

## **Reducing health inequities through action on the social determinants of health**

The Executive Board,

Having considered the Secretariat's report on the final report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health,<sup>1</sup>

RECOMMENDS to the Sixty-second World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Sixty-second World Health Assembly,

Having considered the Secretariat's report on the final report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health;

Noting the 60th anniversary of the establishment of WHO in 1948, and its Constitution, which affirms that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition;

Noting the 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Primary Health Care at Alma-Ata in 1978, which reaffirmed the essential value of equity in health and launched the global strategy of primary health care to achieve health for all;

Recalling the principles of "Health for All", notably the need for intersectoral action (resolution WHA30.43);

Confirming the importance of addressing the wider determinants of health and considering the actions and recommendations set out in the series of international health promotion conferences, from the Ottawa Charter on Health Promotion to the Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World making the promotion of health central to the global development agenda as a core responsibility of all governments (resolution WHA60.24);

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<sup>1</sup> Document EB124/9.

Noting the global consensus of the United Nations Millennium Declaration to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and the concern at the lack of sufficient progress towards many of these goals in some regions at the half-way point;

Welcoming in this regard resolution WHA61.18, which initiates annual monitoring by the World Health Assembly of the achievement of health-related Millennium Development Goals;

Noting *The world health report 2008* on primary health care and its focus on ways to improve health equity by reforming health and other societal systems;

Mindful about the fact that responses to environmental degradation and climate change include health equity issues and noting that the impact of climate change is expected to negatively affect the health of vulnerable and disadvantaged populations (resolution WHA61.19);

Mindful about the facts concerning widening gaps in life expectancy worldwide;

Attaching utmost importance to the elimination of gender-related health inequities;

Recognizing that millions of children globally are not reaching their full potential and that investing in comprehensive supports for early child development that are accessible to all children is a fundamental step in achieving health equity across the lifespan;

Acknowledging that improvement of unfavourable social conditions is primarily a social policy issue;

Noting the need to improve coordination among global, national and subnational efforts in tackling social determinants of health through work across sectors, while simultaneously promoting social and economic development, with the understanding that such action requires the collaboration of many partners, including civil society and private sector,

1. EXPRESSES its appreciation for the work done by the Commission on Social Determinants of Health;
2. CALLS UPON the international community, including United Nations agencies, intergovernmental bodies, civil society and the private sector:

- (1) to take note of the final report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health and its recommendations;

- (2) to take action in collaboration with WHO's Member States and the WHO Secretariat on assessing the impacts of policies and programmes on health inequities and on addressing the social determinants of health;

- (3) to work closely with WHO's Member States and the WHO Secretariat on measures to enhance health equity in all policies in order to improve health for the entire population and reduce inequities;

3. URGES Member States:

- (1) to develop and implement goals and strategies to improve public health with a focus on health inequities;
- (2) to take into account health equity in all national policies that address social determinants of health and to ensure equitable access to health promotion, disease prevention and health care;
- (3) to ensure dialogue and cooperation among relevant sectors with the aim of integrating a consideration of health into relevant public policies;
- (4) to increase awareness among public and private health providers on how to take account of social determinants when delivering care to their patients;
- (5) to contribute to the improvement of the daily living conditions contributing to health and social well-being across the lifespan by involving all relevant partners, including civil society and the private sector;
- (6) to contribute to the empowerment of individuals and groups, especially those who are marginalized, and take steps to improve the societal conditions that affect their health;
- (7) to generate new, or make use of existing, methods and evidence, tailored to national contexts in order to address the social determinants and social gradients of health and health inequities;
- (8) to develop, make use of, and if necessary, improve health information systems in order to monitor and measure the health of national populations, with data disaggregated according to the major social determinants in each context (such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, employment and socioeconomic status) so that health inequities can be detected and the impact of policies monitored in order to devise appropriate policy interventions to minimize health inequities;

4. REQUESTS the Director-General:

- (1) to work closely with partner agencies in the multilateral system on appropriate measures that address the social determinants of health and promote policy coherence to minimize health inequities; and to advocate for this topic to be high on global development and research agendas;
- (2) to strengthen the capacity within the Organization with the purpose to give sufficient priority to relevant tasks related to addressing the social determinants of health in order to reduce health inequities;
- (3) to implement measures, including objective indicators for the monitoring of social determinants of health, across relevant areas of work and promote addressing social determinants of health to reduce health inequities as an objective of all areas of the Organization's work, especially priority public health programmes;

- (4) to ensure that ongoing work on the revitalization of primary health care addressing the social determinants of health is aligned with this, as recommended by *The world health report 2008*;
- (5) to support Member States in implementing a health-in-all-policies approach to tackling inequities in health;
- (6) to support Member States, upon request, in implementing measures with the aim of integrating a focus on social determinants of health across relevant sectors and to design, or if necessary redesign, their health sectors to address this appropriately;
- (7) to support Member States, upon request, in strengthening existing efforts on measurement and evaluation of the social determinants of health and the causes of health inequities and to develop and monitor targets on health equity;
- (8) to support research on effective policies and interventions to improve health by addressing the social determinants of health that also serve to strengthen research capacities and collaborations;
- (9) to support the regional directors in developing a regional focus on issues related to the social determinants of health and in engaging a broader range of countries in this issue, in accordance with the conditions and challenges of each region;
- (10) to convene a global event, with the assistance of Member States, before the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly in order to highlight the developments, progress and renewed plans for addressing the alarming trends of health inequities and to increase global awareness on social determinants of health, including health equity;
- (11) to report on progress in implementing this resolution to the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly through the Executive Board.

Eighth meeting, 23 January 2009  
EB124/SR/8

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