Terms of Reference for the Technical Advisory Group on Universal Health and Preparedness Review (TAG-UHPR)

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that no country was fully prepared to deal with a pandemic of such scale, speed, severity, and impact. The Universal Health and Preparedness Review (UHPR) was proposed to increase accountability and transparency among Member States in gap identification and capacity building to empower better health emergency preparedness. The peer-review nature of the UHPR ensures that key issues identified will be acted upon at the highest political levels of government, and that relevant recommendations will be followed up upon and monitored on a regular basis.

To provide technical guidance and advice on the UHPR process, a group of global technical experts has been convened to support WHO in the development of relevant technical documents, including the methodology for reviewing preparedness status, including a set of indicators to be used by all Member States undergoing the review process.

The UHPR Technical Advisory Group (TAG) will act as an advisory body to WHO in this regard.

I. Functions

In its capacity as a technical advisory body to WHO, TAG will provide expert inputs to WHO on the technical content of the UHPR, including draft processes for piloting, and ensure that relevant technical documents are evidence-based, logical, and appropriate. TAG shall have the following functions:

1. Support WHO strategies to ensure that implementation of the UHPR adheres to its key principles and requirements considering the unique contexts and specific needs of countries.
2. Provide feedback and outcomes to WHO from the UHPR pilot phase and refine the technical content toward a final version to be presented by WHO at the 78th World Health Assembly in 2025.

II. Composition

The AG shall have up to 16 members who serve in their personal capacities to represent the broad range of disciplines relevant to UHPR, including senior and high-level expertise in the following:

1. In the selection of TAG members, consideration will be given to ensuring adequate distribution of technical expertise, geographical representation, and gender balance.
2. Members of TAG, including the Chairperson, shall be selected, and appointed by WHO following an open call for experts and appointed by the Executive Director (ExD) of WHE. The Chairperson's functions will include the following:

- Chair meetings of the TAG.
- Liaise with the WHO Secretariat between meetings.

In appointing a Chairperson, consideration shall be given to gender and geographical representation.

3. Members of TAG shall be appointed to serve for a period of 3 years and be eligible for reappointment. The Chairperson will be eligible for reappointment as a member of TAG but is only permitted to serve as Chairperson for one term. Their appointment or designation as Chairperson may be terminated at any time by WHO if WHO’s interest so requires or as otherwise specified in the terms of reference or letters of appointment. Where a member’s appointment is terminated, WHO may decide to appoint a replacement member.

4. TAG members must respect the impartiality and independence required by WHO. In performing their work, members may not seek or accept instructions from any Government or other authority external to the Organization. They must be free of any real, potential, or apparent conflicts of interest. To this end, proposed members shall be required to complete a declaration of interests form and their appointment, and 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 real, potential, or apparent conflicts of interest.

5. 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 raise to a real, potential, or apparent conflict of interest.

6. 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 conflicts of interest.

7. When 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 (Temporary Adviser Letter). WHO shall not authorize travel by a TAG member, until it receives a countersigned Temporary Adviser Letter.

8. TAG members will 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 costs and per diem shall be covered by WHO in accordance with the applicable WHO rules and policies.

III. Operations

1. The TAG shall normally meet at least four times each year. However, WHO may convene additional meetings as needed and appropriate. 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.

TAG meetings may be held in open or closed sessions, as decided by the Chairperson in consultation with WHO.

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

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

2. The quorum for TAG meetings shall be two thirds of the members. 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/intergovernmental organization, or from a non-state actor. WHO will 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 will be subject to internal due diligence and conflict of interest considerations in accordance with FENSA. Observers invited as representatives may be requested to complete a confidentiality undertaking. Observers shall normally attend TAG meetings at their own expense and be responsible for making relevant arrangements.

3. At the invitation of the Chairperson, observers may be asked to present their personal views and/or the policies of their organizations. Observers will not participate in the process of adopting decisions and recommendations of the TAG.
4. 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 video-conference. For these sub-groups, no quorum requirement will apply; the outcome of their deliberations will be submitted to the TAG for review at one of its meetings.

5. TAG members are expected to attend meetings. If a member misses two consecutive meetings, WHO may end their appointment as a member of the TAG.

6. Reports of each meeting shall be submitted by TAG to WHO. All recommendations from TAG are advisory to WHO, which retains full control over any subsequent decisions or actions regarding any proposals, policy issues or other matters considered by the TAG.

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

8. 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 provide their views for consideration by TAG.

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

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

IV. Secretariat

WHO Secretariat shall provide secretariat services to the AG, including necessary technical, administrative and other support. In this regard, the WHO Secretariat shall provide members in advance of each meeting with the agenda, working documents and discussion papers. Distribution of aforementioned documents to Observers will 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. The WHO Secretariat shall also draft meeting reports with inputs from TAG members after each meeting and circulate final versions of the meeting reports to TAG members.

V. Information and documentation

1. Information and documentation to which members may gain access in performing TAG-related activities shall be considered confidential and proprietary to WHO and/or parties collaborating with WHO. In addition, by countersigning the letter of appointment and accompanying terms and conditions referred to in section II (5) above, TAG members
undertake to abide by confidentiality obligations contained therein and confirm that any and all rights in the work performed in connection with, or as a result of their TAG-related activities shall be exclusively vested in WHO.

2. TAG members and Observers shall not quote from, circulate, or use TAG documents for any purpose other than in a manner consistent with their responsibilities under these Terms of Reference.

3. WHO retains full control over the publication of the reports of the TAG, including deciding whether to publish them.