

Report of the Executive Board on its 121st and 122nd session

1. The Executive Board held its 121st session on 24 May 2007 and its 122nd session from 21 to 25 January 2008. A report of the main outcomes follows.

121ST SESSION (24 MAY 2007)

2. Members agreed that following the extensive discussion on **avian and pandemic influenza** and on **public health, innovation and intellectual property** at the Sixtieth World Health Assembly, there was no need to reopen the debate.

3. The Board agreed that a document on the issues relating to the **appointment of a Director-General**, including regional rotation, should be submitted to its next session.

4. The Board adopted resolution EB121.R1 on **methods of work of the Executive Board**, endorsing criteria for the inclusion of proposed additional items in the provisional agenda and reviewing resolutions introduced during sessions. It also amended its Rules of Procedure.

5. After an extensive discussion of the plan of action on **multilingualism**, the Board noted the Secretariat's report. It was agreed that the document would be revised in the light of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 61/266. (See also paragraph 24 below.)

6. By resolution EB121.R2, the Board decided to establish a temporary **subcommittee of the Expert Committee on the Selection and Use of Essential Medicines** which should prepare a list of medicines for children as part of its terms of reference. The subcommittee would terminate in 2009.

7. The Board noted a report that outlined the outcomes and recommendations of a consultation of a group of experts and interested Member States on the scope of **health technologies** and a report on **expert committees and study groups**.

122ND SESSION (21–25 JANUARY 2008)

8. **The Director-General** reviewed significant developments in the past year, noting inter alia the progress made in implementing the global immunization strategy and combating neglected tropical diseases, the attention being paid to health-related Millennium Development Goals and the improved coordination of WHO's work at all levels. The Board acknowledged that year's achievements, and in particular welcomed the work on pandemic influenza preparedness, strengthening of health systems and the focus on the health problems of developing countries.

Technical and health matters

9. After a constructive debate, the Board noted the report on **pandemic influenza preparedness: sharing of influenza viruses and access to vaccines and other benefits**. The Director-General assured members that, since the Intergovernmental Meeting, a tracking system to enhance transparency in the movement of viruses had been set up and advisory mechanisms were being prepared in consultation with Member States.

10. The Board adopted resolution EB122.R1 on the mechanism for management of potential risks to eradication of **poliomyelitis**. This recommended a resolution to the Health Assembly, which requested the Director-General, inter alia, to undertake the necessary research to characterize fully the long-term risks and to develop appropriate responses, and to develop a new strategy for a renewed fight to eradicate poliomyelitis from the remaining affected countries.

11. In the course of the debate on **implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005)**, the Chairman of the Board ruled that a draft resolution proposed by three members was inadmissible. After extensive discussion and a roll-call vote on a proposed amendment, the Board adopted an amended version of the resolution contained in the Secretariat's report. Resolution EB122.R3 recommended a draft resolution to the Health Assembly, which included reporting requirements on the implementation of the Regulations and requested the Director-General, inter alia, to provide support to Member States with most vulnerable health systems in strengthening core capacity requirements for surveillance and response.

12. The Board, recognizing the importance of the topic of **climate change and health**, had agreed to include a supplementary item on its agenda. Members welcomed a draft resolution proposed by several Member States and adopted resolution EB122.R4, which recommended to the Health Assembly the adoption of a resolution that requested the Director-General to continue to draw attention to the serious risk of climate change to global health security and to cooperate closely with Member States and appropriate United Nations organizations and other bodies.

13. Members supported the draft resolution submitted on **strategies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol**, and adopted resolution EB122.R2, which, in a draft resolution recommended to the Health Assembly, among other things urged collaboration on the preparation of a draft global strategy based on all evidence and best practices as well as broad consultations on ways of reducing harmful use of alcohol. Consultations with the alcohol industry were scheduled to be held after the Board's session, and members' comments and suggestions would be reflected in the document submitted to the Health Assembly.

14. Members emphasized the importance of **health of migrants** and welcomed the proposal of a draft resolution by several Member States. After extensive discussion, the Board adopted resolution EB122.R5, which recommended the adoption of a draft resolution to the Health Assembly that called on Member States and requested the Director-General to undertake a series of actions ranging from training and collection and sharing of information to promoting cooperation and policies for improving migrants' health.

15. Members were unanimous in their support of action to stop the practice of **female genital mutilation**, but were unable to reach consensus on the wording of two paragraphs in a draft resolution. The Board therefore adopted resolution EB122.R13 which submitted a draft resolution with bracketed text to the Health Assembly for its consideration, with the hope that consensus would be reached at the Health Assembly.

16. Following extensive discussion of the **global immunization strategy** and numerous proposed amendments to the Secretariat's draft resolution, the Board adopted resolution EB122.R7, which recommended adoption of a resolution to the Health Assembly. Among other things, that draft resolution urged Member States to implement fully the strategy for reducing measles mortality, to enhance efforts to improve delivery of high-quality immunization services, and to expand access to new life-saving vaccines. It also requested the Director-General to sustain political commitment, to collaborate with international partners, donors and vaccine producers, and to take measures to expand developing countries' supply of affordable vaccines.

17. Members considered the supplementary agenda item proposed by several Member States on the **monitoring of health-related Millennium Development Goals**, and agreed to include the topic on the provisional agenda of the Sixty-first World Health Assembly together with the draft resolution that had been proposed. Similarly, although members welcomed the draft action plan on the **prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases**, they needed more time to reflect on its contents. It was agreed that a one-day consultation would subsequently be held, and that the action plan, revised in the light of comments received, would be submitted to the Health Assembly.

18. The Board noted reports on the **eradication of dracunculiasis, health technologies, international migration of health personnel: a challenge to health systems in developing countries**, and a series of reports on progress in implementing previous resolutions on **control of human African trypanosomiasis, strengthening nursing and midwifery, international trade and health, health promotion in a globalized world, smallpox eradication: destruction of variola virus stocks, infant and young child nutrition, and reproductive health: strategy to accelerate progress towards the attainment of international development goals and targets**. It also noted the report on the **progress of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property** and the fact that its second session would be resumed before the Sixty-first World Health Assembly.

19. Under the item on "Matters for information, **reports of advisory bodies**", the Board noted the reports on the Advisory Committee on Health Research and on expert committees and study groups.

Staffing matters

20. The Board reappointed Dr Mirta Roses Periago as **Regional Director for the Americas** (resolution EB122.R6).

21. By resolution EB122.R10 the Board confirmed amendments to the Staff Rules concerning remuneration of staff in the professional and higher categories, the mobility and hardship scheme, and resignation. It also adopted resolution EB122.R11, recommending a draft resolution to the Health Assembly, with regard to remuneration of staff in ungraded posts and of the Director-General.

22. The Board took note of the **annual report on human resources, the report of the International Civil Service Commission, and the statement by the representative of the WHO staff associations**.

Management matters

23. In the consideration of the item on **method of work of the Health Assembly**, the Board decided to amend two of its own Rules of Procedure and recommended a draft resolution to the Health Assembly that set out changes to the latter's Rules of Procedure. The Board also recommended that

the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee at its next meeting, as well as the Board at its 124th session, should consider how the meetings of the General Committee at the Health Assembly could be made more efficient.

24. In discussing **multilingualism: implementation of action plan**, the Board considered a draft resolution proposed by a Member State. It noted the progress report on the plan of action and adopted resolution EB122.R9, which requested the Director-General to implement the plan as rapidly as possible and to take several other measures to support multilingualism.

25. Having considered the report of its Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations, the Board adopted resolution EB122.R12, concerning the status of **official relations with WHO** of 15 nongovernmental organizations, and, after a review of one third of all such bodies in official relations, it agreed a series of actions set out in decision EB122(1).

26. Board members were not able to reach consensus on the matter of **geographical rotation of the position of Director-General**, and it was evident that there was no agreement among WHO regions themselves. Members agreed that the regional committees should discuss the issue and reach a consensus that would guide the Board in its future deliberations.

27. In the discussion on the **United Nations reform process and WHO's role in harmonization of operational development activities at country level**, the Director-General assured the Board that reform remained her top priority. The Board noted the report.

28. The subject of **partnerships**, discussed by the Board for the first time, provoked a broad discussion, in which members underlined WHO's coordination and leadership roles. The Board noted the report, and the Director-General assured members that their advice would be taken into consideration in preparation of a more detailed document for the next session of the Board.

29. Responding to members' comments during the discussion of **WHO publications**, the Secretariat said that it would report to the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee at its eighth meeting, and subsequently to the Board, on its efforts to implement the Committee's recommendations. The Board noted the report.

30. In discussing **foundations and awards**, the Board approved in principle the establishment of an award entitled the "Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health", for which proposed statutes will be submitted to the Board at its 123rd session (decision EB122(7)). It also agreed, in decision EB122(8), to dissolve the Darling Foundation.

31. In decision EB122(9), members adopted an amended **provisional agenda of the Sixty-first World Health Assembly**, and, by decision EB122(10), agreed that the **123rd session of the Executive Board** would be held from 26 to 29 May 2008 at WHO headquarters, Geneva.

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