
Report of the Executive Board on its 123rd and 124th sessions

1. The Executive Board held its 123rd session on 26 May 2008 and its 124th session from 19 to 26 January 2009. This report summarizes the main outcomes.

123RD SESSION (26 MAY 2008)

2. Members of the Board concluded that more work was needed on the revision of the **WHO Guiding Principles on Human Cell, Tissue and Organ Transplantation**, and agreed that the issue be further discussed at the next session (see paragraph 15 below).

3. The Board noted the report on **global health partnerships** (see also paragraph 30 below) with particular emphasis on WHO's involvement in the GAVI Alliance, and requested the Secretariat to develop policy guidelines on WHO's engagement with partnerships.

4. In a lengthy discussion members of the Board made numerous suggestions on the implementation and evaluation of the **WHO publications policy**. The Board noted the report. It also noted the report on meetings of two **expert committees**.

5. The Board approved the statutes of the **Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health** (see also paragraph 33 below).

124TH SESSION (19–26 JANUARY 2009)

6. The opening of the 124th session was postponed until the afternoon of 19 January in order to allow a high-level consultation on the financial crisis and global health to be held.¹

7. In adopting its agenda for the session, the Board agreed to include a supplementary item on the health situation in the Gaza Strip (see paragraph 9 below).

8. In her report to the Board, **the Director-General** highlighted the importance of health action in crises, mentioning the epidemics of cholera in two African countries and the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. Such events underlined the primary purpose of public health – to protect populations from

¹ World Health Organization. *The financial crisis and global health: report of a high-level consultation*. Geneva, World Health Organization, 34 pp., 2009.

harm, whether microbial, behavioural or environmental – and its basic elements of prevention, protection and equity. She also stressed good governance in public health. The Board noted her report.

Technical and health matters

9. After an extensive debate and a roll-call vote, the Board adopted, by 28 votes to 1, with 4 abstentions, resolution EB124.R4 on **the grave health situation caused by Israeli military operations in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip**. Inter alia, the resolution requested the Director-General urgently to send a specialized health mission to the Gaza Strip in order to assess health needs and the damage to health facilities and to report to the Health Assembly.

10. In the discussion of **climate change and health**, members emphasized the situation facing small island States, the need for awareness raising and continued research. Adopting resolution EB124.R5, the Board endorsed the proposed workplan. The Director-General underlined WHO's contribution to coordination within the United Nations system, a priority of the Secretary-General.

11. Together with consideration of the Secretariat's report on the final report of the **Commission on Social Determinants of Health**, the Board considered a draft resolution submitted by several Member States. After extensive discussion and the work of an informal drafting group, the Board adopted resolution EB124.R6 on reducing health inequities through action on the social determinants of health.

12. In the discussion of the report on **Chagas disease**, members of the Board welcomed the attention being given to neglected tropical diseases in general as well as to Chagas disease itself. The Board noted the report and, after consideration of a draft resolution proposed by several Latin American and Caribbean Member States on the centenary of the first description of the disease, adopted resolution EB124.R7 on the control and elimination of the disease.

13. The submission of three draft resolutions under the agenda item on **primary health care**, including one on **traditional medicine**, led to considerable debate and the setting up of an informal drafting group. The Board adopted resolution EB124.R8 on primary health care, including health system strengthening, which recommended a resolution to the Health Assembly, at the centre of which lay reaffirmation of commitment to the values and principles enshrined in the Declaration of Alma-Ata. Resolution EB124.R9 on traditional medicine also recommended a resolution to the Health Assembly for adoption that likewise recalled the Declaration of Alma-Ata and urged Member States to consider implementing the Beijing Declaration on Traditional Medicine (adopted in November 2008).

14. The reports on **WHO's role and responsibilities in health research**, with its draft strategy on research for health, and the Bamako Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health stimulated a lengthy debate, continuing in an informal drafting group and informal consultations. The Board adopted resolution EB124.R12 which recommended a resolution to the Health Assembly calling for endorsement of the strategy and setting out a series of actions for the health research community, international organizations, supporters of research, the private sector, civil society and other stakeholders as well as Member States. It also requested the Director-General, inter alia, to provide leadership in identifying global priorities for research for health and to strengthen the role of WHO collaborating centres.

15. The Board welcomed the revision of the **WHO Guiding Principles on Human Cell, Tissue and Organ Transplantation**, regarding which a draft resolution sponsored by numerous Member

States was submitted from the floor. After extensive discussion, the Board adopted resolution EB124.R13 in which it recommended the Health Assembly to welcome the revised Guiding Principles and to urge Member States to implement them. It also requested the Director-General, *inter alia*, to continue collecting and analysing data on practices, safety, quality, and ethics of donation and transplantation globally.

16. The Board noted the report on **avian and pandemic influenza**, having been assured that WHO would maintain its activities to support sharing influenza viruses and increasing access to vaccines and other benefits, such as developing a transparent traceability mechanism, transferring vaccine-production capacity to developing countries and working with partners on vaccine procurement. The Board also noted the report on progress of the Intergovernmental Meeting with its reference to reconvening in connection with the Health Assembly.¹

17. Several members reported on their countries' progress in implementing the **International Health Regulations (2005)**, but also described some of the difficulties encountered and areas where support was needed. The Board took note of the report.

18. The Board also noted the report on **HIV/AIDS and mental health**, a complex issue that was identified as a challenge to Member States and highlighted the need for training and further research. Several members offered guidance and described their own countries' approaches and experiences.

19. Board members made several comments and suggestions on the draft action plan for **the prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment** which the Secretariat would use to strengthen the final draft that would be submitted to the Sixty-second World Health Assembly.

20. Members of the Board agreed that **counterfeit medical products** increasingly constituted a serious public health problem that was becoming more severe. The ensuing debate, with marked divergence of views, was robust and thoughtful. The Board agreed that the Secretariat should prepare a revised report for the Health Assembly that took into consideration the comments of members, focused on the public health impact of this problem and contained new information, and that it should present in a separate document details of the role, function and membership of the International Medical Products Anti-Counterfeit Taskforce.

21. After considering the report on **the international recruitment of health personnel and the draft global code of practice**, the Board decided that further consultation and participation of Member States were needed before consensus could be reached on the code of practice. It agreed to note the report. Further, it agreed that the Director-General would prepare a paper for national consultations and a technical briefing before producing a common report for regional directors, recommend regional directors to include the subject on the agendas of regional committees later this year, and submit a further report to the Board at its 126th session in January 2010.

22. The Board noted the report on the **global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation and intellectual property**, which had been submitted as an update on progress before the final report was submitted to the Health Assembly. An expert working group would continue to meet in order to consider, among other things, specific proposals made by Board members and innovative proposals for financing.

¹ The dates and venue for the resumption of the Intergovernmental Meeting are 15 and 16 May 2009 in Geneva.

23. The Board welcomed consideration of the complex issue of **the role of the private sector in the delivery of health care** as timely, but after long discussion members concluded that the proposed draft resolution was premature and that further work was needed. The Board agreed that an informal working group should be created in order to help to provide guidance to the Secretariat in preparing a revised report for submission to the Health Assembly in May 2009, including more evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of both public and private health-care services.

Matters for information

24. The Board took note of the reports on **expert committees and study groups** and on expert advisory panels and committees and their membership. It also noted the reports requested by earlier resolutions, covering **progress** made in the following areas: **the mechanism for management of potential risks to eradication of poliomyelitis; smallpox eradication: destruction of variola virus stocks; malaria, including a proposal for establishment of World Malaria Day; implementation by WHO of the recommendations of the Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination among the Multilateral Institutions and International Donors; prevention and control of sexually transmitted diseases; strengthening of health information systems; working towards universal coverage of maternal, newborn and child health interventions; strategy for integrating gender analysis and actions into the work of WHO; rational use of medicines; better medicines for children, and health technologies.**

Programme and budget matters

25. The Board noted the report on **the performance assessment of the Programme budget 2006–2007**, including the comments thereon made by the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.

26. The Programme, Budget and Administration Committee had considered the draft amended **Medium-term strategic plan 2008–2013 and Proposed programme budget 2010–2011** and requested the Board to take account of the Committee's comments and concerns. After an open debate, the Director-General assured members that she would take account of all the comments in revising the Proposed programme budget 2010–2011 for submission to the Health Assembly. She would also convene a meeting of donors and other interested parties to review funding and business models. The Board noted the report.

Financial matters

27. The Board took note of the report on the **scale of assessments 2010–2011**, recommending adoption of that scale by the Health Assembly.

28. In resolution EB124.R10, the Board confirmed **amendments to the Financial Rules** and recommended a resolution to the Health Assembly that would adopt changes to the **Financial Regulations** relating to the introduction of International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

Management matters

29. The Programme, Budget and Administration Committee reported to the Board on the options for establishing an independent expert oversight advisory committee, in line with best practice in the United Nations system. The Committee would further consider that topic at its 10th meeting and submit its conclusions for consideration by the Board at the latter's 125th session in May 2009.

30. After reviewing the draft policy guidelines on **partnerships**, the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee recommended that the Board endorse them and consider future action. The Board welcomed the progress made, noted the report, and agreed that the draft guidelines should be submitted to the Health Assembly for review and endorsement.

31. Board members acknowledged progress in **implementing the action plan for multilingualism** but nevertheless urged further action to make more information available on the WHO web site in official and working languages. The Board noted the report.

32. Having considered the report of its Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations, the Board adopted resolution EB124.R11 on **relations with nongovernmental organizations**, admitting into official relations the International Medical Corps and confirmed the status of provisional official relations for four nongovernmental organizations to participate in the work of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property. Official relations with two such organizations were discontinued. After review of a third of all such bodies in official relations, the Board agreed a series of actions set out in decision EB124(1).

33. Besides the existing **foundation awards and prizes**, the Board made its first award of the Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health (decision EB124(6)).

34. In decision EB124(9), the Board approved an amended **provisional agenda for the Sixty-second World Health Assembly**, but in a break with practice it decided to include in that agenda several items that had not been discussed by the Board. By decision EB124(10), the Board agreed that the **125th session of the Executive Board** would be held from 28 to 30 May 2009 at WHO headquarters, Geneva.

Staffing matters

35. The Board adopted resolutions EB124.R1 and EB124.R2, respectively reappointing Dr Samlee Plianbangchang as **Regional Director for South-East Asia** and appointing Dr Shin Young-soo as **Regional Director for the Western Pacific**. In resolution EB124.R3, it expressed its gratitude and appreciation to Dr Shigeru Omi on his retirement from the latter position for his contribution to WHO's work.

36. In resolution EB124.R16 the Board recommended that the Health Assembly note its recommendations regarding the remuneration of both **staff in ungraded posts and the Director-General** and establish those salaries with effect from 1 January 2009.

37. In resolution EB124.R14, the Board confirmed **amendments to the Staff Rules** concerning remuneration of staff in the professional and higher categories, the education grant, dependent children and special education grant travel, to take effect from 1 January 2009. In resolution EB124.R15, it recommended the Health Assembly to adopt proposed amendments to Staff Regulations, relating to good human resources management including the reassignment of staff, with effect from 1 June 2009. It also took note of the **annual report on human resources** and the **report of the International Civil Service Commission**.

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