European Union
Statement

WHO
143rd Executive Board
(28 May – 29 May 2018)

Item 4.1 - WHO reform: governance

Geneva, 28 May 2018

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –
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EU Statement

Mr. Chairman,
Director-General,
Colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Montenegro*, Serbia* and the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Georgia align themselves with this statement.

Director-General, / Mr. Chairman

The EU and its Member States have been long-standing and active supporters of WHO reform.

First, we underline the necessity of balance between expected progress and due reflection on how to achieve it. We highlight the primary role of Member States in this process and call for full transparency of relevant changes.

Second, strengthening the strategic role of the EB requires better preparation of the sessions, and there is an onus on both Member States and Secretariat to achieve this. Encouraging Chairs to use the full extent of their powers for efficient session management, introducing

* Montenegro and Serbia and continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
web-based guidance for delegations and the rolling pluri-annual agenda planning as well as the full use of annotated agendas are important elements in this process. During the deliberations, priority should be given to the issues where the Board’s guidance is needed.

Third, it is important to revitalize the strategic distinction and relationship between the different governing bodies.

Fourth, in order to give visibility to the governing bodies’ meetings and allow us to implement the decisions we take, we must focus on the most important issues and therefore consider reducing the agenda of the governing body meetings. While proposing new resolutions remains the right of every Member State, we notice the need for a disciplined approach to exercising this right. New draft resolutions should be accompanied by the financial assessment.

While we recognize that WHO’s constitution differentiates between members and non-members of the Board, we cannot accept the proposal to limit the right to speak to EB Members only. We think that other options such as shorter speaking time for Non-EB-members, could better serve this purpose, if considered in relation to other changes. The rule of equality of official languages of the WHO must be fully respected. In the context of Rules of Procedure, we wish to include the REIO footnote to the text of Rules.

We think that some proposals, such as introducing gender-neutral language in the Rules of Procedures, voting by electronic means, delivering electronic credentials, terminology regarding private and public meetings or paperless meetings are “low hanging fruits” which can be easily agreed.

Regarding the informal document, on these so-called low-hanging fruits and on other possible changes which would require procedural changes, we need more clarity on how to proceed. To us, the low-hanging fruits must be harvested now. Other issues clearly require further discussion. Could the Chair please outline his vision of how this could be done.

We are convinced that some proposals can be immediately implemented without changing the Rules of Procedure, but not without informing us in advance. Therefore, we do not support the
draft decision as presented in doc EB143/2, but we would like to encourage further consultation on a possible way forward.

In addition, we would like to ask the Secretariat to provide us with an update on broader reform including on when the transformation plan will be shared with Member States and how it fits within the context of UN reform. We underline the need to take into consideration the UN reform process and best practices from other UN governing bodies.

Mr Chair, we should also learn from the recently concluded Assembly. The rules that govern the proceedings of the Assembly should not be changed on the spot. The duration of the Assembly is established by decision of the EB. So we should use our time to provide guidance and should not be pressured to finish early.

As regards speaking time: The EU, as a group of 28 Member States, works hard on its statements. It takes us time to agree on them. We cannot then at short notice cut them in half. Regional statements contribute to a lower number of statements and, consequently, save time. We also believe that the Non State Actor statements could be handled differently as, in their current format, they are not taken fully into consideration. Another way of allowing Non State Actors to contribute should be found.

We remain committed to further work on these matters.

Thank you.