

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING

**WHO headquarters, Geneva
Thursday, 31 January 2019, scheduled at 14:00**

Chairman: Dr P. SILLANAUKKEE (Finland)

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FIFTEENTH MEETING

Thursday, 31 January 2019, at 14:05

Chairman: Dr P. SILLANAUKEE (Finland)

1. FINANCIAL MATTERS: Item 8 of the agenda

Scale of assessments for 2020–2021: Item 8.2 of the agenda (document EB144/44)

The CHAIRMAN invited the Board to note the report and consider the draft resolution contained in document EB144/44. She drew the Board's attention to the discussion on the scale of assessments for 2020–2021 by the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, which was reflected in paragraph 23 of the document EB144/4.

The representative of CHINA expressed support for the draft resolution. His country would pay its increased assessed contributions for the period 2020–2021 in full and on time. He hoped that countries whose assessed contributions had been lowered would continue to support the Organization by increasing their voluntary contributions.

The resolution was adopted.¹

2. HUMAN RESOURCES: Item 9 of the agenda (continued)

Report of the Ombudsman: Item 9.4 of the agenda (document EB144/INF./2)

The OMBUDSMAN, speaking on behalf of all of WHO's ombudsmen, said that his role was to provide confidential assistance to staff members experiencing work-related issues through informal means, in order to reduce unnecessary formal processes and associated costs, and to avoid human suffering. The Ombudsman monitored trends so that systemic issues were detected early and brought to the attention of senior management. He acknowledged how management at all levels and the Director-General had shown a willingness to regularly engage with the Ombudsman and to respond constructively to queries and suggestions.

The need for greater diversity and inclusion was a major systemic issue to be addressed by WHO. A significant number of cases that the Ombudsman had dealt with related to staff members who had felt discriminated against on grounds of race, gender or age. Although WHO had taken action to resolve that issue, more needed to be done. The Ombudsman had recommended that the Organization proactively increase its efforts to deal with the issue of discrimination and explore different ways of addressing it. Messages to staff from senior management regarding the issue and focus group discussions might help to raise staff awareness and provide a forum for new ideas and mechanisms to address such behaviour. Managers bore a particular responsibility to prevent such problems and should be prepared to address them; in that regard, the Organization should make managers accountable for their response.

WHO should similarly address the need to encourage more active engagement by its staff members. Many colleagues had expressed concern about negative consequences for their careers if they

¹ Resolution EB144.R6.

voiced criticism, which resulted in some staff members being unwilling to engage with others to improve the working environment. Certain managers also appeared to be reluctant to engage with staff to deal with issues. While efforts to ensure greater openness and transparency were welcome, further work was required. He recommended that all managers should mirror the Director-General's open-door policy and encourage staff members to seek informal means to address issues without fear of retaliation. Staff should be made aware of the institutional avenues available within WHO to address problems and be empowered to act.

Although efforts had been made to address the issues and recommendations identified in the 2018 report of the Ombudsman (document EB142/INF./2), opportunities for further improvement remained. In that connection, the Ombudsman was willing to engage with senior management to: ensure that newly appointed managers received mandatory training in areas relating to supervisory tasks and guidance in managerial style; strengthen collaboration between the different services in WHO that could deal with cases involving alleged harassment; encourage career development initiatives and support them with adequate resources; and ensure that opportunities existed for the informal resolution of conflicts so that all regional offices had an ombudsman and operated with similar professional standards of practice. While the issues and systemic problems identified in the report were not exclusive to WHO, addressing them would ensure that WHO was at the forefront of current efforts within the United Nations family in that regard. WHO's ombudsmen were committed to supporting that process and to acting as a catalyst to bring about change.

The representative of AUSTRALIA expressed strong support for WHO's efforts to ensure access to ombudsmen at all levels and was pleased that senior management had engaged with the issues identified by the Ombudsman and implemented programmes in response to the 2018 report. However, she noted with concern the number of cases of discrimination reported by staff members and, in the context of the 2018 report on the work of the Independent Expert Panel on Prevention of and response to harassment, including sexual harassment; bullying and abuse of power at UNAIDS Secretariat, asked whether the Secretariat had conducted staff surveys to ascertain the reasons for the increase in the number of cases. Her Government supported the Ombudsman's recommendations and continued, regular reporting on the office's services and trends, including action taken in response.

The representative of FINLAND emphasized the need to improve awareness among staff of the institutional avenues at their disposal to address issues. He welcomed the Secretariat's reporting on additional measures to foster diversity and inclusion, encourage staff engagement and define WHO core values. It was important that WHO staff members were included in, and were made aware of, the status of the WHO transformation process, including the core values.

The representative of the NETHERLANDS, welcoming the actions taken by the Secretariat on the recommendations of the 2018 report of the Ombudsman, said that the staff training sessions that had recently been held should become standard practice for WHO managers and supervisors. Further information on whether the open-door policy of the Director-General was being used by lower-level management and was creating a diversity of thought would be welcome. Although the rise in the number of cases dealt with by the Ombudsman was, on the one hand, a positive development and indicated greater access and trust, such a sharp increase, on the other hand, was a matter of concern. She asked the Secretariat and the Ombudsman if there was an explanation for the increase and, should the trend continue, whether the offices of the ombudsmen were equipped to handle the number of cases. She would be interested to hear the Ombudsman's views on the situation described in the UNAIDS report on the work of the Independent Expert Panel, as well as the role of the Ombudsman in relation to non-WHO organizations, and WHO's expected follow-up to the report's recommendations.

The representative of GERMANY said that he was pleased that senior management had actively engaged in tackling and confronting the issues identified by the Ombudsman, but highlighted that such

issues must be followed up comprehensively. The principle of no discrimination was a basic tenet of WHO's institutional culture and situations of perceived discrimination must be addressed. His Government fully supported the measures that had already been taken by senior managers in that regard and welcomed the initiative taken by the WHO Health Emergency Programme to hold open discussions on diversity in cluster meetings. The Ombudsman's recommendations, especially the need for WHO to invest in its managers through mandatory training, were highly relevant. WHO must send a clear signal that disrespectful behaviour would not be tolerated at any level.

The representative of the UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the African Region, commended senior management for their active involvement in staff issues. A unified practice of gathering and publishing statistical data in the same manner should be established among ombudsmen in order to provide a comprehensive view of the issues identified. He emphasized the need to: ensure continuous training of managers on basic interpersonal skills and evaluate the resulting level of impact; address appropriately all formal or informal allegations; hold formal and regular focus group discussions in cluster meetings; address career development mechanisms at the regional, subregional and country levels; and ensure transparency in the recruitment process. Respect for WHO staff and a cohesive vision shared by staff and Member States would be key to successful implementation of the transformation agenda.

The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA supported the recommendations made by the Ombudsman to address the concerns highlighted in his report. She agreed that, similarly to the practice of the Director-General and senior management, managers should foster an open-door policy and be made accountable for the working environment of their staff. Managers needed to be more motivated to engage with their staff to address workplace conflict, resolve situations that could lead to workplace harassment, and take advantage of training opportunities that improved their skills. Training courses implemented by the Secretariat to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment were welcome, but there were other forms of disrespectful behaviour that should also be tackled. It would be useful to understand how the Respectful Workplace initiative fitted into the Secretariat's strategy to combat that issue.

The representative of PANAMA¹ expressed appreciation for the measures taken by the Organization to deal with the work-related issues identified in the report of the Ombudsman, including the Director-General's open-door policy. It would, however, be useful to provide information on the results of such measures to evaluate their effectiveness in accordance with established criteria for the treatment of systemic problems. Commending the Organization for its efforts to train managers in appropriately managing their staff and resolving disputes, she hoped that such training opportunities and tools would be accessible to staff members in all regions. It was essential to continue implementing the measures identified in the report of the Ombudsman.

The DIRECTOR (Human Resources Management) highlighted the collaborative spirit between Human Resources Management and the Office of the Ombudsman and appreciated the "early warning" of systemic issues which helped to ensure that timely action was taken. Responding to points raised, she drew attention to the need to work together with the United Nations family, including its ombudsmen and its ethical and investigation networks to address the systemic issues that were common to other organizations of the United Nations system and find best practices. One such example was the first United Nations system-wide sexual harassment survey, the data from which was in the process of being analysed. The need to raise awareness and understanding among staff members about the mechanisms available for them to seek support and report improper conduct was being addressed via an online toolkit

¹ Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

containing relevant information that had already been made available. The excellent management training programme implemented in the African Region should be further developed and expanded for implementation in all regions. Several joint training activities with the Office of the Ombudsman had also been organized on communication skills, management coaching, dealing with difficult conversations, and diffusion of workplace conflicts. To address the issue of improper conduct, a training session on standards of conduct at the Organization would be made mandatory in 2019. The aim of the initiatives in the context of transformation was to create a respectable workplace, with the involvement of all staff members, with a view to improving working conditions and the working environment.

The OMBUDSMAN appreciated Member States' positive comments on the work of the Office of the Ombudsman, which was at times challenging given that it involved highlighting negative practices and signalling issues. Responding to questions raised, he said that the approximate 20% increase in the number of cases brought to the attention of the Ombudsman was not necessarily linked to increased conflict within WHO, but could be due to the efforts by the Office of the Ombudsman to reach out to staff members, and to a certain level of anxiety about future change within the Organization, particularly with regard to the transformation agenda. The Office of the Ombudsman dealt with cases from both WHO headquarters and the regions, and was working in coordination with regional ombudsmen whenever possible. However, increasing the human resource capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman might be necessary to ensure an adequate response to the significant challenges ahead.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL, thanking participants for their comments, said that he would prefer to maintain the current size of the Office of the Ombudsman; the best way to reduce the Ombudsman's workload would be to prevent problems happening in the first place by fostering a culture of openness across the Organization.

The rise in the number of cases reported to the Ombudsman was attributable to a number of reasons, one of which was increased awareness of the issue of sexual harassment; indeed, over 95% of staff, including senior management, had already completed the training on harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority. Occasionally, he was asked to intervene in complex and sensitive issues in coordination with the Ombudsman.

The Secretariat had agreed to invest in continuous staff training, in particular among managers at all levels, many of whom had asked the Secretariat to help them to develop their management skills. It would be important to identify and tackle competency gaps among managers to help them to better address the needs of their staff. The Secretariat would build its institutional capacity by investing in its workforce and preventing issues by addressing concerns at an early stage.

Since taking office, the Director-General had introduced an open-door policy, which had proven to be a highly enlightening, enjoyable and humbling experience. By listening closely to staff in an informal setting, he was better placed to determine whether the issues they raised related to individual grievances, which could be addressed within their respective departments, or systemic problems, which would require the Secretariat to consider implementing institutional change. However, most staff had presented helpful ideas and questions rather than complaints. It was heartening that almost all managers had acted on the Director-General's suggestion to designate weekly office hours during which their staff could approach them with ideas or concerns. The Organization would continue working to address the challenges it was facing and increase productivity.

The representative of the NETHERLANDS said that the human resources capacity of the Office of the Ombudsman must be adequate to enable it to carry out its functions fully. She asked the Secretariat and the Ombudsman to comment on the report of the UNAIDS Independent Expert Panel.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL said that WHO could learn from the report of the UNAIDS Independent Expert Panel, which had already been discussed at the management level. Some of the

report's recommendations were already in place at WHO and the Secretariat would take heed of any that were not yet reflected in WHO policy.

The CHAIRMAN took it that the Board wished to conclude the discussion on this item.

It was so agreed.

Statement by the representative of the WHO staff associations: Item 9.3 of the agenda (document EB144/INF./1)

The representative of the WHO STAFF ASSOCIATIONS, speaking on behalf of the staff associations of WHO, UNAIDS and IARC, welcomed the introduction of mandatory training for WHO staff on the prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority, and on serving with pride – zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, and the efforts made to ensure that all staff completed both trainings. The staff associations looked forward to further supporting the Secretariat to revise and modernize its policies on the basis of international best practices to ensure they were victim-centred, protected whistle-blowers from retaliation, and ensured both timely access to justice and accountability for implementation.

She commended the work to strengthen the internal justice system to ensure that staff had early access to a forum for justice before resorting to international administrative tribunals. The Organization should seek to protect itself from litigation by proposing amendments to the existing rules and procedures of the administrative conflict resolution system to ensure that all parties acted within that framework. She noted with concern that elected WHO staff representatives had not been invited to propose amendments to the statutes of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization.

Locally recruited staff at some duty stations had faced considerable losses in real income owing to consistent local currency devaluations; the Executive Board should therefore develop more responsive measures that upheld purchasing power for all WHO staff. The mandatory mobility policy was key to the development of a modern workforce with broad and diverse experience. Although some of the principles discussed at the Global Staff/Management Council at its October 2018 meeting were aligned with staff expectations, implementation of the mobility policy should also include the optimal use of the workforce.

The representative of ROMANIA, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, expressed concern at Member States' muted response to the reports submitted by the WHO staff associations and the Ombudsman in recent years. Independent oversight and control was crucial to a healthy, well-functioning and transparent organization. Employees should be free to voice their concerns without fear, including to independent bodies if necessary, and WHO should take any issues raised by those bodies seriously. He welcomed the participation of the staff associations and the Ombudsman at the current session of the Board as a means of fostering interaction.

The Secretariat must work with staff to identify and tackle the root causes of mental health concerns. He supported the WHO staff associations in their efforts to identify the next steps in addressing and preventing harassment, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and bullying to foster a safe organizational culture. Response systems should be independent, sufficiently funded and protect the rights of all parties involved.

Noting the threats to the financial stability of some staff owing to delayed adjustments to currency devaluations, the European Union and its Member States would be paying special attention to discussions on that subject within the International Civil Service Commission and at the forthcoming meeting of the Fifth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly.

Staff well-being was central to WHO's success. The issues raised should therefore be placed on the agenda at all future sessions of the Executive Board, and Member States should receive regular

updates on the progress made on the review and implementation of safe workplace policies, with a special emphasis on communication with staff. The revised policies, including on regular incident notification to Member States, should be the subject of a separate agenda item at the 145th session of the Executive Board, with the participation of staff. To reduce its workload, the Secretariat could include those issues in existing reports, such as those of the Ombudsman and ethics and oversight committees, and in the report on human resources.

The representative of GERMANY stressed that, as a knowledge-based organization, WHO's highly skilled and committed staff were its core asset. It would be important to identify all factors with the potential to affect staff welfare. A zero-tolerance approach on harassment and the Respectful Workplace initiative should be implemented throughout WHO and observed at all levels. Anonymous accusations against individual staff members were incompatible with that principle. Staff must be fully involved in the transformation agenda and share a common understanding of the relevant processes. He expressed support for flexible working arrangements as a critical component of transforming WHO into a modern workplace. In addition, the mobility policy should be fair, objective and transparent and ensure optimal use of the workforce.

The representative of AUSTRALIA said that the Secretariat and Member States should work together to ensure that WHO was a safe, enabling and inclusive workplace, free of discrimination, harassment and abuse. She supported WHO's efforts to improve workplace culture, including the implementation of mandatory online training courses for all staff and the Respectful Workplace initiative. WHO should continue to invest in staff health and well-being and professional development to ensure that it would be best placed to provide global leadership on health. She welcomed the implementation of the United Nations system mental health and well-being strategy at WHO and the work done to strengthen the internal justice system and safeguard its independence, which should take into account the recommendation regarding the WHO complaint and redress system contained in the report of the UNAIDS Independent Expert Panel.

The representative of FINLAND, speaking on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden, noted with appreciation that WHO had taken steps to address allegations of abuse and was working to prevent such abuse through mandatory training. WHO would need transparent rules and procedures together with dedicated and competent staff to deal with accusations and foster a culture with zero tolerance of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Cases of sexual harassment reported by staff at other organizations of the United Nations system in recent years had damaged the reputation of the United Nations as a whole, at a time when multilateral cooperation was most needed. To transform itself into a more modern and relevant organization, WHO must cultivate a safe working environment in which its staff could thrive. The United Nations system model policy on sexual harassment should be implemented at all levels.

The representative of PANAMA¹ commended the WHO staff associations for their efforts to support the Organization in ensuring a decent, safe and equal working environment. She expressed concern at the surprisingly high prevalence of mental health conditions among staff at organizations of the United Nations system, including at WHO. The recent launch of the United Nations system mental health and well-being strategy was to be applauded, and she urged the Secretariat to ensure its implementation within the Organization. She supported the WHO staff associations' efforts to identify additional measures to ensure a safe working environment by encouraging a zero-tolerance approach to harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority.

¹ Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

The DIRECTOR (Human Resources Management) said that the Secretariat would respond to all comments made by Member States in future reports on the matter.

The DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL (Corporate Operations) highlighted the productive discussions on mobility held at the Global Staff/Management Council meeting in October 2018; the Secretariat was committed to working with the WHO staff associations to ensure that the mobility policy would be successful.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL said that he attended a meeting with the staff associations every month. Thus far, there had been agreement on many issues, except one: teleworking. In principle, teleworking could be very helpful. However, it was vital to strengthen teams before implementing such a policy. For the time being, teleworking would only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, such as in the case of family problems. He would, however, rethink the policy after the transformation process had been completed.

Regular dialogue with the staff associations would continue; he would implement the issues on which there was agreement and continue dialogue on those on which there was not. No distinction should be made between management and staff since they were all working towards the same goals. Management stood ready to support the creation of a respectful workplace environment. As a technical, normative and knowledge-based organization, WHO's central and core assets were its staff. He thanked the staff associations for their leadership and work.

Human resources update, including on the global internship programme: Item 9.5 of the agenda (documents EB144/47 and EB144/INF./3)

Report of the International Civil Service Commission: Item 9.6 of the agenda (document EB144/48)

Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules: Item 9.7 of the agenda (documents EB144/49 Rev.1 and EB144/49 Rev.1 Add.1)

The CHAIRMAN invited the Board to consider the reports contained in documents EB144/47, EB144/48 and EB144/49 Rev.1, and the two draft resolutions contained in document EB144/49 Rev.1. The financial and administrative implications of adopting those draft resolutions were set out in document EB144/49 Rev.1 Add.1.

The representative of BENIN, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the African Region, referring to item 9.7 of the agenda, said that the new unified base/floor salary scale was appropriate since it would reduce disparities between the different categories of staff and would not result in a decrease in staff salaries. The proposal to recommend to the Seventy-second World Health Assembly adjustments to the salaries of the Assistant Directors-General and the Director-General was in line with the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board. To cover the increase in budgetary expenditure for the period 2018–2019, the Secretariat should make greater use of existing strategies for the mobilization of additional resources. He supported the idea of a common scale of staff assessment.

The representative of JAMAICA, speaking on behalf of the core group on WHO internship reform, comprising Algeria, Haiti, Jamaica, Mozambique and South Africa, and referring to item 9.5 of the agenda, said that the level of in-kind support that WHO was currently providing to interns was a big step towards fulfilling the objectives of resolution WHA71.13 (2018). However, the provision of lunch vouchers and medical insurance was not enough to ensure the participation of young health professionals from low- and middle-income countries, who would be in a better position once the distribution of stipends had begun. The Secretariat should clarify how the global internship programme would redress

the imbalance in the number of interns from developing countries. Clarification should also be provided on when the programme would commence, when a decision would be made on the stipend amount, including travel expenses, and what percentage of the daily subsistence allowance WHO was considering providing. Furthermore, she asked the Secretariat to outline its fundraising strategy for the internship programme, which must be sustainable.

The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA said that the Director-General's open-door policy was a good practice since it created a working environment of inclusion and respect. In that connection, the Secretariat should provide Member States with regular updates on the investigation of allegations. In addition, the Secretariat must implement the recommendations of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit on whistle-blower policies and practices. Regarding item 9.5 of the agenda, she said that WHO should fully implement the mobility policy. There was also a need to carry out strategic recruitment initiatives to address underrepresentation and non-representation throughout the Organization while ensuring a fair selection process.

The representative of BURUNDI, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the African Region, and referring to item 9.5 of the agenda, commended the Secretariat for the way in which it was managing its staff. However, the Secretariat must ensure that the downward trend in staff numbers did not affect the performance of the Organization. He welcomed the commitment of the Director-General to ensuring geographical diversity and gender balance among staff and recognized the progress made. With regard to the global internship programme, the Secretariat should clarify when the second and third phases would be implemented and ensure that appropriate funding was in place in order to guarantee equitable access to the programme. In addition, a timetable for the implementation of the initiative supported by the Wellcome Trust should be provided, as well as further details on the implementation process. WHO should accelerate the recruitment process to ensure sufficient human capacity to enable the Organization to achieve its goals.

The representative of GERMANY, referring to item 9.5 of the agenda, said that the figures on underrepresentation and non-representation of Member States among staff were premature since they did not include staff at PAHO. The Secretariat should take PAHO into account in the figures in an appropriate way, while respecting PAHO's independence.

Increased mobility would be beneficial as long as it was based on clear incentives for staff, was administered in a fair and transparent way and made best use of the competencies of staff. To make mobility a success, preconditions were needed, such as adequate preparation and a well-resourced human resources department. Job descriptions must be coherent across regions. In addition, the Secretariat should clarify the costs involved per rotation as the figures were out of date. It was important to strike the right balance between seeking outstanding, world-class experts and specialized generalists who could be mobile. To ensure transparency, up-to-date accountability compacts of senior management should be published online.

The representative of MEXICO, referring to item 9.5 of the agenda, acknowledged the progress made on contractual arrangements and gender. The Secretariat should pursue efforts to promote gender parity and geographical diversity in the regional and country offices and should maintain a zero tolerance policy to sexual abuse and exploitation. Campaigns must promote a culture of respect. He supported the global internship programme and staff mobility. The Secretariat must employ competent human resources who were able to adapt to the different circumstances of different regions, while also guaranteeing added value for the Organization and its staff.

The representative of the NETHERLANDS said that there must be zero tolerance for inaction on sexual harassment, abuse of authority and bullying. It was paramount to improve conditions for staff, mainly out of concern for their health and well-being, but also because inaction had an adverse effect

on WHO credibility. The Secretariat should clarify the logic and logistics of staff mobility at forthcoming sessions of the governing bodies, as the right solution had not yet been found. She agreed that the accountability compacts of senior management should be published on the website.

The representative of CHINA said that candidates from low- and middle-income countries represented half of internship applicants but only one quarter of those recruited. Although the Secretariat had proposed solutions to the problem, including stipends, no substantive progress had been made.

He objected to the statement mentioning Taiwan, China, made by the representative of Honduras earlier in the session, as such statements challenged the One-China policy.

The representative of ESWATINI, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Africa Region on item 9.6 of the agenda, said that the United Nations General Assembly had instructed all organizations of the United Nations system to cooperate fully with the International Civil Service Commission on matters related to remuneration and conditions of services. He urged WHO to comply with those instructions or risk prejudicing claims to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund.

The representative of HAITI,¹ referring to item 9.5 of the agenda, welcomed efforts by the Secretariat to combat sexual harassment and to increase the number of directors from developing countries at headquarters. It was important to pay special attention to candidates from least developing countries, many of which were under- or unrepresented. Professionals from least developed countries offered a unique perspective on how to better serve the vulnerable. The Secretariat should indicate the number of interns that it expected to support per year from 2020 onwards.

The representative of SOUTH AFRICA¹ expressed appreciation for the progress made on the global internship programme, particularly the adoption of resolution WHA71.13 (2018). However, further consultations should be held on a draft strategy covering issues such as selection, eligibility, stipends and fundraising.

The representative of CANADA¹ asked the Secretariat how it planned to improve its procedures for dealing with allegations of misconduct, including its investigation, disciplinary and redressal procedures, and suggested that it adopt the UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment. He welcomed efforts to achieve gender balance and broaden representation, and asked how the Director-General would select the new leadership team to plan and implement WHO transformation. Any selection processes for senior positions should be transparent, open and competitive. Financing for interns should be needs-based and cost-effective. He also asked about the potential P6 scientists' stream, including how it would be financed; new pay grades without management requirements should be created only in exceptional circumstances and only for world class experts. Mobility would provide staff with opportunities for learning. WHO should support opportunities for staff to become resident coordinators in the context of the United Nations reform.

The DIRECTOR (Human Resources Management) said that Member States had been wise, when adopting resolution WHA71.13 (2018), to allow until 2020 to implement financial stipends for interns. That gave the Secretariat time to reflect in depth on the appropriate amount and method. It was important to resolve the issue so that WHO could attract and inspire future public health leaders.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL, referring to the "piecemeal" support currently being offered to interns, said that it was the WHO headquarters intern board that had specifically requested lunch vouchers, health insurance and 2.5 days' time off per month. However, the stipend alone would not be

¹ Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

enough to increase the number of interns from low- and middle-income countries, so the selection process was being redesigned as well. The total funding required for the stipend would be US\$ 20 million per year based on a maximum of 700 interns receiving US\$ 2 000 per month, although fewer interns could be hired initially and the number gradually increased. Funding the stipend would be worth the investment, and full details of the implementation process would be made available by the 2020 deadline.

The new staff mobility policy had been scheduled to go into effect in early 2019, but as representatives had observed, proper preparations must first be made. Discussions with staff had shown that they agreed with the principle of mobility but had concerns about the details: whether the policy would be fair and transparent, put the right people in the right places and make the Organization more productive. Decisions would therefore be taken in a transparent manner, with the involvement of the Staff Association, and the new guidelines would be discussed with staff and all issues resolved before the policy was implemented.

On sexual harassment, he acknowledged the calls for a zero tolerance policy and promised that the Secretariat would do everything in its power to tackle the problem. In response to the request for clarification on the new leadership team, he specified that the team would be “new” in terms of structure but would not be composed entirely of new members; some current members would merely switch to new positions. The process, based on the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023, had been under way for a year and would be completed by the end of February 2019.

The CHAIRMAN took it that the Board wished to adopt the draft resolutions contained in document EB144/49 Rev.1.

The resolutions were adopted.¹

3. MATTERS FOR INFORMATION: Item 10 of the agenda

Outcome of the Second International Conference on Nutrition: Item 10.1 of the agenda (document EB144/50 Rev.1)

Evaluation: update: Item 10.2 of the agenda (document EB144/51)

Reports of advisory bodies: Item 10.3 of the agenda

- **Expert committees and study groups** (documents EB144/52 and EB144/52 Add.1)

The Chairman invited the Board to consider the reports contained in documents EB144/50 Rev.1, EB144/51, EB144/52 and EB144/52 Add.1.

The representative of MEXICO, referring to item 10.3 of the agenda, welcomed the updates on discussions of cannabis-related substances by the Expert Committee on Drug Dependence in June 2018. It was unfortunate that recommendations from the Committee’s November 2018 meeting had been published too late to be included in document EB144/52.

The representative of JAPAN, referring to item 10.1 of the agenda, said that his country planned to host the 2020 Nutrition for Growth summit with a view to increasing international momentum and

¹ Resolutions EB144.R7 and EB144.R8, respectively.

reviewing progress on the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and Plan of Action for Nutrition. He hoped for international cooperation in preparing for the summit.

The representative of BURUNDI, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the African Region on item 10.2 of the agenda, expressed support for WHO's systematic approach to evaluation. Budgetary constraints and limited capacity made it a challenge to prioritize evaluation work, but he was confident that all objectives could be met if Member States remained committed to advancing organizational learning and following up on evaluation recommendations. He supported the proposal to review 40 years of implementation of primary health care.

The representative of GABON, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the African Region on item 10.1 of the agenda, said that much work remained to be done on stunting, anaemia, low birth weight and child overweight. Nutrition specialists were particularly scarce in Africa. Despite efforts by WHO, FAO and other organizations in the United Nations system to support implementation in the wake of the Second International Conference on Nutrition, renewed engagement was needed to produce concrete results. Intersectoral policy documents should be updated, and feasible and realistic measures taken to promote healthy diets. Turning to item 10.3 of the agenda, he commended the research- and consensus-based methodology used, and recommended that WHO provide Member States with more support to bridge regulatory gaps in tobacco and drug control.

The representative of BRAZIL said that it was time to scale up efforts to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025) by taking effective steps to promote healthy nutrition and food environments. In future reports, the Secretariat should mention additional action networks, such as the networks for the reduction of sodium consumption and for the promotion of food guides.

The representative of ITALY, noting the increasingly important role of nutrition on the global health agenda, welcomed WHO's involvement. The Organization's guidelines and recommendations must always be backed up by robust scientific evidence aimed at combating malnutrition in all its forms and should promote healthy, balanced diets without demonizing specific foods. WHO's willingness to engage with the private sector was also welcome, as it would be key to successful implementation of commitments made under the 2018 Political Declaration of the Third High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases. Her Government had experience and best practice to share on topics such as safeguarding against potential conflicts of interest in nutrition.

The representative of INDONESIA said that his country's disease pattern had come to resemble that of a high-income country, as processed foods with high sugar and fat content became part of people's everyday diets. Creating a healthy food environment was challenging, and he counted on WHO technical support to help strengthen Indonesia's monitoring and regulatory capacity.

The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, referring to item 10.2 of the agenda, welcomed the ongoing focus on strengthening evaluation and organizational learning at WHO. She looked forward to receiving the final report by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, which she hoped would enhance organizational learning and be useful to outside stakeholders in addition to providing accountability to donors. She asked whether all evaluations in the 2018–2019 workplan would be completed during the current biennium, including those for which no update had been provided, and repeated a request for more information regarding the process and terms of reference for the 2019 evaluation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors.

The representative of FRANCE,¹ speaking on behalf of the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative, a group comprising Brazil, France, Indonesia, Norway, Senegal, South Africa and Thailand, on item 10.1 of the agenda, said that the Initiative had adopted a multidimensional and intersectoral approach to fighting the root causes of and contributors to all forms of malnutrition, as the Sustainable Development Goals would not be attained unless significant progress was made in that respect. She fully supported the mechanisms established for implementing the Decade of Action on Nutrition, including action networks.

The representative of INDIA¹ outlined the various initiatives that his Government had taken to combat malnutrition. Document EB144/50 Rev. 1 did not address the impact of prevailing trade regimes and the lack of effective regulation on transnational food corporations, which were perhaps beyond the scope of the outcome documents of the Second International Conference on Nutrition. It nevertheless contained enough material on which Member States could act.

The representative of ARGENTINA¹ recalled that nutrition, particularly child obesity, was a priority for both her Government and the G20. Referring to the “Way Forward” section of document EB144/50 Rev.1, she suggested that intersectoral efforts should be coordinated for policy coherence and a Health in All Policies approach adopted to achieve comprehensive food policies. In addition to sex and age, socioeconomic vulnerability should also be considered when applying health measures, and malnutrition should be tackled in all its forms. Healthy food environments should be established through regulations based on scientific evidence.

The representative of WORLD CANCER RESEARCH FUND INTERNATIONAL, speaking at the invitation of the CHAIRMAN on item 10.1 of the agenda, said that, to reach global nutrition and noncommunicable disease targets, Member States must make ambitious specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound commitments to step up efforts; prioritize policy coherence and multisectoral action to address current policy fragmentation; implement policies and interventions to address both undernutrition, and overweight and obesity; ensure the mandatory implementation of evidence-informed nutrition policies; prevent and manage industry interference in policy-making; increase domestic and international financing for nutrition and noncommunicable diseases; and establish mechanisms to engage civil society in planning and implementing nutrition and noncommunicable disease actions.

The REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL (Evaluation and Organizational Learning), responding to questions on item 10.2 of the agenda, said that the status of the evaluations in the workplan for 2018–2019 would be described in the annual report submitted to the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee in May 2019. Based on the current budget, he expected all the evaluations to be completed during the 2018–2019 biennium and any problems would be flagged in the annual report in 2020. The initial evaluation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors was planned for the second half of 2019. A proposal for that evaluation’s terms of reference would be set out in the May 2019 report and would, as was customary, be discussed with the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee.

The Board noted the reports.

¹ Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

4. STRATEGIC PRIORITY MATTERS: Item 5 of the agenda (continued)

Follow-up to the high-level meetings of the United Nations General Assembly on health-related issues: Item 5.8 of the agenda (continued from the eleventh meeting)

- **Antimicrobial resistance** (document EB144/19)

The representative of IRAQ, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, highlighted the action taken to combat antimicrobial resistance in the Region, including the unanimous resolution EM/RC64/R.5 on antimicrobial resistance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the development of national action plans and enrolment in the Global Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System by some Member States, and capacity-building workshops. However, further efforts were needed, especially to support antimicrobial stewardship activities and policies to limit the use of antibiotics in human and animal health and the environment. Combating antimicrobial resistance required integrated and multisectoral measures, robust health systems, innovative approaches and strong political will at the highest level.

The representative of MEXICO outlined the goals of the national strategy on antimicrobial resistance and affirmed her Government's strong commitment to the issue. She welcomed the collaboration between FAO, OIE, WHO, noting that, while support was needed from international organizations to fill implementation gaps in the global action plan on antimicrobial resistance, it was essential that organizations avoid duplicating efforts. The five strategic objectives of the global action plan must be implemented on an equal basis, as focusing on only one would weaken overall efforts. It was also critical to generate and systematize data for monitoring and measuring progress in strategy implementation.

The representative of SRI LANKA recalled that antimicrobial resistance was a flagship priority for the South-East Asia Region and said that all the Member States in the Region were developing national strategic and action plans. Their effective implementation required political endorsement at the highest level and continued multisectoral follow-up.

The representative of JAMAICA said that the guidance provided by the Secretariat had enabled Member States to align national efforts with the global action plan on antimicrobial resistance. Recognizing that the issue threatened to reverse many of the health gains of the last 70 years, she urged WHO to: support the establishment of the global development and stewardship framework to combat antimicrobial resistance; encourage Member States to strengthen links between national plans on antimicrobial resistance and on universal health coverage, health security and multisectoral action; and advocate for guidance on integrated surveillance of antimicrobial resistance in the food chain, and on laboratory capacity-building.

The representative of ROMANIA, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, said that the candidate countries, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the stabilization and association process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, aligned themselves with his statement.

Stronger organizational coordination on antimicrobial resistance was needed at all levels. As antimicrobial resistance was a cross-cluster issue, he requested that WHO allocate adequate core funding to ensure that objectives in that area were met. Government commitment to antimicrobial resistance was also essential, and he urged WHO and its Member States to capitalize on the opportunity for discussion at the High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on Universal Health Coverage in 2019. The report from FAO, OIE, WHO and UNEP to the United Nations Secretary-General must

underscore the need to strengthen collective efforts across all levels, organizations and sectors to tackle antimicrobial resistance. He welcomed the joint workplan for 2019–2020 submitted by those four partners, but said that the report submitted to the Seventy-second World Health Assembly should include more detailed rationale for costings, timings and the division of labour and demonstrate clear efficiency savings.

The representative of JAPAN commended WHO's collaboration on antimicrobial resistance with FAO, OIE and other United Nations organizations. However, more work was needed globally and nationally on surveillance, the prudent use of antibiotics, and research and development.

Describing his Government's contribution to regional collaboration on antimicrobial resistance surveillance, he asked WHO to increase support for countries with limited resources. There was an urgent need to translate advocacy and high-level policy commitment into practical action informed by evidence-based best practice, and WHO had a key role to play in that regard. He asked the Secretariat to provide a response to the global governance model for antimicrobial resistance proposed by the Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance.

The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Region of the Americas, commended the Director-General and Secretariat for maintaining antimicrobial resistance as a global health priority. He outlined the areas of focus of the Region's action plan and, taking into account the multisectoral nature of the threat, he welcomed the deepened collaboration between FAO, OIE, WHO and UNEP. Member States should work with the Secretariat to finalize the global development and stewardship framework, consider the recommendations of the Interagency Coordination Group, and streamline workplans to avoid duplicated efforts. Strong political will and coordinated efforts would ensure that public health progress was not lost.

The representative of AUSTRALIA welcomed collaboration between FAO, OIE, WHO and UNEP, and looked forward to updates on the financing and implementation of the joint workplan for 2019–2020 and the recommendations from the Interagency Coordination Group. Alignment with other work to combat antimicrobial resistance and close consultation with Member States were important in advancing the global development and stewardship framework. She welcomed WHO's critical work on drug resistance, with particular regard to drug efficacy monitoring and updated treatment guidelines.

The representative of CHINA praised WHO's cooperation with other organizations and noted that action was needed at all three levels to combat antimicrobial resistance. Citing the important role of World Antibiotic Awareness Week, he encouraged the Secretariat to make materials and information available earlier to ensure that the campaign was more effective. It was paramount to improve health worker training in the use of antimicrobials, especially for community health workers and in areas with limited resources. He asked WHO to continue resource mobilization efforts and to support developing countries in their capacity-building activities.

The meeting rose at 16:55

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