

## WHO Malaria Elimination Certification Panel

### Terms of Reference

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#### I. Background and rationale

The Malaria Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC) has been constituted to provide independent advice to the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Malaria Programme (WHO/GMP) for the development of policy recommendations for the control and elimination of malaria. The mandate of MPAC is to provide strategic advice and technical input aligned with the Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030 as part of a transparent, responsive and credible policy setting process, and extends to all aspects of malaria control and elimination. In addition to the MPAC, standing expert groups have been established to provide WHO/GMP with advice within specific technical areas.

As one of these expert groups and following the recent revision of the WHO process for certification of national malaria elimination, MPAC recommended establishment of a Malaria Elimination Certification Panel (MECP), pursuant to which WHO hereby establishes the MECP. Operating and functioning as a standing technical expert group (TEG), the MECP will recommend to WHO/GMP, whether malaria elimination can be certified in applicant countries, based on WHO criteria, including the WHO publication entitled a *Framework for Malaria Elimination* (2017).

#### II. Role and functions of the Malaria Elimination Certification Panel

The MECP is constituted by WHO/GMP and provides advice to the Organization. The MECP is tasked to review evidence submitted by countries that apply for WHO certification of malaria elimination and this implies assessing i) whether mosquito-borne local malaria transmission has been fully interrupted in the country, resulting in zero indigenous malaria cases for at least the past three consecutive years; and ii) that the national health system will be able to prevent re-establishment of malaria transmission in the country.

The WHO MECP shall have the following main functions and activities (a more detailed list of activities is provided in Annex 1):

1. To review submitted country documentation and national elimination reports;
2. To conduct country assessments and field missions to verify findings in the national elimination report;
3. To develop a final evaluation report and submit it to the MPAC through WHO/GMP with a recommendation to certify malaria elimination or to postpone certification, based on analyses described in items (1) and (2) above.

#### III. Membership of the Malaria Elimination Certification Panel

Members should have knowledge about and experience in malaria control and elimination and at least one should be an entomologist. They should represent fields such as medical parasitology, tropical medicine, laboratory science, epidemiology, vector biology and control, information systems and other specialized areas of public health such as programme management. The MECP will have no fewer than 8 core members, and may temporarily co-opt additional members to meet the requirements for expertise as necessary. MECP members will be selected by a panel appointed by

WHO/GMP. Members of the MECP shall be appointed to serve for an initial term of up to four years with subsequent possible extensions.

Members shall provide independent opinions, have no conflicts of interest, and serve in their personal capacities only. The composition of the MECP should also strive for appropriate geographical representation and gender balance, and should comprise individuals representing different areas of expertise and experience related to malaria elimination from around the world, including formerly endemic countries.

Prior to being appointed as a MECP member and term extensions, and prior to each meeting or mission to countries, nominees shall be subject to a conflict of interest assessment by WHO GMP, based on information that they disclose on the WHO Declaration of Interest (DOI) form. Activities that will contribute to a determination of conflict of interest for certification of elimination include: providing technical support or advice for malaria elimination or preparation for certification of elimination in an applicant country during the previous 4 years. Panel members who are determined to have a conflict of interest for a country under consideration for certification will be recused from participating in evaluation missions, discussions about the country's application and panel recommendations on certification. In addition, MECP members have an ongoing obligation throughout their tenure to inform WHO/GMP of any changes to the information that they have disclosed on the DOI form. Summaries of relevant disclosed interests that may be perceived to give rise to real or apparent conflicts of interest will be noted during the meeting and included in the meeting report.

In addition, prior to confirmation by WHO/GMP of their appointment as MECP members, nominees shall be required to sign a WHO confidentiality agreement and the standard agreement for WHO temporary advisers. Although all papers presented at the MECP may be made publicly available on the WHO/GMP website, unpublished manuscripts or confidential documents will clearly be labelled as such and will only be provided to MECP members for discussion.

Members are expected to attend all meetings, and conduct field assessments when requested. Membership on the MECP may be terminated by WHO/GMP, including for any of the following reasons:

- Failure to attend two consecutive MECP meetings;
- Change in affiliation resulting in a conflict of interest;
- A lack of professionalism, for example, a breach of confidentiality.

#### **IV. Responsibilities of Malaria Elimination Certification Panel members**

Members of MECP have a responsibility to provide WHO/GMP with high quality, well considered, evidence-informed advice and recommendations on matters described in these Terms of Reference. The MECP has no executive or regulatory function. Its role is to provide recommendations to WHO/GMP.

MECP members may be approached by non-WHO sources for their views, comments and statements on particular matters related to the certification of malaria elimination, and asked to state the views of MECP or details related to MECP discussions. MECP members should refer all such enquiries to WHO/GMP.

## **V. Structure**

The Chair (and Alternate Chair) of the MECP shall be selected and appointed by WHO/GMP. Their responsibility is to submit a final evaluation report with a recommendation to MPAC through WHO/GMP. Their appointment, and, if applicable, designation as Chair or Alternate Chair, may be terminated at any time by WHO/GMP or as otherwise specified in these Terms of Reference or letters of appointment.

To conduct field assessments in support of the certification process, a subset of the existing core members of the MECP (including a team leader), with the potential to include temporary members, will be selected by WHO/GMP to form a Certification Evaluation Team, in consultation with the Chair of MECP. Their responsibilities will include: 1) to conduct country assessments and field missions to verify findings, and 2) to draft an evaluation report for plenary discussion. Their designation as Certification Evaluation Team members or team leader will be terminated automatically when the certification procedure for that country is concluded.

## **VI. Working procedures**

As part of the standard operating procedure for certification, WHO/GMP will convene MECP meetings in the main form of teleconferences and/or videoconferences. Face-to-face meetings may also be convened if necessary. After launching the certification procedure, MECP meetings will be convened before the country field assessment, to discuss the national elimination report and supporting documents submitted by a country. After the country field assessment and submission of a drafted evaluation report by the Certification Evaluation Team to the Chair, a plenary MECP meeting will be convened in order to discuss and finalize the evaluation report.

Relevant staff from WHO headquarters and regional offices may attend meetings as members of the Secretariat. WHO may invite observers from bilateral agencies, donors and civil society organizations, among others, to attend the meetings, at their own expense. However, only MECP members participate in the formulation of draft recommendations. Observers shall not take the floor unless requested to do so by the Chair.

Decisions on MECP recommendations to WHO/GMP will, as a rule, be taken by consensus. A quorum for the MECP to make recommendations on certification will be six members. In the exceptional situation that consensus cannot be reached, the Chair shall report the majority and minority views. It is also the Chair's responsibility to ensure there is clarity for MECP members on what exactly is being decided. The Chair of the MECP may be invited to present to MPAC.

In addition to attendance at MECP meetings, active participation will be expected from all MECP members throughout the year, potentially via interactions by e-mail. Review of documents may also be solicited.

## **VII. Rules of procedure**

MECP members will not receive any remuneration from WHO/GMP for their participation in meetings or in field assessments. However, when attending meetings and conducting field visits by invitation of WHO, WHO/GMP will cover airfare/transportation costs and provide daily subsistence allowance during such meetings and missions, in compliance with WHO policies, including its travel policies.

WHO/GMP will act as secretariat to the MECP and facilitate its work, including the preparation of agendas and background documents, in consultation with the Chair. All reports and recommendations of the MECP are advisory to WHO/GMP. WHO/GMP will communicate all malaria certification materials to MPAC, which will make the final recommendation to WHO. WHO retains full control over the final decision on certification of malaria elimination.

## **VIII. Dissolution of Malaria Elimination Certification Panel**

The relevance and terms of reference of the MECP will be assessed regularly by WHO/GMP.

**Annex 1**  
**Detailed list of Malaria Elimination Certification Panel activities**

1. Review submitted documentation and national elimination reports, and discuss their content.
2. Conduct country assessments and field missions with the following terms of reference:
  - a. Review and assess how procedures and criteria proposed by WHO/GMP have been applied to document the elimination of malaria transmission, including evaluation of the performance of the surveillance system and high-quality case management.
  - b. Verify that the data and information in country documentation and reports are accurate.
  - c. Conduct field visits to verify elimination; in particular, visit the last malaria foci in the country to ensure that they have been cleared.
  - d. Review national guidelines and plans of action to ensure that the strategic technical components of the guidelines are up to date.
  - e. Collect and review any additional information required on the malaria situation in the country by meeting with key stakeholders, published and unpublished documents, journal publications, etc.
  - f. Assess the capacity of the government to maintain its malaria free status and prevent re-establishment of malaria transmission.
  - g. Prepare an evaluation report for country certification and submit it to the WHO/GMP.
3. Review and discuss the evaluation report. Develop recommendations by consensus as to whether malaria elimination can be certified or whether a decision should be postponed, via video conference, teleconference or physical meetings.
4. Submit an abstract of the evaluation report to the WHO/GMP and MPAC with recommendations as to whether certification can be granted to an applicant country or whether a decision should be postponed.
5. Provide technical advice and update the certification criteria and procedures for certification, as needed.
6. Review the data of prevention of re-establishment and recommend the decertification of a country to the WHO Director-General based on criteria outlined in the *Framework*.