

## Terms of Reference for the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization

The Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization was established in 1999 to provide policy and strategy advice on vaccines and immunization to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO). SAGE is the principal advisory group to WHO for vaccines and immunization. All vaccine-and immunization-related topics of public health relevance for which WHO requires strategic and policy advice shall be reviewed by SAGE.

### I. Functions

In its capacity as an advisory body to WHO, SAGE shall provide:

1. ***Policy advice on vaccines and on immunization*** – This is based on the synthesis of scientific and technical information with considerations of programme implementation to form normative guidance, e.g., for vaccine use published as WHO vaccine position papers<sup>1</sup>.
2. ***Strategic advice*** – This is based on the technical review and appraisal of vaccine-preventable disease (VPD) control or global vaccine and immunization strategies developed by WHO and partners. SAGE reviews the evidence base for strategies, targets and objectives; identifies gaps or areas for improvement; and determines whether to endorse the reviewed strategies.
3. ***Monitoring and evaluation*** – This consists of providing external independent appraisal on progress toward vaccine and immunization goals defined by the global community and to provide advice on ongoing efforts, need for and approaches to course corrections.
4. ***Strategic foresight and innovation*** – This consists of identifying research needs and areas that require innovation in order to achieve VPD control targets more effectively.

### II. Composition

1. SAGE shall have up to 20 members<sup>2</sup>, who shall serve in their personal capacities to represent the broad range of disciplines relevant to vaccines and immunization. In the selection of SAGE members, consideration shall be given to attaining an adequate distribution of technical expertise, geographical representation and gender balance.
2. Members of SAGE, including the Chairperson and deputy Chairperson, shall be selected and appointed by WHO following an open call for experts. The Chairperson's and deputy Chairperson's functions include the following:
  - to chair the meeting of SAGE;
  - to liaise with the WHO Secretariat between meetings.

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

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<sup>1</sup> In adherence to the SAGE [Guidance for the development of evidence-based vaccine-related recommendations](#)

<sup>2</sup> Members serve as full participants and partake in the decision-making process of the meeting in which they are involved.

3. Members of SAGE shall be appointed to serve for a period of up to 3 years and shall be eligible for reappointment. Their appointment of a SAGE member and/or designation as 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. Where a member's appointment is terminated, WHO may decide to appoint a replacement member.
4. SAGE 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 a declaration of interests 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.
5. Following a determination that a proposed member's participation in SAGE 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 SAGE. Their appointment to SAGE is subject to WHO receiving the countersigned invitation letter and letter of agreement. Notwithstanding the requirement to complete the WHO declaration of interest form, SAGE 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.
6. As contemplated in paragraph II.4 above, WHO may, from time to time, request SAGE members to complete a new declaration of interest form. This may be before a SAGE meeting or any other SAGE-related activity or engagement, as decided by WHO. Where WHO has made such a request, the SAGE member's participation in the SAGE activity or engagement is subject to a determination that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.
7. Where a SAGE member is invited by WHO to travel to an in-person SAGE 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 SAGE member, until it receives a countersigned Temporary Adviser Letter.
8. SAGE members do not receive any remuneration from the Organization for any work related to the SAGE. 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 SAGE shall normally meet at least twice each year. However, WHO may convene additional meetings. SAGE meetings may be held in person (at WHO headquarters in Geneva or another location, as determined by WHO) or virtually, via video or teleconference.

AG 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). In addition, the Secretariat may decide that all or parts of the open sessions may be web streamed. Participants connected through web stream will not be allowed to engage in the meeting.
- (b) Closed sessions: The sessions dealing with the formulation of recommendations and/or advice to WHO shall be restricted to the members of SAGE and essential WHO Secretariat staff.

2. The quorum for SAGE 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 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 WHO internal due diligence and risk assessment including conflict of interest considerations in accordance with Framework on engagement with non-State actors (FENSA). Observers invited as representatives may also be requested to complete a confidentiality undertaking. Observers shall normally attend meetings of SAGE at their own expense and be responsible for making all arrangements in that regard.

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

4. SAGE may decide to establish smaller working groups (sub-groups of SAGE) 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 SAGE for review at one of its meetings.
5. SAGE members are expected to attend meetings. If a member misses two consecutive meetings, WHO may end his/her appointment as a member of SAGE.
6. The SAGE Chair presents the Director-General or delegate a report containing the outcomes and recommendations of the meetings. The Director-General or delegate shall be responsible for authorizing their release. Only thereafter can recommendations be publicly communicated. All recommendations from SAGE are advisory to WHO, who retains full control over any subsequent decisions or actions regarding any proposals, policy issues or other matters considered by SAGE.

7. SAGE 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 SAGE members, including in working groups, teleconferences, and interaction over email. SAGE members may, in advance of SAGE meetings, be requested to review meeting documentation and to provide their views for consideration by SAGE.
9. WHO shall determine the modes of communication by SAGE, including between WHO and SAGE members, and the SAGE members among themselves.
10. As a general rule, SAGE members shall not speak on behalf of SAGE but should redirect enquiries to the Secretariat. However, on specific occasions, the WHO Secretariat may authorise SAGE members to represent or speak on behalf of SAGE in compliance with confidentiality rules and with appropriate disclaimers. In no instance can SAGE members speak on behalf of WHO.

#### **IV. Secretariat**

WHO shall provide the secretariat for SAGE, 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 will be determined by the WHO Secretariat.

#### **V. Information and documentation**

1. Information and documentation to which members may gain access in performing SAGE related activities 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, SAGE 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 SAGE-related activities shall be exclusively vested in WHO.
2. SAGE members and Observers shall not quote from, circulate or use SAGE 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 SAGE, including deciding whether or not to publish them.