

# Implications of decision EB152(29)



World Health  
Organization

# EB152(29), 7 February 2023

In EB152(29), the Executive Board decided:

- (1) that constituency statements will continue to be implemented during all WHO governing body meetings . . .
- (2) that the Secretariat regularly consult Member States and [NSAs] in official relations with a view to improving these modalities based on such consultations . . . ;
- (3) to request the Director-General to explore the implications of this decision for statements delivered by observers and report to the 153<sup>rd</sup> session of the Executive Board, through the [PBAC].



# Observers

Several types of entities attend sessions of the Health Assembly and the Executive Board in an observer capacity:

- Observers: This term is traditionally used to designate a limited number of entities invited to attend in an observer capacity open meetings of the Health Assembly, or any of its main committees, and of the Executive Board. Current Observers are:
  - the Holy See;
  - Palestine;
  - Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance;
  - the Order of Malta;
  - the International Committee of the Red Cross;
  - the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies;
  - the Inter-Parliamentary Union; and
  - the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
- Other international organizations in effective relations with WHO
- Non-State actors in official relations with WHO



# Implications

- The decision to continue to permit NSA constituency statements – where one NSA speaks on behalf of several -- in governing bodies on select items will change the order of interventions for those items. On items identified for constituency statements, five such statements may take place before Observers speak.
  - At the Board, constituency statements will come after statements by Board Members and will be mixed with those of Member States that are not Board Members.
  - At the Health Assembly, constituency statements will be intermingled with those of Member States more generally.
- Because constituency statements are intermingled with those of Member States, interventions by at least some Member States will also be delayed. Member States have accepted this as a compromise to promote more meaningful NSA involvement in governing bodies.
- Constituency statements will also precede those of UN representatives, intergovernmental organizations, and individual NSAs.



# Implications, continued

- The speaking order change also means a time delay for Observers to speak.
  - The amount of time an Observers' remarks will be pushed back will depend on the number of constituency statements and the time accorded each.
  - If constituency statements are accorded three minutes, as they were at EB152, and five constituency statements are made, the opportunity for Observers -- and the United Nations, intergovernmental organizations and individual NSAs -- to speak would be delayed by up to 15 minutes.



# Options

- The Board may wish to consider whether to maintain the status quo or whether any changes should be made at this point with respect to Observer participation.
- Consideration could be given to:
  - Whether increased Observer speaking time would foster more meaningful engagement.
    - For example, in the Board context, Observers could be permitted the same speaking time as Member States not on the Board.
    - A similar change could be considered for the Assembly on items where constituency statements are delivered. In that context, increased speaking time for Observers could mean offering them the same speaking time as Member States or creating a new category of speaking times.
  - Amending speaking order such that Observers speak among Member States.
    - Some might question whether others that attend should receive a similar opportunity.
    - It could also undercut the efficiency gains of the constituency statement decision by reducing NSA incentive (speaking earlier) for such statements.
    - Changing speaking order would also require Assembly action with respect to two Observers.
  - Maintaining current arrangements until governing bodies have the opportunity to review more holistically participation by not only Observers but also the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations.



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# Discussion

