

Accountable Now

Board of Trustees Meeting

25 October 2017

Minutes

Present

Janet Dalziell, Greenpeace International (*Member*)

Clare Doube, Amnesty International (*Member*)

Elie Gasagara, World Vision International (*Member*)

Brendan Gormley, (*Chair*) (*Independent*)

Caroline Harper, Sightsavers (*Vice-Chair*) (*Member*)

Janet Mawiyoo, (*Independent*)

Rosa Inés Ospina, Rendir Cuentas (*formally linked to 12 Commitments*)

Bettie van Straaten, CIVICUS (*Treasurer*) (*Member*)

Apologies:

Perry Maddox, Restless Development (*Member*)

In attendance from the Secretariat

Nick Roseveare, Interim Executive Director

Ezgi Akarsu, Programme Manager (*Minute taker*)

Welcome (ACC 17/26)

- All action points from the last Board meeting have either been completed or are currently being processed.
- Trustees spoke about the contexts in which their organisations are operating, with shrinking civic space and tensions between governments and civil society a common issue across the board.

Executive Director's Report (ACC 17/27)

The Interim Executive Director **highlighted** the following key achievements and developments in the period from May to October 2016:

- The Global Standard for CSO Accountability :
 - The [12 Commitments](#) have been finalised and published, and the Global Standard will be launched officially at the CIVICUS International Civil Society Week in Fiji, 4-8 December. Accountable Now will be represented by Interim Executive Director Nick Roseveare and incoming Executive Director Rocío Moreno Lopez.
 - A draft concept note and budget for the second phase of the project, which Accountable Now (AN) will host, has been prepared to



support a proposal to SIDA. Preliminary talks are underway, with the suggestion that funding could be provided directly to Accountable Now. **Trustees expressed their support for AN taking on direct funding.**

- Fundraising proposals: Accountable Now is included in two proposals: as an expert partner in CIVICUS' "Beyond Accounts-ability" proposal to the Ford Foundation, and as a supporting partner in Restless Development's bid for the DFID Aid Connect 'Civil Society Effectiveness' stream. Further discussions on both will take place later in the year.
- New reporting framework: Significant work has gone into adapting Accountable Now's reporting framework to reflect the new Global Standard commitments. The new framework has significantly fewer questions and a focus on demonstrating effectiveness rather than strict quantitative reporting. After extensive consultations with Members, it is expected to be formally adopted by the Independent Review Panel in December 2017. Members will begin using the new framework from 2018.
- Member events: Accountable Now hosted another successful annual Members' workshop, on the topic of "[Stakeholder Data Informing Better Decisions](#)", and two [webinars](#) since the last Trustees' meeting.
- Secretariat staffing and capacity:
 - Accountable Now's Executive Director, Karenina Schröder, left the organisation in August, with Nick Roseveare taking over as Interim Executive Director until a permanent replacement was found.
 - Accountable Now's new permanent Executive Director has been confirmed as Rocío Moreno Lopez. Rocío will begin on 29 January, leaving a gap of a month between Nick's departure and her arrival. The Secretariat and Board are exploring how best to create a smooth transition.
 - Accountable Now's Programme Officer Mahmoud Farag will unfortunately be leaving at the end of October, and recruitment for a replacement is underway. As a result, the team is stretched, and is shuffling priorities to deal with reduced capacity until a replacement is hired and trained.

Strategic Issues (ACC 17/28)

The Interim Executive Director presented issues of strategic significance to Accountable Now, which need to be considered in the lead-up to revisions to Accountable Now's Strategy Beyond 2015. The strategy revisions will be undertaken once the new Executive Director arrives.

- Institutional arrangements: The possibility of obtaining German registration for Accountable Now was discussed. Whilst current hosting arrangements with the International Civil Society Centre are satisfactory, Trustees agreed that German registration would increase AN's independence in certain key



areas of decision making. Trustees **decided** to explore this further with the new Executive Director in the first half of 2018.

- Partnerships and alliances: Trustees also agreed that if AN were to strengthen its identity, partnerships with other organisations and/or frameworks could be explored. Trustees agreed that this could add value to AN's work, and **it was decided to explore this further in early 2018**.
- Programmatic growth and funding: Given AN's very limited capacity, it is currently not feasible to prepare extensive bids for significant pieces of funding. It was therefore suggested that AN should invest in partnering with other organisations and joining their bids as a sub-grantee. **Trustees agreed that this is a desirable approach**, but that if AN were approached by a donor who wanted AN to lead a proposal, such an offer would not be turned down.
- Far-horizon issues: it was suggested that Accountable Now should begin considering its longer-term future, particularly as it prepares to host the Secretariat of the Global Standard Phase 2 for the next three years. The history of other sector-wide quality initiatives has shown that organisational identity often changes over time. **Trustees agreed that such a discussion should be taken up with the new Executive Director**.

Financial Report and Legal Update (ACC 17/29)

- **The Board acknowledged the financial update** (08 January – 15 September 2016) as presented by the Interim Executive Director.
- **The Board approved the Secretariat's work plan for 2018**, with the addition of an item on strategy development, and with a note that it is subject to the new Executive Director's preferences. A major change to previous years will be AN's hosting of the Global Standard Secretariat for the project's second phase – details of which are still being clarified. As such, Trustees noted that the work plan may change based on new strategic and programmatic priorities.
- **The Board approved the 2018 budget**, which envisages a significant (66%) increase in turnover, mostly due to the Global Standard Phase 2. The Secretariat presented the budget split into core and programmatic income/expenditure, and demonstrated that core income can cover the costs of all core activities – even if no external funding were to be secured, AN's core functions can still be supported.
- Trustees questioned whether external funds would be paid in advance or in arrears. If the latter is the case, AN may need to rely on its reserves to cover programmatic expenses in the meantime.
- Trustees suggested that the 2018 budget should be presented based around restricted and unrestricted income, rather than core and programmatic, to give a more accurate representation of the amount of reserves AN has



unrestricted access to. The Secretariat will present an updated visualisation of the budget.

- The calculation of reserves was discussed, and Trustees **agreed** that it should be based on a percentage of unrestricted funding rather than a percentage of all expenditure, as is currently the case. The Secretariat will make a concrete suggestion to the Board for decision.
- The Board **mandated** the Board Chair to negotiate and sign the Cooperation and Service Contracts 2018 with the International Civil Society Centre.

Trustee Recruitment (ACC 17/30)

- The Board discussed the turnover of Trustees. Miklos Marschall had left the Board in June, and this was Clare Doube's last meeting. One further Trustee indicated that they may be leaving in the near future, and Janet Dalziell's term ends in June 2018. This makes it imperative to begin recruiting new Trustees as soon as possible, although the Board had previously decided to wait until the new Executive Director shaped AN's new strategy.
- The majority of remaining Trustees' terms come to an end in April 2019, which makes the case for a staggered recruitment of Trustees in future, to avoid the loss of knowledge.
- The Secretariat suggested the creation of a skills matrix to identify the skills required on the Board and which of these are missing, to ensure a purposeful recruitment process.
- The issue of balance between independent Trustees and those from Member organisations was raised. The Board **mandated** the Secretariat with examining the Articles of Association and suggesting any necessary changes.
- It was **agreed** that the Interim Executive Director and the Board Chair would suggest a skills matrix and process for recruitment.

Any Other Business (ACC 17/31)

- The Board Chair expressed his thanks to Clare Doube for her time and valuable contributions as a Trustee of Accountable Now.
- Trustees finished the meeting with a closed session without the Secretariat.

The 2018 Board meetings will take place on 14 February (Wednesday, online), 03 May (Thursday face to face, followed by AGM on Friday 04 May) and 24 October (Wednesday, online).

END