

Development of a new Health Assembly resolution and action plan for prevention of deafness and hearing loss

The Executive Board,

Having considered the report on development of a new Health Assembly resolution and action plan for prevention of deafness and hearing loss,¹

RECOMMENDS to the Seventieth World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Seventieth World Health Assembly,

Recognizing that 360 million people across the world live with disabling hearing loss, a total that includes 32 million children and nearly 180 million older adults;

Acknowledging that nearly 90% of the people with hearing loss live in low- and middle-income countries, which often lack resources and strategies to address hearing loss;

Concerned by the persistent high prevalence of chronic ear diseases, such as chronic suppurative otitis media, which lead to hearing loss and may cause life-threatening complications;

Acknowledging the significance of work-related, noise-induced hearing loss, in addition to issues related to recreational and environmental noise-induced hearing loss;

Aware that unaddressed hearing loss is linked with cognitive decline and contributes to the burden of depression and dementia, especially in older adults;

Noting the significant impact of ear diseases and hearing loss on the development, ability to communicate, education, livelihood, social well-being and economic independence of individuals, as well as on communities and countries;

Aware that most of the causes of hearing loss are avoidable with preventive strategies; that the interventions available are both successful and cost-effective; but that, despite this, most people with ear diseases and hearing loss do not have access to suitable services;

¹ Document EB139/5.

Recalling resolutions WHA48.9 (1995) on prevention of hearing impairment, and WHA58.23 (2005) on disability, including prevention, management and rehabilitation;

Recalling also the *World report on disability 2011*,¹ which recommends investment in improved access to health services, rehabilitation and assistive technologies and the WHO global disability action plan 2014–2021,² based on the report's recommendations;

Mindful of the Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) with its target 3.8 on achieving universal health coverage, which implicitly recognizes the need for persons with disabilities to have access to quality health care services, and recognizing that the targets of Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) explicitly mention persons with disabilities, and that unaddressed hearing loss greatly hinders their education and academic outcomes;

Appreciating the efforts made by Member States and international partners in recent years to prevent hearing loss, but mindful of the need for further action,

1. URGES Member States, taking into account their national circumstances:

- (1) to integrate strategies for ear and hearing care within the framework of their primary health care systems, under the umbrella of universal health coverage, by such means as raising awareness at all levels and building political commitment and intersectoral collaboration;
- (2) to collect high-quality population-based data on ear diseases and hearing loss in order to develop evidence-based strategies and policies;
- (3) to establish suitable training programmes for development of human resources in the field of ear and hearing care;
- (4) to ensure the highest possible coverage of vaccination against rubella, measles, mumps and meningitis, in line with the immunization targets of the global vaccine action plan 2011–2020, and in accordance with national priorities;
- (5) to develop, implement and monitor screening programmes for early identification of ear diseases such as chronic suppurative otitis media and hearing loss in high-risk populations, including infants, young children, older adults and people exposed to noise in occupational and recreational settings;
- (6) to improve access to affordable, cost-effective, high-quality, assistive hearing technologies and products, including hearing aids, cochlear implants and other assistive devices, as part of universal health coverage, taking into account the delivery capacity of health care systems in an equitable and sustainable manner;

¹ World report on disability 2011. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2011. Available at http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/ (accessed 11 April 2016).

² Available at http://www.who.int/disabilities/about/action_plan/en/ (accessed 11 April 2016).

(7) to develop and implement regulations for control of noise in occupational settings, at entertainment venues and through personal audio systems, as well as for control of ototoxic medicines;

(8) to improve access to means of communication through promoting alternative methods of communication, such as sign language and captioning;

(9) to work towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) and Goal 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all) in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with special reference to people with hearing loss;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to prepare a world report on ear and hearing care, based on the best-available scientific evidence;

(2) to develop a toolkit as well as provide the necessary technical support for Member States in collecting data, planning national strategies for ear and hearing care, specifying how prevention of hearing loss can be integrated in other health care programmes, raising awareness, screening for hearing loss and ear diseases, training and provision of assistive technologies;

(3) to intensify collaboration with all stakeholders with the aim to reduce hearing loss due to recreational exposure to noise through the development and promotion of safe-listening standards, screening protocols, software applications to promote safe-listening and information products;

(4) to undertake advocacy through World Hearing Day on 3 March each year, with a different theme every year;

(5) to report on progress in implementation of this resolution to the World Health Assembly.¹

Second meeting, 30 May 2016
EB139/SR/2

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¹ The Executive Board agreed that the long-term reporting requirements of this resolution should be included in the forward-looking planning schedule of expected agenda items, established by decision WHA69(8). See summary record of the Executive Board at its 139th session, second meeting.