

Election of the Director-General of the World Health Organization: report of the working group

Report by the Director-General

The Director-General has the honour to transmit to the Executive Board the report of the Working Group of Member States on the Process and Methods of the Election of the Director-General of the World Health Organization, which met in Geneva from 21 to 24 November 2011.

ANNEX

**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP OF MEMBER STATES ON THE
PROCESS AND METHODS OF THE ELECTION OF THE
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

1. The Working Group of Member States on the Process and Methods of the Election of the Director-General of the World Health Organization met in Geneva from 21 to 24 November 2011 and was chaired by Ambassador Tan Yee Woan (Singapore) with the following Vice-Chairpersons: Mr Faiyaz Kazi (Bangladesh), Mr Jacques Pellet¹ (France), Dr Masato Mugitani (Japan), Mr Colin McIff (United States of America) and Mrs Petronellar Nyagura (Zimbabwe). Dr Mokhtar Warida (Egypt) was unable to participate.² The session was attended by 97 Member States and one regional economic integration organization.

Introduction

2. The Working Group was established by resolution EB128.R14 with a view to enhancing fairness, transparency and equity among the Member States of the six regions of the World Health Organization with respect to the process of nomination and appointment of the Director-General. In this regard, the Working Group was mandated to review and analyse all the aspects of the nomination and appointment process of the Director-General: identify the rules, procedures and/or steps that could be either revised, enhanced and/or added to improve the transparency, fairness and equity of the election of the Director-General with a view, inter alia, to ensuring that the recruitment of this Official be in harmony with the provisions of Article 101, paragraph 3 of the Charter of the United Nations; and to make specific recommendations on the above to the Executive Board at its 130th session for final recommendations by the latter to the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly.

3. The second session of the Working Group built on the discussions held at the first session, as summarized in paragraphs 6 to 20 of the interim progress report of the Working Group.³ The Working Group reviewed again the various steps of the process of nomination and appointment and elaborated further on several issues raised and discussed at the first session. The Working Group was assisted in its work by the advice of the Secretariat on the possible implications of the issues under discussion for the Constitution and the relevant Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board and the World Health Assembly. The Working Group also made use of the documents prepared by the Secretariat for the meeting, in particular those referred to in the list of reference documents contained in document EB/EDG/WG/2/2.

4. The Working Group discussed a working table developed by the Chairperson with the support of the Secretariat which contained specific proposals raised in the first session of the Working Group (document A64/41). Following the first reading, the Working Group identified four specific areas which required further discussions: candidates' forum; code of conduct; the roles of the Executive Board and World Health Assembly; and the criteria for selection of the Director-General.

¹ Elected as Vice-Chair following the resignation of Mr Konrad Scharinger (Germany).

² Dr Reida El Oakley (Libya) attended Bureau meetings on behalf of Dr Warida.

³ Document A64/41, noted by the World Health Assembly, see document WHA64/2011/REC/2, summary record of the fourth meeting of Committee B, section 2.

5. The Working Group agreed on the need to improve methods and processes in the election of the Director-General in order to promote transparency, fairness and equity, including equal opportunities for all candidates, acknowledging that candidates appointed for this post have so far only come from three out of six regions of the Organization. It was reaffirmed that the Member State-driven nature of the process of nomination and appointment should be fully maintained.
6. The Working Group discussed again and elaborated on some proposals raised at its first session as tools that could assist in leveling the playing field, such as the following.

Candidates' forum

7. The Working Group agreed that a candidates' forum could provide an opportunity for all candidates to make themselves and their vision known to Member States, on an equal footing. The Working Group supported the establishment of such a forum, recognizing that further work is needed and agreed that it should be open to all Member States.¹ The candidates' forum was not considered as a decision-making body.
8. The candidates' forum would be convened by the Secretariat at the request of the Executive Board and chaired by the Chairman of the Board, using the Bureau structure, as a self-standing event preceding the Board.
9. Other issues concerning a candidates' forum elicited a number of views and the Working Group considered that they would benefit from further discussions, such as the following:
 - (i) With regard to the timing of the candidates' forum, the main options discussed by the Working Group included holding the candidates' forum sufficiently before the nomination process by the Board, in order to give Member States time for reflection and consultations; or holding the forum immediately before or at the margins of the Executive Board to reduce costs and increase participation by all countries.
 - (ii) While there was agreement that each candidate could make a presentation and would respond to questions from Member States, several views were offered concerning the specific modalities for the question and answer part of the forum. Some options raised by members of the Working Group included the submission of fixed questions known in advance by the candidates; free questions during the interview, or a combination of approaches, and the role of regional groups.
 - (iii) With respect to the duration of the candidates' forum, the potentially high number of candidates, a realistic time for each interview, as well as the cost and time involved for candidates and Member States should be taken into account.
 - (iv) The possibility of webcasting the candidates' forum was also discussed.
 - (v) Different views were offered with respect to the outcome of the candidates' forum, in particular whether the Secretariat should submit a report to the Executive Board.

¹ Including, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

Code of conduct

10. With regard to electoral campaigns some Member States expressed the concern that the campaigns can be affected by financial and political influence. There were differences in opinion on whether disallowing campaigns from the process is enforceable and whether the code of conduct would sufficiently address these concerns.

11. To promote transparency and enhance ethical behaviour throughout the nomination process, the Working Group considered that it would be useful to establish a code of conduct or a statement of ethical principles for candidates for the post of Director-General. After some discussion on possible principles for inclusion in the code of conduct, the Group acknowledged that the development of the code would require more time, including for the evaluation of relevant documents.¹

12. The Working Group reviewed possible elements, including financial controls, rules governing internal candidates, establishment of an accountability mechanism, and different views were expressed in this regard. Support was expressed for the inclusion in a code of conduct or statement of ethical principles of elements such as equal opportunities among candidates, abstention from abuse of position of power and improper practices, as well as a commitment by candidates to comply with the code.

13. The Working Group also considered the following issues:

Role of the Executive Board and World Health Assembly

14. The Working Group was informed by the Secretariat that the process followed by the Executive Board in assessing candidates and nominating a person for the post had significantly improved over the last 15 years. However, it was felt that there were still several shortcomings which prevented a fair, equitable and transparent process in how it carried out its functions. Moreover, the criteria established by resolution EB97.R10 were found to be vague and the screening process superficial and should be strengthened.

15. Member States discussed two possible proposals to address those problems:

- (a) One proposal consisted of focusing the role of the Board on technical aspects such as an initial assessment and a shortlisting of the best candidates. The Board would then submit more than one candidate to the Health Assembly which would make the final choice among them. Member States who supported this proposal argued that it would increase the inclusiveness and legitimacy of the process in line with the principle of democracy since the whole membership could have a voice. Some Member States raised the point that this proposal could contribute to enhancing equitable geographical representation. Member States who favoured the existing system argued that this proposal would make the overall process more politicized and polarized

¹ Including the documents prepared by the Secretariat for the session, in particular documents EB/EDG/WG/2/3 and EB/EDG/WG/2/6 and those referred to in the list of reference documents (in document EB/EDG/WG/2/2), as well as: Western Pacific Region: Nomination of the Regional Director: Code of Conduct (document WPR/RC62/9); Rules governing the election process for the position of Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, *Basic Documents of the Pan American Health Organization*, 2007; and ILO, Reports of the Officers of the Governing Body (document GB.312/INS/16/3, November 2011).

without an evident benefit in terms of equity, fairness and transparency. The Group agreed that further discussion was needed.

(b) The other way forward discussed by the Working Group consisted of addressing and aiming at solving the perceived shortcomings in the method of work of the Board. It was agreed that further work was needed in this regard.

Criteria for selection of the Director-General

16. The Working Group agreed that the qualifications of the candidate are of paramount importance. In this regard, Member States focused on the criteria established by the Board¹ and how they could be used effectively.

17. The Working Group discussed how the Executive Board should undertake a rigorous screening of candidates for the post of the Director-General. In this regard, the Group reviewed the criteria for the post agreed by the Executive Board in resolution EB97.R10, as well as a proposal from a Member State and discussed areas of improvement in order to strengthen the criteria. It was agreed that further work was needed in this area, and some preliminary discussions by the Working Group are reflected in the annexed working paper [see Appendix].

18. It was also felt that the criteria on the qualifications of the candidates could be complemented by the elaboration of some guidance to the Board.

19. In this context, different Member States proposed that the Board, in considering the nomination of the Director-General, should give due regard to the following concepts:

- geographical rotation
- equitable geographical representation
- geographical diversity
- diversity in geographical representation
- geographical equity.

20. There was lack of convergence on any of the concepts in paragraph 19 and there were suggestions to further discuss these issues.

Other ideas discussed

21. The Working Group noted the benefit of advertising the post in journals and other relevant media as well as on the WHO web site as one practical measure to increase the pool of qualified candidates, bearing in mind that only Member States can propose candidates.

¹ Resolution EB97.R10.

22. The Working Group considered that the development of a competency questionnaire allowing candidates to elaborate their experiences in areas based on revised selection criteria could be a useful additional tool to assess the candidates.

23. The Working Group agreed not to pursue the following suggestions raised during its first session: (1) the idea that each region should nominate two candidates for submission to the Executive Board; and (2) the idea to mobilize financial resources and other forms of support for candidates.

Conclusions

24. The Working Group concluded that significant progress had been made in this session. However, it did not reach adequate convergence to make substantive recommendations on the various areas discussed on the process and methods for the election of the Director-General. It is recommended that the Executive Board convene a follow-up session of the Working Group to further explore discussed proposals and finalize its work ahead of the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly. This would also allow additional time for inter-sessional work.

25. The Secretariat is requested, based on discussions at the second meeting, to further elaborate key principles of a code of conduct as well as to propose specific modalities for a candidates' forum and for a rigorous screening process at the Executive Board, and to prepare reports on these issues for the next meeting of the Working Group.

Appendix

**WORKING PAPER ON CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF THE
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

Possible criteria include the following:

<p>(1) a strong technical and public health background and[/or] extensive experience in international health</p> <p>(3) proven historical evidence for public health leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognized leadership skills combined with an ambitious and determined commitment to improve global public health and strengthening coordination among international partners • Excellent communication skills at all levels, including the ability to be a convincing advocate within the United Nations system, with Governments, civil society organisations, as well as with the wider public • An advanced university degree [preferably in public health]/[an advanced degree in public health and a strong technical background and extensive experience in international health (or an advanced degree with public health experience)]
<p>(2) competency in organizational management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proven management skills with experience in staff and financial management in an international context, preferably of a large organization, and the capacity to build a cohesive and effective senior management team
<p>(3) proven historical evidence for public health leadership</p>
<p>(4) sensitiveness to cultural, social and political differences</p>
<p>(5) a strong commitment to [the work of WHO][public health]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good understanding of the United Nations system and ability to lead efforts for a more effective and coherent United Nations response at all levels
<p>(6) the good [physical]/[health] condition required of all staff members of the Organization; and [undertake medical examination in accordance with EB120.R19]</p>
<p>(7) sufficient skill in at least one of the official working languages of the Executive Board and Health Assembly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluency in English and/or French, and/or Spanish, with knowledge of another United Nations language desirable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Proficiency in at least one United Nations language

- Proven competence over two decades in the area of public health at the national and international level
- Proven leadership in championing public health issues, especially in the international context
- Demonstrated examples of successfully pursuing and implementing public health challenges including in the area of public health strengthening
- Does not possess any distinct corporate experience, especially at the strategic level, that could compromise his or her integrity or independence in the area of public health.

The following text could be considered for guidance to the Executive Board:

The Executive Board in considering [the candidatures for the nomination of]/[the candidatures for]/[the nomination of] the Director-General should take due regard of the principle of [geographical rotation][equitable geographical representation][geographical diversity] [geographical equity][diversity in geographical representation]

= = =