

Independent Panel on Evidence for Action Against Antimicrobial Resistance

Final Draft Terms of Reference for Public Discussion

Background

There is an urgent global need for an independent and regular evaluation of evidence that addresses the impact of antimicrobial resistance, the effectiveness of prevention and control strategies and policies, and how the impact and risks from antimicrobial resistance may change in the future. Such regular evaluation can inform actions aimed at mitigation and containment of antimicrobial resistance, by stakeholders at global, regional and national levels.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the entire global community illustrates the importance of heeding warnings about current and future disease threats, and the imperative for evidence-based action in the aftermath of the pandemic. The Panel's output will help to prevent and mitigate exacerbation of such risks. The challenge of antimicrobial resistance lies in its highly dynamic, complex, cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary nature – threatening both the effectiveness of drugs available today and our future ability to control the spread of infection. It causes loss of lives, impacts livelihoods, and disrupts the economy and the attainment of many of the Sustainable Development Goals. There is, therefore, an urgent need to generate an evidence base for action to address and mitigate emerging risks, to resolve scientific disagreements and create synergies, and to improve communication among different stakeholders.

The Interagency Coordination Group (IACG) on antimicrobial resistance was convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2017 to formulate a blueprint for action against antimicrobial resistance. The IACG concluded its mandate by submitting its report to the UN Secretary General in 2019. One of the recommendations of the IACG for the UN Secretary General was to convene an Independent Panel on Evidence for Action against Antimicrobial Resistance in a One Health context in close collaboration with the Tripartite agencies (FAO, OIE and WHO), UN Environment Programme and other international organizations. The following are the proposed terms of reference for the Panel. The mandate of the Panel will be reviewed every 5 years.

1. Purpose

Generate and communicate independent, robust and authoritative assessments of the science related to antimicrobial resistance across the One Health spectrum at the interface between human, terrestrial and aquatic animals and plant health, food and feed production and the environment. This will be accomplished through an evidence-based, holistic systems approach and in the form of periodic reports that can inform governments, multilateral organizations and all other stakeholders. The Panel will rigorously evaluate and synthesize existing and new data, impacts and future risks, to address the urgency and complexity of antimicrobial resistance. It will provide options for evidence generation, and mitigation and containment strategies and interventions.

2. Objectives of the Panel across the One Health spectrum

- Assess the evidence and science related to antimicrobial resistance in an independent, comprehensive and objective manner using a holistic systems approach;
- Evaluate existing data and identify gaps in the evidence, science and implementation on antimicrobial resistance;
- Assess emerging and future economic, health, environmental, hygiene and sanitation risks and impacts of antimicrobial resistance, and actions and interventions for risk management;
- Provide evidence-based practical options for mitigation and containment actions and interventions, including on local knowledge, and considering existing normative and standard setting functions, to address challenges in all settings, particularly in low-and middle-income countries;
- Develop periodic reports to inform governments, multilateral organizations and all other stakeholders on the findings and assessments of present and future scenarios that can be used by policy and decision makers to limit the consequences associated with antimicrobial resistance.

3. Accountability

The Panel will be accountable to the UN Secretary General. This level of accountability reflects the urgency as well as the complex nature of antimicrobial resistance that reaches beyond the mandate of any one agency of the United Nations or other international organizations.

4. Guiding Principles

The following are the key principles that are proposed to guide the evidence assessment and reporting of the Panel:

- ***Independence and political neutrality:*** As antimicrobial resistance is a complex issue that cuts across several sectors including economic, trade, food safety and security, human, animal and plant health and the environment, the work of the Panel should be free from political and group influence. It will define its priorities and workplan.
- ***Inter and intradisciplinary (Trans-disciplinary) systems approach:*** The work of the Panel should reflect the technical challenge of antimicrobial resistance that requires involvement of multiple disciplines with a holistic systems approach to examine interactions and the interface across the One Health spectrum.
- ***Non-duplication and complementarity:*** The evidence assessment and reporting of the Panel should complement and not duplicate, the ongoing normative and standard setting activities of the Tripartite and other international organizations.
- ***Transparency, peer review and open access:*** The work of the Panel should be transparent, and its reports should be subject to a rigorous peer review process and made available (including original data and its analyses) via open access.
- ***Comprehensiveness and inclusivity:*** The Panel will seek input and feedback on its work (including its priorities) from national, regional and global stakeholders across all relevant disciplines, sectors and geographic regions in a balanced and inclusive way to reflect diversity of socio-economic determinants, resource availability and challenges to the implementation of the options provided.

5. Structure & Membership

- **Composition:** The Panel will consist of a core group of 10-15 experts with proven knowledge, strategic skills and experience in areas relevant to antimicrobial resistance. Panel members should represent a wide range of geographic regions, relevant disciplines and sectors. Panel members should have experience in developing and communicating across the science-policy and policy-practice interface and contributions from early to mid-stage professionals should be encouraged. At a minimum, a panel member should have expertise in one or more of the following:
 - Disciplines: Biological and Pharmacological Sciences; Human and Veterinary Medicine; Agricultural Sciences; Environmental Sciences; Economic Sciences; Social or Political Sciences; Humanities; Bioethics; Behavioral science; and Epidemiology and Modelling.
 - Sectors: human, terrestrial and aquatic animal and plant health, environment, food and feed production and development sectors.

- **Working Groups:** The Panel can establish Working Groups with time bound and clearly defined tasks and objectives. The Working Groups will consist of Panel and non-Panel members for specific areas. The Panel has the responsibility to define its priorities and to establish the Working Groups with clear terms of reference and accountability mechanisms. Details on the operation, formation and composition of Working Groups will be developed by the Panel.
- **Nomination and Selection:** Experts will be identified and appointed by the UN Secretary General upon recommendation of a Nomination Committee that will be convened by the Tripartite organizations. Nomination of members will take into consideration gender balance and geographic diversity as well as representation from across the One Health spectrum.
- **Selection of Chair and Vice Chair:** The UN Secretary General will appoint the Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel.
- **Terms of office:** Panel members will serve for an initial term which can be renewed once. To ensure continuity of the Panel, the terms of the members will be spaced with half of the members being offered an initial 2-year term and half a 3-year term. In addition to meetings, members will regularly participate in the development of reports and other activities of the Panel. However, their appointment will not involve full-time or part-time work arrangements. Members are expected to attend at least two thirds of the meetings of the Panel in a year to continue as members.
- **Termination of membership:** The Chair and Vice Chair, in consultation with the Panel and the Secretariat, will reconsider membership if a member has acted in a manner that undermines the scientific and/or operational integrity of the Panel, has been unable to attend two thirds of the meetings per annum (without apology) or breached these terms of reference. When resigning from the Panel, members are expected to give prior notice of at least one meeting in advance.
- **Decision making (including handling disagreements):** Decisions shall be taken generally by consensus. Should a vote be necessary, decisions shall be taken on simple majority with the Chair having the casting vote should the vote be equal. When disagreements cannot be resolved, divergent views will be recorded and made publicly available.
- **Compensation:** Members will receive no fees or other remuneration for their time. Should travel or other activities be needed, support will be provided. Details will be added in the operational guidance.
- **Secretariat:** The Tripartite Joint Secretariat on antimicrobial resistance will provide support to the Panel. The details of operation, including the relationship with the Chair and Vice Chair, will be developed by the Panel. The

Secretariat should be adequately funded to be able to support the work of the Panel.

- **Operational guidance:** The Panel will develop its own operational guidance in line with the principles of these terms of reference to describe ways of working, including functions and roles, Working Groups, meetings, reviews (peer and external), consultations and Secretariat support.
6. **Declaration of interests:** A conflict of interest refers to any interest (professional, financial or other) that may affect or may reasonably be perceived to affect the Panel or Working Group member's objectivity and independence. These potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed by members before the start of their terms of office. Members must recuse themselves from engagement when conflict of interest exists. Members are required to regularly declare perceived conflicts as they arise but at least once a year. The Secretariat, in collaboration with the Panel Chair and Vice Chair, will decide on conflicts of interest and will make them publicly available.
 7. **Communication with governments and other stakeholders:** The Panel should devise a communications strategy that seeks to bring the Panel conclusions and evidence to the attention of priority stakeholders in a way that will enable them to act on the Panel's reports. The Panel can communicate its reports and options to governments to inform their efforts in tackling antimicrobial resistance. In addition, the Panel will confer and communicate with the Global Leaders Group (pending its establishment), the Tripartite and other organizations as well as the partnership platform (pending establishment) where governments, civil societies and the private sector interact.
 8. **Key performance indicators:** The Panel's performance will be measured by key input, process, and output indicators that assess the impact of its work. The metrics of these indicators will be agreed upon by the Panel at an early date. The Panel should assign members responsibility for collating and presenting stakeholder evaluation and supporting information to inform its effectiveness, drawing on independent expertise as needed. This information and assessment should be made publicly available.