

NOTE FOR THE RECORD¹

Teleconference with the Officers of the Executive Board regarding the draft provisional agenda of the 144th session (January 2019)

Friday 5 October 2018

Participants

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General
Mrs Maria Nazareth Farani Azevêdo (Brazil) Chairperson
Dr Päivi Sillanaukee (Finland) Vice-Chairperson
Dr Simon Mfanzile Zwane (Eswatini) Vice-Chairperson
Adjunct Professor Debra Thoms (Observer representing Australia)
Dr Anil Jasinghe (Observer representing Sri Lanka)
Dr Mohammed Jaber Hwoal Al-Taae (Iraq) Rapporteur
Mr Nilo Dytz Filho (Brazil) Advisor to the Chairperson
Mr Igor Da Silva Barbosa (Brazil) Advisor to the Chairperson

Secretariat

Ms Jane Ellison, Deputy Director-General for Corporate Operations
Dr Bernhard Schwartlander, Chef de Cabinet, Office of the Director-General
Dr Tim Armstrong, Director Governing Bodies
Mr Derek Walton, Legal Counsel
Ms Gina Vea, External Relations Officer, Governing Bodies
Mr Nicolas Ashforth, Senior Editor, Governing Bodies Editing
Dr Claudia Nannini, Legal Officer, Office of the Legal Counsel
Ms Patricia Durand Stimpson, Protocol Assistant, Governing Bodies
Ms Laurence Vercammen, Protocol Assistant, Governing Bodies

1. The Director-General and the Officers of the Executive Board met by teleconference on Friday 5 October in order to review the draft provisional agenda of the 144th session of the Board, to be held in January 2019, in accordance with Rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board. Ms Glenys Beauchamp (Australia) Vice-Chairperson and Dr Rajita Senaratne (Sri Lanka) Vice-Chairperson were unable to attend.

2. The draft provisional agenda had been circulated to Member States on 26 June 2018. Fourteen proposals for additional items had been made by Member States within the deadline of 18 September 2018. A further proposal had been included by the Secretariat. The proposals and their explanatory memorandums were sent to the Officers of the Board prior to the teleconference, together with supporting materials, in order to facilitate consideration of the potential changes to the draft provisional agenda. The criteria mandated by the governing bodies to be used in decision-making were also provided.

3. The Director-General welcomed the participants and invited the Chairperson of the Executive Board, who conducted the teleconference, to open the meeting.

Opening of the meeting

¹ As cleared by the Chairperson and the Officers.

4. The Chairperson reminded the Officers of the purpose of the meeting, which was as follows:
- *To consider the proposed amendments to the Provisional agenda of the 144th session of the Executive Board, particularly the requests to include additional items, together with one proposal from the Secretariat, and draw up the Provisional agenda*
 - *In line with the Board's request to the Officers, made in decision EB143(6) (2018) on governance reform:*
 - *to apply, on a trial basis, the proposed amended prioritization tool, as set out in document EB143/4*
 - *to prepare the Officers' report to the Executive Board at its 144th session on the use of the proposed amended prioritization tool*

Prioritization of proposals for the provisional agenda of the Executive Board at its 144th session

5. The Chairperson explained to the Officers that they had a number of options before them in considering the various proposals. The Officers could recommend:

- accepting the proposal as a new agenda item
- combining the proposed item with an existing item
- deferring the proposed item to a later session
- referring the proposal to another governing body, such as the regional committees or the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board
- turning down the proposal

6. The Legal Counsel then explained the background to decision EB143(6) (2018), in which the Executive Board had requested the Officers of the Board to apply the proposed amended prioritization tool for the preparation of the provisional agenda of the 144th session of the Board. At that session, members had advised the Secretariat that the tool should be tested by means of a retroactive application once the officers had arrived at a decision on the basis of their own deliberations.

7. The Legal Counsel explained that the guidance provided by the Board suggested that the Officers consider the proposals in the following stages:

- considering each item on its merits to arrive at a shared position
- using the tool afterwards to see if its application changed the outcome
- reporting to the Executive Board

8. The Director, Governing Bodies then provided the Officers with a governance perspective for the task in hand. Secretariat analyses of Executive Board sessions over the previous 15 years had revealed that the ideal number of items was six per day. That way, the Executive Board could avoid having recourse to night sessions. As 2019 was a “budget year”, the Board’s 144th session in January would run over eight days, which meant that the appropriate number of items for that session was 48. He pointed out to the Officers that for several of the items of the Provisional agenda there were already additional papers. On the basis that each paper involved a discussion, the Officers should consider that the Provisional agenda as it currently stood would already involve 44 discussions; the Officers could therefore reasonably add 4 items without there being a risk of needing night sessions in order to conclude the Board’s agenda.

9. The Officers of the Executive Board agreed to recommend the following:

- **to move** – in line with the proposal made by the Governments of Uruguay and Switzerland – existing item 10.1 on Outcome of the third High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and control of Non-communicable diseases in order to place it under the section on “Strategic priority matters”. At the same time, the Officers decided to **combine**

that item, **under new item 5.8**, with two further reports on high-level meetings of the United Nations General Assembly. This implied **moving existing item 10.3** on Outcome of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on ending tuberculosis and **accepting for addition** to the provisional agenda of the **144th session of the Executive Board** the item on antimicrobial resistance, proposed by the Governments of the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Canada. The new item would be **entitled “Follow-up to the high-level meetings of the United Nations General Assembly on health-related issues”** and would have three bullet points: Prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases, Ending tuberculosis and Antimicrobial resistance.

- to **accept for addition** to the provisional agenda of the **144th session of the Executive Board, under a new item 5.5, entitled “Universal health coverage”**, the following proposed items, which would be presented by means of three bullet points:
 - “Community health workers delivering primary health care: opportunities and challenges” (proposed by the Government of Ethiopia)
 - “Primary health care towards universal health coverage” (proposed by the Government of Kazakhstan)
 - “Preparation for a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on universal health coverage” (proposed the Governments of Thailand² and Japan)

- to **defer to a future session of the Executive Board**, consideration of the item on “Further actions to address the global burden of epilepsy and its health and social implications at the country level” proposed by the Governments of Croatia and Honduras. There was agreement that the subject had recently been discussed in the governing bodies. The Secretariat was asked to advise on the placement of the item on the forward-looking planning schedule of expected agenda items.

- to **defer to a future session of the Executive Board**, consideration of the item on “Follow-up on the implementation of paragraph 3 of decision WHA70(18) on the public health dimension of the world drug problem”, which had been proposed by the Governments of Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay and Portugal. That subject also had recently been discussed in the governing bodies. The Secretariat was asked to advise on the placement of the item on the forward-looking planning schedule of expected agenda items. In view of the importance of the matter, it was also agreed that the Secretariat would provide a briefing session for Member States on activities developed by WHO, as well as submitting a report on the issue for the consideration of the Health Assembly.

- to **accept for addition** to the provisional agenda of the **144th session of the Executive Board**, the item on “Accelerating cervical cancer elimination,” which had been proposed by the Governments of Australia, Brazil, Thailand and Zambia. There was agreement that including a separate item on cervical cancer elimination would allow for a broader discussion than if the matter were included under the item on access to medicines and vaccines. That way, consideration could be given to all the dimensions of the approach needed to the subject.

- to **accept for addition on** the provisional agenda of the **144th session of the Board** the proposed new items entitled “Global action on patient safety” (proposed by the Governments of thirty-four Member States) and “Water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities” (proposed by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania). The two subjects would be considered as **bullet points under a new item 6.6, entitled “Patient safety”**.

² On behalf of the Member States of the South-East Asia Region.

- to **defer** to the **145th session of the Executive Board**, consideration of the item on “Standardization of medical devices nomenclature” proposed by the Government of Brazil. Although the Officers recognized the importance of the subject, there was agreement that there would be insufficient time at the Board’s 144th session to give the matter the consideration that it merited. Deferral would also give the Secretariat additional time to prepare a comprehensive report, including through consultations.
- to **amend** – in line with the proposal made by the Government of France, with support from the Governments of Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia and Switzerland – the title of the **existing item** on WHO reform, changing it to read “WHO reform processes, including the transformation agenda, and implementation of United Nations Development System reform.”
- to **amend** – in line with the proposal made by the Secretariat – the title of the **existing item 5.6** on Addressing the global shortage of, and access to, medicines and vaccines, including for cancer prevention and control, changing it to read as follows:

Medicines, vaccines and health products

- Access to medicines and vaccines
- Cancer medicines

10. Following a discussion launched by the Chairperson, the Officers of the Executive Board also asked that the Secretariat’s human resources update to the Board in January 2019 include information that would enable the Board to consider, in a transparent and well informed manner, the issue of housing allowance to the Director-General, considering the time this matter was last discussed by the governing bodies, as well as practice in other United Nations specialized agencies.

Structure of the Provisional agenda of the Executive Board at its 144th session

11. The Chairperson recalled that during the continuing consultations on Governance Reform, one Member State had called for an explanation of the decision, taken by the Officers at their meeting on 31 July and 1 August 2017, to change the structure of the agenda based on the actions and outcomes expected from the Board. As a result, strategic issues of high priority had been grouped together separately. In the view of the Member State concerned, the decision had not been taken with the proper consideration of the Executive Board. The Officers agreed to recommend that the Executive Board at its 144th session in January 2019, take advantage of its first item (adoption of the agenda) to consider and approve the current structure of its agenda.

Preparation of the provisional agenda of the Executive Board at its 144th session

12. The Chairperson requested the Secretariat to provide a new Provisional agenda on the basis of the Officers’ discussions, together with additional information on: how each item would be handled; what action was expected of the Board; and how much time would be available for members and non-members of the Board to express their governments’ position. The Officers also stressed the importance in the future of organizing the agenda in line with the General Programme of Work rather than according strategic priority to certain items, as that gave the impression that other items were less important.

13. The Director, Governing Bodies confirmed that the amended Provisional agenda would be circulated to Member States at least six weeks before the opening of the January session of the Executive Board, in line with the Board's Rules of Procedure.

Assessment of the prioritization tool and report to the Executive Board at its 144th session

14. As most of the Officers' scores had not been received in time for the meeting, the Chairperson proposed that they be sent for Monday 8 October, and that the Secretariat produce a compilation of the scores so as to facilitate a retroactive assessment of whether the application of the tool supported the decisions taken by the Officers during the teleconference.

15. In their comments, some Officers mentioned the need to consider further questions alongside those that are part of the prioritization tool, namely: when the issue at hand was last discussed; the relative importance of discussing it at the forthcoming governing bodies meeting; if not in the General Programme of work, whether it is a new or evolving issue; the breadth of support for the proposal; the degree to which that support is cross-regional; its global relevance; its links to implementation of the Agenda 2030; whether the issue has a normative element; whether the proposal makes clear what outputs are expected of the Secretariat and Member States. Such questions would have provided valuable information, making the tool easier to use. Governance and administrative matters in particular were found to be difficult to evaluate using the existing questions and should have their own criteria. It was also difficult for a Member State to evaluate the resource implications; that type of analysis should be provided by the Secretariat. The links of proposals to existing resolutions and decisions and the reporting requirements thereof should also be made clear. Overall, the Officers were of the view that the tool had been difficult and time-consuming to use; the questions, which were of an objective nature, were not appropriate for the issues under scrutiny, which were subjective. It was therefore suggested that use of the tool should be discontinued.

16. The Director-General thanked the Officers and the Chairperson for their work in what had been a productive teleconference; the Chairperson then closed the meeting.

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