

Outcome of the Fifty-ninth World Health Assembly

1. The Fifty-ninth World Health Assembly opened with the announcement of the sad news of the untimely death of the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr Lee Jong-wook, on the morning of 22nd May 2006. A two-minute silence was observed.
2. The Health Assembly dealt with an extremely heavy agenda, including the following items: strengthening pandemic-influenza preparedness and response, eradication of poliomyelitis, HIV/AIDS, sickle-cell anaemia, smallpox eradication: destruction of variola virus stocks, a draft global strategy on prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections, prevention of avoidable blindness, infant and young child nutrition, intellectual property rights, international trade and health, international migration of health personnel, WHO's role and responsibilities in health research, emergency preparedness and response, health promotion, health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, the Eleventh General Programme of Work, collaboration within the United Nations system and with other intergovernmental organizations, the outcome of the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and patient safety.
3. Excerpts of the speech prepared by the late Director-General were read out, and the Health Assembly had the opportunity to hear Johnson Mwakazi, a young activist and poet who had impressed Dr Lee during his visit to Kenya in March of this year. Mr Mwakazi spoke passionately about the stigmatization suffered by those living with HIV/AIDS. The invited speaker was His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who focused his statement on the integrated approach to health.

COMMITTEE A

4. The Committee had a very heavy agenda of challenging public health issues, and several agenda items were transferred to Committee B (see paragraph 19 below).
5. Committee A began its work with a discussion on strengthening pandemic-influenza preparedness and response, and approved a resolution by which Member States would begin implementing, on a voluntary basis, the provisions of the International Health Regulations (2005) that relate directly to the risk posed by avian influenza and pandemic influenza.
6. The resolutions considered by Committee A were all approved by consensus. In addition to pandemic influenza preparedness, resolutions were approved on eradication of poliomyelitis, nutrition and HIV/AIDS, implementation by WHO of the recommendations of the Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination, the global strategy on prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections, sickle-cell anaemia, infant and young child nutrition, prevention of avoidable blindness and

visual impairment, international trade and health, rapid scaling up of health workforce production, and strengthening nursing and midwifery.

7. Throughout its work, the Committee was assisted by drafting groups. These related to the agenda items on smallpox eradication: destruction of variola virus stocks and intellectual property rights.

8. After some discussion, the Committee approved a resolution whereby Member States welcomed the report of the Commission on Intellectual Property Rights, Innovation and Public Health and decided to establish an intergovernmental working group to draw up a global strategy and plan of action in order to provide a medium-term framework based on the recommendations of the Commission.

9. After prolonged discussion of the destruction of variola virus stocks, it was decided to refer the proposed draft resolution to the Executive Board at its 119th session for consideration.

10. The Committee noted the Secretariat's report on HIV/AIDS: WHO's contribution to universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care, in particular the goal of coming as close as possible to universal access by 2010.

COMMITTEE B

11. The work of Committee B included four subitems under Technical and health matters that were transferred from Committee A (see paragraph 19 below) in addition to items including the Eleventh General Programme of Work, 2006-2015, the reports of the External Auditor and the Internal Auditor, amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules, collaboration within the United Nations system and with other intergovernmental organizations, amendments to the Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, outcome of the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly, Rule 14: dispatch of documents.

12. The Committee started its work with the discussion of the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. A resolution was approved, and later adopted by the plenary.

13. The Eleventh General Programme of Work for the period 2006-2015, was approved. It was agreed that the General Programme of Work would be used as a basis for strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation of WHO's work, and that it would be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the changing state of global health.

14. Under the agenda item on Programme budget and financial matters, the status of collection of assessed contributions, including Member States in arrears in the payment of their contributions to an extent that would justify invoking Article 7 of the Constitution, was considered. One resolution was approved in this respect, with another five resolutions being approved on special arrangements for settlement of arrears. The Director-General's Financial report and audited financial statements for the period 1 January 2004 - 31 December 2005 and report of the External Auditor to the World Health Assembly were also approved. The Committee also considered a report on the performance assessment of the 2004-2005 Programme budget.

15. Following a proposal by a Member State, it was decided to amend Rule 14 of the Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly, in order to provide that copies of all reports and other documents to the Health Assembly shall be made available on the Internet and sent to all Members not less than six weeks before the commencement of a regular session of the Health Assembly.

16. Discussions under the agenda item on collaboration within the United Nations system and with other intergovernmental organizations concluded with the approval of a resolution that endorsed the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, as contained in the Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management, the Overarching Policy Strategy and the Global Plan of Action.

17. The amendments to the Statutes of the Codex Alimentarius Commission were approved.

18. Having considered the report on the outcome of the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the Committee approved a resolution requesting the Director-General to establish the permanent secretariat of the Convention within WHO, in Geneva.

19. Committee B took up several subitems on Technical and health matters that were transferred from Committee A, approving a resolution on emergency preparedness and response, and noting progress reports on the global strategy on diet, physical activity and health, health action in relation to crises and disasters, and control of human African trypanosomiasis. The Committee decided to recommend to the Health Assembly that it should defer action on two draft resolutions – one on health promotion in a globalized world, and another on WHO's role and responsibilities in health research – and submit them to the Executive Board for consideration at its 119th session.

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