

Outcome of the Sixty-second World Health Assembly

1. The Sixty-second World Health Assembly dealt with a heavy agenda, covering the Medium-term strategic plan 2008–2013 and the Proposed programme budget 2010–2011; 10 subitems under technical and health matters; financial matters, including the interim report of the External Auditor, and the scale of assessments for 2010–2011; health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan; the report of the Internal Auditor; and staffing matters. In total, the Health Assembly adopted 16 resolutions and one decision.

2. The Director-General, in her address, noted that the world was facing multiple crises, including the current financial crisis and global economic downturn. In addition, it was also facing the prospect of the first influenza pandemic of this century. She emphasized that concerns about a pandemic should not overshadow or interrupt other vital health programmes, and that an effective public health response to threats depended on strong health systems that were inclusive and offered universal coverage down to the community level.

3. The Health Assembly heard two invited speakers: the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, and Mrs Sarah Brown, Patron of the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood. In his statement, Mr Ban said that he had made global health one of his top priorities as Secretary General, and urged delegates to place solidarity at the heart of the world's response to the outbreak of influenza A(H1N1), adding that all needed to have access to medicines and vaccines, and that virus samples and data had to be shared. Mrs Brown spoke of how vitally important it was to reduce maternal mortality rates if the Millenium Development Goals were to be reached, and pointed out that least progress had been made towards Millenium Development Goal 5 (Improve maternal health).

COMMITTEE A

4. The Committee dealt with several pressing and challenging public health issues, and two agenda subitems were transferred to Committee B (see paragraph 12 below).

5. Committee A began its work with a discussion on pandemic influenza preparedness: sharing of influenza viruses and access to vaccines and other benefits, and the work of the Intergovernmental Meeting. A draft resolution on the subject was approved.

6. A further five draft resolutions were approved by consensus under technical and health matters: Prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment; Primary health care, including health system strengthening; Reducing health inequities through action on the social determinants of health; Traditional medicine; and Prevention and control of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis.

7. A draft appropriation resolution endorsing the Proposed programme budget for the financial period 2010–2011 was also approved.

COMMITTEE B

8. Most of the agenda items considered by the Committee concerned financial and staffing matters, but it also considered two subitems under technical and health matters that had been transferred from Committee A. In total, eight draft resolutions and one draft decision were approved by the Committee.

9. The Committee started its work with a discussion of the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. A draft resolution was proposed by a Member State and a roll-call vote was taken, in accordance with Rule 72 of the Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly. The draft resolution was approved, by 92 votes in favour to six votes against, with five abstentions.

10. Under the agenda item on programme and budget matters, the Committee considered the following: Programme budget 2006–2007: performance assessment and implementation of Programme budget 2008–2009: interim report. It also considered the report of the Internal Auditor. Under financial matters, in addition to considering the interim report of the External Auditor, the Committee approved draft resolutions on the following subitems: the unaudited interim financial report on the accounts of WHO for 2008; the status of collection of assessed contributions; the scale of assessments for 2010–2011; and amendments to the Financial Regulations and Financial Rules.

11. On staffing matters, two draft resolutions were approved, the first on amendments to the Staff Regulations and the second on salaries of staff in ungraded posts and of the Director-General. A draft decision on the appointment of representatives to the WHO Staff Pension Committee was also approved.

12. The two subitems under technical and health matters transferred from Committee A concerned: Public health, innovation and intellectual property: global strategy and plan of action, and Progress reports on technical and health matters. Discussions were constructive, and one draft resolution was approved on the Global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation and intellectual property.

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