Participants: Sai D Prasad (SDP), Patrick Tippoo (PT), Adriansjah Azhari (AA), Lingjiang Yang (LY), Tiago Rocca (TR), Weidan Huang (WH) Rajinder Suri (RS), Sonia Paglusi (SP), Sonia Villasenor (SV); Prerna Kumar (PK)

Leave of Absence: Fernando Lobos
Meeting started at 12:10 CET and adjourned at 01:00 CET.

SDP welcomed the Board, CEO and secretariat team members and declared the meeting open.

Agenda point no. 1: Funding - PATH/BMGF proposal update
RS shared that he has had interactions with PATH, BMGF & NIIMBL. The focus of NIIMBL is on competency mapping of workforce. They need their assumptions to be validated by DCVMN while are still evaluating the role DCVMN could play in the project.

Supply Chain assessment is likely to be taken care largely by CEPI.

Keeping these two developments in mind we have carved out another proposal and shared with PATH/BMGF which includes assessment of manufacturing and R & D. This is now split in two parts instead of three buckets as was planned earlier. One part until June, 2022 was shared by SP on 27th Jan.22 while part 2 integrating H2-2022 and Africa proposal has been shared by Laura Viviani on 31st Jan 22 as per our commitment. The total value is pitched at US$1.3Mn for 2nd part. RS informed that while so far, the interactions have been positive but the indication is that the decision might take more time than expected.

Agenda point no.2: CEPI – i) MOU; ii) CDA; iii) List of bullets to be exchanged
RS shared that he has been responding to queries from PATH/BMGF to help them in being thorough in their understanding of the proposal.

No questions were asked or comments made by Board for agenda point no.1

RS informed that he had discussions with CEPI at various levels with the recent one being with Ankur, responsible for investments in LMICs and Sourabh Sotbi (SS) from Business Development, based in India, reporting to CEPI London. Responding to the proposal by SS for signing a CDA (Confidentiality Agreement) and an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between CEPI & DCVMN, RS advised that DCVMN is looking forward to clear deliverables like wallet share, technical collaborations, capacity building initiatives etc as part of the MOU. This will help DCVMN support their members and value add on CEPI’s projects for DCVMNs.

Regarding Africa, RS debriefed CEPI team on the initiatives that are under discussion with PATH & BMGF and expressed the intention of working with CEPI on manufacturing and supply chain, complementing each other’s initiatives.

RS put forward the proposal to the Board members asking for their contribution for the bullet points to be exchanged on the initiatives/projects with CEPI to start working on CDA leading to MOU.

Appreciating the query of AA of the impact on working groups, RS responded that MOU is not pertaining to working groups. Though periodic feedback from the representatives nominated on CEPI groups would help DCVMN integrate the expectations and give feedback to CEPI.
The intention of CEPI is disseminating information through DCVMN to all members e.g. call for proposal on thermostability shall be shared by DCVMN to its members. Most important, is the funding part, as DCVMs have received miniscule contribution from CEPI as compared to big-pharma like IFPMA and/or BIO. Our proposal is for CEPI to increase the contribution towards DCVMs.

SDP commented that this has become clear during the pandemic, even though DCVMs contribution in vaccine manufacturing has been in large numbers yet the funding given out by CEPI to US & European manufacturers was far more in comparison to the funding given to DCVMs. With the increase in purchase and marketing commitment from DCVMs, the focus of DCVMs is on product development as well. It is imperative to convey to CEPI to definitely increase the wallet share for DCVMs.

Agreeing with both SDP & RS, PT shared his perspective, that clearly defined MOU would help strengthen the relationship between DCVMN & CEPI. It shall also be advised that CEPI funding should be distributed evenly to all geographies as per the program and/or project.

SP commented that there are three grants provided by CEPI - SK Bio, Pasteur Institute Senegal and BioNet Asia. SDP added that grants were also provided to Biological E and Clover (which RS clarified is member of BIO). In the beginning of pandemic big-ticket grants were given to companies who were in R&D which are largely US & Europe based companies. The strength of DCVMs is in large scale manufacturing. This has been proven as more than 50% share in production of COVID vaccines has been from DCVMs. This should be advised to CEPI to take into consideration. To fight an infectious disease or pandemic, large scale manufacturing is as important as R&D. When a grant is given for product development or innovation company to US/Europe a similar grant should be provided to DCVMs for enhancing the manufacturing capability.

Responding to AA’s query whether manufacturing is part of CEPI’s strategy, RS informed that manufacturing is part of core strategy 2.0 of CEPI.

Thanking the Board, RS summarized that the clear expectation of DCVMN from CEPI is (i) technical collaboration (ii) higher wallet share (iii) crisp and clear communication of objectives to showcase the strength of DCVMs to push for more grants for its members. RS shared that the message is being well received by CEPI and thus the discussions on CDA & MOU. RS requested the Board to share their thoughts on CEPI via email, which shall be helpful in creating the document for CEPI.

Agenda point no. 3: HR Recruitment Status – hiring of Aila Marini
RS informed that Ms. Aila Marini has been hired as an intern based in Switzerland and shall be joining on 21st of February. For the position of HR & Accounts, RS suggested a change in job profile, with more focus on HR rather than accounts as DCVMN now already has an accounting firm in place. For Business Development (BD), the search is still on for candidates from any geography e.g. Switzerland, India, China, South Africa, S.Korea and Indonesia. RS asked for recommendations on candidates for BD position from the Board.

SP proposed that for the positions based in Switzerland, to identify a Treasurer or a Financial Director for managing accounts and fund-raising activity. RS responded that Treasurer’s position and financial decisions shall remain with the Board, only an accountant is required to manage the day-to-day accounts while fund-raising shall be the responsibility of the BD (Business Development) person. Two positions requiring different profiles cannot be clubbed.
Agenda point no. 4: Medical & Regulatory Consultants
RS informed that since Simoneta is not available for DCVMN and Bernadette’s contract is until March 31st we need to look for replacement. He requested Board for references for the medical and regulatory consultants. The profile is a person with a medical degree having experience in clinical and efficacy trials, having exposure in both developed and developing countries so as to have understanding of FDA & EMA.

Agenda point no. 5: Decision on Fixed Deposits (FD)
The point has been pending from last meeting. In the absence of FL, RS reminded the Board that FL had asked for recommendations based on their prior experience. Will be reviewed in next meeting in presence of FL.

Agenda point no. 6: Visit to Hilleman Labs
RS informed that he is invited to Hilleman Labs Singapore for the Ground breaking ceremony, Symposium and to address a session for the Hilleman team in Singapore. RS shall be in travelling from 20th Feb. and be back in office on the 25th. RS is exploring the idea of video recording the Hilleman training for wider dissemination; however, an external agency might be required as Hilleman does not have this facility inhouse.

Agenda point no. 7: AOB
Based on the change of high-level meetings moving from virtual to physical, RS suggested for the Board to consider a face-to-face meeting for the Board & Secretariat members and a visit to office in Switzerland, coinciding with the SAGE meeting in April or PPC meeting in May, 2022.

While PT, SDP & AA preferred April, SDP proposed May coinciding with PPC. LY and WH to get back on the international travel guidelines from China. TR may or may not be able to attend due to personal reasons.

SDP concluded the meeting with a vote of thanks for the active participation to all present. He reiterated that the strategic direction DCVMN is taking in moving forward would help the membership by driving the pressing issues to CEPI, BMGF and other funding agencies. DCVMN is actively working towards making a difference and bring about a change for its members.

End of minutes
08th February, 2022

Sai D. Prasad
Chair

Notes taken by PK