

# **Method of work of the governing bodies**

## **Report by the Secretariat**

1. As part of the reform processes led by the Director-General,<sup>1</sup> a comprehensive review of the area of WHO governance is envisaged. This document responds to three specific requests relating to the method of work of the governing bodies made by members of the Executive Board: (1) a review of the current reporting requirements and the related need to propose ways in which to institutionalize safeguards against over-demanding reporting schedules in future proposed draft resolutions;<sup>2</sup> (2) heightened attention to the financial implications of proposed resolutions during discussion of their adoption;<sup>3</sup> and (3) clarification of the time limit for introduction of proposals to the Executive Board.<sup>4</sup>

### **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

2. There are currently 124 reporting requirements to either one or both of the governing bodies (see Table).<sup>5</sup> Forty per cent of those reporting requirements are annual, biennial or biannual – in perpetuity. In 2011, 80% of items on the provisional agendas for the Board and the Health Assembly were generated by reporting requirements.

3. According to the Rules of Procedure of the governing bodies,<sup>6</sup> the content of the agendas is subject to the ultimate decision of those bodies. However, in practice, a large part of the agenda content is determined by previous reporting requirements generated either by resolutions or by other sources such as items stipulated by the Financial Regulations of the World Health Organization<sup>7</sup> or the Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> To be discussed, inter alia, under provisional agenda item 11 of the Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly; see document A64/4.

<sup>2</sup> See EB128/2011/REC/2, summary record of the twelfth meeting, section 4.

<sup>3</sup> See EB128/2011/REC/2, summary record of the seventh meeting, section 2.

<sup>4</sup> See EB128/2011/REC/2, summary record of the thirteenth meeting, section 1.

<sup>5</sup> The Secretariat maintains a database of reporting requirements, updated annually, which guides the composition of the draft provisional agendas.

<sup>6</sup> See Rules 4 and 5 of the Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly and Rules 8–10 bis of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Financial Regulation III – the Budget.

4. There is a natural limitation on the opportunity for discussion of issues deemed strategically important when there is such a high proportion of pre-determined material for review. Consideration should thus be given to limiting the recurrence of reporting items on the agenda, making a defined period of reporting the default option, with extension possible only in specific cases where the governing body so decides.

**Table. Summary of reporting requirements by reporting frequency**

Reporting frequency	Number of reporting requirements
Annual	23
Biannual	7
Biennial	20
Triennial	4
Quadrennial	4
Specified	31
Unspecified	36
TOTAL	125*

\* Note: there are 124 items, but one item has an annual and a triennial reporting requirement, so it appears twice.

### **Proposed approach**

5. The proposed approach for future resolutions would be to institute specific reporting requirements, with an initial time frame of a maximum of three bienniums (six years) for reporting, and nominated sessions for review. Unless otherwise stated, there would be no further requirement to report to the governing bodies. This would not mean that the public health work described in the resolution ceased, only that, in most cases, the reporting on that work had agreed limits.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF RESOLUTIONS**

6. The requirement that the governing bodies should consider the administrative and financial implications of draft resolutions is clearly expressed in Financial Regulation XV,<sup>1</sup> in the Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly<sup>2</sup> and of the Executive Board,<sup>3</sup> and has been recently confirmed by resolution WHA58.4. However, it is evident that many resolutions are adopted without a full consideration of their administrative and financial implications or a clear decision on how their implementation by the Secretariat may be financed. As a result, the implementation of the requests

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<sup>1</sup> Financial Regulations of the World Health Organization, Regulation 15.1.

<sup>2</sup> Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly, Rule 13.

<sup>3</sup> Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization, Rule 18.

addressed to the Director-General depends on the ability of the Secretariat to raise the necessary resources.

7. As an indication of the levels of additional funding requirements generated by new resolutions, the resolutions adopted by the Board at its 128th session had a total cost implication for the Secretariat of US\$ 43 million for 2010–2011. In the main, the reports on the financial implications of the programme activities resulting from the resolutions adopted by the Board at its 128th session stated that voluntary contributions would be needed for implementation.<sup>1</sup>

### **Proposed approach**

8. The objective is to make sure that resolutions can be adequately financed as an integral part of the process of adoption. It is proposed that consideration be given to financing additional costs incurred by resolutions adopted in the form of supplementary assessed contributions. In addition, it is proposed that the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board takes on an additional task at its meeting in May, of considering the financial and administrative implications of resolutions that have been recommended by the Board at its session in January, before the resolutions are considered by the Health Assembly. A new Committee agenda item would include consideration of the proposed draft resolutions and their financial implications, with advice on that subject forming part of the Committee's reports to the Health Assembly.

## **TIME LIMIT FOR INTRODUCTION OF PROPOSALS**

9. During the 128th session of the Board, concern was expressed regarding late introduction of formal proposals relating to items on the Board's agenda.<sup>2</sup> Clarification is needed of this procedure. Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly provides guidance: "Formal proposals relating to items of the agenda may be introduced at plenary meetings up to the date on which all items of the agenda have been allocated to committees or until fourteen days after the opening of the session, whichever date is the earlier". The Board has no analogous Rule.

### **Proposed approach**

10. Consideration should be given to a formulation such as: "Formal proposals relating to items of the agenda shall be introduced within 48 hours after the adoption of the agenda, unless the Board decides otherwise".

## **ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

11. The Board is invited to note the report and consider the proposals contained in paragraphs 5, 8 and 10.

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<sup>1</sup> See also document A64/2.

<sup>2</sup> See EB128/2011/REC/2, summary record of the thirteenth meeting, section 1.