

Report of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board

1. The twenty-ninth meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee was held in Geneva from 21 to 23 January 2019 under the chairmanship of Dr Jabbin Mulwanda (Zambia) and Mr Björn Kümmel (Germany).¹ The Committee adopted its agenda² with the deletion of item 3.4. The Director-General provided opening remarks.

Agenda item 2 Matters for information or action by the Committee

2.1 Report of the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee (Document EBPBAC29/2)

2. The Programme, Budget and Administrative Committee welcomed the report presented by the Chair of the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee. While appreciating the concise nature of the report, the Committee indicated that it would welcome more contextual detail in future reports and encouraged the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the Secretariat in the spirit of constructive criticism.

3. The Committee commended the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee on including a regional focus for its report, and asked if this would continue in future reports, moving from region to region on a rotating basis. Significant interest was expressed in the Western Pacific Region's pioneering Health Law team, which could be replicated in other regions.

4. On the issue of potential underfunding, the Committee supported the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee's recommendation concerning the prioritization of expenditures and activities that could be reduced or eliminated in the event of a budget shortfall.

5. The Committee expressed its support for the work done on accountability, internal controls, oversight, risk, compliance and ethics by the Secretariat. In addition, it requested assurances on sufficient resources for the oversight and accountability functions in the Secretariat. Further, noting the multiplicity of oversight mechanisms in WHO, the Committee encouraged the Secretariat to identify areas of cooperation and complementarity.

6. While expressing support for the audit function and noting the call for more forensic audits by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Committee asked the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee to continue its scrutiny of internal oversight services, including in relation to the current

¹ The list of participants is available in document EBPBAC29/DIV./1.

² Document EBPBAC29/1 Rev.1.

investigations. The Committee supported the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee's planned focus on the transformation process.

7. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the reduction in the number of overdue audit recommendations that remained open, but also drew attention to the increase in the number of reported cases of misconduct. It agreed that the increase reflected heightened awareness of the issues by way of successful communication campaigns, on topics that included sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, but other concerns, including gaps in internal controls, should also be considered. In response to the Committee's call for systematic and mandatory training in this area, the Secretariat confirmed that work was under way on an ethics training programme for 2019. The Secretariat also confirmed that WHO generally supports the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on stronger protection for whistle-blowing which need to be applied in an organization-specific manner.

The Committee noted the report of the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee.

Agenda item 3 Matters for review by, and/or recommendation to, the Executive Board

3.1 Proposed programme budget 2020–2021 (Documents EB144/5, EB144/6 and EB144/7)

- **Proposed programme budget 2020–2021** (Document EB144/5)
- **Better value, better health: strategy and implementation plan for value for money in WHO – update** (Document EB144/6)

8. The Secretariat provided an introduction, noting that the Proposed programme budget 2020–2021 was the first programme budget to be prepared in line with the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 and WHO's triple billion approach.

9. The Committee welcomed the report's focus on measurable impact, capacity, and integrated systems at the country level. In addition, the Committee stressed the importance of strengthening the normative functions of the Organization and expressed interest in receiving further details concerning the work on global public health goods.

10. At the same time, the Committee expressed concern regarding the transition from the Programme budget 2018–2019 and the proposed overall budget increase of US\$ 364.3 million to be funded through voluntary contributions, which would make WHO more vulnerable than at present. In response, the Secretariat highlighted that progress on fundraising for the Proposed programme budget 2020–2021 was ahead of that for the Programme budget 2018–2019 at a comparable point in time and that the new resource mobilization strategic framework would consider new funding sources, including philanthropic organizations and innovative financing.

11. The Committee also urged the Secretariat to ensure that gender equality, equity and human rights, including the empowerment of women, were clearly reflected in the proposed programme budget in line with WHO's commitment under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

12. In its final remarks, and in response to questions by the Committee, the Secretariat clarified that the Proposed programme budget 2020–2021 was designed to reflect the Thirteenth General Programme of Work and that additional information on implementation and design of the new budgeting framework

(including information on allocation of budget to major offices and an outline plan for achieving the efficiency and reallocation target, together with additional financial details) would be shared before the Seventy-second World Health Assembly and, as appropriate, reflected in the document on the Proposed programme budget 2020–2021 that would be submitted to the Seventy-second World Health Assembly.

13. In introducing document EB144/6, the Secretariat presented a video on the principle of value for money in WHO and confirmed its continued commitment to the implementation of its strategy. The Committee commended the efforts of the Secretariat in that regard.

- **WHO Impact Framework** (Document EB144/7)

14. The Secretariat presented an update on the development of the WHO Impact Framework for the Thirteenth General Programme of Work.

15. The Committee expressed its appreciation of the Secretariat's focus on monitoring and evaluation, and the development of the measurement system. The work covered new ground; it was ambitious, necessary and timely.

16. The Committee noted the number of indicators for the universal health coverage index and emphasized the need both to ensure data quality and availability and to avoid placing an additional burden of data collection on countries. The Committee wondered how, and how often, data would be collected from Member States, how baselines would be established and how instances of lack of data would be managed. It was noted that gaps in data and health information systems would need action by and collaboration with and between Member States; and that health ministries should work with partners, such as national statistics offices. More work needed to be done at the level of WHO's regional and country offices.

17. The Committee urged further consultations with Member States and expert bodies as well as cooperation with other processes involved in gathering statistics. The Committee noted the importance of WHO's work with organizations in the United Nations system in order to align the WHO Impact Framework's indicators with those for achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

18. The Secretariat's contributions for achieving impacts should be better defined, measured, monitored and reported on.

19. The Secretariat indicated that it would increase its efforts to support strengthened country capacity to measure impact, and that additional resources for data and innovation were included in the Proposed programme budget 2020–2021.

20. In response to questions about next steps, the Committee was informed that work would focus on finding better ways to measure universal health coverage in terms of quality of services, effective coverage and impact. Further consultations with Member States and partners would be organized, followed by the publication of a paper in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Progress and information about timelines would be reported to the Seventy-second World Health Assembly.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the reports contained in documents EB144/5, EB144/6 and EB144/7.

3.2 Overview of financing and implementation of the Programme budget 2018–2019 (Document EB144/43)

21. Following brief introductions from the Secretariat, the Committee discussed the report, and welcomed the encouraging data on the level of financing as at 31 October 2018. At the same time, the Committee voiced concerns regarding the mismatch between funding and the Organization's priorities as set out in the Programme budget, especially in respect of the noncommunicable disease category for the fourth consecutive biennium and noted the need to analyse the reasons for that low funding rate. The Committee also expressed concerns about the low level of implementation of priority areas in the Programme budget. It discussed the uneven funding across major offices, programmes and projects; the lack of flexible funding, including the core voluntary contributions account, and the mechanisms for allocating those resources; and the overall implementation rate of the Programme budget. The Committee expressed interest in WHO's reserves and projections of funding.

22. The Committee welcomed the information on the resource mobilization strategic framework for 2019–2023, which would guide the transformation in the area of WHO's resource mobilization together with other initiatives already implemented. In that regard, comments were made by the Committee concerning the expected broadening of the donor base, including exploring options with non-State actors, the projected increase in funding from emerging donors, innovative financing and the allocation of funding across the Organization to the key priorities of the Programme budget. The Committee appreciated that the planned Partners' Forum would offer further opportunities for exchanges on those matters, but noted that all formal exchanges should continue to be directed through the governing bodies.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the report as a basis for discussion of the draft Proposed programme budget 2020–2021.

3.3 Scale of assessments for 2020–2021 (Document EB144/44)

23. The Committee considered the report of the Director-General outlining the proposed scale of assessments for the financial period 2020–2021.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board adopt the draft resolution contained in document EB144/44.

3.5 WHO reform processes, including the transformation agenda, and implementation of United Nations development system reform (Document EB144/31)

24. Following an introduction by the Secretariat, the Committee considered the report.

25. The Committee welcomed the comprehensive approach being taken to transformation, particularly the central emphasis on ensuring the relevance, quality and impact of WHO's normative work, and deepening its impact on improving health at the country level in support of Member States, while addressing any duplication of effort and inefficiencies across the Organization's three levels. The substantial progress made in efficiently managing the exchange between all concerned stakeholders, including partners and WHO staff members, was noted. The Committee supported the maintenance and the harmonization of WHO's normative and standard-setting work and guideline development, which would benefit from a whole-of-WHO approach and Member State feedback.

26. The Committee requested clarification regarding: the terminology used in describing WHO's transformation; the processes identified for optimization, standardization and harmonization; the

timeline for introducing the process redesigns; the roles and responsibilities at all three levels of the Organization; the transformation targets for 2019; the innovation hub and WHO's role in innovation; and the elaboration of the operating model. It also requested that a report on WHO's role and presence at the country level be submitted for consideration at the Seventy-second World Health Assembly. Further, an implementation plan for transformation should be prepared by mid-2019. The plan would reflect the development of the relevant components related to the Organization's structure and operating model.

27. The Committee welcomed the opportunities offered by synergies between the transformation agenda and United Nations reform, especially that of the United Nations development system. The Committee looked forward to receiving further information on the implications for the Organization of the new Resident Coordinator system at the country level. The Committee discussed the importance of coordination at the country level in conjunction with the United Nations Country Team. Information on the functional reviews of WHO's presence in more than half the Member States in the African Region was provided.

28. The Director-General assured the Committee of the Secretariat's commitment to change and the continuous involvement of Member States throughout the process.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the report contained in document EB144/31.

3.6 Human resources update, including on the global internship programme (Documents EB144/47 and EB144/INF./3)

29. The Committee applauded the strong position taken by the Director-General and senior management against sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and stressed that there must be a change of culture and zero tolerance for such misconduct. The Committee also requested the Secretariat to accelerate its work on the new policy on the prevention of sexual harassment, based on the policy reference model developed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. At the same time, the Committee highlighted the need to safeguard the principle of the presumption of innocence. The Committee also noted with approval the Secretariat's efforts to ensure gender balance and the increase in recruitment of women to international positions. Acknowledging the continued need to promote balanced geographical representation, the Secretariat confirmed that there had been increased recruitment from under-represented or unrepresented countries compared to the number of applications from those countries. The Committee recommended that future analyses related to geographical diversity should take into account staffing numbers from all major offices.

30. The Committee welcomed the new structure and rigour of the global internship programme and stressed the need for a better geographical balance in the programme, in particular for low- and middle-income countries. It supported remedies that included the payment of stipends to interns and the promotion of internship programmes in regional and country offices, which would be more cost-effective. The Committee highlighted the need for information on the administrative burden arising from the administration of stipends.

31. With regard to recruitment policies, and responding to a question about the new ranges for evaluating candidates that had replaced the numerical scoring system, the Secretariat confirmed that merit remained the primary selection criteria, but the new approach also allowed gender and geographical diversity issues to be considered. The Committee also expressed concerns about the preferential treatment of internal candidates and the fact that most entry-level positions at WHO required

substantial experience. To address that problem, attention was drawn by the Secretariat to the useful cooperation with the United Nations Volunteer programme and the efforts made to increase the number of P1 posts to create career opportunities for candidates with less experience.

32. The Committee expressed support for the mandatory mobility policy but stressed that mobility should always be in the interests of the Organization and conducive to efficiency, with the aim of achieving country impact. It recommended that lessons be learned from mobility practices and experience in other organizations. The Secretariat acknowledged that it had a duty of care for staff serving in hardship stations and would ensure that their situation would be given priority consideration.

33. Where succession planning was concerned, the Secretariat explained that the extension of the mandatory age of retirement to 65, already available as an option for existing staff members, had made it difficult to project the number of vacancies arising from retirement. The Secretariat's statistics confirmed that the vast majority of staff were electing to retire at the age of 65 even when they had the acquired right to retire earlier. The number of vacancies is expected to increase as of 2022, when the first group of approximately 200 staff members will have reached the age of 65 and will retire.

34. In addition, the Committee requested that the next human resources update should include information on performance management.

3.7 Report of the International Civil Service Commission (Document EB144/48)

35. The Committee noted the report of the International Civil Service Commission and asked for clarification concerning the three recommendations not fully approved by the United Nations General Assembly. The Secretariat noted that those recommendations related to: the proposed end-of-service grant, which was already in place for WHO; the increase in children's and secondary dependants' allowances; and better entitlements for staff with dependants appointed to duty stations with hardship classifications D or E. With respect to the last category of staff members, the United Nations General Assembly had approved a pilot for duty stations classified as E; WHO would look to implement the decisions of the United Nations General Assembly accordingly.

3.8 Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules (Document EB144/49 Rev.1)

36. The Committee discussed the report, which outlined amendments based on recommendations by the International Civil Service Commission. In response to a question regarding the increase in remuneration of staff in professional and higher categories and in ungraded positions (including that of the Director-General), the Secretariat explained that the amendment would not have a financial impact for WHO as the increase in the base salary would be offset by a corresponding decrease in post-adjustment.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the reports contained in documents EB144/47 and EB144/48.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board consider adopting the draft resolutions contained in paragraph 11 of document EB144/49 Rev.1, namely:

- **draft resolution 1 on salaries for staff in the professional and higher categories**
- **draft resolution 2 on remuneration of staff in ungraded positions and the Director-General.**

3.9 Evaluation: update (Document EB144/51)

37. The Committee considered the two-part report, covering progress in current work and the outline of the scope and framework of the review of 40 years of primary health care to be conducted in 2019.

38. The Committee commended the evaluation activities, including that of the WHO Rapid Access Expansion Programme, which supported countries with high disease burden. It observed that the findings of many individual evaluations could well be applied elsewhere. This was the case for country office evaluations, which could be used in comparable settings.

39. The Committee welcomed the close collaboration with the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the confirmation that reports on the Secretariat's implementation of the JIU's recommendations were submitted annually to the Committee at its May session.

40. The Committee emphasized that organizational learning formed an integral part of strengthening organizational performance and rectifying high-level priority issues. It recognized the relevance of organizational learning to the implementation of WHO's transformation agenda.

41. Welcoming the identification of a short-list of systemic cross-cutting issues and the five priority issues for further action, the Committee looked forward to information on the follow-up and asked what measures were being taken to address recurrent issues. The Secretariat noted that findings and recommendations had informed the development of the Programme budget 2020–2021, the ongoing transformation work and other related processes each under a specific business owner.

42. With regard to the proposal for the primary health care review, the Committee expressed support and encouraged the focus on progress rather than comparing conditions at the end of the 40-year period. It requested that the outcome of the Global Conference on Primary Health Care held in Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan, in October 2018 should be taken into consideration and that the findings and recommendations of the review should guide future operational planning for implementing primary health care in countries.

43. The Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean highlighted the importance of evaluation and documentation of best practices through the example of the recent evaluation of the Regional Centre for Environmental Health Action, which had resulted in useful recommendations and proposed actions.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the report and consider the proposal for the review of 40 years of implementation of primary health care at country level.

3.10 Engagement with non-State actors (Documents EB144/36 and EB144/37)

44. The Committee received an update on engagement with non-State actors and the implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors. The Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 and the transformation agenda require enhanced and more proactive engagement with non-State actors. The Framework had been implemented as mandated by resolution WHA69.10 (2016).

45. The Committee acknowledged the importance of the Framework to guide engagement, noted the Secretariat's efforts to become less risk-averse and appreciated the more proactive approach being taken by seeking out engagement opportunities.

46. The Committee urged WHO to safeguard against potential conflicts of interest, to ensure that the Framework was implemented in a consistent manner at the three levels of the Organization, and to preserve the Organization's intergovernmental nature. The Committee looked forward to the planned initial evaluation of the Framework's implementation and its impact on the work of WHO, which was scheduled for 2019.

47. The Committee welcomed the due diligence and risk assessment performed by the Secretariat on the non-State actors under consideration for admission into or renewal of official relations. It considered the proposals for admission of non-State actors into official relations with WHO, for renewing and discontinuing such relations and for those non-State actors set to undergo their triennial review by the Executive Board during its 146th session.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the report contained in document EB144/36.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board adopt the draft decision contained in paragraph 26 of document EB144/37.

Agenda item 4. Adoption of the report and closure of the meeting

48. The Committee adopted its report.

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