Executive Oversight Committee

Meeting notes

Date: Wednesday, 8 May 2019

Participants:
Patrick Moriarty (Chair)
Catarina de Albuquerque, Joost Kooijmans, Lotte Feuerstein, Lisa Schechtman, Vanessa Dubois

Notetaker: Soumeya Benbouchta

Agenda

1. CEO update
2. HR update and discussion
3. Fundraising and budget update and discussion
4. Steering committee meeting update and discussion
5. CEO travel plan approval
6. AOB

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<td>22 March</td>
<td>CTA to draft email on behalf of the SC Chair, asking UNICEF to create PCAs with new selected hosts, once the SC approves.</td>
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1. CEO update

Catarina updated the group on the Sector Ministers’ Meeting (SMM), the upcoming Finance Ministers’ Meeting (FMM) that will take place in Washington D.C next spring, the Secretariat retreat and the SWA website.

- **Sector Ministers’ Meeting**

  Catarina informed the group that: 1) we had a record number of Ministers participating in the SMM this year (53 Ministers from 74 countries and a total of 297 participants); 2) 89 people completed the feedback form and; 3) 87% of the participants viewed the meeting positively.

  Catarina mentioned that the main takeaways from the feedback received were the following:

  - Most participants thought the plenaries were too long;
  - Many expressed they would have liked to have more time to table and develop commitments ahead of the meeting;
  - The Ministerial Dialogues were strongly appreciated;
  - The Private Sector was the least satisfied constituency and provided more detailed feedback than other constituencies;

  Catarina also informed the group that we still don’t have the final figures, but we spent on average 1.2 million dollars on the SMM and exceeded our budget by 400K.

- **Finance Ministers’ Meeting**

  Catarina informed the EOC that she had a fruitful meeting in Washington D.C last week with the World Bank to discuss the FMM preparations.

- **SWA team retreat**

  Catarina reported that the SWA Secretariat had a retreat in Costa Rica the week following the SMM. This was the very first team retreat SWA has ever had, it took place in a hotel outside the city and it lasted 4 and a half days. Catarina also expressed that this retreat was very useful both in terms of planning and team building. She reported that the Secretariat is now preparing a summary of the retreat that will be shared with the EOC and asked if this should also be shared with the Steering Committee in June. The group decided this should indeed be shared with the Steering Committee.

  **Action:** Catarina to share summary of Secretariat retreat with EOC ahead of the June Steering Committee meeting.

- **SWA Website**

  Catarina explained that the SWA website hasn’t been updated in a long time and it therefore requires considerable work in terms of web development. There are two options available at the moment: 1) accepting UNICEF’S suggestion to use a website template that is also being used by another partnership within UNICEF or, 2) hire a company that will update and maintain the SWA website. The second option would have an additional cost of 30-40K.

  Catarina expressed her preference for the second option as it allows SWA to have a more complex and attractive website, more independence and flexibility. She explained that the SWA website might not be a priority for UNICEF in the long run and this could be a risk. Patrick asked for a formal note to be shared with the group if a decision was needed from the EOC but clarified that this could be simply for informational purposes. Lotte seconded Patrick on his suggestion and mentioned it’s important to understand the justification for the extra cost if a decision is needed from the group.

  Catarina clarified that we had already budgeted for these expenses and this cost was approved by the Steering Committee. She emphasized that the website issue is urgent as we need to publish the commitments on the website and this will require significant web development work.

  It was agreed by the group that Catarina will share an informational comparison note with the EOC by next week and that the Secretariat will decide on the most appropriate course of action.

  **Action:** Catarina to share a comparison note with EOC on the week of 20 May for informational purposes.
2. Human Resources update and discussion

- **Africa Regional Coordinator**
  Catarina reported that this position was advertised and a total of 42 applications were received. Out of the 42 applications, 7 candidates were initially shortlisted, but this will be increased to a total of 8 candidates.

- **Abolished posts**
  Catarina reminded the group that two posts were abolished by the Steering Committee last September and explained that as per UNICEF rules and procedures, we had to keep the two staff members on contract for 6 months after the abolition. Catarina informed that these two contracts have ended on 30 April and that SWA has no further financial obligation over these posts.

- **Ad hoc support for SMM**
  Catarina reported that several consultants were hired to support the SMM preparations and that most of these contracts have now ended. She announced that one of the senior consultants who had a contract until the end of the year decided to terminate it to pursue other professional opportunities. The fundraising adviser’s contract has also ended, and Catarina asked the EOC if a new consultant should be hired. A discussion about fundraising took place at a later moment (see below).

- **Recruitment of 3 approved staff positions (G7, P2 and P4)**
  Catarina announced that the G7 Budget Officer post has been advertised and interviews will be taking place next week. She mentioned Paul Deverill has kindly accepted to be on the selection panel.

  Catarina also informed the group that the P4 Country Engagement post is being advertised, the P2 Executive Officer will be advertised mid-May and the P4 Communications Officer post is being created. She also mentioned that SWA’s presence in Geneva will be strengthened next year with some posts being based there. Catarina flagged that being based in Geneva is particularly important for the Country Engagement Officer’s role to ensure he/she is able to travel easily to partner countries and also to guarantee a certain alignment in terms of time zones.

- **LNEC and IRC positions**
  Catarina informed the EOC that LNEC and IRC have agreed to host the three positions approved by the Steering Committee.

  Catarina explained that there is a need to secure funding beyond 2020 to sign agreements with these two organizations. She mentioned that the SWA leadership is currently looking into the funding situation to decide how to best proceed. Catarina informed that since the decision memo (which is needed to transition SWA’s arrangement with UNICEF into a hosted fund) hasn’t been signed yet, an interim solution has to be found. She proposed we sign a short-term agreement for a period of one year with these organizations. She asked the group to share their thoughts and views on this issue.

  Joost stated that Catarina and himself are highly optimistic regarding the funding and mentioned they have received reassurances from several donors on this issue.

  Patrick suggested that it would be good to ask the two organizations if they are comfortable with the short-term agreement as an interim solution..

  The group agreed on creating the positions for one year with the option to renew for a longer period of time.

**Action:** Catarina to consult LNEC and IRC on the possibility of creating a short-term agreement.

- **Human Resources AOB**
  Patrick asked Joost if Secretariat team members had fully recovered from the SMM. Joost answered that everyone has recovered well and that the team is on track with all the different issues and tasks. He mentioned the recruitments are time consuming and that these are the Secretariat’s main focus at the present time.

3. Update on Fundraising and Budget
Joost reported he has been receiving encouraging signs from current SWA donors particularly, from USAID whom he visited last week in Washington D.C along with Catarina and Sitali. He also mentioned he is maintaining discussions with other donors and is convinced SWA is on the way to cover its funding needs for 2020. He flagged we still have a 3.7 million gap (of which 2.2 should be dedicated to cover staff costs) but he is optimistic that these gaps will be covered in a timely manner.

Joost announced that it was decided donors will continue funding SWA through the traditional grants. However, once SWA transitions to a hosted fund, we will need to discuss with donors the reporting mechanism they will be most comfortable with. He suggested we send personalized reports to each donor instead of sharing the annual report.

Vanessa asked if there is a “plan B” in place in case the funding shortage is not resolved soon. Catarina stated she is confident the funding gap will be covered and that USAID for example, is willing to continue funding SWA. She indicated this is an encouraging sign and she foresees other donors will follow. Amanda confirmed that USAID will indeed continue funding SWA next year in the same amount as previously.

Joost clarified that we do have a budget allocated for next year but not enough for salaries. Vanessa suggested in view of this situation, that we recruit a new fundraising adviser and also that the Finance Working Group helps and guides the fundraising process.

Catarina proposed she could be the new chair of the Finance Working Group to work closely with the members on fundraising issues. The group asked if having the CEO chair a WG could represent a Governance issue. Catarina clarified that she can indeed chair a WG based on the following excerpt from the Governance document: "Work Groups may be headed by a Work Group Coordinator, who should be nominated by a SC member but can be drawn from the SWA partnership."

Patrick added that donor representatives should be part of this working group as well.

It was decided by the group that Catarina will chair the Fundraising WG moving forward. Catarina took the opportunity to emphasize the fact that donors are not willing to commit for consecutive years because the SWA Strategy is coming to an end. The new strategy is therefore fundamental to be able to “sell” SWA.

The EOC Chair suggested that the Secretariat develops a paper explaining the funding situation to the Steering Committee.

**Action:** The Secretariat to develop a paper on the funding situation to be shared with the SC in June

**Action:** The CEO to write to the head of the Governance and Finance sub-committee to inform her of the decision on chairing the fundraising working group

### 4. Update Berlin SC meeting

Catarina reported a SC draft agenda has been shared with Patrick and she is now addressing the comments he sent back. She also stated that the Steering Committee will be composed of two retreat days and one proper Steering Committee meeting, emphasizing the fact that the retreat is a full part of the SC meeting. The focus, and main topic of the June retreat will be the new SWA Strategy.

Catarina informed the group that during her recent meeting with USAID in Washington, the agenda of the retreat was discussed with Lisa.

Patrick suggested that we think carefully about the sequence of topics during the SC meeting to avoid leaving important elements for the very end. Patrick also suggested observers should not be given a formal role in the discussion. Catarina agreed and proposed that certain discussions such as chair election, approval of new partners, human resources and budget, should be left for the second part of the day, right before the executive session to protect the decision-making process.

The group agreed with Catarina’s suggestion and asked for a new draft agenda to be prepared by the Secretariat.

**Action:** Catarina to circulate an updated Steering Committee draft agenda.
5. CEO’s travel plan April-August 2019

Catarina shared a document with the group outlining her missions from April to August.

The group thanked her for the consultation but proposed she shares a calendar of activities instead. Catarina explained that for UNICEF purposes she needs the EOC members to approve her travel, which they did.

Patrick emphasized that SC members and partners should be encouraged to participate in regional events in representation of the Partnership.

**Action:** The Secretariat to share with the group a calendar of activities for the remainder of the year and to include this item in the draft SC agenda.

6. AOB

It was decided that the next EOC meeting will take place before the June SC meeting.

Lotte announced she won’t be able to join the next meeting and asked if Neil could replace her. The EOC Chair agreed to this proposal. Patrick also suggested to have a meeting to discuss the SWA budget ahead of the SC meeting.

**Action:** Catarina to circulate Doodle with options for upcoming EOC meeting.

**Action:** Catarina and Joost to prepare a budget update to be discussed with the EOC ahead of the SC meeting.