

Improving access to assistive technology

Draft resolution proposed by Algeria, China, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Ghana, Iraq, Israel, Jamaica, Pakistan, Philippines, Zambia

The Executive Board,

Having considered the report on assistive technology,¹

RECOMMENDS to the Seventy-first World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Seventy-first World Health Assembly,

(PP1) Considering that one billion people need assistive technology and that, as the global population ages and the prevalence of non-communicable diseases increases, this figure will rise to more than two billion by 2050;

(PP2) Noting that assistive technology enables and promotes the inclusion, participation and engagement of persons with disabilities, ageing populations and people with many health conditions in the family, community and all areas of society, including the political, economic and social spheres;

(PP3) Recalling that 90% of those who need assistive technology do not have access to it, thereby having a significant adverse impact on the education, livelihood, health and well-being of individuals, and on families, communities and societies;

(PP4) Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its ultimate aim of “leaving no one behind”.

(PP5) Recognizing that the inclusion of assistive technology is essential to realizing the SDG targets of relating to universal health coverage, inclusive and equitable quality education, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, reduce inequality within and among countries by empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all, make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe and sustainable, and provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces, particularly for persons with disabilities;

¹ Document EB142/21.

(PP6) Recalling the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, under which 174 Member States have committed inter alia, to ensuring access to quality assistive technology at an affordable cost (Article 20) and to foster international cooperation (Articles 4, 20, 26 and 32) in support of national efforts for the realization of the purpose and objectives of the Convention;

(PP7) Emphasizing the need for a comprehensive, sustainable and multisector approach to improving access to assistive technology that fulfils the safety and quality standards established by national and international regulations, at the national and subnational levels;

(PP8) Recalling resolutions WHA69.3 (2016), WHA67.7 (2014), and WHA66.4 and WHA70.34 in which, respectively, the Health Assembly calls on Member States inter alia to improve access to assistive technology for older people, people with disabilities and people with vision and hearing loss, respectively;

(PP9) Noting the request made to the Executive Board by the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, in resolution EM/RC63/R.3 on improving access to assistive technology, to include assistive technology as an agenda item for the Health Assembly.

OPI. URGES Members States:

- (1) to develop, implement and strengthen policies and programmes, as appropriate, to improve access to assistive technology within universal health and/or social services coverage;
- (2) to ensure that adequate and trained human resources for the provision and maintenance of assistive products are available at all levels of health and social service delivery;
- (3) to ensure that assistive technology users and their carers/givers have access to the most appropriate assistive products and use them safely and effectively;
- (4) to develop a national list, where appropriate, of priority assistive products that are affordable and cost-effective and meet minimum quality and safety standards, drawing on WHO's priority assistive products list, as relevant and/or applicable, based on national needs and context;
- (5) to promote or invest in research, development, innovation and product design in order to make existing assistive products affordable, and also to develop a new generation of products including high-end or advanced assistive technology, taking advantage of universal design and new evidence-based technologies, in partnership with academia, civil society organizations, in particular with persons with disabilities and older persons and their representative organizations, and the private sector, as appropriate;
- (6) to encourage international and/or regional collaboration for the manufacturing, procurement and supply of priority assistive products, ensuring that these remain affordable and available across borders;

(7) to collect population-based data on health and long-term care needs including those that may be met by assistive technology in order to develop evidence-based strategies, policies and comprehensive programmes;

(8) to invest in and promote inclusive barrier-free environments so that all people who need assistive technology can make optimum use of it, in order to live independently and safely and participate fully in all aspects of life;

(9) to promote the inclusion of priority assistive products and inclusive barrier-free environments within emergency preparedness and response programmes;

OP2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to prepare a world report on assistive technology in the context of an integrated approach, based on the best available scientific evidence and international experience, with the participation of all relevant units within the Secretariat and in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, including the possibility of establishing an Expert Advisory Group, within existing resources, for this purpose;

(2) to provide the necessary technical and capacity-building support for Member States, aligned with national priorities, in the development of national assistive technology policies and programmes, including procurement and financing, regulation, training for health and social services, appropriate service delivery, and inclusive barrier-free environments;

(3) to provide technical and capacity-building support to countries, on request, to assess the feasibility of establishing regional or sub regional manufacturing, procurement and supply networks for assistive technology;

(4) to contribute to and engage in, as appropriate, the development of minimum standards for priority assistive products and services, in order to promote their safety, quality, cost-effectiveness and appropriateness;

(5) to report on progress in the implementation of the present resolution to the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly and thereafter to submit a report to the World Health Assembly every four years until 2030.

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