

**Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Governors held in Committee Room 19,  
Palace of Westminster, on Thursday, 11 September 2014**

<b>Present</b>	Henry Bellingham MP (Chair)	
	Ken Caldwell	
	Bronwen Manby	
	Rt Hon Sir Andrew Stunell MP	
<b>In attendance</b>	Anthony Smith	CEO
	Paul Naismith	Finance Director
	Graeme Renshaw	M&E Adviser
	George Kunnath	Head of Europe Team
	Dina Melhem	Head of MENA Team
	Chris Harmer	Communications Manager
	Philippa Broom	Conservative Party
	Nabila Sattar	Labour Party
	Iain Gill	Liberal Democrats
	Chris Levick	Smaller Parties
	Lucy Ahad	Head, Human Rights & Democracy Dept, FCO
	Neil Angell	Deputy Head, Human Rights & Democracy Dept, FCO
	Emma Kouki	Desk Officer, Democracy & Elections, HRDD, FCO
	Aislin Baker	Political Governance Adviser, DFID
	Tamara Moluch	Minute Taker

**1. Welcomes and Apologies for absence**

Henry Bellingham **welcomed** Anthony Smith, WFD's newly appointed Chief Executive, to his first Board meeting.

**Apologies** were received from Rushanara Ali, Ann McKechin, John Osmond, Andrew Rosindell and Pete Wishart

**2. Conflict of Interest Declarations** - None declared.

**3. Minutes of Board meetings** (Document 1a-b)

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 25 June 2014 **APPROVED** and duly signed by the Chair.

Action Point 3/Apr.14 - review of process for reporting open/ closed projects and programmes: Anthony Smith referred the Board to Agenda Item 5 (Forward Board Agenda) and a proposal for the Board to review key management information in the form of a quarterly dashboard which would provide more coherent key performance indicator of WFD's financial and business processes; information on open/closed projects and programmes would be part of this dashboard. A proposal on how this information might be presented will be considered by the Board at its November meeting.

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

As a prelude to discussion, Anthony Smith gave a snapshot of his first impressions of WFD. In his first weeks as CEO, he had met everyone at the Board meeting on a one-to-basis and had been warmly welcomed by all. His initial impressions had been reinforced. The work that WFD was engaged in was of huge importance to both national and international priorities and WFD should be making significant contributions to this effort. Everyone he had met was enthusiastic about WFD and, whilst agreeing that WFD was not living up to its potential, all were eager to invest energy and resources into improving the way WFD worked, particularly at the collective level. He was supportive of WFD's party work / parliamentary work model and also saw an opportunity for WFD to strengthen and extend its collaboration with others working in the field of democracy. In so doing, UK's impact in this area would increase.

WFD now has the opportunity and great potential to move forward; and the work now needs to begin in earnest.

### 4. Response to FCO Triennial Review (Document 2)

Anthony Smith introduced a proposed response to those recommendations in the Triennial Review that enjoyed support among Governors, stressing the need for an urgent response in order to prepare a Business Case by end-2014 for further DFID funding as well as compete successfully for other funding in 2015.

In **APPROVING** the four-part agenda outlined in the document and **ENDORISING** the urgency of the planned work, the Board made the following comments:

- A new strategic framework  
Ken Caldwell raised the need to clearly define and agree the areas to be covered in the strategic framework, including, as highlighted by Andrew Stunell, the role of politics which was part of WFD's unique selling point. Ken also supported the proposed consultation workshop which he said was an opportunity for WFD to rebuild its profile with key external opinion-formers in the democracy building world. A draft strategic framework would be considered by the Board at its November meeting.
- Improved programme quality  
As work on improving programme quality progressed, process indicators would need to be developed to track progress and an appropriate reporting system put in place to facilitate the Board's oversight of programme quality.
- Reformed governance structure, roles and responsibility  
See agenda item 5 below.
- Cross-cutting issues, etc. communications and systems modernisation
- Milestones  
The following additions were proposed: the recruitment of Programme and Policy Directors; development of the annual Business Plan for 2015-16; the proposed high-profile external event; and the 2015 UK General Election. In this connection, Andrew Stunell asked that thought be given as to how momentum could be maintained as WFD came to the end of one funding cycle and entered another whilst, at the same time, the UK General Election would put much of WFD's political party work on hold. The Board also agreed that it could benefit from its own set of milestones.

## 5. **Forward Board Agenda** (Document 3)

Anthony Smith introduced a Forward Board Agenda plan which outlined possible issues for Board discussion over the next year. The revised agenda would respond to the Triennial Review's recommendation that the Board play a more strategic role and take note of the possible removal from the agenda of some of the transactional processes around project approval. The issues covered were:

- Approval of WFD's Strategic Framework and overall direction and reviews of progress
- Periodic debates on the context of WFD's work, eg. key challenges to strengthening democracy, and international trends on support to governance
- Examination of democracy strengthening issues in specific regions
- Review of key management information in the form of a quarterly dashboard / management report (to allow the Board keep track of key performance indicators around financial and operational/business processes and analytical information).

As background to the discussion, Ken Caldwell updated the Board on the review he and Ann McKechin had been asked to undertake at the last Board meeting around the function of the Board and how it could better add value and support the executive team in future. Following consultation with the majority of Board members, the review was now in its final stages and a report would be presented to the Board at its November meeting. To date, consensus had emerged around the following:

- The Board should concentrate on strategic discussions around democracy building issues and its challenges;
- Less time should be spent on detailed operational issues and programme approval;
- To allow the Board the time to become more strategic, and subject to certain safeguards, the Board would delegate approval of all projects to the CEO;
- Current Board structure, scheduling and attendance needed to be revisited to provide opportunities for strategic debate;
- Governors expressed interest in becoming more involved in WFD's work eg. representation, networking, hands-on experience as well as helping bridge WFD's party – non-party divide.

Iain Gill drew the Board's attention to current FCO and DFID funding of private companies and international democracy organisations and the need for WFD to reach an operational level that would convince funders of our ability to deliver. Anthony Smith assured the Board that WFD was not being ignored. Whilst acknowledging that WFD needed to improve delivery, he felt that much more could be done to communicate WFD successes to funders in the field. Lucy Ahab said that WFD had FCO's full support and looked forward to discussions on how FCO could assist in taking its work forward. Henry Bellingham agreed that work to strengthen WFD's operations would greatly enhance its reputation and branding.

## 6. **Any Other Business**

### a) Bosnia-Herzegovina Joined up Programme

George Kunnath gave a brief overview of the Bosnia-Herzegovina joined-up programme which brought together WFD's political party and parliamentary streams of activity with the aim of improving women's representation in Bosnia & Herzegovina's political environment. The unique aspect of this programme was its cross-party approach to a multi-layered programme that built towards sound and measurable objectives. All four political parties

were committed to the programme and, once the initial concept had been agreed – which had been a challenging process – only the modalities remain to be worked out. The programme itself represented a three-year commitment leading to the 2016 general elections. However, as work on some activities could be carried out within the current FY, the overall programme would benefit from an initial one-year funding agreement, approved under WFD's Urgency procedure.

With regards to lessons learnt, George stressed the need for better joined-up assessment and project scoping. All agreed the need to develop a proper methodology for joined-up programmes; the parties adding that structures and processes would need to be developed whilst retaining a level of flexibility and nimbleness that would allow integration. They also highlighted their limited resources saying that their biggest challenge was finding the time to come together to develop the programme.

#### b) Final independent evaluation of the EU Georgia Programme (Document 8)

George Kunnath introduced the final independent evaluation of the EU-funded programme, whose aim had been threefold:

- Identify 15 CSOs and provide them with the necessary skills to research and prepare shadow reports: the evaluation showed that the quality of CSO research had been improved but that more could be done
- Provide the 15 CSOs with advocacy skills and teach them how to develop communication plans: the evaluation showed that lines of communication were now excellent and staff were developing innovative activities;
- Improve their access to parliament: the evaluation showed that more needed to be done to strengthen parliamentary engagement

Overall, the results had been impressive. The evaluation had also shown that this engagement had strengthened WFD-EU relationships and that, as a result, a new agreement had recently been signed with UNDP for additional work in Georgia funded by the EU. In this context, he pointed out that the Georgia programme itself had been built on TWC's work around access and advocacy processes with CSOs in Mozambique and Ukraine. He felt strongly that developing CSO engagement with parliaments and political parties should continue to be part of WFD's core work. Equally, past experience had shown that engagement with CSOs within a specific umbrella (eg. human rights) could prove more successful than trying to bring all CSOs together under one very broad umbrella.

George confirmed that recommendations of the Evaluation and lessons learnt would be shared with all WFD programme and political party staff in order to benefit future programming.

#### c) Ukraine

George Kunnath updated the Board on possible work in Ukraine. Early in the year, a briefing note had been developed following consultation with established Ukrainian partners. Unfortunately, the conclusion was that the situation on the ground made it impossible to take any work forward; a situation that remains unchanged. In the meantime, DFID had established a £10m fund to support Ukraine implement the IMF restructuring plan. Following discussions with fund managers, it had been agreed that there might be a parliamentary role for WFD but only post-parliamentary elections; political party work continued as Labour was currently working with social democratic parties in Ukraine.

George confirmed that WFD had engaged with ethnic and linguistic minorities in national parliaments. In the MENA region, one WFD project brought together the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Lebanese Parliament. In Ukraine, WFD's work with minorities included support for an NGO that was instrumental in passing a language bill that had recognised languages at the local level if spoken by 10% of the population (thus also recognising the Russian language in eastern Ukraine). This bill was rescinded by the new parliament following the events in Maidan Square that resulted in further discontent in the east of the country; the President vetoed the bill shortly afterwards. Nabila Sattar said that the parties also worked with such minorities; in the Western Balkans, one achievement had been an amendment to the constitution of Bosnia & Herzegovina.

d) Iraq

Given recent developments at the security level, Dina Melhem updated the Board on the current status of WFD's two programmes in Iraq – in Baghdad and in Erbil. These developments had raised concerns about the security of WFD staff and, in consequence, the progress of the programme as a whole. Dina outlined the measures taken to ensure the safety of WFD's Programme Manager based in Erbil. She was in constant communication with HMC in Erbil and the UN Women representative in Iraq, Frances Guy. Whilst HMC did not evacuate local staff, Frances mentioned that the policy of UN Women was to evacuate national staff only in extremis for a maximum of one month. The situation in Iraq continues to be closely monitored and WFD receives travel advice updates from HMC Erbil, which currently advises only essential travel. The situation in Iraq has highlighted the fact that WFD urgently needed to put in place its own security policy which would address such situations.

Operationally, the last few months have been difficult but the situation, though now slowly normalising, continues to be closely monitored. Activities are being adapted accordingly and events moved to safer locations as and when necessary. Support for WFD's work remains strong and, at a recent meeting with Dina at the House of Commons, senior staff from the Iraqi Parliament reaffirmed their support for the work and made enquiries about the possibility of future support.

e) International Development Committee enquiry into parliamentary strengthening

Anthony Smith reported on IDC's current enquiry into parliamentary strengthening. Following the mid-term evaluation and the Triennial Review, the IDC decided that it would be an opportune moment to undertake a brief inquiry into the subject and had invited written submissions from interested organisations and individuals, including WFD who had been name checked in the enquiry's terms of reference. Submission deadline was 7 October. Following discussion with all stakeholders, evidence would be drafted over the next few weeks and a draft paper circulated to Governors for final comment.

9. **Date of next meeting:** Wednesday, 19 November 2014

Chair.....  
Date: 19 November 2014