Background

The frequency and magnitude of outbreaks of arthropod-borne viruses ("arbovirus"), particularly those transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes, are increasing globally, fuelled by the convergence of ecologic, economic and social factors. These factors include rapid urbanization, migration, climate change, insecticide resistance, poverty, and water and sanitation deficiencies. Some Aedes spp. mosquitoes (Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus) have adapted to feeding on humans and reproducing in water collections near human habitats, particularly under favourable tropical and subtropical temperatures. Thus, continuing urbanization and climate change are driving the expansion of the geographic range in which these vectors can thrive. Vulnerable populations in tropical and sub-tropical regions are typically most exposed, and many are threatened by circulation of multiple arboviruses including dengue, chikungunya, Zika and yellow fever viruses, among others. In a resource-constrained global public health environment, a comprehensive integrated arbovirus strategy is necessary to tackle these ubiquitous threats and address preparedness, prevention, response and control of the Aedes-borne diseases.

WHO is uniquely positioned globally, regionally and at the country level to coordinate a Global Integrated Arbovirus Initiative ("GIAI" or "the Initiative") for preparedness, prevention, detection and response to the public health challenges posed by arbovirus globally. The GIAI is a World Health Organization (WHO) Secretariat initiative, coordinated jointly by the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (Global Infectious Hazards Preparedness (GIH) Department and the Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals Department), and the Neglected Tropical Diseases Programme of the Communicable and Noncommunicable Diseases Division. The Initiative shall convene multi-disciplinary partners and existing disease-specific programs to strengthen regional and national integrated arbovirus disease programs. An integrated approach shall enable optimal use of limited resources to achieve the greatest impact, particularly in areas with the heaviest arboviral burden.

The Technical Advisory Group on the GIAI (TAG) shall provide technical advice to WHO with a view to supporting the development and refinement of the GIAI, as well as the monitoring of the GIAI implementation, and shall act as an advisory body to WHO in the field of arbovirus.
I. Functions

In its capacity as an advisory body to WHO, the TAG shall have the following functions:

1. to provide independent evaluation of the scientific, technical and strategic aspects of the GIAI;

2. to recommend priorities on Arbovirus research within WHO;

3. to advise WHO on GIAI approaches and/or strategies to be pursued in WHO Member States; and advise WHO on matters pertaining to the review of progress in the GIAI implementation; and

4. to make recommendations to WHO on any necessary modifications and/or updates to the GIAI.

II. Composition

1. The TAG shall have up to 20 members¹, who shall serve in their personal capacities to represent the broad range of disciplines relevant the GIAI.

2. In the selection of the TAG members, consideration shall be given to attaining the broadest possible representation in terms of diversity of skill set, experience, geographical representation and gender balance.

3. Members of the TAG, including the chairperson and vice-chairperson, shall be selected and appointed by WHO following an open call for experts. The chairperson's functions include the following:

   - to chair meetings of the TAG;
   - to liaise with the WHO Secretariat between meetings;
   - to facilitate a productive and respectful discussion;
   - to assist the WHO Secretariat in finalizing the report of each TAG meeting; and
   - to participate in meetings of other relevant WHO technical advisory groups, as an observer, when invited by WHO.

In appointing a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, consideration shall be given to gender and geographical representation. The Vice-Chairperson shall take the responsibilities of the Chairperson when the Chairperson is absent from a meeting or any part thereof, or is unable to complete her or his term of office or act in between TAG meetings.

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¹ Members serve as full participants and partake in the decision-making process of the meeting in which they are involved.
4. Members of the TAG shall be appointed to serve for a period of two (2) years and shall be eligible for reappointment only once for another two-year period. The Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson are eligible for reappointment as a member of the TAG, but are only permitted to serve as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for one term. Their appointment and/or designation as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson may be terminated at any time by WHO if WHO's interest so requires or as otherwise specified in these terms of reference or letters of appointment.

5. Where the position of a TAG member becomes vacant for any reason (including, without limitation, by reason of the termination, resignation or death of the incumbent member), such position shall be filled with a replacement member selected and appointed by WHO in accordance with the relevant provisions of these terms of reference.

6. TAG members must respect the impartiality and independence required of WHO. In performing their work, members may not seek or accept instructions from any Government or from any authority external to the Organization. They must be free of any real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest. To this end, proposed members/members shall be required to complete and return to WHO a declaration of interest form and their appointment, or continuation of their appointment, shall be subject to the evaluation of completed forms by the WHO Secretariat, determining that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

7. Following a determination that a proposed member’s participation in the TAG would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest, the proposed member will be sent a letter inviting them to be a member of the TAG. Their appointment to the TAG is subject to WHO receiving the countersigned invitation letter and letter of agreement. Notwithstanding the requirement to complete the WHO declaration of interest form, TAG members have an ongoing obligation to inform the WHO of any interests real or perceived that may give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

8. As contemplated in paragraph II.4 above, WHO may, from time to time, request TAG members to complete a new declaration of interest form. This may be before a TAG meeting or any other TAG-related activity or engagement, as decided by WHO. Where WHO has made such a request, the TAG member’s participation in the TAG activity or engagement is subject to a determination that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

9. Where a TAG member is invited by WHO to travel to an in-person TAG meeting, WHO shall, subject to any conflict of interest determination as set out in paragraph II.6 above, issue a letter of appointment as a temporary adviser and accompanying memorandum of agreement (together “Temporary Adviser Letter”). WHO shall not authorize travel by a TAG member, and a TAG member shall not undertake such travel, until WHO receives a countersigned Temporary Adviser Letter.

10. TAG members do not receive any remuneration from the Organization for any work related to the TAG. However, when attending in-person meetings at the invitation of WHO, their
travel cost and per diem shall be covered by WHO in accordance with the applicable WHO rules and policies.

III. Operation

1. The TAG shall normally meet once each year. However, WHO may convene additional meetings. TAG meetings may be held in person (at WHO headquarters in Geneva or another location, as determined by WHO) or virtually, via video or teleconference, on an ad-hoc basis. TAG meetings may be held in open and/or closed session, as decided by the Chairperson in consultation with WHO.

   (a) Open sessions: Open sessions shall be convened for the sole purpose of the exchange of non-confidential information and views and may be attended by Observers (as defined in paragraph III.3 below).

   (b) Closed sessions: The sessions dealing with the formulation of recommendations and/or advice to WHO shall be restricted to the members of the TAG and essential WHO Secretariat staff.

2. The quorum for TAG meetings shall be two thirds of the members.

3. WHO may, at its sole discretion, invite external individuals from time to time to attend the open sessions of an advisory group, or parts thereof, as “observers”. Observers may be invited either in their personal capacity, or as representatives from a governmental institution / intergovernmental organization, or from a non-state actor. WHO shall request observers invited in their personal capacity to complete a confidentiality undertaking and a declaration of interests form prior to attending a session of the advisory group. Invitations to observers attending as representatives from non-state actors shall be subject to internal due diligence and conflict of interest considerations in accordance with FENSA. Observers invited as representatives may also be requested to complete a confidentiality undertaking. Observers shall normally attend meetings of the AG at their own expense and be responsible for making all arrangements in that regard.

4. At the invitation of the Chairperson, observers may be asked to present their personal views and/or the policies of their organization. Observers shall not participate in the process of adopting decisions and recommendations of the TAG.

5. The TAG may decide to establish smaller working groups (sub-groups of the TAG) to work on specific issues. Their deliberations shall take place via teleconference or videoconference. For these sub-groups, no quorum requirement shall apply; the outcome of their deliberations shall be submitted to the TAG for review at one of its meetings.

6. The appointment of TAG may be terminated at any time by WHO, if WHO’s interest so requires or as otherwise specified in these terms of reference or in the Letters of Appointment.

7. A yearly report shall be submitted by the TAG to WHO (the Assistant Director-General of the responsible Cluster). All recommendations from the TAG are advisory to WHO, who retains
full control over any subsequent decisions or actions regarding any proposals, policy issues or other matters considered by the TAG.

8. The TAG shall normally make recommendations by consensus. If, in exceptional circumstances, a consensus on a particular issue cannot be reached, minority opinions shall be reflected in the meeting report.

9. Active participation is expected from all TAG members, including in working groups, teleconferences, and interaction over email. TAG members may, in advance of TAG meetings, be requested to review meeting documentation and to provide their views for consideration by the TAG.

10. WHO shall determine the modes of communication by the TAG, including between WHO and the TAG members, and the TAG members among themselves.

11. TAG members shall not speak on behalf of, or represent, the TAG or WHO to any third party.

IV. Secretariat

WHO shall provide the secretariat for the TAG, including necessary scientific, technical, administrative and other support. In this regard, the WHO Secretariat shall provide the members in advance of each meeting with the agenda, working documents and discussion papers. Distribution of the aforesaid documents to Observers shall be determined by the WHO Secretariat. The meeting agenda shall include details such as whether a meeting, or part thereof, is closed or open, and whether Observers are permitted to attend.

V. Information and documentation

1. Information, materials and documentation (whether written, oral, visual, electronic or any other forma) to which members may gain access in performing TAG-related activities and/or attending TAG meetings (collectively “Information”) shall be considered as confidential and proprietary to WHO and/or parties collaborating with WHO. In addition, by counter signing the letter of appointment and the accompanying terms and conditions referred to in section II(5) above, TAG members undertake to abide by the confidentiality obligations contained therein and also confirm that any and all rights in the work performed by them in connection with, or as a result of their TAG-related activities shall be exclusively vested in WHO.

TAG members and Observers shall not disclose, quote from, circulate or use Information for any purpose other than in a manner and for the purpose expressly permitted in these Terms of Reference and letter of appointment and accompanying terms and conditions referred to in section II(5) above.

2. WHO retains full control over the publication of the reports of the TAG, including deciding whether or not to publish them.