



# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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## A corporate strategy for the WHO Secretariat

### Report by the Director-General

#### INTRODUCTION

1. This paper reports on progress in developing a corporate strategy for the WHO Secretariat. The overall purpose of the process, initiated by the Director-General in early 1999, is to guide the Secretariat as it responds to a changing global environment. The corporate strategy is inspired by the vision and values of health for all, and is designed to enable WHO to make the greatest possible contribution to world health.
2. Rather than a process leading to production of a single document, elaboration of the corporate strategy should be seen as a process of organizational development, which will give rise to a number of different products. The first of these will be the next general programme of work, which will provide a policy framework for work of the Secretariat during the period 2002-2005. The programme of work will be submitted first in draft form to the Executive Board at its 106th session in May 2000, then to the Fifty-fourth World Health Assembly one year later.
3. The scope of the overall process, however, is broader and concerns several other aspects of WHO's work. For example, a more holistic approach to resource mobilization, staff development, evaluation, performance assessment and communications will be among the products of the corporate strategy, which will also provide the policy framework for preparation of WHO country cooperation strategies.
4. The first part of the present report sets the corporate strategy in a broader context. The second part outlines the major components of the policy framework. This framework sets out new emphases, strategic directions, core functions, and criteria for defining specific priorities for the Secretariat. The third part focuses on the linkages between the corporate strategy, the policy framework and the proposed programme budget 2002-2003.

#### THE CORPORATE STRATEGY IN CONTEXT

5. The past decade has been a time of significant change in international health. The corporate strategy is designed to ensure that WHO is in a position to rise to these new challenges.
  - **Understanding of the causes and consequences of ill-health is changing.** It is increasingly evident that achieving better health cannot depend on health services alone, but requires

action on a much broader front to address the determinants of ill-health. Moreover, there is growing recognition of the role that better health can play in reducing poverty.

- **Health systems are becoming more complex.** In many countries, the role of the State is changing rapidly, and the private sector and civil society are emerging as important players. In the developing world, a growing number of development agencies are active in the health sector. Worldwide, peoples' expectations of health care services are increasing. With increasing complexity comes a need to develop consensus around agreed key strategies and standards.
- **Safeguarding health is gaining increasing prominence as a component of humanitarian action.** A significant increase in the occurrence and impact of man-made and natural disasters has raised awareness of the need for health protection.
- **The world is increasingly looking to the United Nations system for leadership.** Reform in the United Nations system aims to make its organizations more responsive to the needs of Member States, and to provide a rallying point for achievement of International Development Goals. To rise to this challenge will require more emphasis on effectiveness through collective action and partnerships. This, in turn, will require more dynamic and less bureaucratic approaches to management.

6. Given the magnitude of the global health agenda, it is self-evident that WHO cannot do everything. Defining WHO's particular role in world health is therefore central to development of the corporate strategy. Although the Organization's financial contribution will remain modest, the aim of the strategy is to enable WHO to enhance its role in providing technical, intellectual and political leadership. To succeed in this endeavour will require a greater concentration on areas in which WHO can demonstrate a clear advantage compared to the many other actors at international and national levels.

## A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE WHO SECRETARIAT

### Mission

7. The review of context does not imply any change in the objective of WHO as set out in the Constitution. That remains the attainment, for all people, of the highest possible level of health. However, the purpose of the corporate strategy is more specific and is intended **to enable WHO to make the greatest possible contribution to world health through increasing its technical, intellectual and political leadership.**

### Health for all

8. As with WHO's Constitution, health for all is a policy endorsed by all Member States. The corporate strategy for the Secretariat will therefore continue to reflect the values and principles articulated in the Global Strategy for Health for All reaffirmed by the Fifty-first World Health Assembly in 1998.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution WHA51.7.

## New emphases

9. New ways of working are needed if WHO is to respond effectively to a changing international environment. These include:

- adopting a broader approach to health within the context of human development, humanitarian action and human rights, focusing particularly on the links between health and poverty reduction;
- playing a greater role in establishing wider national and international consensus on health policy, strategies and standards by managing the generation and application of research, knowledge and expertise;
- triggering more effective action to improve health, and to decrease inequities in health outcomes by carefully negotiating partnerships and catalysing action on the part of others;
- creating an organizational culture that encourages strategic thinking, global influence, prompt action, creative networking, and innovation.

10. These overarching principles will require WHO to develop new processes and ways of working which draw on the respective and complementary strengths of headquarters, and regional and country offices.

## Strategic directions

11. WHO's goals are to build healthy populations and communities, and to combat ill-health. To realize these goals, four strategic directions will provide a broad framework for focusing the technical work of the Secretariat.

**Strategic direction 1:** reducing excess mortality, morbidity and disability, especially in poor and marginalized populations.

**Strategic direction 2:** promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing factors of risk to human health that arise from environmental, economic, social and behavioural causes.

**Strategic direction 3:** developing health systems that equitably improve health outcomes, respond to peoples' legitimate demands, and are financially fair.

**Strategic direction 4:** developing an enabling policy and institutional environment in the health sector, and promoting an effective health dimension to social, economic, environmental and development policy.

12. The four strategic directions are interrelated. Real progress in improving peoples' health cannot be achieved through one direction alone. Success in reducing excess mortality will depend on more effective health systems and a reduction in exposure to risks and threats to health, many of which lie outside the reach of the health system itself. The effectiveness of work on health systems and risk reduction will in turn depend on the broader policy and institutional environment – global and national – in which countries work to improve the health of their populations.

13. These strategic directions have already been applied in carrying out a preliminary review of WHO's work. The findings indicate that there is a significant gap in some areas between the range of work that would be required to pursue these strategic directions, and what is happening in practice. Moreover, there is an imbalance between the four strategic directions. For example, despite a growing recognition of the importance of strategic direction four, this is an area in which WHO has been relatively weak and where work has been initiated by the Director-General to enhance WHO's influence.

### Core functions

14. Carefully defining WHO's core functions provides a second lens for reviewing the work of the Secretariat. Although the core functions are helpful in thinking about comparative advantage in general terms, they are more useful for appraising whether WHO has achieved the right balance of functions in relation to specific areas of work. They also help to define more explicitly the respective roles of headquarters and regional and country offices.

15. On the basis of the Constitution, the WHO Secretariat will focus on:

- articulating consistent, ethical and evidence-based **policy and advocacy** positions;
- managing **information**, assessing trends and comparing performance of health systems; setting the agenda for, and stimulating, **research and development**;
- catalysing change through **technical and policy support**, in ways that stimulate action and help to build sustainable national capacity in the health sector;
- negotiating and sustaining national and global **partnerships**;
- setting, validating, monitoring, and pursuing the proper implementation of, **norms and standards**;
- stimulating the development and testing of new **technologies, tools and guidelines** for disease control, risk reduction, health care management and service delivery.

16. These definitions do not separate technical cooperation from normative work as has often been the practice in the past. This emphasizes that the aspect of WHO's work designed to address the specific needs of individual countries is likely to have several components, including advocacy, development of partnerships, and policy and technical advice.

17. Defining core functions highlights the fact that some aspects of WHO's current work lie outside the framework, and should therefore be afforded lower priority. Examples include acting as a project management or project execution agency. Similarly, activities such as procurement need to be justified in terms of the core functions. Using the core functions in this way is important not only in terms of greater focus, but also in identifying areas for cost savings.

## Specific priorities

18. Although the strategic directions and core functions provide a way of focusing WHO's overall portfolio of work, several more specific areas of emphasis still need to be defined. Significantly, they will attract additional investment, either from new sources of financing, or stemming from shifts between high and low priorities within the budget. Specific priorities may be defined in terms of existing excellence, or they may represent areas which are currently weak but in which WHO has made an explicit decision to build up its capabilities.

19. The number of specific priorities will be **limited**. Several of the priorities designated for the current budget will be carried over into the next two bienniums. The main challenge is to define the criteria that will guide priority setting. Broadly speaking, they should combine purely technical factors with a more pragmatic assessment of WHO's comparative advantage. Criteria in the first category should include the potential for a significant reduction in the burden of disease using existing cost-effective technologies, particularly where the health of poor populations will demonstrably benefit; and the urgent need for new information, technical strategies, or products to reduce a high burden of disease.

## LINKAGES AND NEXT STEPS

### General programme of work

20. The next general programme of work will be the first major product of the corporate strategy. In contrast to some earlier programmes of work, it will cover a shorter period (four rather than six years), and will take the form of a short policy document (10 to 15 pages). This approach recognizes that the purpose of translating policy into practice is best served through the programme budget and operational plans, prepared closer to the time of implementation. Preparation of the programme of work – based on the policy framework set out in this paper – is currently under way.

### Proposed programme budget 2002-2003

21. Work on preparing the proposed programme budget 2002-2003 has also begun. The programme budget will be drafted jointly by regional offices and headquarters, and not separately, as in the past. The corporate strategy development will influence preparation of the budget by providing an overall policy framework and defining specific priorities.

22. A chief concern of the corporate strategy is to introduce greater focus in WHO's work. Toward this end, the draft policy framework will be used to carry out a detailed **portfolio review** within the Organization. The purpose will be to examine all current work in order to ensure consistency with new emphases and strategic directions, to define WHO's comparative advantage and added value, and to assess the balance of functions carried out by the cluster or department concerned. The portfolio review will highlight areas where capacity should be developed, and those of lower priority because they are better handled by other bodies. It will also set the scene for regional offices and headquarters to frame strategy together as part of programme budget preparation.

23. The corporate strategy sets out overall ambitions in terms of new emphases and strategic directions. The policy framework will therefore include a series of **corporate objectives** against which the overall performance of WHO can be judged by Member States and other development partners. Definition of these objectives will capture several different perspectives: from the way that WHO

performs in relation to its own manageable interests, through to its contribution to better health in selected priority areas.

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