



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

EXECUTIVE BOARD
110th Session
Provisional agenda item 6.3

EB110/9
17 May 2002

Review of working methods of the Executive Board

Report by the Secretariat

1. In resolution WHA54.22 (May 2001), the Health Assembly requested the Executive Board to conduct a review of its working methods and those of its subsidiary bodies in order to ensure that they are effective, efficient and transparent, and to ensure improved participation of Member States in its proceedings, including working groups and drafting committees.
2. The resolution also requested the Executive Board to establish an ad hoc open-ended intergovernmental working group to make recommendations to the Executive Board for improvement of its working methods.
3. The Executive Board, at its 109th session, established the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group under the chairmanship of Professor T. Zeltner (Switzerland).¹
4. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group held its first meeting on 16 January 2002, under the chairmanship of Professor Zeltner. On the basis of resolution WHA54.22, the Working Group proposed that its terms of reference should be (1) to conduct a review of the working methods of the Executive Board and those of its subsidiary bodies in order to ensure that they were effective, efficient and transparent, and that participation of Member States in the proceedings of the Board, including working groups and drafting committees, was improved. The review would include the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board in light of the functions of the Board, and interaction between the Board and other organs of WHO; (2) to make recommendations to the Executive Board on the working methods that may need improvement, and to include relevant cost implications; (3) to report on its work at every session of the Executive Board; (4) to prepare draft provisions and other measures for implementing its recommendations and to submit them to the Board for consideration. The Executive Board agreed on the terms of reference.²
5. At the second meeting of the Working Group (21 January 2002), China, Cuba, Egypt, India and Pakistan submitted proposals in order to facilitate discussion on working methods. In a broad-ranging discussion, the main issues considered were methods of work of the Working Group, participation and transparency, and the timetable.
6. Concerning the calendar and modalities of work, it was agreed that the Chairman would write to all Member States by the end of January 2002 to solicit views on the issues that should be discussed in

¹ See document EB109/2002/REC/2, summary record of the fifth meeting.

² Decision EB109(2).

the reform process. It was agreed that submissions would be sent to him, care of the Department of Governing Bodies of WHO, and that the deadline for their receipt would be 15 March. They would then be compiled and dispatched in all official languages of WHO by 15 April to the relevant ministries of all Member States and Permanent Missions of those Member States with permanent representation in Geneva.

7. It was also agreed that the third meeting of the Working Group would be held on Friday, 10 May 2002 and, if needed, continued on Saturday, 11 May. At that meeting, the Working Group would debate on the basis of the submissions received and report to the Executive Board at its 110th session (May 2002). It was also agreed that, following consideration by the Board and taking into account its comments, a drafting process would begin with a view to preparing specific recommendations for the 111th session of the Executive Board in January 2003. The Working Group decided to consider participation in the drafting exercise at its next meeting. It was also understood that the Chairman of the Executive Board would report orally to the Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly on the work of the Working Group.

8. On the issue of participation, it was agreed that, although all Member States should be involved at all stages, it was not realistic to subject the progress of work to the presence of all Member States, in particular those which did not have a permanent mission in Geneva. Alternative means to ensure exchange of information and involvement of all Member States would be explored and utilized. Particular reference was made to the role that regional coordinators could play in this respect. It was also agreed that the regional committees would be informed about the progress of work.

9. On the issue of transparency, it was agreed that all submissions from Member States would be posted upon receipt in their original language, in the two formats commonly used for downloading (PDF and HTML), on a dedicated web site to be established within the WHO web site. It was decided that summary records of the meeting of the Working Group would be prepared and distributed to Member States.

10. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group held its third meeting on 10 May 2002, again under the Chairmanship of Professor Zeltner. The meeting considered the submissions received from Member States,¹ the future programme of work of the Group and its reports to the Executive Board and Health Assembly.

11. The review of submissions received from Member States or groups of Member States began with an overview of the main points of each. The Chairman introduced an informal paper setting out the common topics in the submissions from Member States to help future development and consideration of submissions. The list of topics, as amended by the Working Group, is annexed. Questions and comments were elicited for each submission, a process which served to clarify several issues and positions. For example, the question of the scope of the mandate of the Working Group regarding the question of size of the Executive Board was discussed. It was agreed that this issue was appropriate for discussion in the context of the effective working of the Board.

12. On the matter of future programme of work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group, the following actions are proposed:

- preparation of a document that collates the submissions received into themes, as outlined in the agreed list of topics (see Annex). This should also include issues raised at the third

¹ Document IGWG/Working Methods /3/3.

meeting. Written comments of other delegations on the submissions can be sent to the Chairman, care of the Department of Governance; these would be circulated and posted on the WHO web site. The target date for distribution would be mid-June 2002;

- preparation of a report from the Secretariat indicating cost implications of the proposals;
- convening of two informal intersessional meetings, each of two days' duration, before the 111th session of the Executive Board. All Member States will be advised of these meetings. The suggested dates of the meetings are:
 - August (before 19th) 2002 for the first informal meeting
 - November (after 11th) 2002 for the second informal meeting.

There was agreement that these meetings should focus on the substance of the submissions and positions of Member States.

13. On the issue of reporting to the Executive Board and Health Assembly, the following steps were agreed:

- **Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly** (Provisional agenda item 17). The Chairman of the Executive Board will supplement document A55/32 with an oral report on the outcome of the third meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group;
- **110th session of the Executive Board.** In addition to the document prepared by the Secretariat,¹ the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group will provide an oral report to the Executive Board.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

14. The Executive Board is invited to review the progress of the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group and its proposed plan of work leading up to the 111th session of the Executive Board in January 2003, and give guidance to the Working Group accordingly.

¹ Document EB110/9.

ANNEX

COMMON TOPICS¹ FROM SUBMISSIONS OF MEMBER STATES

1. Committee system of WHO
2. Documents/communications
 - Distribution
 - Electronical availability
3. Harmonization of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board with those of the Health Assembly and the Constitution
4. Languages
5. Mandate of the Executive Board and its accountability
 - Roles of Chairman and Vice-Chairmen
 - Working methods
 - Agenda of the Executive Board
6. Methods of decision-making
7. Participation of Member States (and observers)
 - Executive Board members
 - Non-Executive Board members
 - Size of Executive Board/number of members
 - Electronic participation by Member States
8. Regional involvement
9. Relations of the Executive Board with other organs of the Organization

¹ In alphabetical order.

10. Sessions of the Executive Board and other meetings

January

May

Retreat

Others (including Meeting of Interested Parties)

11. Transparency

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