14 December 2018 -- WHO is establishing a global multi-disciplinary expert panel to examine the scientific, ethical, social and legal challenges associated with human gene editing (both somatic and germ cell). The panel will review the current literature on the state of the research and its applications, and societal attitudes towards the different uses of this technology. WHO will then receive advice from the panel on appropriate oversight and governance mechanisms, both at the national and global level. Core to this work will be understanding how to promote transparency and trustworthy practices and how to ensure appropriate risk/benefit assessments are performed prior to any decision on authorization.

The recent application of tools such as CRISPR-Casp9 to edit the human genome have highlighted the need for the development of standards in this area. WHO's expert working group will work in a consultative manner and build on existing initiatives. As WHO proceeds, we are liaising with relevant UN and other international agencies, and are in communication with Academies of Science and Medicine as well as with bodies that have produced previous reports.

WHO will be approaching leading experts in the world, and publishing the membership of the panel once we receive responses and assess conflicts of interest