

## **Ensuring accessibility of essential medicines**

The Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly,

Welcoming adoption of the “Declaration on the TRIPS agreement and public health” at the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference (Doha, 14 November 2001), supportive of the rights of countries to protect public health and, in particular, to promote access to medicines for all;

Recalling discussions and proposals reported by Member States in their regional meetings before the Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly, mainly at the 53rd session of the Regional Committee for the Americas (September 2001)<sup>1</sup> and the Forty-eighth session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (October 2001)<sup>2</sup> and, additionally, the thorough discussion of the Executive Board at its 109th session;

Reaffirming resolution WHA54.11, emphasizing WHO’s medicines strategy and its requests to Member States and the Director-General of WHO;

Aware of the need to assure the continuity of updating WHO’s Model List of Essential Drugs in light of evidence-based, scientific information;

Underlining the feasibility of addressing comprehensively the impact of international trade agreements on equitable access to all drugs, particularly essential drugs;

Conscious of the responsibility of Member States to support solid scientific evidence, excluding any biased information or external pressures that may be detrimental to public health;

1. URGES Member States:

(1) to reaffirm their commitment to increasing access to medicines, and to translate such commitment into specific regulation within countries, especially enactment of national drug policies and establishment of lists of essential medicines based on evidence and with reference to WHO’s Model List, and into actions designed to promote policy for, access to, and quality and rational use of, medicines within national health systems;

(2) to establish the necessary mechanisms for essential medicines lists that are science-based, independent of external pressures, and subject to regular reviews;

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<sup>1</sup> See document CD53/5.

<sup>2</sup> See resolution EM/RC48/R.2.

(3) in addition to health policies and actions, to implement complementary measures to ensure that national lists of essential medicines are supported by standard clinical guidelines, preferably national therapeutic formularies, with the aim of promoting rational prescription;

(4) to reaffirm, within the national drug policies, WHO's concept of essential medicines as those medicines that satisfy the priority health care needs of the population, reflecting also availability, quality, price and feasibility of delivery, and reemphasizing the evidence base for overall national discussions;

(5) to continue monitoring the implications on access to medicines of recent patent-protection laws and compliance with WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS);

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to strengthen the Expert Committee on the Use of Essential Drugs, ensuring its independence from external pressures at all times, the use of science-based criteria for revision and updating, and receipt, when appropriate and as required, of the necessary inputs from all relevant stakeholders;

(2) to ensure that WHO's medicines strategy addresses the important issue of the impact of international trade agreements on access to medicines and to reflect, in the relevant reports to WHO's governing bodies, progress in its comprehensive endeavour;

(3) to advocate the necessary action worldwide to promote market-based differential pricing for essential medicines between high-, middle-, and low-income countries, and to provide technical support, especially to developing countries, to establish drug-pricing policies;

(4) to advocate the concept and policies of essential medicines as a tool for implementing rational prescription of medicines;

(5) to continue to work on the methodology for computerized databases on reference prices of essential medicines worldwide;

(6) to pursue all diplomatic and political opportunities aimed at overcoming barriers to access to essential medicines, collaborating with Member States in order to make these medicines accessible and affordable to the people who need them;

(7) to join with and support nongovernmental organizations in the process of implementing initiatives that are compatible with public health priorities.

Ninth plenary meeting, 18 May 2002  
A55/VR/9

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