Setting WHO priorities

WHO will develop its priorities through a review of resolutions. Its Results-Based Management Framework will be used for setting priorities; a limited number of strategic objectives will be outlined in the six-year Medium-term Strategic Plan 2008-2013. These priorities will be in the following areas:

- Providing support to countries in moving to universal coverage with effective public health interventions;
- Strengthening global health security;
- Generating and sustaining action across sectors to modify the behavioural, social, economic and environmental determinants of health;
- Increasing institutional capacities to deliver core public health functions under the strengthened governance of ministries of health;
- Strengthening WHO’s leadership at global and regional levels and supporting the work of governments at country level.

Implementing the Eleventh General Programme of Work

This will be taken forward with Member States through the development of a six-year Medium-term Strategic Plan for 2008-2013, with biennial Programme Budgets agreed with the governing bodies. The global health agenda of this General Programme of Work will be reflected in future agendas of the Health Assembly.

WHO will strengthen its engagement with international financing institutions and development partners. WHO will engage fully in the process of United Nations system reform. WHO will set up mechanisms with the global public health community for engaging a wider range of stakeholders in the policy dialogue around the global health agenda. WHO will evaluate its contribution to carrying out this agenda through the Medium-term Strategic Plan.

The adequacy of the contribution made by the WHO Secretariat will be assessed by evaluating performance every two years. This will include an assessment of progress to the Millennium Development Goals and other health-related targets within the period 2006-2015.
WHO Core Functions

Building on WHO’s mandate and its comparative advantage, six core functions have been defined for the Organization.

1. Providing leadership on matters critical to health and engaging in partnerships where joint action is needed;
2. Shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, translation and dissemination of valuable knowledge;
3. Setting norms and standards, and promoting and monitoring their implementation;
4. Articulating ethical and evidence-based policy options;
5. Providing technical support, catalysing change, and building sustainable institutional capacity;
6. Monitoring the health situation and assessing health trends.

The challenges and future opportunities for WHO

WHO must respond to important challenges if it is to realize its potential for effective action in the future. In health crises, WHO has to act rapidly in order to be an effective partner amongst the numerous other agencies working with governments. WHO will continually assess its procedures to allow for more prompt responses.

WHO will provide a clearer understanding of health equity and health-related human rights. WHO will lead by example in mainstreaming gender equality building this into all its technical guidance and normative work. WHO will do more to focus attention and action on ensuring that countries have sufficient human resources for health, and work to keep this concern at the forefront of national and international policy. WHO will work with ministries of health to strengthen health systems and to build their understanding of what can realistically be done by working with other sectors. WHO will engage more routinely with civil society and industry, including international health care and pharmaceutical industries.

WHO – EVOLVING TO MEET THE CHALLENGES

The comparative advantages of WHO

WHO’s strengths lie in its neutral status and nearly universal membership, its impartiality and its strong, convincing power. WHO is the only global health, and is the only health body. WHO has a large repertoire of global normative work. Many countries rely on WHO standards and guidance, and developed guidelines, and WHO’s evidence-based databases, and has numerous formal and informal networks around the world. WHO’s regionalized structure provides it with multiple opportunities for engaging with countries.

A GLOBAL HEALTH AGENDA

The analysis of the past and our understanding of the present challenges and gaps in the response show that future progress, with less health inequality, requires strong political will, integrated policies and broad participation. Any significant progress towards the health-related Millennium Development Goals will require action in many sectors and at all levels – individual, community, national, regional and global.

1. Inventing in health to reduce poverty;
2. Building individual and global health security;
3. Promoting universal coverage, gender equality, and health-related human rights;
4. Tackling the determinants of health;
5. Strengthening health systems and equitable access;
6. Harnessing knowledge, science and technology;
7. Strengthening governance, leadership and accountability.

1.

2.

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4.

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6.

7.

The broad directions for the work of WHO as the world’s health agency, are set out in this General Programme of Work. The more specific priorities will be set out in the WHO Medium-term Strategic Plan 2008-2013 where they are defined as strategic objectives, and in the two-yearly Programme Budgets, as expected results.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE WHO’S ELEVENTH GENERAL PROGRAMME OF WORK

The General Programme of Work is a requirement specified in Article 28(g) of the WHO Constitution. This document, covering the period of 2006-2015, is more far-reaching than the previous General Programmes of Work, and is linked to the Millennium Development Goals. It examines current global health problems, the challenges they impose, and the ways in which the international community, not just WHO, must respond to them over the next decade.

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HEALTH IN A CHANGING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Health is increasingly seen as a key aspect of human security, and occupies a prominent place in debates on the priorities for development. Over the last 20 years, there have been major gains in life expectancy, but these are being eroded by the deadly toll of violence, in particular HIV/AIDS, collapsing health services and deteriorating social and economic conditions.

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