

WHO reform

Governance

Report by the Director-General

1. Since 2012, the WHO governing bodies have been discussing options for promoting more strategic decision-making in the context of WHO reform. Such options have focused on improving the methods of work of the governing bodies, including by reducing the number of items on the agendas, and in doing so, dedicating more time to substantive discussion on WHO's strategic priorities and ensuring that meetings' agendas are concluded within the number of days allotted and within reasonable working hours of each day. Reform discussions have also addressed the development of global strategies and action plans, for example by requiring that the regional committees be invited to provide comments and input on such documents.¹

2. This report responds to paragraph 5(e) of decision EB144(3) (2019) on WHO reform, in which the Executive Board decided to request the Director-General to undertake several steps, including:

- to review and make recommendations on the establishment of end dates for reporting on resolutions and decisions that have unspecified reporting requirements;
- to review and make recommendations on consolidating and managing reporting requirements on similar subjects; and
- to provide a list of global strategies and action plans, highlighting in particular the ones that will expire during the timeline of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023, and outline options for their extension, as appropriate.

3. This report contains several recommendations related to reporting requirements, global strategies and action plans. The recommendations were developed following an informal consultation with Member States on 12 September 2019.²

¹ See decision WHA65(9) (2012), in which the Health Assembly decided to endorse a proposal “that regional committees be asked to comment and provide input to all global strategies, policies and legal instruments such as conventions, regulations and codes”.

² By decision EB144(3) (2019), paragraph (5)(e)(vi), the Executive Board requested the Director-General to organize such an informal consultation with Member States prior to the 146th session of the Executive Board in January 2020.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

4. One way of reducing the number of items on governing body agendas is to adopt a more systematic approach to managing reporting requirements contained in resolutions and decisions, since reporting requirements influence the scope and content of governing body meeting agendas. In this regard, the Health Assembly decided in decision WHA72(22) (2019), paragraph 4, that “resolutions and decisions should provide for clear reporting requirements, including reporting cycles of up to six years, with biennial reports, unless otherwise advised by the Director-General”. Thus, the Secretariat has clear guidance on reporting obligations and can take advantage of more predictability in agenda management.

5. With respect to resolutions and decisions that have already been adopted and that have unspecified reporting requirements, the Secretariat proposes that the reporting requirements of such resolutions and decisions be considered as “sunsetting”, or expired, if they were adopted six or more years ago and/or have been superseded by another resolution or decision (for example, reporting on the Millennium Development Goals has been replaced with reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals).

6. Recognizing that Member States may wish to review carefully all of the resolutions and decisions in which the reporting requirements would be sunsetted under the six-year reporting limitation and identify certain exceptions, the Secretariat proposes to undertake the following steps with respect to each resolution and decision that was adopted six or more years ago and has an unspecified reporting requirement:¹

- (a) to outline any related reporting requirements that might be considered as having superseded the original one(s), provide an indication of when any reporting to the governing bodies has taken place in response to the relevant mandate, and describe any ongoing work related to the subject matter of the resolution or decision;
- (b) to provide criteria for proposing exceptions to the six-year limitation on reporting;² and
- (c) applying the criteria mentioned in (b), to provide a list of resolutions and decisions in which the reporting requirements are recommended for sunsetting.

7. Similarly, with respect to each resolution and decision with unspecified reporting requirements that is less than six years old,³ the Secretariat proposes to:

- (a) outline any related reporting requirements that might be considered as having superseded the original one(s), provide an indication of when any reporting to the governing bodies has taken place in response to the relevant mandate, and describe any ongoing work related to the subject matter of the resolution or decision; and
- (b) applying the criteria mentioned in paragraph 6(b), provide a recommendation with respect to the reporting cycle.

¹ See http://apps.who.int/gb/gr/pdf_files/Annex1.pdf (accessed 9 December 2019).

² Criteria could include reporting requirements in resolutions and decisions related to continuing efforts to eradicate diseases, such as poliomyelitis and dracunculiasis.

³ See http://apps.who.int/gb/gr/pdf_files/Annex2.pdf (accessed 9 December 2019).

8. With regard to reporting requirements on similar subjects, efforts have been made recently to consolidate and streamline reporting.¹ The Secretariat proposes to make additional recommendations on the consolidation and streamlining of reporting requirements in the context of the sunseting exercise described in paragraphs 6 and 7.

9. Furthermore, the Secretariat proposes to present the recommendations mentioned in paragraphs 6 to 8 at an informal consultation of Member States and to submit a final list of recommendations to the Executive Board at its 148th session for consideration.

PROGRESS REPORTS

10. One issue closely linked to the subject of reporting requirements concerns progress reports. In resolution WHA67.2 (2014), the Health Assembly decided that progress reports shall be considered by the Health Assembly only. The Secretariat has observed, however, that the time available for the discussion of progress reports during the Health Assembly is limited. As a result, discussion is opened on several reports at the same time and comments are subject to strict time limits. Member States may wish to consider whether discussion of progress reports by the Executive Board (rather than the Health Assembly) may be more consistent with the Board's mandate to "give effect to the decisions and policies of the Health Assembly".² In this regard, Member States may decide that progress reports be considered by the Executive Board only.

GLOBAL STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

11. Proposals for global strategies and action plans appear on virtually all Health Assembly agendas. The Secretariat is currently implementing 32 global strategies and action plans, 13 of which are scheduled to expire within the time frame of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 (see Annex).

12. During discussions on governance reform, Member States highlighted the need for the governing bodies to consider at an appropriate stage whether global strategies or action plans have fulfilled their mandates, should be extended and/or need to be adjusted. In this regard, the Secretariat proposes to systematically include as substantive items on governing body agendas any global strategies or action plans that are scheduled to expire within one year.

REGIONAL INPUTS ON GLOBAL STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

13. Regarding the preparation of global strategies and action plans, the Health Assembly mandated in decision WHA65(9) (2012) that the regional committees be asked to provide comments and inputs on all proposals for global strategies and action plans.³ In recent years, however, the number of proposals for global strategies and action plans has increased, thereby adding pressure on the regional committees' heavy agendas. As a result, comments and inputs from the regions have often been collected through focused technical consultations, side events held on the margins of the regional committees, and web-based consultations. In view of this practice, Member States may wish to consider deciding that

¹ See http://apps.who.int/gb/gr/pdf_files/Annex3.pdf (accessed 9 December 2019).

² See Article 28 of the WHO Constitution.

³ Decision WHA65(9) (2012), paragraph (4)(a), endorsed a proposal "that regional committees be asked to comment and provide input to all global strategies, policies and legal instruments such as conventions, regulations and codes".

comments and inputs from the regions be collected through regional consultation processes that are not strictly linked to regional committee meetings.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

14. The Board is invited to note the report and consider the following draft decision:

The Executive Board, having considered the report by the Director-General on WHO reform,¹ decided:

- (1) to request the Director-General:
 - (a) with respect to each resolution and decision that is six or more years old and has an unspecified reporting requirement:
 - (i) to outline any related reporting requirements that might be considered as having superseded the original one(s), provide an indication of when any reporting to the governing bodies has taken place in response to the relevant mandate, and describe any ongoing work related to the subject matter of the resolution or decision;
 - (ii) to provide criteria for proposing exceptions to the six-year limitation on reporting;²
 - (iii) applying the criteria mentioned in paragraph (1)(a)(ii), to provide a list of resolutions and decisions in which the reporting requirements are recommended for sunseting;
 - (b) with respect to each resolution and decision that is less than six years old and has an unspecified reporting requirement:
 - (i) to outline any related reporting requirements that might be considered as having superseded the original one(s), provide an indication of when any reporting to the governing bodies has taken place in response to the relevant mandate, and describe any ongoing work related to the subject matter of the resolution or decision;
 - (ii) applying the criteria mentioned in paragraph (1)(a)(ii), to provide a recommendation with respect to the reporting cycle;
 - (c) with regard to reporting requirements on similar subjects, to make recommendations on the consolidation and streamlining of reporting requirements in the context of the sunseting exercise;

¹ Document EB146/32.

² Criteria could include reporting requirements in resolutions and decisions related to ongoing efforts for the eradication of diseases, such as poliomyelitis and dracunculiasis.

- (d) to present the recommendations mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) at an informal consultation of Member States and submit a final list of recommendations for consideration by the Executive Board at its 148th session;
- (2) to recommend to the Seventy-third World Health Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

The Seventy-third World Health Assembly decided:

- (1) that progress reports shall henceforth be considered only by the Executive Board and no longer by the Health Assembly, starting from the end of this session;
- (2) that comments and inputs on global strategies, policies and legal instruments such as conventions, regulations and codes, made in line with decision WHA65(9) (2012), may be understood to include those provided by Member States in the context of technical meetings, informal consultations and other intergovernmental meetings in the regions;
- (3) to request that the Director-General systematically include as substantive items on the agendas of meetings of the WHO governing bodies any global strategies or action plans that are scheduled to expire within one year in order to allow Member States to consider whether global strategies or action plans have fulfilled their mandates, should be extended and/or need to be adjusted.

ANNEX

LIST OF EXISTING GLOBAL STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

	Expiration date	Mandate	Global strategy/action plan	Reports to the governing bodies (Session of the Health Assembly)
1	2019	WHA69(11)	Road map for an enhanced global response to the adverse health effects of air pollution	Seventy-third
2	2020	WHA65.17 WHA70.14	Global vaccine action plan (2011–2020)	Seventy-third and Seventy-fifth
3	2020	WHA66.4	Global action plan 2014–2019 on universal eye health	Seventy-third
4	2020	WHA69.3	Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health	Seventy-third
5	2021	WHA67.7	WHO global disability action plan 2014–2021: better health for all people with disability	Seventy-fourth
6	2021	WHA68.7	Global action plan on antimicrobial resistance	Seventy-fourth
7	2021	WHA69.5	WHO global plan of action to strengthen the role of the health system within a national multisectoral response to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children	Seventy-fourth
8	2021	WHA69.22	Global health sector strategies on HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections, for the period 2016–2021	Seventy-fourth
9	Extended to 2022 by resolution WHA68.18	WHA61.21	Global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation and intellectual property	Seventy-third
10	2023	WHA67.18	WHO traditional medicine strategy: 2014–2023	Periodically, as appropriate

	Expiration date	Mandate	Global strategy/action plan	Reports to the governing bodies (Session of the Health Assembly)
11	2023	WHA71(15)	Five-year global strategic plan to improve public health preparedness and response (2018–2023)	Annually
12	2023	WHA70(9)	Strategic action plan on polio transition ¹	Mid-term evaluation at the end of 2021 and final evaluation at the end of 2023 by the WHO Evaluation Office, and reports submitted to the governing bodies
13	2023	WHA72(14)	WHO global action plan on promoting the health of refugees and migrants, 2019–2023	Seventy-fourth and Seventy-sixth
14	2025	WHA70(17)	Global action plan on the public health response to dementia 2017–2025	Seventy-third, Seventy-sixth and Seventy-ninth
15	Extended to 2030 by decision EB142(6)	WHA65.6	Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition	Biennial ²
16	Extended to 2030 by decision WHA72(11)	WHA66.8	Comprehensive mental health action plan 2013–2020	Seventy-fourth
17	Extended to 2030 by decision WHA72(11)	WHA66.10 WHA57.17 WHA63.13	Global action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2013–2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health • Global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol 	Seventy-third
18	2030	WHA69.2	Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030)	Regularly

¹ See documents A71/9 and the summary records of the Seventy-first World Health Assembly, Committee A, sixth and eighth meetings.

² See paragraph 21 of the draft comprehensive implementation plan (document A65/11).

	Expiration date	Mandate	Global strategy/action plan	Reports to the governing bodies (Session of the Health Assembly)
19	2030	WHA67.10	Newborn health action plan	Included in the agendas of the Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth sessions, and integrated in the reporting on the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030)
20	2030	WHA68.2	Global technical strategy and targets for malaria 2016–2030	Regularly
21	2030	WHA70(23)	Road map to enhance health sector engagement in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards achieving the 2020 goal and beyond	Seventy-fourth
22	2030	WHA69.19	Global strategy on human resources for health: workforce 2030	Regularly
23	2030	WHA70.6	“Working for Health”: the ILO, OECD and WHO five-year action plan for health employment and inclusive economic growth (2017–2021)	Annual progress report to the Health Assembly, aligned with reporting on the implementation of WHO's global strategy on human resources for health: workforce 2030
24	2030	WHA70.16	Strategic approach for integrated global vector control and response	Seventy-fifth, Eightieth and Eighty-fifth
25	Extended to 2030 by decision WHA72(11)	WHA70(19)	Implementation plan to guide further action on the recommendations included in the Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity	Decision WHA72(11) also requested that future reports be included in the consolidated reports on noncommunicable diseases from 2021 to 2031
26	2030	WHA71.6	WHO's global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030	Seventy-fourth, Seventy-ninth and Eighty-third
27	2030	WHA72(9)	WHO global strategy on health, environment and climate change	Seventy-fourth
28	2030	WHA72(10)	Plan of action on climate change and health in small island developing States	Seventy-fourth

	Expiration date	Mandate	Global strategy/action plan	Reports to the governing bodies (Session of the Health Assembly)
29	2035	WHA67.1	Global strategy and targets for tuberculosis prevention, care and control after 2015	Seventy-third
30	Unspecified	WHA57.12	Strategy to accelerate progress towards the attainment of international development goals and targets related to reproductive health	Biennially
31	Unspecified	WHA60.25	Strategy for integrating gender analysis and actions into the work of WHO	Biennially
32	Unspecified	WHA63.21	WHO strategy on research for health	Biennially