

# Accountable Now Verein

## General Meeting

1 June 2023

Protocol

### **Present**

Rachel Smith, (Chair of the Board) *(Non-Member)*

Jean Scrimgeour, Accountability Lab *(Member)*

Mary Brezovich, SOS Children's Villages International *(Member, Incoming Trustee)*

Jo Thompson, Independant *(Non-Member)*

Alex Sardar, Independent *(Non-Member)*

Babacar Ndong, Educo, *(Member)*

Tamryn Lee-Fourie, Civicus *(Member)*

Veronica Zambrano, Plan International *(Member)*

### **With apologies:**

Dumiso Gatsha, Success Capital *(Independent)*

### **In attendance from the Secretariat**

Megan Colnar, Interim Executive Director

Rocio Moreno, Outgoing Executive Director

### **Welcome and agree on agenda**

- The Chair acknowledged that we had the necessary quorum to begin the meeting and to make the necessary decisions.
- The Chair also pointed out that the agenda had changed slightly because Mary Brezovich would have to leave the meeting early and so the issues that required a decision had been pushed up.

### **Finance and Legal**

The Interim Executive Director provided an overview of our current finances and up to date projections for the rest of the year. In terms of our income, the bulk of our revenue has come in. We are still waiting for 2 membership fees but these will come in in the next

couple of months. In terms of projections, a couple of prospective members are expected to join in the next couple of months. We also included projections on revenue projection related to organising the annual workshop.

In terms of expenses, the board originally approved a non-balanced budget. Some of the main changes to the original budget relate to resources to pay taxes. Our tax advisors have said that given that we provide a service to members we might need to pay VAT on top of membership fees. There are various mitigation strategies that we plan to implement to reduce the amount but this situation is creating pressure on our finances. For this reason, the biggest priority at the moment is fundraising.

**Decision** - The Board requested the Secretariat to calculate how much money we need to have in our reserves to prepare for any contingencies and include a line-item for this in the budget to make sure we do not run out of reserves.

The board instructed the Secretariat to develop and send a monthly financial update to the Board to keep them up to date.

### **Finding a new home for Accountable Now**

AN is fully independent in Germany and there are several hurdles and requirements that take a toll on our small team. For this reason, AN began looking for a home. The Executive Director shared that we have spoken to various members but most of them were not in the position to consider our request. We were looking for an offer that allowed us to maintain independence and thus continue being member-led. Members were very supportive and also excited about the opportunity to reduce the burden on AN and the possibility of freeing up time to work with members.

We received an offer from one of our members which is competitive and strategic. The offer respects the independence of Accountable Now, while at the same time opening up opportunities to expand the membership, enhance our values and mission, while also providing financial support. Taking into consideration the proposal, our current organisational situation and the opportunities going forward, Taking these points into consideration, **the Board unanimously agreed that Accountable Now will begin negotiations on a collaboration agreement with the selected partner which will outline the partnership arrangement between the two parties.**

In addition to this, the Board also discussed the German legal requirements for a small organisation like ours and the potential risk of having to continue to pay taxes going forward for our core work. Taking this into account, **by unanimous vote, the members of the Verein decided to wind down the International - NGO - Accountability Charter in**

**Germany** as soon as possible, following all relevant German laws relevant to the process.<sup>1</sup>

## Membership Options

The Interim Executive Director shared with the Board the need to expand membership that goes beyond reporting. She explained that over time we have seen that our current model is not flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of CSOs' needs. In this regard, AN needs more ways of engaging different types of organisations particularly if we want to expand the membership and become more inclusive.

The Board cautioned that we need a mechanism to make sure that organisations are not just using AN to legitimise organisations who might not put in the work. They also shared that this was a good opportunity to connect more to the power shift and localization agendas.

**Decision** - The Board has unanimously agreed to begin testing out new approaches to bringing in new members. And have also volunteered to bring in new members.

## Priorities

The Interim Executive Director provided an overview of what the next 12 months will look like. She mentioned that the biggest priority is bringing in new resources. There are three main priority areas:

1. Grow the movement- new members, engage donors and using our collective voice to shape agendas
2. Deepen our collective learning and exchange - hosting dialogues and events and sharing resources on some spotlight themes
3. Evolve practice - new reporting framework, new operational home, and new membership tiers and services

The board suggested that the Secretariat elevates fundraising with members to a strategy level. They also cautioned working on emerging topics where there might not be money to carry these out.

## Board Matters

The Board still needs to fill in the roles of Treasurer and Vice-Chair. Given our current composition we need to bring in a member representative to continue maintaining our 60-40 ratio.

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<sup>1</sup> Modified slightly to reflect reality of timelines and processes in Sept 2023 board meeting

**Decision** - The board has asked the Interim Executive Director to find a member

representative to join the Verein as Treasurer. Temporarily, Jean will step in as Interim-Treasurer. The decision around picking a Vice-Chair has been tabled until after the collaboration agreement has been finalised.

The Interim Executive Director mentioned that she will reach out to Board members to also configure a governance committee to work on simplifying the AoA, board charter, and any other governance documents.

The next meeting will take place virtually in September 2023.

**END**