

**Governance reform: follow-up to decision WHA69(8)**  
**Improving the level of correspondence between the number of items on the**  
**provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and**  
**timing of sessions**

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## **AFRICA GROUP**

### **Governance reform: follow-up to decision WHA 69(8)**

#### **Improving the level of correspondence between the number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of sessions**

*(Version of 11 October 2016)*

We have reviewed the Secretariat report and the proposed options and we have the following comments to make.

#### **GENERAL COMMENTS :**

1. We acknowledge that there is a challenge in managing the agenda items in the governing board meetings of WHO as highlighted in the report. There are several reasons for this challenge, chief amongst them, an increase in the agenda items due to failure to balance issues that are dealt with in other UN agencies. These items are brought to WHO despite the fact that they generally go beyond the core mandate of WHO. We therefore note with concern, the increase in the tabling of agenda items which should be addressed in other fora, thereby putting strain on efforts to reach consensus during WHO governing board meetings.

WHO should continue to be a science based organization and consensus should be reached through scientific evidence in order to avoid putting the Organisation into disrepute. In that regard, we recommend that the 'criteria on how to propose new agenda items' should include an assessment of the comparative advantage to WHO, based on its mandate in tackling the agenda proposed in relation to other UN agencies. In addition, it must acknowledge that the regions are different in terms of architecture and burden of disease as well as that the proposal should be within the mandate of the WHO to respond urgently to the public health threats whenever they are detected in various regions

2. When Member States agreed to initiate discussions on the reform of the WHO (*which was due to financial constraints the organization was facing at that time and is still facing*), it was on the understanding that the constitution of the WHO would not be changed. However, it is observed that some of the proposals made in the document would tamper with the constitution by giving more mandate and authority to the Executive Board whilst removing some of the critical work of the World Health Assembly. We are not in a position to support proposals that would change the constitution of WHO or which would impede of rights of Member States.
3. Furthermore, we note the increased role and power of the Bureau of the Executive Board. In that regard, greater transparency is needed in the workings of the Bureau through the official dissemination to all Member States, including through the Regional Coordinators. If the Bureau is taking decisions of global importance greater transparency is necessary. Member states should be made aware of the decision making guidelines preparations (dates when bureau meetings will take place) and the interim and final reports of the

meetings should be made available to all Board members. This can be achieved through, inter alia, the participation of Regional Coordinators at the Bureau meetings.

4. The document does not acknowledge the ever increasing number of parallel informal sessions during the governing board meetings. Most crucial discussions are being finalised in several parallel side meetings, which usually go on till very late and unmanageable and unhealthy hours for delegations who do not have alternates to exchange and take breaks. This needs to be urgently corrected through the present discussion. We propose that informal consultations should be held prior to the main meetings and if there is no consensus, the discussions should be postponed to the next governing board meeting.

### **SPECIFIC COMMENTS :**

#### **A) Reduce the number of agenda items (paragraphs 11-21) :**

1. In order to have a transparent process at the EB on the process of including new agenda items, there is a need to have an agreement among Member States on the single set of criteria to be used. It is not clear how the proposed 'mechanism' proposed in paragraph 14 would be linked to the criteria to be developed. We are particularly not in favour of the proposal made in paragraph 15 of using a voting mechanism if consensus is not reached. This may result in agenda items based solely on political rather than scientific considerations.
2. We are also not in a position to support the proposal in Paragraphs 19 – 21 to limit the space by Member State to propose agenda items to the Assembly. In that regard, we do not support the proposal of deleting and amending Rule 5 of the Rules of Procedure of Health Assembly letters (d), (e), and (f) and neither the proposed wording in paragraph 21. The proposal in this paragraph is one of fundamental change to the constitution, which is removing the rights of all Member States and giving more power to a smaller group of Member States in the Executive Board. However, we can support that any proposal submitted to the World Health Assembly should include an explanatory memorandum as this will facilitate appropriate discussions. In view of this we propose inclusion of either a foot note or additional letter ( g) which would read '*proposal to include an explanatory memorandum*'.

#### **B) Expand the duration of the sessions :**

1. We can support the need for an additional day of the Executive Board as this will be important for the Board to have in-depth discussions on items on its agenda.

**C) Hold additional session (paragraphs 23 ) :**

1. We are not in a position to support the addition of a ‘Committee C’. Once again due sensitivity should be exercised considering smaller delegations who will not have adequate numbers of delegation members to participate in the process of deliberations made in these committees. This might result in further discussions at the plenary to reach consensus as members who were not able to participate in the committees have a right to contribute to all documents which are passed by the assembly. This should also be considered in light of the several parallel informal consultations which make it impossible for some delegations to follow the discussions.

**D) Reduce the time required for each agenda item :**

1. We are not in position to agree to the proposals to further reduce the time for statements from delegations. It is important to note that the Health Assembly is an important opportunity of Ministers of Health to come together to agree deliberate not just on the functioning of the Health Assembly, but to also share national experiences. Furthermore it is already difficult to condense statements into the currently allocated timing. We would rather be in a position to encourage Member States to make their statements through a regional mechanism or those MS with similar views to combine their statements. The Chairs of Committees should be encouraged to ensure that the slots given are not exceeded.

**OTHER PROPOSALS :**

1. Reduce the number of the electronic formal or informal consultations which should not replace the physical meetings, especially for the important topics considered by the organisation. In addition, meetings outside of Geneva should be avoided as most countries will not have travel support to attend the meetings.
2. The cost effectiveness approach is welcomed in all the work of WHO but should not influence negatively the response to the public health threats detected in all the regions of the world.
3. We insist on the need to translate, in the 6 WHO languages, the important documents submitted for MS consultations, such as the governance reform paper which we are discussing now, to give an equal opportunity to each country to bring its comments.
4. Evening and night sessions should be substituted by the extension of the days of the relevant session. In other words, we can accept the idea of the maximum number of the agenda item to be discussed per day, and extend, when necessary, the number of days of the session in order to cover all the items on the agenda.

5. The WHO needs to preserve its leadership on the world health agenda. In this regard, it should focus its efforts on its mandate and let, when possible, the other matters (such as the humanitarian issue) that can be covered by the other more relevant UN agencies.
6. The Secretariat should avoid conflict of scheduling WHO's meetings which negatively influences the participation of small delegations to such meetings.

**Governance reform: follow-up to decision WHA69(8)**  
**Written Submission to the WHO Secretariat**  
**AUSTRALIA**

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Australia has been a strong advocate for WHO governance reform and welcomes the progress made to date. We acknowledge the challenges that a large, evolving agenda poses to Member States and the Secretariat in preparing for governing body meetings, and thank the Secretariat for its efforts in developing the draft document “Improving the level of correspondence between the number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of sessions”. We are pleased to offer the following comments.

Reduction in the number of agenda items

Actions to reduce the number of agenda items are essential to allow sufficient consideration of issues and timely, strategic decision making by governing bodies. In this respect, Australia supports applying a limit to the number of EB agenda items, including no more than 36 items in non-budget years and no more than 48 items in budget years. We urge the Secretariat to consider introducing an optimal limit of agenda items on a trial basis and evaluating the process before further consideration of adopting the practice more widely.

Australia also considers it essential that the Chairs and Bureaus of governing bodies are empowered to define a manageable agenda for meetings and select the most strategic agenda items. We consider that all proposed agenda items should require an explanatory memorandum and be reviewed by the Board, prior to consideration at the WHA. This process will empower the decision making of the EB by enabling the consistent application of decision making criteria to all agenda items. The development of a six-year, forward looking schedule for the agendas of the EB and WHA, pursuant to decision WHA69(8), will further support this process. With respect to extraordinary circumstances, Australia considers that the necessary safeguards can be put in place to ensure timely consideration of such agenda items.

Reducing the number of agenda items for governing body meetings is the collective responsibility of Member States and the Secretariat. We note a record number of proposals were received for 140<sup>th</sup> session of the EB in January 2017 and that a number were successful or altered the agenda substantially. We urge fellow Member States to consider the merit of and alignment between proposed agenda items prior to submission, in the spirit of the governance reform process. We further urge the Secretariat to consider options for a process to share proposals among Member States in a timely manner, to facilitate a more coordinated approach.

Duration and number of sessions

Australia considers the proposal to establish a Committee C at the WHA as problematic and detracts from the core issue of agenda management. We note the financial costs associated with these changes and the potential burden on Member States and the Secretariat. In particular, we consider that this proposal would unfairly disadvantage smaller delegations and pose challenges to ensuring appropriate, senior representation and engagement in these meetings. We note that technical agenda items are consistently reallocated to Committee B and suggest a review is

undertaken of this process, with the view to ensuring a more even split of agenda items and workloads across Committees A and B.

#### Time allocated to agenda items

Australia strongly supports focusing deliberations during the governing body meetings on strategic issues and urges fellow Member States to refrain from lengthy interventions detailing country health situations, unless highlighting innovative approaches or specific requests for assistance or action. We note efforts to reduce the length of statements during Committee A at the 69th session of the WHA in May 2016 were successful, and support the proposed reduction in the length of statements to two minutes and four minutes for Member State and regional interventions, respectively. The establishment of a web page for the posting of full statements would support this proposed change. However, we also acknowledge the need for flexibility in the application of the time limit, recognising there may be circumstances in which additional time is required. Flexibility should also be applied in the case of the Secretariat, including the Director-General, to ensure the Secretariat has sufficient time to address the issues raised by Member States during deliberations.

## BRAZIL

### **Governance reform: follow-up to decision WHA 69 (8)**

Brazil has the following comments and suggestions in relation to the proposals presented by WHO's Secretariat:

- Paragraph 13 proposes that Member States could establish 6 items of agenda items per day (defined as the maximum optimal number of agenda items), based on the supposal that each item discussion would last one hour. Has this optimal number been determined in accordance to any study or analysis performed by the Secretariat?
- Paragraph 14 mentions criteria for the prioritization of agenda items that should be defined by the Board, aiming at not exceeding the maximum optimal number of 6 items. Has the Bureau of the EB already started discussions of a prioritization mechanism provided by Decision WHA69 (8) paragraph 3?
- Paragraphs 19 and 20 propose a new process in relation to the direct inclusion of agenda items for the provision agenda of the World Health Assembly. In this sense, Brazil would not favor limitations to Member States' prerogative to present agenda items, and we consider that the proposal of centralizing decisions in the EB would limit such prerogative. The document also suggests that, in "exceptional circumstances", Member States could propose a direct inclusion of agenda item to the World Health Assembly, without previous assessment by the EB. The document does not provide, however, the definition of "exceptional circumstances". We believe that the suggestion of presenting an explanatory memorandum is justifiable; but it is mandatory that the WHA defines the definition of exceptional circumstances before any amendments of the rules of procedures.
- Paragraph 22 – We consider that the proposal of expand the duration of session is a good alternative in order to avoid evening sessions, even though the additional costs entailed in such proposal.
- We are not in favor of the creation of a Committee C (par. 23), as it would lead to more fragmentation and, consequently, would pose an obstacle to adequate participation of Member States during World Health Assemblies.
- We consider that the reduction of the length of statements is a reasonable proposal, based on the experience of the 69<sup>th</sup> WHA, but only combined with the adoption of a mechanism such as the one proposed in paragraph 29. The document does not mention, however, any proposal in relation to progress reports, which have been combined and discussed as a single item. Does the Secretariat intend to continue with this practice? It is important to clarify it before EB 140.
- Lastly, we kindly ask the Secretariat to avoid publishing documents close to the deadlines for comments, as it difficulties Member States coordination and adequate participation in electronic consultations.



## **CANADA**

Canada appreciates the opportunity to comment on the continued process of governance reform at the World Health Organization (WHO).

Good governance is critical to an effective, transparent and financially responsible WHO. Both Member States and WHO administrators have important roles to play. Canada encourages both to reflect on how we can all contribute to more manageable, transparent and effective decision making processes.

Canada agrees with a number of measures proposed including caps on the length of governing body meetings as well as limiting the length of Member State statements. Canada offers, for your consideration, the following suggestions:

### 1. The length of governing body meetings

- Night sessions should no longer be considered an option for clearing the regular agenda. They are costly (\$175,000 per session) and encourage loaded agendas. Night sessions, if absolutely necessary, should be limited to negotiations or drafting sessions.
- A maximum number of agenda items should be set for each meeting. The maximum number of agenda items should be determined based on the number of days multiplied by six (the smallest number of daily agenda items cleared by a governing body in the last 8 years).
- Each working day should be limited to 8-hours (two three-hour sessions with a 2 hour lunch break, which may be shortened if voting members agree to do so). In the event that six agenda items are concluded before the end of the working day is complete, Member States may elect to discuss additional items but the working day may not exceed 8 hours.
- Proposals not retained for the January EB agenda may be considered for the spring EB session or rejected.
- Only agenda items addressing true health emergencies (i.e. graded based on the WHO Health Emergencies Programme) should be considered by WHA without being considered by EB or PBAC. No exceptions should be allowed to the criteria defining an emergency item.

### 2. Interventions during governing body meetings

- Member State statements should be limited to 3 minutes and regional statements to 5 minutes at all governing board meetings, as suggested.
- EB and WHA Committee Chairs should first call for all regional statements, ask for the Secretariat to respond to issues raised during the regional statements and then open the floor to statements from Member States.
- Where a regional statement is made on an agenda item, all Member States from that region should have their time allotment reduced to 2 minutes.
- Full Member State statements should be posted on a dedicated webpage, as suggested. Member States may opt to post a statement online in place of a statement.
- Canada agrees that Member States should be discouraged from making statement that focus entirely or mostly on domestic health issues and action. The secretariat could draft guidelines for Member State statements.

## CHINA

### (Original version)

- 一、如会员国或准会员直接向世界卫生大会提交议题，无论是否紧急，均应提供一份解释性说明。
- 二、世界卫生大会设立 C 委将会分散一些小的会员国代表团，将不利于议题的深入讨论，因此不建议设立 C 委。秘书处可提前对乙委的工作量进行评估，以便尽早安排相关的甲委议题至乙委审议。
- 三、有必要保证执委会和卫生大会上各成员国的发言时间（3 分钟），同时可设置网页以便有需要的国家将完整发言放上去。执委会、卫生大会甲委、乙委主席需要对会议讨论时间进行有力的管理，尽可能简洁高效。

### (English version)

1. Any agenda item directly submitted to the World Health Assembly by a Member State or by an Associate Member needs to be accompanied by an explanatory memorandum, no matter how urgent the item is.
2. We are not in favour of the proposal to establish a new Committee “C” for the World Health Assembly, as this might disadvantage delegations of some small Member States, making it difficult for thorough deliberations of agenda items. The Secretariat may make an estimate of the workload of Committee B in advance to facilitate arrangements as soon as possible for a transfer of some relevant items from Committee A to Committee B.
3. It is necessary to guarantee the duration of a statement by a Member State (three minutes) in an EB or WHA meeting. In the meantime, a dedicated web page might be created for posting full written statements by Member States if they wish to do so. The chairmen of EB and of WHA Committee A and Committee B need to control rigorously discussion time at meetings to allow for concise and highly efficient discussions.

## **CZECH REPUBLIC**

First of all let us sincerely thank you for this draft and for the possibility to submit our comments. Please find below the statement of the Czech Republic concerning some key points of the document.

The number of agenda items is a very sensitive topic. We believe that every topic on the agenda is important, which makes it impossible to say that one topic is more important than another one. Even within one WHO Region, there are topics, which are more important for a specific group of states than for the other ones. This trend is even more evident at the global level. We consider it necessary to put emphasis on a good time management of the considered topics and an early publication of background documents. This will allow better preparations and will help to avoid misunderstandings.

The Czech Republic cannot accept the longer duration of sessions as well as the arranging of additional sessions. The proposal of establishing a new committee C during the Health Assembly is closely linked with this. The Czech Republic does not support this proposal. Even now it is nearly impossible to participate in all parallel sessions (mainly for smaller delegations). The idea of additional sessions goes against the declarations of the WHO to revise the number of expert sessions and to decide which ones can be held by audio- and videoconferences.

Regarding the reduction time for each agenda item, the Czech Republic would like to propose rather the enforcement of the time determined for the statements by chairs (i.e. The delegate could not continue with reading of its national statement after the expiration of the time set.).

## DENMARK

### **Electronic consultation on governance reform - Danish comments**

Governance reform: follow-up to decision WHA69 (8)

Denmark would like to thank the Secretariat for the chance to comment on the governance reform document regarding proposals to improve the level of correspondence between the number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of sessions.

In May of this year, the World Health Assembly had a record breaking number of agenda items to be discussed and, as stated in the document, the large number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies poses a real challenge for delegations in preparing their participation in substantial discussions. Going through the many meeting documents in the governing bodies (strategies, action plans, road maps etc.) takes a large amount of time and resources and, for a small delegation, it is difficult, at times impossible, to cover the many informal and formal meetings that are often being held in parallel with the sessions of the main committees.

Therefore, the need for good governance is more important than ever before and ongoing governance reform is vital in order to enhance efficiency and transparency at all 3 levels of the organization.

We welcome the proposal to reduce the number of agenda items and introducing further limitation of the length of statements during governing body sessions, which should apply for both Member States as well as the Secretariat.

However, we are generally disappointed to see that the document seems to focus more on expanding the duration of sessions and holding additional sessions rather than addressing the underlying problems. We do not see adding more meetings to be a solution to this and we would have wanted the level of ambition to be higher. In our view, the document does not address how to reform the actual format and execution of the sessions, and there is a need to discuss how to better organize sessions which the document does not cover.

Finally, this year we have experienced a tendency to arrange special funding sessions outside the scope of the Financing Dialogue (e.g. WHO Emergency Programme and CEWG). In light of the need not to have additional sessions, we urge the Secretariat not to undermine the general strategic approach of the Financing Dialogue and to ensure that WHO is funded to achieve all its objectives.

We look forward to discussing this important issue at the Executive Board meeting in January 2017.

## FRANCE

(Original version)



La France remercie le secrétariat de l'OMS pour ses propositions de maîtrise des ordres du jour des organes directeurs.

La France est consciente de la difficulté à maîtriser les ordres du jour, dans un contexte où les défis en matière de santé sont toujours plus lourds. Nous espérons que les propositions présentées seront suffisantes pour permettre de les résoudre.

La France considère la possibilité de réduire le nombre de points à l'ordre du jour comme une option à explorer. Cependant, pour être opérationnelle, cette réduction doit s'accompagner d'un mécanisme transparent et ouvert sur la sélection des points à l'ordre du jour. Les critères qui serviront de base à cette sélection doivent être discutés en amont, de façon à effectuer un choix objectif, équilibré et équitable. Concernant la possibilité de ne présenter à l'AMS que des points d'ordre du jour qui auraient été préalablement examinés par le Conseil exécutif, (CE) les autorités françaises s'inquiètent que cette solution puisse engorger encore davantage le CE.

La France n'est pas favorable à accroissement de la durée des sessions. Cette option ne permet pas une meilleure maîtrise de l'ordre du jour et risque au contraire de se traduire par une augmentation du nombre de sujets proposés. En outre, elle entraîne un coût supplémentaire pour l'OMS et défavorise les délégations aux effectifs les plus restreints.

Les autorités françaises ne sont pas non plus favorables à la tenue de sessions supplémentaires (« comité C »). Comme l'augmentation de la durée des sessions, cette solution ne permet pas de maîtriser les ordres du jour, entraîne un coût supplémentaire et surtout introduit une inégalité évidente entre les Etats membres, en fonction des effectifs de leur délégation

Les autorités françaises voient en revanche, un intérêt certain à réduire le temps alloué à chaque point de l'ordre du jour, en postant sur le site web les déclarations intégrales des Etats et en réduisant la durée des déclarations orales. Nous estimons, à cet égard, que le temps de présentation des rapports du secrétariat pourrait également être réduit. En effet, les rapports du secrétariat étant distribués à l'avance, une présentation détaillée n'est pas indispensable. Le temps de réponse du secrétariat aux commentaires des Etats membres, membres associés ou observateurs ne doit pas pour autant être réduit.

La France est convaincue de l'importance de maîtriser les ordres du jour des sessions des organes directeurs de l'OMS, afin d'assurer un fonctionnement opérationnel et efficace de l'organisation. Les autorités françaises demeurent activement impliquées en faveur de la définition de solutions optimale en ce sens.

(English version)

France thanks the secretariat for its proposals to streamline the agenda of the Governing Bodies.

France is aware how difficult it is to streamline the agenda in a context of increasingly complex health challenges. We hope that the proposals that have been submitted will be sufficient to address the issue.

France believes that the option of reducing the number of agenda items should be explored. However, to achieve effective results, the items on the slimmed-down agenda must be selected in a transparent and open manner. The core criteria for selection need to be discussed well in advance to ensure that the choice is objective, balanced and fair. The French Government is concerned that the option of submitting to the World Health Assembly only those items which have been previously discussed at the Executive Board could overburden the Board even further.

France does not favour increasing the length of sessions. This does not streamline the agenda, on the contrary it could actually increase the number of items taken up. In addition, it would involve additional costs for WHO and would place smaller delegations at a disadvantage.

Nor does the French Government favour the holding of additional meetings ("Committee C"). Like increasing the length of sessions, this solution does not streamline the agenda, entails additional costs and – worst of all – introduces inequality between Member States by penalizing smaller delegations.

On the other hand, the French Government sees some merit in reducing the time allocated to each agenda item by posting the full statements of Member States on the web site and reducing the time allowed for oral statements. We also think that the presentation of reports by the secretariat could be shortened. Because these are distributed in advance, no detailed introduction is necessary. However, the time allotted to secretariat responses to comments by Member States, Associate Members or Observers should not be reduced.

France is convinced of the importance of streamlining the agenda of the WHO Governing Bodies to ensure that the Organization is able to function smoothly and effectively. The French Government is proactively committed to identifying optimal solutions in this area.

## GERMANY

With reference to C.L.39.2016 and World Health Assembly decision WHA 69(8), Germany would like to thank WHO for the most valuable suggestions and submit the following comments concerning the Governance Reform:

With respect to proposal (1) "Reduce the number of items on the agenda",

- (13) In general, we support establishing a maximum optimal number of items for the provisional agendas of the Executive Board.

- we are in favor of promoting an orderly consideration of new items by requiring, except in extraordinary situations, consideration of new items by the Board prior to consideration of them by the Health Assembly.

Regarding proposal (2) "Expand the duration of session",

- (22) generally, we do not support the expansion of the duration of sessions as long as we have not agreed on a method to limit the number of items. However, we might consider an extension of EB sessions in non-budget years, if at the same time evening/night sessions will be strictly excluded.

With respect to (3) "Hold additional session",

- (23) we do not support the establishment of a committee "C", as we believe, that it may be a challenge - especially for small delegations - to cover main committees and additional sessions of the newly established committee C.

Regarding (4) "Reduce the time required for each agenda item",

- (24, 25) we are not in favor of reducing the length of statements during the meeting to less than 3 minutes as a general rule. A measure like this should still lie in the prerogative of the chair if time is indeed too limited.

## **IRAQ**

We appreciate what have been propounded we want to focus on the followings:-

1- We ought to unify other items within WR of the country so that all areas of concern will be tackled

within these items, so the country will share its concerns.

2- That agenda will be unified with concerns of all regions of WHO.

3- The final agenda will be discussed within the executive board to refer to most areas of concern taking

into consideration the epidemiological, demographic variables with field renewals.



## JAPAN

1 November 2016

The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare would like to thank the World Health Organization for drafting a note for consultation on ‘improving the level of correspondence between the number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of sessions’. Japan recognises its importance and is broadly supportive of necessary reforms. Specific comments to the proposed options are as follows:

- Japan is in favour of ‘(1) Reduce the number of items on the agenda’ and ‘(4) Reduce the time required for each agenda item’.
- However, considering the number of agenda items in the recent Executive Board meetings (over 50 agenda items for 6-day meetings since 2010), the proposed maximum optimal number of agenda items, which is 6 items per day and amounts to 36 items for a 6-day meeting, may be too small, therefore we propose to add just 1 or 2 more items per day.
- Japan opposes ‘(3) Hold additional sessions’ because it would increase burdens particularly for smaller delegations, making it difficult for them to fully monitor developments in each session. The additional cost of 105,000 to 175,000 USD is another drawback of the option.
- Similarly, ‘(2) Expand the duration of sessions’ is on the bottom of our priorities because of its additional cost of 175,000 USD per day for the WHO and further additional cost for the delegations.

## MALAYSIA



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*Ruj. Tuan : C.L.39.2016*  
*Ruj. Kami : KKM(KA).600-2/4/1.Jld3(4)*  
*Tarikh : 28 Oktober 2016*

**RE : Malaysia feedback on Electronic Consultation of WHO Governance Reform – Governance Body Meeting**

Malaysia had the privileges to be the member of the Executive Board in the 2014-2015 period, thus enabling it to play an active role in the executive body of the WHO, and to represent the interest and concern of the Western Pacific Region. Coincidentally, this period witnessed the biggest number of agenda to be discussed (68 agenda items in EB 134), which saw 3 evening sessions needed to be held to accommodate the agenda items discussion.

Subsequently, WHA 67 saw a culmination of 74 agenda items, while in WHA 69 - in which Malaysia had the honor to be the vice-president of the assembly - delegates did their utmost to finish all 76 agenda items (with 1223 of pages of pre-session documentation need to be revised). This overcrowding of agenda posed a challenge for representatives from Malaysia to participate in a substantial and inclusive manner. Similar concerns have been raised by many Member States especially those with a small number of delegations.

In regards with this, we are supportive of the proposal to :-

- Establishing a maximum optimal number of agenda items during the formation of Provisional Agenda under “Rule 8 of the Board’s Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board”. Where exceeding the number is vital, the matters should be taken into a vote by the Board should there be no consensus.
- Promote an orderly consideration of additional items, through a review from the Board, with an explanatory memorandum justifying the inclusion of the aforementioned agenda, except in extraordinary situations which warrant direct consideration by the Assembly

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(Sila catatkan rujukan surat ini apabila menjawab)  
(Please quote our reference while replying)

itself. We noted that this changes would require an amendment to the “Rule of Procedure of the Health Assembly”. While it may be viewed by some that it rest too much authority to the Executive Board, we remain confident in the wisdom of the Board to ensure an orderly consideration, while maintaining the flexibility of agenda item inclusion in an extraordinary situation.

- Reducing the length of statements during meeting : Encourage Member States to focus their remarks during the session on particular action requested of the governing body, while comments regarding activities undertaken in countries can be posted on a dedicated web page, to be established by the Secretariat – so to shortened it into an abbreviated statement.

Malaysia, however, could not commit to the proposal to hold an additional session (i.e. committee “C” during the Health Assembly). We opined this would be a detriment to Member States with small delegates, as they might not have the capacity to distribute human resource across 3 concurrent sessions, and therefore, further hindering them from participating in a substantial and inclusive manner during the Assembly.

**Global Health Sector**

**Public Health Development Division**

Ministry of Health Malaysia

28<sup>th</sup> October 2016

## MONACO

(Original submission)

### Consultation des Etats membres - Réforme de la gouvernance Suites de la décision WHA69(8)

#### Commentaires de la Principauté de Monaco

Ces solutions prises individuellement ne sont pas susceptibles de fournir une véritable solution au problème auquel nous sommes confrontés. Il s'agit de solutions « rapides » qui pourraient avoir un effet à court terme mais une réflexion plus globale s'impose sur le processus et notre capacité respective, Etats membres comme Secrétariat, à faire preuve d'efficacité, de cohérence et de discipline.

#### **Option 1 – Réduire le nombre de points à l'ordre du jour**

##### *Fixer un nombre maximum optimal de points pour l'établissement de l'ordre du jour provisoire*

Il s'agit d'une solution trop arithmétique. Fixer le nombre maximal de points à 6 points par jour, soit un point par heure, n'a aucun sens compte tenu du fait que le temps nécessaire à la discussion dépend du sujet. Typiquement, les questions budgétaires nécessitent souvent beaucoup plus de temps.

Il conviendrait donc, comme évoqué par la Principauté lors des consultations précédentes, d'assurer un « filtrage » beaucoup plus strict en amont mais également de répartir les points entre les différents organes et éviter de répéter les mêmes débats.

##### *Soumettre tout nouveau point au Conseil exécutif avant l'AMS, sauf exception*

En l'état, nous sommes opposés à cette option. Le Conseil exécutif n'est pas destiné à être une forme de « répétition » de l'Assemblée mondiale et cette proposition, si elle était appliquée telle que présentée, n'aboutirait qu'à répéter une même discussion.

#### **Option 2 – Etendre la durée des sessions**

Nous y sommes formellement opposés. En tant que petite délégation, nous n'avons pas la capacité de suivre des réunions toujours plus longues. De plus, cela risque d'avoir à terme l'effet inverse à savoir de générer davantage de points à l'ordre du jour. Cela nuirait en outre à la qualité du travail fourni car il est impossible de maintenir un niveau d'efficacité/concentration soutenu sur une période trop longue. Enfin, devant l'actuelle crise budgétaire, il semblerait peu opportun d'opter pour cette solution qui représenterait un coût additionnel de 175 000 dollars US par jour supplémentaire.

#### **Option 3 – Tenir des sessions supplémentaires**

Nous ne sommes pas favorables à la mise en place d'une commission « C » qui serait clairement au désavantage des petites délégations qui ne sont pas en mesure de suivre trois commissions en parallèle. De plus, cela se ferait également au détriment de la participation de certains Etats aux groupes de rédactions qui constituent pourtant des éléments essentiels des activités conduites au cours de l'Assemblée.

#### **Option 4 - Réduire le temps nécessaire pour chaque point à l'ordre du jour**

##### ***Réduire la durée autorisée pour les déclarations pendant les réunions***

Nous soutenons cette proposition et pensons qu'il est fondamental que nous parvenions à faire preuve d'efficacité dans nos interventions, ainsi que de discipline. Cette solution, pour s'avérer efficace, doit bien entendu être accompagnée d'une présidence capable de faire respecter ces règles.

Nous regrettons par ailleurs le fait que certaines des propositions issues des précédentes discussions relatives à la réforme de la gouvernance ne figurent pas dans ce document soumis à consultation. Notamment, la proposition de constituer le Bureau de l'Assemblée en amont de celle-ci (idéalement à la fin de l'Assemblée précédente) pourrait permettre au dit Bureau de travailler efficacement à l'élaboration de l'ordre du jour provisoire et de suivre l'évolution des discussions pendant toute une année.

(English version)

#### **Member State consultation – Governance reform** **Follow-up to WHA decision WHA69(8)**

#### **Comments by the Principality of Monaco**

Taken individually, these solutions are unlikely to provide a real solution to the problem we face. They are quick fixes which might work in the short term, but the process as a whole and the respective capacity of Member States and the secretariat to work efficiently, coherently and in a disciplined manner need to be looked at more closely.

#### **Option 1 – Reduce the number of items on the agenda**

##### ***Establishing a maximum optimal number of provisional agenda items***

This is too arithmetical. Establishing a maximum of 6 items per day, or one per hour, makes no sense because the time needed for discussion depends on the topic being discussed. For example, budget matters often need more time.

As we have indicated in previous consultations, much stricter upstream filtering criteria need to be applied; items must also be distributed among the different bodies in such a way as to avoid having the same discussion twice.

##### ***Consideration of new items by the Board before consideration by the WHA, except in extraordinary situations***

In its present form, we do not favour this option. The purpose of the Executive Board is not to be a dress rehearsal for the Health Assembly. If applied in the form currently proposed, this proposal would simply mean that one and the same item is discussed all over again.

#### **Option 2 – Expand the duration of sessions**

This we categorically oppose. As a small delegation, we do not have the capacity to attend ever longer meetings. In addition, this option would eventually backfire by generating yet more agenda items, which would be detrimental to the quality of our work because it is not possible to maintain a level of sustained

and effective concentration over such a long period. Last but not least, considering the current budget crisis, it seems somewhat imprudent to opt for this solution which would add an extra US\$ 175 000 for every additional day.

### **Option 3 – Hold additional sessions**

We do not favour establishing a new Committee C as this would clearly penalize smaller delegations which lack the resources to attend three committees in parallel. Moreover, this option would also make it hard for some Member States to participate in drafting groups, which are an essential part of the Assembly's work.

### **Option 4 – Reduce the time required for each agenda item**

#### ***Reducing the length of statements during meetings***

We support this proposal and we think it vitally important to be efficient and disciplined when making statements. To be effective, this solution must obviously be backed up by an effective chairperson capable of enforcing the rules.

It is unfortunate that some the proposals that emerged from previous discussions on governance reform do not appear in this consultation document, for example the proposal to constitute the General Committee of the following Assembly in advance (ideally at the close of the previous Assembly), thus enabling it to contribute effectively to developing the provisional agenda and track the debate as it evolves in the course of the year.

## NETHERLANDS

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide feedback on the document the WHO Secretariat has drafted following operative paragraph 4 of decision WHAa69(8).

The draft document is clearly structured and provides readers with relevant background information. Four clear options to make the meetings of the Governing Bodies more "manageable" (for Member States and the Secretariat) are presented on page 4.

Before going in more detail regarding on the options 1 and 4, which we evaluate positively, we would like to stress that the options 2 and 3 are by no means appealing to us. The reason for this is not only related to the additional costs involved. We also take the position that expanding the duration of sessions and holding additional sessions is likely to stimulate the increase of the number of agenda items. As we aim at less packed agenda's this clearly does not offer a solution.

Under option 1, reducing the number of items on the agenda, two concrete proposals are presented for consideration by Member States:

- 1) Establishing a maximum optimal number of agenda items

We support the maximum of 6 agenda items per day, meaning a maximum of 36 agenda items in non-budget years and 48 agenda items in budget years.

The interesting question is of course how to respect the maximum number of agenda items. In this respect it is mentioned that the EB would need a mechanism on the basis of which it may prioritize agenda items (paragraph 14). In our view the Board should start as soon as possible with reflecting on and determining such a mechanism. While agreeing with the suggestion in paragraph 15, it is our view that the Board should also establish criteria allowing to exceed the maximum optimal number of agenda items.

- 2) Promote an orderly consideration of new items by requiring, except in extraordinary situations, consideration of new items by the Board prior to consideration of them by the Health Assembly

The Netherlands fully agrees with the suggested limitation (as much as possible) of direct submission of items to the Health Assembly, as well as the suggested way forward, as set out in paragraph 21.

Under option 4, reducing the time required for each agenda item, Member States are invited to "consider reducing the length of statements during meetings, while providing opportunity for web-posting of more complete statements by delegates".

In general we agree with this. However, we would like to make the following remarks.

The enforcement described in para 25 could and should be much stricter!

Next to limiting the length of statements, attention should also be paid to the *content and number of interventions*.

As regards the content of statements, it seems to us that words of praise are too abundantly used, as well as descriptions of situations in Member States. In the case of adopting new policy documents for instance, one could also start from the assumption that Member States agree, and that they only take the floor in case of disagreement or substantial criticism. We agree that it would be helpful to post full statements on a web page and to focus a statement during a session on the particular action

requested of the governing body. We agree that the many descriptions of situations, activities and policies undertaken in Member States should be posted on this web page.

A maximum number of interventions by Member States could also be considered. A maximum would compel Member States to focus on those items that are really important for them. Are there any data available on the number of interventions by individual Member States at meetings of the governing bodies?



## NEW ZEALAND

### Governance Reform Consultation: follow-up to decision WHA 69 (8)

Overall, New Zealand appreciates the Secretariat swiftly responding to the World Health Assembly's request to consider mechanisms for improving the level of correspondence between number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of sessions.

Our comments on 'Options':

#### (1) Reduce the number of items on the agenda

- We agree that a maximum optimal number of agenda items should be agreed (as reflected in paragraph 13), however importantly that prioritisation of items is based on a clear, transparent mechanism determined by the Executive Board (EB), with the EB also having the ability to exceed the maximal number of items for consideration through a 'show of hands' vote (paragraph 15). It will be important to clearly demonstrate the array of proposed agenda items (and their rationale) to EB members so they can determine whether exceeding the maximum optimal number of items is worthwhile. Clear articulation of timing for each of these steps would also be helpful.
- We agree with amending the Rules of Procedure for the Health Assembly and establishing a process for any agenda items proposed by Member States (and others) being subject to the EB's prior consideration, with an accompanying explanatory memorandum for exceptional circumstances leading to a proposal for direct inclusion in the provisional Health Assembly agenda (as per paragraph 20).

#### (2) Expand the duration of sessions

- We agree with allotting eight days for each January EB session (paragraph 22). This should enable sufficient time to assess agenda items for the Assembly and other matters as outlined above.
- We suggest that the Health Assembly is also a standard length of eight days, rather than alternating between eight and six.

#### (3) Hold additional sessions

- We do not agree with the need to hold additional sessions during the Health Assembly (paragraph 23), particularly due to the impact on smaller delegations. We suggest that rather Committee A and Committee B be re-framed so the content and items are flexible and more balanced between both Committees. This will allow for smooth transition between the two, therefore removing the need to consistently 're-allocate' once the Health Assembly is underway.

#### (4) Reduce the time required for each agenda item

- We strongly support reduction in length of Health Assembly statements to 2 minutes (Member States) and 4 minutes (Regions), encouraging Member States to focus on particular action requested of the governing body (rather than country-level activity), and the ability to provide and publish full statements on the website of the governing body meeting (paragraph 29).
- We also suggest similar reductions in the length of statements at Executive Board sessions.

**NORWAY**  
**WEB CONSULTATION ON GOVERNANCE REFORM –**  
**COMMENTS BY NORWAY**

11. We would suggest phrasing this in a way that emphasizes the potential for organizing the sessions of governing bodies more efficiently, and the need for a rational system of agenda-setting that enables prioritization and sufficient time for consideration, while preserving an adequate possibility for member states to bring matters before the health assembly. Rather than simply stating the four most direct measures available as if they constituted separate routes.

12, subpoint b) and 16 through 21: We acknowledge the gain in orderliness that would result from such a rule, but note that it would also serve to further increase the length of the EB agenda. Consideration of such a proposal requires more detail on modalities, but we would, on balance, be favorably disposed to considering this further. We do not however see this proposal as something that is likely to have a major effect on the issues at hand.

13-15: The concept presented here may have a useful potential. However, it makes little sense to consider this at such a general level. It depends fundamentally on several other issues which the paper does not clarify, such as the exact nature of the criteria used to establish the limit and to consider which items to prioritise. We do not see this proposal as likely to solve the challenges in isolation, but it could be a useful element in a larger overhaul. We would however argue, that the core of the issue is not the number of agenda items, but the number of debates/discussions. Generally it is the number of debates that decide how many agenda items that can be covered, and we propose that this is reflected in the text.

22. We are unhappy with the proposal as it currently stands. Many member states have clearly stated objections to simply prolonging the length of sessions, and any proposal to do so needs clear justification. It would also need to explore possibilities for making the sessions more efficient, as opposed to merely longer. Any such reorganization should also and equally consider the format of the Health Assembly.

23. We do not support the idea of creating a Committee C, which would in our estimation have more negative than positive consequences. It would in effect increase the resources each delegation have to allocate to formal processes in the committees by 50%, which would reduce the ability to participate in drafting groups etc. This would again increase the need for evening sessions, and put further pressure on the processes requiring negotiation, which constitute the most acute and serious bottleneck of governing bodies meetings.

25-29: While we sympathise with the aim of the proposals, we would not on balance support limiting speaking time to two minutes at this stage. Particularly given the technical nature of many discussions, we consider that this simply leaves insufficient time to present arguments and views, and that consequently, the quality of debate would be likely to suffer.

**PERU**

(Original)

Me dirijo a usted, por encargo de la Lic. Rocío Casildo, Directora General de la Oficina General de Cooperación Internacional del Ministerio de Salud del Perú, MINSA, con relación a la comunicación de la referencia, mediante la cual se alcanzó el documento elaborado por la Directora General de la OMS, que contiene propuestas orientadas a mejorar el grado de correspondencia entre el número de puntos de los órdenes del día de los órganos deliberantes y el número, la duración y las fechas de sus reuniones, incluidas las repercusiones financieras de las opciones propuestas, a fin de ponerlo en consideración de la 70° Asamblea Mundial de la Salud; documento disponible para consulta electrónica.

Al respecto, transmito el saludo y reconocimiento del MINSA a los esfuerzos que está realizando la organización en cumplimiento de la Decisión WHA69 (8) de la Asamblea Mundial, así como, su conformidad con lo propuesto en el mencionado documento, con excepción del posible establecimiento de un nuevo Comité C, como se reseña en el punto 3) "Hold additional sessions".

Asimismo, mucho se apreciará contar con información desagregada (*o con mayor información*) sobre los costos a los que se hace referencia en el indicado documento.

(English version)

I am writing on behalf of Ms Rocío Casildo, General Director of the General Office for Cooperation and International Affairs at the Peruvian Ministry of Health, regarding the above-mentioned C.L. linking to the document developed by the Director-General of WHO, containing proposals to improve the level of correspondence between the number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of their sessions, including the financial implications of proposed options, for consideration by the Seventieth World Health Assembly (Consultation Draft).

The Ministry of Health of Peru is grateful for the efforts that WHO is making to comply with World Health Assembly decision WHA69 (8) and concurs with the proposals in the above-mentioned document, except for the proposal to establish a new Committee C referred to under option (3), "Hold additional sessions".

In addition, we would greatly appreciate receiving disaggregated information (*or more information*) about the costs referred to in the document.

## PHILIPPINES



Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Health  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

27 October 2016

**DR. TIMOTHY ARMSTRONG**

Director  
Department of Governing Bodies  
World Health Organization

Dear **Dr. Armstrong:**

This refers to the Note Verbale from the World Health Organization (WHO) on the document developed by the Director-General containing proposals to improve the level of correspondence between the number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of sessions.

Noting the four options in improving the conduct of the 3 governing bodies, to wit: 1) reduction of the number of agenda items; 2) expansion of the duration of the sessions; 3) conduct of additional sessions; and 4) reduction of time required for each agenda item, and taking into consideration Philippines' membership to the Executive Board, we support the following proposals:

- Amendment of the Rule 5 of the Rules of Procedure of the Health Assembly to particularly highlight the requirement for any proposed items for inclusion to the Health Assembly's provisional agenda to be accompanied by an explanatory memorandum and be subject to the consideration of the Executive Board, *unless exceptional circumstances apply which may warrant direct consideration by the assembly*. This would aid the reduction of the number of agenda items such as in the case of the 69<sup>th</sup> WHA in May 2016 which recorded the highest 76 agenda items in 6 days.
- Expansion of the duration of the sessions, specifically to allot eight days for all January sessions and reduce the need for evening sessions. Historically, 8-day sessions of the Executive Board such as in 2009, 2011, 2013, and 2015 with an average of 51 agenda items, did not require evening sessions (see page 3 of the WHO document). The concern on the cost of the additional day may be considered an item to be covered by the proposed increase in the Assessed Contribution (AC) of the Member States.
- Adoption of a mechanism that would allow further limitation of the length of statements during governing bodies sessions, specifically to establish a standard for Member States to only focus their statements during the session on the particular action requested of the governing body and that the Secretariat shall establish a dedicated web page to post full statements of all Member States. This then would reduce time required for each agenda item.

We do not however, deem it necessary to hold additional sessions such as the proposed establishment of a new committee "C". Apart from the fact that it could disadvantage smaller delegations, consistent reallocation of items from Committee A to Committee B is still efficient and manageable granted that the proceedings of the latter only deals with the administrative work and thus, closes earlier than the former.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,



**LILIBETH C. DAVID, MD, MPH, MPM, CESO III**

Undersecretary of Health  
Office for Policy and Health Systems

/mmb

**POLAND**


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Permanent Mission  
of the Republic of Poland  
to the United Nations Office  
in Geneva



Geneva, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2016

**POSITION OF POLAND CONCERNING DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION ON GOVERNANCE  
REFORM: FOLLOW-UP TO DECISION WHA69(8)**

Poland wishes to thank the Secretariat for preparing the document outlining the options for improving the number, timing and length of the governing body sessions, however we would have hoped that it had provided more options for Member States consideration.

First of all, we support the proposal of reducing the number of items on the agenda, as WHA should consider only issues of the highest priority and of global nature. Topics relevant for specific regions or not having the significant impact on global health should be considered either on Regional Committees or other fora. We do believe that establishing a maximum optimal number of agenda items is a good solution, but it has to take into account possible duration of every single agenda item, since some of them require much more time for discussion than the others.

Expanding the duration of sessions or holding additional sessions (Committee C during WHA) will not solve the problem of overloaded agenda, but rather make the situation worse. Longer or additional sessions will encourage Member States to propose more issues to be considered by EB or WHA. It would also impose additional costs both for the Organization and for the Member States delegating their representatives to the longer sessions or forced to form bigger delegations in order to cover additional parallel committee sessions. In that sense, creating additional Committee C would also be problematic to those delegations that are traditionally small as they could have problems to follow the working stream of the whole Assembly.

Therefore, prolonging the regular sessions would be acceptable only if absolutely necessary and should take form of evening meetings as it is today and not additional days of regular sessions.

Poland strongly agrees to encourage Member States to focus their statements during the session on the particular action requested of the governing body, and to refrain from comments on activities undertaken in countries, which could be posted on the dedicated web page. This should be applied especially rigorously in case of regular, non-problematic issues, when many Member States deliver statements mainly of informative nature, that can be disseminated in other ways.

We look favorably to the proposal of reducing the time allotted for statements by delegations to 2 minutes. We do believe that such a solution would be time-saving and all delegations should be encouraged to adhere to it, furthermore we are of the opinion that shorter statements would serve better to present key messages delivered by Member States.

Prolonging the time of speeches could be applied only exceptionally and during particularly difficult discussions and allowing for such a solution would be a sole prerogative of the Chairperson, strictly observed by that person. The same rule (3 minutes speech) could be applied to EB Member States during EB sessions, while the observer Member States and other observers would have 2 minutes for their intervention, as it currently practiced for example in the UN Human Rights Council.

Furthermore, better time management during the sessions could be ensured by more effective leadership by the Chairmen of the EB or the Committees, who should strictly respect the time given to each speaker, including members of the Secretariat, moderate the discussion and propose shortening the statements (or even concluding the deliberations) in case of delay of the proceedings or emerging a consensus around a given issue. The same approach should be applied to respecting by all the delegations the timing of particular meetings and avoiding artificial delays in the proceedings of the governing bodies, that is for example observing time-slots given for breaks or consultations.

We would strongly welcome any study done by the Secretariat to compare the most up-to-date time management solutions in force in other UN organizations and their applicability in WHO setting.

Poland is looking forward to any further discussion on this topic in the governing bodies or other relevant fora and we are very willing to engage constructively in these deliberations.

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## PORTUGAL

Portugal thanks WHO for presenting the draft document on "Governance reform: follow-up to decision WHA69(8)" and for submitting it to the consideration of Member States. Portugal has been very closely following the process of WHO's Governance Reform and agrees that it is needed to improve the level of correspondence between the number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of sessions. In this regard, Portugal supports the proposals contained in the above mentioned draft document under points 1 (reducing the number of agenda items by establishing a maximum optimal number of agenda items and by requiring, except in extraordinary situations, the consideration of new items by the Board prior to their consideration by the WHA) and under point 4 (reducing the speaking time for oral statements). However, we do not look favourably to the other proposals under points 2 and 3: on the one hand they would they bring additional costs and, on the other hand, we are not entirely convinced that they would be effective in improving such level of correspondence. We look forward to the next discussions under this topic.



## **QATAR**

Ref. to the attached letter dated 22 sept 2016 regarding the Governance Reform.

We would like to inform you that the Ministry of Public Health - Qatar reviewed the draft and agrees on the following:

- Reducing of items on the agenda.
- Expanding the duration of sessions.
- Holding additional sessions ( session C )
- Reducing the time for each agenda item.

Therefore, Qatar has no suggestions to be added nor opinions to be noted.

## SPAIN

(Original versión)

Ante todo, nos disculpamos por el retraso en el envío de los comentarios de España al documento que contiene las propuestas para la consulta con los Estados Miembros para la Reforma de la Gobernanza de la OMS, pero hemos tenido algunas dificultades en la localización de dicho documento. En cualquier caso, esperamos que nuestros comentarios puedan ser tenidos en cuenta.

En particular, estamos de acuerdo con las siguientes opciones señaladas en el documento:

- 1.- Reducir el número de ítems de la agenda, mediante las dos propuestas planteadas.
- 2.- Establecer un número óptimo de ítems. La inclusión de nuevos ítems requeriría ir acompañado de un memorándum justificativo y estar sujeto a su consideración previa por el Consejo, salvo en circunstancias excepcionales.
- 3.- Reducir el tiempo para cada ítem y el tiempo de intervención de los delegados (actualmente 3 minutos para delegados y 5 minutos para delegaciones regionales) a 2 y 4 minutos respectivamente, aunque después de recoja la declaración completa en actas y esté previamente en la página web.

Sin embargo, no sería deseable la ampliación de la duración de las sesiones en días, ni ampliar a otro Comité "C", lo que supondría aumentar la composición de la delegación que debe trasladarse a la reunión.

(English version)

I would first like to apologize for the delay in sending Spain's comments on the document containing the proposals for consultation with Member States on WHO Governance Reform, but we have had trouble locating the document. In any case, we hope our comments can be taken into account.

In particular, we agree with the following options highlighted in the document:

1. Reducing the number of agenda items through the two proposals mentioned;
2. Establishing an optimal number of items. The inclusion of new items would need to be accompanied by an explanatory memorandum and be subject to the Board's prior consideration, except in exceptional circumstances;
3. Reducing the time for each item and the length of statements for delegates (currently 3 minutes for delegates and 5 minutes for regional statements) to 2 and 4 minutes respectively, with the full written statement uploaded to the website beforehand.

However, it would not be appropriate to extend the duration of meetings by a number of days, nor to establish a new committee "C", which would involve increasing the sizes of delegations sent to the meeting.

## **SRI LANKA**

Further to the letter C.L.39.2016 requesting the submission of comments on the above document, we are in general agreement with the draft recommendations for improving the level of correspondence between the number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and the timing of sessions.

Establishing a maximum optimal number of agenda items except in extraordinary situations is appropriate. Expanding the duration of sessions per day may be more appropriate than requiring additional days and incurring further cost. Reducing the time required for each agenda item and also the length of statements during meetings is appropriate provided full statements are posted on the WHO web site during the relevant governing body session. One way forward is to encourage Regional 'One Voice' statements.

Nevertheless some flexibility should be allowed for the Chairperson of the relevant governing body to grant additional time as may be appropriate for the orderly conduct of business.

**SWEDEN**

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**REGERINGSKANSLIET**

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**Memorandum**

28 October 2016

**Ministry of Health and Social Affairs  
Sweden****Swedish comments to the consultation on governance reform: follow up to decision WHA69(8) (ref C.L. 39.2016)**

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Sweden welcomes the electronic consultation on options for improving the level of correspondence between the number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of sessions. As we and others have repeatedly stated governance reform, which mostly depends on Member States, has made far too little progress, which has come to hinder our ability to efficiently prepare for, as well as fully participate in, the governing bodies.

The increased interest in global health issues is something fundamentally positive which we, the WHO and its Member States, need to leverage in a constructive way. Ensuring an effective management of agenda items in the governing bodies is crucial in improving our organizational management and following-up on our course of action. WHO cannot, and should not, do everything at the same time everywhere. If resources become too thinly spread the possibility for WHO to have the impact for global health that is needed will be negatively affected.

Furthermore, proposals which seek to accommodate the current situation through the adding of meeting days/sessions and/or committees fail to address the fact that, regardless of the number of days/hours Member States and the Secretariat will have at their disposal to discuss at the actual governing body meeting, there is a limited number of staff – in the Member States and at the Secretariat – who will need to do the preparatory work in between the sessions. Their number doesn't increase in correlation with the growing agendas, nor does the time at their disposal between the EB and WHA. This could negatively affect the ability to prepare as well as participate and take well-founded decisions in our governing bodies. From an equity perspective, the “overload” will disproportionately affect small delegations with limited resources. This is something that the Swedish delegation itself – a small country although with comparatively strong resources – has experienced during the last years.

Against this backdrop Sweden does not support the proposals put forward in paras: 22, 23 and 24, 26, 28 and 29.

However, we would strongly welcome action in line with the proposals raised under item 1, namely in paras 13, 14, 15, 19, 20 and 21.

## SWITZERLAND

Thank you for the consultation regarding the draft on governance reform.

Switzerland would like to make the following preliminary remarks: while it is important to improve the level of correspondence between the number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of sessions, we would like first to remind that the Executive Board meetings used to last a few weeks and that the World Health Assembly was in the past 2 weeks long. The length of the meetings may have diminished, but this is not the case for the global and public health issues which have increased and grown more complex over the years.

In case of prioritization of agenda items, as suggested in the document, we would like to underline that a topic put on the agenda is a (1) public health issue (2) representing a global health priority (3) and requiring joint action from WHO and its Member States. Therefore, we have to act upon it. Otherwise, we cannot claim in the end to leave no one behind.

Please find hereafter comments and questions from Switzerland:

- On a general note, the draft paper extensively describes the current state of the issue (pp.1-4) but does not propose in sufficient details a satisfactory solution nor does it give a clear direction for the future.
- Regarding the options presented under § 11 (p.4): the first option to “*Reduce the number of items on the agenda*” is the only one that tries to address the core issue. Yet here are some comments and questions that need to be further discussed:
  - §14 under proposal (a) – *Establishing a maximum optimal number of agenda items*: the proposal offers a practical solution in that it calls for a prioritization of items on the basis of a mechanism. However, “*to be determined by the Board*” is too vague. It is clear that a mechanism, or at least certain guiding principles are necessary for prioritization, but the document fails to deliver any further reflection or proposal on this topic. Could you please provide concrete proposals on that prioritization mechanism that the Board will determine?
  - §16-21 under proposal (b) – *Promote an orderly consideration of new items by requiring, except in extraordinary situations, consideration of new items by the Board prior to consideration of them by the Health Assembly*: while the document goes into great details of making any new item go through the Board before being discussed at the Health Assembly, it is important to recognize that this will not bring any improvement if the proposal to establish a maximum optimal number of agenda items (proposal a) is not implemented first. Otherwise, it would only result in an increase of agenda items for the Board. It may also create additional institutional burden for small potential gains.

- Moreover, the proposal (b) outlined in §16-21 does not provide enough flexibility for new items that may arise between the meetings of the Board and the Health Assembly. Should this be the case, it would be useful to have the possibility to discuss it at the Health Assembly rather than having to wait the next Board meeting. This is especially true for urgent health topics to be considered, which however should remain the exception.
- §20 under proposal (b) – regarding *exceptional circumstances*: in order to allow for a transparent decision on what is considered an “*urgent topic*”, a set of clear criteria should be developed and applied. Could you please provide concrete proposals on the exceptional circumstances that may apply?
- Regarding the second (“*Expand the duration of sessions*”) and third (“*Hold additional sessions*”) options presented on p.6: the estimated costs highlight the considerable burden that the institution as well as the delegations, especially smaller ones, would carry. Additionally, these options do not address the underlying problem related to the rising number of agenda items. In the long run, it will not be possible to indefinitely increase the sessions if the number of items continues to grow.
- Regarding the fourth option “*Reduce the time required for each agenda item*”:
  - In what way does the mechanism described in §29 under the proposal “*Reducing the length of statements during meetings*” differ significantly from existing practice? This option would become much more realistic if concrete examples of success would be provided to illustrate it (has this ever been done in another organization?). Would there be any additional costs?
  - In addition, rather than limiting the time for statements even further, it would be preferable to strictly enforce the “3 minutes rule”. Yet a dedicated web page to post full statements of Member States would indeed be a welcomed initiative, as this would serve as a track record for later consideration by Member States. However, such a web page will hardly be the solution to the challenges described at the beginning of the document, as tendency of Member States is often rather to exceed the 3 minutes rather than shortening statements.

In order to tackle the problem in a serious manner, a limit of the number of items based on a prioritization scheme seems to be the only viable long term solution. However, the document is not yet clear enough about the mechanisms and guiding principles to prioritize the items. It is important to include concrete proposals on how this prioritization could be made, based on previous experiences. These should be presented in the document for further discussion.

We hope that these remarks will be useful for the consultation process. Do not hesitate to contact us if needed.

**UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**  
**UK response - Correspondence between the number of items on the**



**provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of sessions**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these proposals to improve the level of correspondence between the number of items on the provisional agendas of the governing bodies and the number, length and timing of sessions. We would also like to thank the Secretariat for the proposals in this paper and the information it contains, which we believe is helpful for improving understanding of the situation and what is practical.

The UK would like to stress that we cannot support an extension to the duration of the EB to 8 days in non-budget years. For us this is not purely a matter of cost, but rather that it is not a long term solution to the issues. The problems of capacity and delegation preparation are not solved by this proposal, as the number of items and amount of paper will continue to grow, and this will further compromise the quality of discussions.

The UK supports the proposal for indicative numbers of agenda items. The proposed prioritisation process would need to work in conjunction with the rolling agenda that is currently being developed. We recognise that the paper is clear that this process would not prevent member states from bringing items to agendas, as there are clear processes for overriding these indicative limits. However, we believe it would be a useful way to improve member state appreciation of what discussions are feasible within certain time limits. We do not, however, agree with the numbers given in the paper as they do not recognise the additional time needed, and currently allowed, for discussion of the programme budget. Therefore, the figure for budget years should be less than 48.

We do not see a reduction in intervention length as a solution in itself. We do, however, fully support the points set out in the proposal as they represent good practice and the means to improve discussions. To that end the UK welcomes the suggestion that statements focus on action for the governing body, rather than on setting out domestic action. In addition we would support the idea of limiting the duration of interventions by the Secretariat and others, such as other UN organisations and other partners too.



The UK welcomes proposals that re-inforce the functions of specific governing bodies. We therefore support the proposal to have firmer control of items going direct to the WHA, especially the need for explanatory memoranda, this re-enforces the agenda preparation role of the EB. In this context we believe discouragement of domestic activity statements is more applicable to the EB.

We support the conclusion in the paper that an additional Committee at the WHA is not an option. However, perhaps better use could be made of Committee B by a more strategic transfer of items – perhaps the Programme and Budget matters would be better suited to Committee B.

**Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

**London**

**October 2016**

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the governance reform proposal. The U.S. appreciates this document, which outlines potential options to manage the time of governing body meetings, and we believe the goal should be to make discussions more focused within the given time frame.

The following are the U.S. responses to the document provided:

12 - Support the establishment of a maximum optimal number of agenda items. That will give the Bureau a benchmark, allowing it to prioritize further. We are a little concerned about needing EB consensus or approval for the item and would like a clearer idea of the process/future of items that are removed.

15 — Can agree with the voting procedure proposed here for considering adding items.

16 — Support the notion that agenda items should be considered by the EB first, and not introduced at the Assembly. Two other issues worth re-visiting would be to:

- 1) strongly urge/require any new resolutions to be introduced at least 2 weeks prior to the Assembly. The practice of showing up and having new texts introduced is among the most disruptive, and
- 2) Allow for Decision Points to emerge from discussions during the week, but for the Chair to exercise more parliamentary direction about what is allowed in a DP text — should be primary focused on directives to the Secretariat, have bare minimum of preambular language (references to previously agreed resolution titles only (not pulling out text), and no section to “urge MS” or other actors.

18 – We support the suggestion to require an explanatory memorandum to accompany any proposal for inclusion of items in the provisional agenda of the Health Assembly. The explanatory memorandum should include clear justification on the need to include the item since the Secretariat may not be able to provide any documentation.

22 – We disagree with expanding the EB to 8 days every year. The current model of every other year in budget years should continue.

23 — We disagree with proposal to establish a “Committee C” — unfair to small delegations.

25-29 — Don’t agree to shorten statements generally to less than 3 minutes, BUT the Chair should 1) emphasize more clearly to delegations the preference to not spend lengthy amounts of time describing national action — and having the chair intercede when delegations are breaching this etiquette.