

# **Process for the election of the Director-General of the World Health Organization**

## **Report by the Director-General**

1. The process for the election of the Director-General was revised in 2012 and 2013 by the Executive Board and the World Health Assembly. The present report does not summarize the revised process since a thorough overview is contained in the reports by the Director-General to the Board at its 134th session and the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

2. In this connection, the Director-General would like to draw the attention of the Executive Board to a number of procedural or managerial points that are not articulated in detail under the Health Assembly and Board resolutions revising the process. These concern, in particular, the leave status of internal candidates, the practical arrangements for the candidates' forum, Secretariat support to candidates nominated by the Executive Board and the possibility of those candidates addressing the Health Assembly prior to the appointment of the next Director-General. The Director-General deems it appropriate to raise the issues laid out in the present report prior to the formal commencement of the process of electing her successor.

3. The Director-General would also like to recall that an electronic voting system will be introduced and tested by the Board and the Health Assembly during 2016.

### **LEAVE STATUS OF INTERNAL CANDIDATES**

4. The Code of Conduct for the Election of the Director-General of the World Health Organization<sup>2</sup> (hereinafter "Code of Conduct") contains a number of provisions with regard to staff members who may be proposed for the post of Director-General, with a view to ensuring the observance of the

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<sup>1</sup> See documents EB134/43 and A67/51.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution WHA66.18 (2013), Annex 1.

highest standards of ethical conduct and avoiding any appearance of impropriety.<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 4, Section 4, of the Code of Conduct enables the Health Assembly or the Executive Board to call on the Director-General to apply Staff Rule 650, concerning special leave for internal candidates.<sup>2</sup>

5. In line with the provisions of the Code of Conduct, the Director-General intends to place internal candidates on leave so as to ensure a clear separation between any campaign activities and service for WHO. Leave will be considered once the deadline for the submission of candidatures has expired in late September 2016 and the list of candidates has been announced. At the same time, the financial implications for WHO of extended periods of paid leave cannot be ignored, especially since candidates may be senior officials and the process will extend until May 2017 should an internal candidate be nominated by the Board.

6. The Director-General therefore intends to request internal candidates to exhaust their annual leave entitlement, beginning on the date of the publication of the list of candidates, before placing them on special leave with half pay until the end of the 140th session of the Executive Board, in January 2017. If one or more internal candidates are nominated by the Board, the Director-General intends to place them on special leave with full pay until the Seventieth World Health Assembly.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding the above, WHO staff members who are elected WHO officials would not be required to take special leave in view of their status and functions.

## CANDIDATES' FORUM

7. Resolution WHA65.15 (2012) established a candidates' forum "to provide a non-decision-making platform for candidates to make themselves and their vision known to Member States on an equal basis". The modalities for the candidates' forum are regulated by resolution WHA66.18 (2013), Annex 2. The Director-General would like to draw the attention of the Executive Board, for information purposes, to the two following points:

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution WHA66.18, Annex 1: "IV. Internal candidates.

"1. WHO staff members, including the Director-General in office, who are proposed for the post of Director-General, are subject to the obligations contained in the WHO Constitution, Staff Regulations and Staff Rules as well as to the guidance which may be issued from time to time by the Director-General.

"2. WHO staff members who are proposed for the post of Director-General must observe the highest standard of ethical conduct and strive to avoid any appearance of impropriety. WHO staff members must clearly separate their WHO functions from their candidacy and avoid any overlap, or perception of overlap, between campaign activities and their work for WHO. They also have to avoid any perception of conflict of interest.

"3. WHO staff members are subject to the authority of the Director-General, in accordance with the applicable regulations and rules, in case of allegations of breach of their duties with regard to their campaign activities.

"4. The Health Assembly or the Executive Board may call upon the Director-General to apply Staff Rule 650 concerning special leave to staff members who have been proposed for the post of Director-General."

<sup>2</sup> Staff Rule 650: "Special leave with full, partial or no pay may be granted at the request of a staff member for such period and under such conditions as the Director-General may prescribe ... The Director-General may, at his or her initiative, place a staff member on special leave with full pay if he or she considers such leave to be in the interest of the Organization. Normally, such leave shall not be granted until all accrued annual leave has been exhausted ...".

<sup>3</sup> Since special leave with half pay may only be granted at the request of a staff member, the Director-General shall interpret the staff member's candidature as a request by that staff member to be placed on special leave with half pay for the period between the deadline for the submission of candidatures and the nomination of candidates by the Executive Board.

(i) Resolution WHA66.18 does not address the question whether the travel costs of candidates participating in the candidates' forum are payable by the Organization. Since the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board were revised to introduce short-listing and interview of candidates, the Secretariat has provided travel support to short-listed candidates to interview in Geneva. Travel support consists of an economy class plane ticket and per diem for the time necessary for the interview. It seems equitable to offer the same level of support to candidates participating in the candidates' forum since it is a statutory process established by the Health Assembly.

(ii) The candidates' forum will be held no later than two months before the opening of the Executive Board, with the precise dates to be decided by the Board at its 139th session, in May 2016. In accordance with the Code of Conduct, the maximum duration of the candidates' forum shall be three days and the overall duration of each interview 60 minutes.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, no more than six candidates can reasonably be interviewed during each six-hour day, allowing for a maximum of 18 candidates over three days. Extending the forum beyond three days would require a decision by the Health Assembly, which seems unnecessary. The Secretariat proposes that, in the unlikely event that there should be more than 18 candidates, the forum hold evening meetings.

## **SUPPORT FOR NOMINATED CANDIDATES BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

8. Even though candidates nominated by the Executive Board in the past could not be entirely sure of becoming Director-General until their appointment by the Health Assembly, in practice they started planning their transition immediately upon nomination and thus had more than five months at their disposal. Under the revised process, unless the date of entry on duty of the Director-General is postponed (from 1 July) or the Board exceptionally nominates only one person, the successful candidate will have approximately five weeks between the end of the Health Assembly and 1 July in which to plan his or her transition and handover from the outgoing Director-General.

9. In order to facilitate an orderly and efficient transition, the Director-General wishes to inform the Executive Board that she intends to provide support to candidates nominated by the Executive Board for the post of Director-General, on an equal basis, upon request, and in a transparent manner. In particular, the Secretariat will establish a focal point to respond or facilitate a response to any request for information that candidates nominated for the post of Director-General may wish to address to the Organization. In order to ensure equity and transparency, all Secretariat responses will be shared with all candidates.

## **NOMINATED CANDIDATES AT THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

10. The Health Assembly shall consider the Board's nomination at a private meeting and will appoint the Director-General by secret ballot in accordance with Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly, as amended by resolution WHA66.18 (2013). The secret ballot will be conducted through an electronic voting system.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution WHA66.18 (2013), Annex 2, paragraphs 3 and 4.

11. In view of the novelty of the procedure and the fact that the Health Assembly will very probably have to consider three candidates, the Director-General wishes to raise with the Board the possibility of allowing the nominated candidates to address the Health Assembly before the vote. On the one hand, Member States will already have had an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the candidates and their electoral platforms through the web forum, the candidates' forum and the interviews at the Executive Board; on the other hand, Member States may feel that hearing the candidates one last time at the end of the electoral process may assist their consideration of the Board's nomination. The additional time that the candidates' addresses will require will be offset by the time gained with the electronic voting. Given the size of the Health Assembly's membership, there should be no questions and answers and statements should be limited to 30 minutes. The order of the statements should be decided by lot and the statements would be delivered during the private meeting at which the Health Assembly will consider the Board's nominations.

## **ELECTRONIC VOTING**

12. The Health Assembly, by resolution WHA67.2 (2014), approved the recommendation of the Executive Board to rent a cost-effective and secure electronic voting system for the nomination and appointment of the Director-General and to test such a system in advance through mock votes by the governing bodies.

13. As requested by that resolution, the Director-General has selected a provider of electronic voting equipment that meets the requirements laid out by the Health Assembly. In order to familiarize delegates with a completely new manner of voting in WHO and respond to any possible questions, the Director-General proposes that mock votes be held at the 138th and 139th sessions of the Executive Board and at the Sixty-ninth Health Assembly. Members of the Board will receive, ahead of the 138th session, a set of instructions on how to operate the electronic voting equipment.

## **ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

14. If the Executive Board is in agreement with the Director-General's suggestion to allow candidates to address the Health Assembly, the Executive Board may wish to recommend that the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly consider such a proposal and adopt a resolution to such effect. The Secretariat would prepare such a draft resolution for the Health Assembly's consideration.

15. The Executive Board is further invited to note the remainder of the report, which, other than the action requested above, provides information regarding the detailed logistical procedures to be followed in order to fully implement the relevant decisions of the Executive Board and the World Health Assembly.

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