



# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**  
**112th Session**  
**Provisional agenda item 3**

**EB112/2**  
**28 May 2003**

---

## **Outcome of the Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly**

1. The Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly dealt with an extremely heavy agenda, covering: the review and approval of WHO's proposed programme budget for 2004-2005; the adoption of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control; the election of Dr J.-W. Lee as Director-General; 19 subitems under Technical and health matters; financial and management matters; collaboration within the United Nations system and with other intergovernmental organizations; health conditions of, and assistance to, the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine; policy for relations with nongovernmental organizations; staffing matters; and governing body matters. In all, the Health Assembly adopted the 35 resolutions and two decisions approved by Committees A and B. The adoption of the Framework Convention was recognized as a historic occasion, as it is the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of WHO.

2. In her report to the Health Assembly, the Director-General referred to the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) as the first new epidemic of the twenty-first century, citing it as an example of the crucial need to share information, expertise and resources. SARS was also the subject of a technical briefing and information exchange which was well attended by ministers and other delegates.

### **COMMITTEE A**

3. Committee A, in its discussion of the framework convention on tobacco control, unanimously supported the draft resolution with its annexed text of the Convention. Delegates praised the hard work of all those involved in the negotiation of the Convention, but emphasized that the work was far from over.

4. When considering the item on the Programme budget, the Committee also discussed the subitem on assessments for 2004-2005 which had been transferred from Committee B, so that the budget items could be deliberated together. After considerable negotiation, three draft resolutions were approved by consensus: appropriation resolution for the financial period 2004-2005; scale of assessments for the financial period 2004-2005; and adjustment mechanism.

5. The Committee approved a draft resolution that took note of the global health-sector strategy for HIV/AIDS. During the debate, delegates stressed the need for innovative training as a preventive measure, enhanced maternal and child health services and reproductive health services, and respect for human rights as a guiding principle.

6. The Committee considered a report on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the International Conference on Primary Health Care held in Alma-Ata, and approved a draft resolution that calls on the Director-General to convene a meeting *inter alia* that will review definitions and strategies and

identify future directions, and continue to incorporate the principles of primary health care into the activities of all WHO's programmes. During the Committee's deliberations, speakers stressed the importance of renewing commitment to providing primary health care services, especially to poor and disadvantaged people.

7. A draft resolution on the Pan African tsetse and trypanosomiasis eradication campaign was approved by consensus. Delegates noted that trypanosomiasis is potentially eradicable through a sustained and coordinated effort. The Committee took note of the report on control of neurocysticercosis, a disease that can be better controlled through investment in prevention and hygiene.

8. The Committee approved a resolution on the fight against pandemics and annual epidemics of influenza. There was general agreement that more attention must be paid to producing lower-cost antiviral agents and vaccines.

9. A draft resolution on traditional medicine, intended to respect and preserve traditional medical knowledge, while enhancing the safety and efficacy of its use, was approved by consensus.

10. Two draft resolutions were approved under the subitem on child and adolescent health and development: one on reducing global measles mortality and the other on a strategy for child and adolescent health and development. Delegates strongly endorsed the strategy, while emphasizing the need for further research on the nature and determinants of risk behaviour in adolescents, such as obesity, smoking, alcohol consumption, use of cannabis and other substances, and sexual behaviour. The need to improve coverage of child and adolescent health services was emphasized, and WHO was urged to increase its budget allocations in this area.

11. Committee A also considered a subitem on strengthening nursing and midwifery. There was unanimous agreement on the need for interventions in human resources planning and capacity building, personnel management, evidence-based practice, education and stewardship.

12. Under the subitem on revision of the International Health Regulations, two draft resolutions were proposed and approved. One, on SARS, pays tribute to the dedication and self-sacrifice of health care workers, including the late Dr Carlo Urbani of WHO. The resolution recognizes the need for rapid sharing of information on disease outbreaks and calls for strengthened international efforts to control them. The resolution on the revision of the International Health Regulations acknowledges the close links between the Regulations and WHO's outbreak alert and response activities and, particularly in light of the SARS outbreak, emphasizes the urgent need for WHO and its international partners to finalize the revision of the Regulations for consideration by the Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly in 2005.

13. Committee A also debated a draft resolution on intellectual property rights, innovation and public health, which was eventually approved by consensus, and took note of the report on smallpox eradication: destruction of *Variola virus* stocks.

## **COMMITTEE B**

14. Committee B first approved a draft resolution on the health conditions of, and assistance to, the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine.

15. The Committee then took up the item on Financial matters, approving the following draft resolutions:

- appointment of the External Auditor in which the Health Assembly decided to appoint the Comptroller and Auditor General of India as External Auditor for the financial periods 2004-2005 and 2006-2007;
- unaudited interim financial report on the accounts of WHO for 2002;
- Members in arrears in the payment of their contributions to an extent which would justify invoking Article 7 of the Constitution;
- arrears in payment of contributions: Kazakhstan;
- assessments for 2002 and 2003 for Afghanistan, Argentina and Timor-Leste.

16. The Committee also took up a subitem of the Programme budget on the Real Estate Fund, and approved two draft resolutions: Real Estate Fund and Real Estate Fund: Regional Office for Africa.

17. On assignment and transfer of Member States to regions, the Committee approved two draft resolutions, the first assigning the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the South-East Asia Region, and the second reassigning Cyprus from the Eastern Mediterranean Region to the European Region.

18. Under Staffing matters, much discussion and debate centred on the subitem on representation of developing countries in the Secretariat. After protracted negotiation, consensus was not reached, and the draft resolution was approved by vote. Other draft resolutions on staffing matters, approved by consensus, include: Human resources: gender balance, and Salaries of staff in ungraded posts and of the Director-General. The Committee also decided on the appointment of representatives to the WHO Staff Pension Committee.

19. In addition, Committee B took up some of the agenda items of Committee A on Technical and health matters. After considering the report on follow up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, it approved a draft resolution on the development of a strategic approach to international chemicals management: participation of global health partners. A draft resolution on the joint FAO/WHO evaluation of the work of the Codex Alimentarius Commission was approved, requesting the Director-General to support the development and implementation of an action plan in order to carry out the recommendations in the evaluation report, and to strengthen WHO's role in the management of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

20. The Committee also approved a draft resolution on implementing the recommendations of the *World report on violence and health*. After a lengthy discussion on the importance of strengthening health systems in developing countries, a draft resolution was approved on the role of contractual arrangements in improving health systems' performance. In addition, after consideration of a report on the issue, the Committee approved a draft resolution on the elimination of avoidable blindness.

21. The report on the policy for relations with nongovernmental organizations was also considered by the Committee. After the proposal of some amendments and some negotiation, a decision was taken to request the Executive Board to review the policy for relations with nongovernmental organizations further at its 113th session in January 2004, and to report to the Fifty-seventh World Health Assembly with its recommendations.

= = =