

Report of the Executive Board on its 125th and 126th sessions

1. The Executive Board held its 125th session on 23 May 2009 and its 126th session from 18 to 23 January 2010. This report summarizes the main outcomes.

125TH SESSION (23 MAY 2009)

2. Members of the Board confirmed that **elimination of measles** was a feasible goal but urged the Secretariat to accelerate progress. The Secretariat undertook to report on assessing the feasibility of elimination to the Health Assembly in 2010 (see paragraph 19).

3. The Board noted the report on **availability, safety and quality of blood products**. It also considered a draft resolution submitted by some 28 Member States but agreed to postpone further discussion to the 126th session. After a short debate, it similarly decided to defer further discussion on the **proposed revision of the guidelines on the WHO review of psychoactive substances for international control** to the 126th session in order to allow for technical input. After a constructive discussion of the report on **birth defects** and another draft resolution, submitted by three Member States, it was agreed that the Secretariat would revise the report which, with the proposed draft resolution, would be reconsidered at the 126th session in January 2010. (For subsequent discussion of these three items, see respectively paragraphs 21, 24 and 16.)

4. In resolution EB125.R1, the Board decided to establish an **Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee** (see paragraph 33) and approved its terms of reference.

5. The Board noted the report on meetings of two **expert committees**.

126TH SESSION (18–23 JANUARY 2010)

6. The session began with an expression of sympathy and solidarity with the people of Haiti suffering as a result of the **earthquake** that had hit the country. In addition, members of the Board remembered the late member for Somalia, who had been killed in a terrorist attack.

7. In adopting its **agenda**, the Board agreed to include three supplementary items, on: health consequences of the earthquake in Haiti, treatment and prevention of pneumonia, and leprosy.

8. In her report to the Board, **the Director-General** observed the uneven progress towards achievement of the health-related Millennium Development Goals and summarized the response to the pandemic of influenza A (H1N1) 2009. She outlined the common obstacles to tackling the diverse

health problems in the world. She reported on an informal consultation on funding options for WHO, concluding that the Board was the appropriate forum to decide on such matters. The Board noted her report.

Technical and health matters

9. Following an update on the current situation on the **pandemic of influenza A (H1N1) 2009**, members warned against complacency. They agreed that the pandemic had demonstrated the effectiveness of the **International Health Regulations (2005)** for the first time. There were lessons to be learnt, for instance in the area of communications and zoonoses, and the need to strengthen core capacities in surveillance and response had been identified. The Board agreed that the Director-General should activate the IHR Review Committee to examine the global response to the pandemic, which would submit an interim response to the Sixty-third World Health Assembly that would include a definition of “pandemic”.

10. The Board extensively discussed the global strategy and plan of action on **public health, innovation and intellectual property**. It was agreed that the full report of the Expert Working Group on Research and Development Financing in all WHO’s official languages would be circulated in time for a web-based consultation and subsequent informal consultations to be held on 13 May 2009.

11. The Haitian Ambassador to the United Nations Office in Geneva addressed the Board about the situation following the catastrophic **earthquake** that had hit his country. Headquarters’ staff and the Regional Director for the Americas, speaking by videolink, outlined WHO’s operations in support of Haiti. Board members outlined the various responses of their respective governments and commended WHO’s work.

12. The Board agreed that an open-ended working group should be convened to reach agreement on the final elements under the **pandemic influenza preparedness framework for sharing of influenza viruses and access to vaccines and other benefits**. The group would meet on 10–12 May and its report would be submitted to the Sixty-third World Health Assembly.

13. In order to give impetus to the process of monitoring annual progress towards **achieving the health-related Millennium Development Goals**, a multi-sponsored draft resolution was submitted for consideration. Discussion highlighted the need for an integrated approach and inclusion of noncommunicable diseases in the targets. The Board adopted resolution EB126.R4, which included a resolution recommended to the Health Assembly for adoption that, inter alia, invited all concerned parties to consider providing further support for implementation of health policies and development plans related to the Goals, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

14. The Board agreed that the current version of the **draft code for international recruitment of health personnel**, which reflected the outcomes of regional discussions, would be submitted to the Health Assembly for consideration, with any comments or amendments submitted by Member States forwarded separately.

15. In its discussion of the progress report on **infant and young child nutrition** the Board also considered a draft resolution submitted by a Member State in order to counter malnutrition effectively through increased commitment from governments, civil society and the international community. The Board adopted resolution EB126.R5 which, among other things, requested the Director-General to develop a comprehensive implementation plan on infant and young child nutrition for submission to the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly.

16. The Board discussed the item on **birth defects**, including a draft resolution, further consideration of which had been deferred from the 125th session. Improvements in maternal and child health at national level were reported, although Board members acknowledged that challenges remained. Emphasizing prevention, they adopted resolution EB126.R6.

17. The Board took up the agenda item on **food safety**, which had been deferred from the Sixty-second World Health Assembly. Several Member States sponsored a draft resolution, which focused on greater international engagement (including funding for joint FAO/WHO normative work), multisectoral collaboration, strengthening scientific advice and the core capacities required under the International Health Regulations (2005), support for the International Food Safety Authorities Network, and prevention of zoonoses. The Board adopted resolution EB126.R7 on advancing food safety initiatives.

18. Several Board members called for more resources to be allocated to the **prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases**. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that all stakeholders had a role to play, including Member States; few resources were made available for the prevention of such diseases. The Board noted the report on implementation of the global strategy on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases.

19. The Board also noted the report on different aspects of **tuberculosis control**. Essential elements in that work were strengthening health systems and achieving high-quality DOTS treatment. The Board further noted reports on **leishmaniasis control** and **smallpox eradication: destruction of variola virus stocks**. The report on the **global eradication of measles**, also noted, indicated that the term eradication should be used to describe worldwide interruption of measles transmission.

20. The item on **viral hepatitis** had been postponed from the Sixty-second World Health Assembly. The Board recognized the growing and serious public health burden due to viral hepatitis and adopted resolution EB126.R16, which, among various actions to improve prevention, control, diagnosis and treatment, designated a World Hepatitis Day.

21. The subject of **availability, safety and quality of blood products** was taken up again, following the initial debate at the 125th session. After consideration of a revised draft resolution submitted by several Member States, the Board adopted resolution EB126.R14 which recommended the Health Assembly to adopt the resolution contained therein.

22. Consultations over the past year, together with informal discussions during the 126th session, on **strategies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol** resulted in the Board's adoption of resolution EB126.R11, to which a revised draft global strategy was annexed.¹ The Board recommended the Health Assembly to endorse that global strategy.

23. The item on **Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management** had been deferred from the Sixty-second World Health Assembly. The Board considered not only the Secretariat's report but two draft resolutions submitted by several Member States. These two texts focused on different ways to improve health: through safe and environmentally sound waste management, and through sound management of obsolete pesticides and other obsolete chemicals. The Board adopted resolutions EB126.R12 and EB126.R13, respectively.

¹ See document EB126/2010/REC/1, Annex 4.

24. Considering anew the **proposed revision of the guidelines on the WHO review of psychoactive substances for international control**, the Board made a few modifications to the texts and approved the revised guidelines.¹

25. In its consideration of the **treatment and prevention of pneumonia**, the Board discussed a draft resolution sponsored by several Member States on accelerating progress towards achievement of Millennium Development Goal 4 to reduce child mortality through the prevention and treatment of pneumonia. It adopted resolution EB126.R15, which included a request to the Director-General to bring together interested stakeholders in order to improve coordination in the fight against pneumonia.

26. Although a draft resolution had been proposed under the supplementary agenda item on **leprosy**, the Board was unable to reach consensus. Instead, it agreed that the Director-General should convene the Expert Committee on Leprosy and report to the Board at its 128th session.

Programme and budget matters

27. The Board noted the report on the **Eleventh General Programme of Work, 2006–2015**, considered by the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee as remaining relevant to the work of the Organization.

Staffing matters

28. The Board adopted resolutions EB126.R1 and EB126.R2, respectively reappointing Dr Luis Gomes Sambo as **Regional Director for Africa** and appointing Ms Zsuzsanna Jakab as **Regional Director for Europe**. In resolution EB126.R3, it expressed gratitude and appreciation to Dr Marc Danzon for his contribution to WHO's work.

29. The Board noted the **appointment of the Internal Auditor**. It also noted the **annual report on human resources** and the **report of the International Civil Service Commission**.

30. In resolution EB126.R9, the Board confirmed **amendments to the Staff Rules** concerning remuneration of staff in the professional and higher categories. In resolution EB126.R10 the Board recommended that the Health Assembly note its recommendations regarding the remuneration of both **staff in ungraded posts and the Director-General** and establish those salaries with effect from 1 January 2010.

Financial matters

31. Following the comments made by members of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee on the report on the **scale of assessments**, the Board recommended adoption of that scale by the Health Assembly. Given the late notification of WHO by the United Nations of adoption of the new scale, the Secretariat agreed to provide, as soon as possible after the Board session, a comparison of amounts payable by Members.²

¹ See document EB126/2010/REC/1, Annex 6.

² Issued in document A63/31, dated 16 February 2010.

Management matters

32. The Board took note of the request by the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee in its discussion of **safety and security of staff and premises and the Capital Master Plan** for further elaboration of the financing options for capital expenditure and recurrent costs, with submission of the outcome to the Sixty-third World Health Assembly.

33. In decision EB126(1) the Board appointed the candidates proposed by the Director-General as **members of the Independent Expert Advisory Oversight Committee** (see paragraph 4).

34. The Programme, Budget and Administration Committee referred the proposals on the **method of work of the governing bodies** to the Board, which decided in resolution EB126.R8 to adopt the proposed amendments to its Rules of Procedure. The Board also suggested that all new Board members should be oriented about the conduct of its business. The Board asked the Director-General, in revising the report for submission to the Sixty-third World Health Assembly, to reflect the comments made by members in the discussion.

35. In decision EB126(3), the Board approved the amended **provisional agenda for the Sixty-third World Health Assembly**, and in decision EB126(2) appointed its **representatives**. The Board affirmed the conclusion of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee for shorter meetings of the governing bodies. By decision EB126(4), the Board agreed that the **127th session of the Executive Board** would be held on 22 May 2010 at WHO headquarters, Geneva.

36. Having considered the report of its Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations, the Board adopted resolution EB126.R17 on **relations with nongovernmental organizations**, admitting into official relations the International Insulin Foundation, International Life Saving Federation, Caritas Internationalis, Stichting Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+), International Committee for Monitoring Assisted Reproductive Technologies and the International Network for Cancer Treatment and Research. Official relations with four nongovernmental organizations were discontinued and in a further two cases were suspended pending submission of a report on collaboration. After review of a third of all such bodies in official relations, the Board agreed a series of actions set out in decision EB126(5).

37. Following the reports of its committees on **foundations and awards**, the Board decided to award four prizes.

Matters for information

38. The Board took note of the reports of **advisory bodies** (specifically the Advisory Committee on Health Research) and **expert committees and study groups**. It also noted the reports requested by earlier resolutions, covering **progress** made in the following areas: **poliomyelitis – mechanism for management of potential risks to eradication; control of human African trypanosomiasis; reproductive health – strategy to accelerate progress towards the attainment of international development goals and targets; rapid scaling up of health workforce production; strengthening nursing and midwifery; sustaining the elimination of iodine deficiency disorders; multilingualism – implementation of action plan; health of migrants; climate change and health; and primary health care, including health system strengthening.**

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