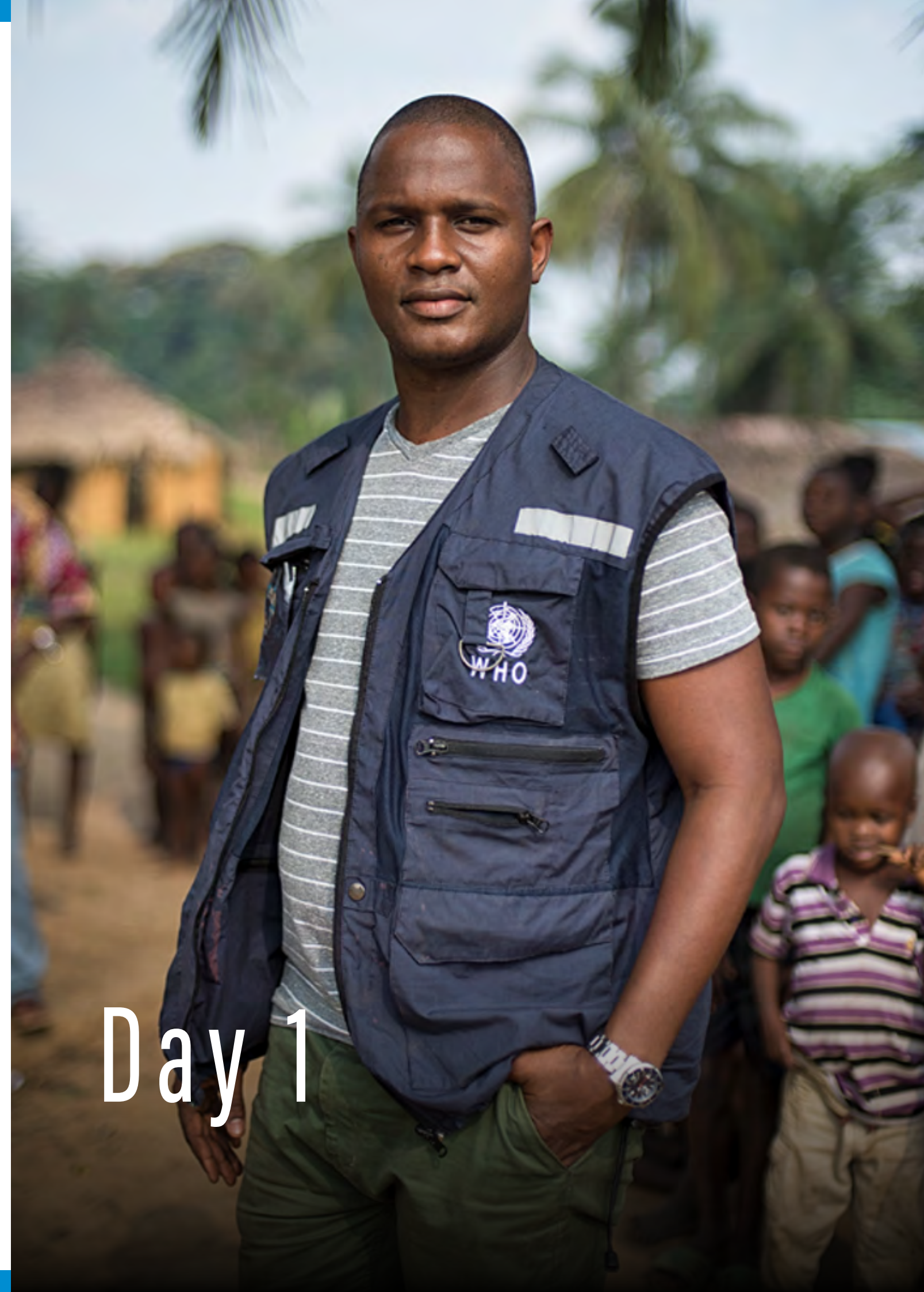
Forty-five Member States and 60 multilaterals, NGOs, foundations and private sector organizations participated. (See participant list in Annex 2.)

Format, topics and objectives

Through keynote addresses and a large number of collaborative opportunities, in part facilitated through the innovative WHO Event App, the day and a half meeting allowed participants to explore WHO's impact and value for money, identify ways in which to strengthen partnerships and better ensure sustainable financing, explore opportunities for further collaboration and to hear fresh perspectives from new, existing and prospective partners.

Forum topics included

- » Collaborating with partners for impact – past, present and future;
- » Sweden's experience and support – at home and abroad, with global health, WHO and SDG3;
- » Working with WHO as a partner – maximizing the impact of partner investments;
- » Healthcare in Sweden – progress, challenges and the importance of WHO;
- » Partnerships and effective financing – reflections, questions and answers;
- » Marketplace one: Partnering for impact – how to develop and strengthen effective partnerships toward shared goals;
- » Working with WHO as a partner: universal health coverage, addressing health emergencies and healthier populations;
- » Marketplace two: Financing for impact – how to ensure more effective and efficient financing of WHO, with a focus on flexibility and predictability, toward shared goals;
- » "Reflections from young leaders in global health" Today and tomorrow; and,
- » Marketplace recommendations and next steps.



Day 1

Welcome

The Forum opened with an evening plenary session at the Hilton Hotel Slussen Stockholm. Dr Anders Nordström, Ambassador for Global Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden and

Ms Michèle Boccoz, WHO Director-General's Envoy for Multilateral Affairs, welcomed Forum participants. Both expressed a desire to have “an open and frank discussion about WHO.” They gave a

brief outline of the Forum’s concept, outcomes and objectives in the context of global health and the Sustainable Development Goals.

“We will listen to some very inspirational people and have the opportunity to discuss how we can improve our partnerships with WHO - and how WHO can improve the way they work with us.”

Dr Anders Nordström, Ambassador for Global Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Keynote address:

Collaborating with partners for impact - past, present and the future

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, WHO

In opening the Forum, Dr Tedros thanked the Government of Sweden for hosting the event and for being such a strong partner to WHO, noting a six-year framework agreement that increases flexible funding to the Organization by US\$ 30 million.

Regarding the importance of non-earmarked funding, he said, “With these flexible funds, WHO can allocate resources when and where they are needed – in times of disease outbreaks or crisis and for areas of work that are

sometimes underfunded.” He also thanked the Governments of Australia, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and others who have all supported WHO with flexible contributions.

Welcoming all participants, Dr Tedros thanked them for attending the Forum and highlighted the transformational process that WHO is undertaking to make it a more transparent, accountable and impactful partner. After summarizing several significant global health achievements, Dr Tedros said, “but we cannot rest on past achievements. We must shape the future. Health

is constantly changing, and so must WHO.”

The DG expressed his personal objective to strengthen partnerships in innovative ways to address global health challenges and reach WHO’s “triple billion” targets that are at the heart of the Organization’s strategic five-year plan: one billion more people benefitting from universal health coverage (UHC); one billion more people better protected from health emergencies; and one billion more people enjoying better health and well-being. He emphasized that the Forum represented just one innovative way in which WHO wishes to

engage with partners and that he desired to hear candid and honest feedback including critical views on the work of, and partnership with, WHO.

Dr Tedros then turned to the major transformation initiative WHO is undertaking to ensure it operates more effectively and delivers greater impact “where it matters most – in the lives of the people we serve.” He noted that transforming WHO must include transforming the way it is financed in order to

ensure long-term success and sustainability.

To achieve the “triple billion” targets, WHO will need \$14.1 billion over the next five years, and necessary changes in financing are not only about the quantity of funding for WHO but also the quality. Dr Tedros highlighted that more than 70% of WHO’s budget is earmarked for specific programmes, which aren’t always aligned with corporate priorities.

The result is that silos and internal competition are created for limited funding and the Organization often does not have sufficient funds for priority programmes. In concluding, Dr Tedros said that the Forum represented “the start of the conversation” on how to ensure WHO has the high-quality funding it needs for the priorities Member States have set.

“This is an opportunity to talk informally and candidly about how we can work together more effectively to achieve our common vision.... a conversation about how to make sure WHO has the resources it needs to do the job the world wants us to do.”

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General

Keynote address:

Sweden’s experience and support-at home and abroad, with global health, WHO and SDG3

Mr Peter Eriksson, Minister for International Development Cooperation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Minister Eriksson followed Dr Tedros with his own welcome by affirming Sweden’s commitment to global health and specifically its focus on human rights in the context of sexual and reproductive health and highlighted the important connection between health and democracy. “Our aim to improve global health needs goes hand in hand with

the work to make countries more democratic.”

The Minister expressed the important role that WHO has to play, saying “Sweden sees WHO as a leading and critical partner in addressing global health challenges.” But he pointed out, that like all organizations over time, WHO needs to continue with its reform efforts. Sweden, the Minister stated, is prepared to work with other governments to support WHO in this effort,

specifically in helping the Organization decentralize and strengthen country offices. recruit leadership and performance management skills and assist in creating more effective financing for the Organization.

The Minister said that Sweden firmly believes in providing unearmarked core funding to WHO while also expecting higher quality reporting and accountability. He highlighted three highly complex global

health challenges that require stronger collaborative efforts – the Ebola crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo, antibiotic resistance (AMR) and child obesity.

“All of these require effective partnerships and this is what the WHO Partners Forum is about. Sweden regards WHO as a leading and critical partner in our global health work.”

Panel discussion:

Working with WHO as a partner - maximizing the impact of partner investments

The Forum continued with a moderated panel discussion among three of WHO key partners: Mr Peter Sands, Executive Director, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; Dr Seth Berkley, Chief Executive Officer, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; and Dr Senait Fisseha, Director of International Programs, Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation.

The panelists first addressed WHO's unique role in global health. All agreed that WHO's global reach, depth of expertise and longstanding relationships in countries are values that no other health organization holds. They then discussed the broader challenge of how WHO and its partners can best address the collective challenge of effectively financing SDG3 and how better resource mobilization coordination and budget prioritization are needed. The importance

of country leadership in delivering the SDGs was also raised as was the importance of improving coordination between WHO and other partners to facilitate and enable country progress and success.

Taking up the topic of collective collaboration and how WHO can improve in this area, the panelists agreed that it is important to choose where to collaborate in order to make the greatest impact. They also noted that leveraging the comparative advantage of all partners and ensuring that large donors do not drive global health based only on their own interests are critical to success.

The group then turned to the issue of funding. All agreed that earmarking contributes to programmatic silos and competition between operations. But they were also aligned on the need for WHO to provide

greater accountability and transparency in order to secure more flexible funding. The group agreed that strengthening accountability at all levels of the Organization would improve how funders view WHO and, as a result, more funding would come. In concluding the session, the three panelists expressed their hopes for WHO's future, all reiterating the Organization's critical global leadership role and their organizations' support in helping WHO achieve its goals and the DG's vision.



Day 2

The second day of the Forum took place at the Stockholm Museum for Photography (Fotografiska).

Prior to the formal start of the day, a series of breakfast meetings was organized that allowed participants to have in-depth discussions on a number of global health priorities. Two Swedish-

led sessions focused on healthy populations and how to improve partner collaboration in sexual and reproductive health and rights. Another group looked at the interlinkages between global health and climate and environment challenges. WHO hosted two sessions about the new science division and sustainable financing of

health emergency response and readiness.

Afterwards, Ms Vaughan Jones, Moderator, welcomed participants to the Forum's second day, reflected on some of the thoughts presented the previous evening and explained the day's agenda.

Opening Remarks: *Healthcare in Sweden - progress, challenges and the importance of WHO*

Ms Lena Hallengren, Minister for Health and Social Affairs, Sweden

The Minister started the morning by welcoming participants to the second day of the Forum, saying how honored she was to host the meeting in Stockholm and stating that Sweden would continue to help ensure that WHO is equipped to lead the global response to future health

and rights. In emphasizing Sweden's commitment to this agenda, she said that broad support for gender equality and respect for human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, is fundamental to sustainable development.

The Minister also highlighted the Swedish Government's strong commitment to the fight against antimicrobial

The Minister concluded by saying that United Nations reform is one of Sweden's top priorities and she welcomed WHO's transformation agenda. She said she was proud that Sweden is a leading partner in providing un-earmarked flexible support to WHO but also expected higher quality reporting and accountability.

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Opening Remarks: *Day one recap and day two welcome*

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, WHO

Dr Tedros welcomed participants back to the second day by re-emphasizing the Forum's objective: "to speak honestly about what kind of WHO the world needs."

"I believe the mark of strong friendship is being able to say what you really think. That's why we're here," he said.

Dr Tedros highlighted the importance that partnership plays in combatting the world's most pressing global

health threats, such as antimicrobial resistance, and in improving sexual and reproductive health and rights. To be a better partner, WHO is transforming the way it does its business and two "straightforward ideas" are key, he said "putting countries at the center of our work and demonstrating impact at the country level."

Referring to the previous evening's panel, Dr Tedros concurred with the panelists that global health organizations must work with countries in a sustainable way that reflects their agendas.

He also agreed that "science, facts and data must underpin our decisions, and we must have the courage to stick with them."

He ended by giving an example of impactful collaboration by highlighting how WHO and its partners had already vaccinated nearly one million people against cholera in Mozambique in the aftermath of a recent cyclone. "This is partnership in action - an example of the difference we can make in our world when we work together."

Townhall discussion: *Partnerships and effective financing - reflections, questions and answers*

Ms Vaughan Jones opened an interactive 'town hall' discussion with Ms Maja Fjaestad, State Secretary for Health and Social Affairs, Sweden, Dr Tedros and participants. The conversation focused on how WHO can strengthen partnerships and better ensure more flexible and predictable financing.

Ms Fjaestad opened by talking about WHO's leading role in supporting Member States

in implementing the health-related SDGs. She said that Sweden also expects higher accountability from WHO, and the whole United Nations. Dr Tedros acknowledged that accountability and openness are two key pillars of WHO's transformation. He discussed how WHO's new strategic plan better aligns with the SDGs and focuses on impact and outcomes and how operational and management processes will be redesigned.

The discussion then turned to how to engage additional partners in WHO's global health mission. Ms Fjaestad highlighted that the private sector has equal responsibility for improving global health and can provide additional knowledge, more effective systems, services and advice. Dr Tedros agreed

that WHO needs to expand collaboration with new partners but that they should