

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE ELEVENTH MEETING

**WHO headquarters, Geneva
Saturday, 23 January 2021, scheduled at 10:00**

Chair: Dr H. VARDHAN (India)

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ELEVENTH MEETING

Saturday, 23 January 2021, at 10:10

Chair: Dr H. VARDHAN (India)

PILLAR 4: MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT WHO PROVIDING BETTER SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES (continued)

1. BUDGET AND FINANCE MATTERS: Item 17 of the agenda (continued)

Proposed programme budget 2022–2023: Item 17.1 of the agenda (documents EB148/25 and EB148/25 Add.1) (continued)

- **Sustainable financing** (documents EB148/26, EB148/26 Add.1 Rev.1 and EB148/26 Add.2) (continued from the seventh meeting, section 2)

The CHAIR drew attention to the draft decision on sustainable financing contained in document EB148/26 Add.1 Rev.1. The financial and administrative implications of the draft decision for the Secretariat were contained in document EB148/26 Add.2.

The VICE-CHAIR, speaking at the request of the CHAIR, said that, while many delegations had submitted proposals for amendments to the draft decision, no consensus had been reached. The two main opposing proposals addressed the following issue: whether to establish a small group initially to discuss financial sustainability, given the complexity of the issue, or to give all Member States the opportunity to participate from the outset, to ensure transparency. It had been suggested that the Chair and Vice-Chair should prepare a new version of the draft decision, which would take into account all proposals, including that for the establishment of a working group for Member States who wished to participate in the discussions. The amended draft decision would be distributed later that day and would provide a basis for informal consultation.

The CHAIR took it that the Board wished to suspend the discussion on the agenda item in the light of ongoing discussions and to allow for the preparation of an amended draft decision.

It was so agreed.

(For continuation of the discussion and adoption of a decision, see the summary records of the thirteenth meeting, section 1.)

Scale of assessments 2022–2023: Item 17.3 of the agenda (document EB148/28)

Status of collection of assessed contributions, including Member States in arrears in the payment of their contributions to an extent that would justify invoking Article 7 of the Constitution: Item 17.4 of the agenda (document EB148/29)

The CHAIR drew attention to the reports contained in documents EB148/28 and EB148/29, and to the recommendations of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive

Board on the scale of assessments 2022–2023 and on the status of collection of assessed contributions, contained in document EB148/5, paragraphs 29 and 31, respectively.

The Board noted the reports and concurred with the Committee’s guidance in respect of the scale of assessments 2022–2023 and the status of collection of assessed contributions.

2. UPDATE ON THE INFRASTRUCTURE FUND: Item 18 of the agenda

Update on information management and technology: Item 18.1 of the agenda (document EB148/30)

Geneva buildings renovation strategy: Item 18.2 of the agenda (document EB148/31)

The CHAIR drew attention to the reports contained in documents EB148/30 and EB148/31, and to the report of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board contained in document EB148/5, paragraphs 32 to 36.

The Board noted the reports.

3. GOVERNANCE MATTERS: Item 19 of the agenda

WHO transformation: Item 19.1 of the agenda (document EB148/32)

The CHAIR drew attention to the report contained in document EB148/32 and to the recommendations of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board contained in document EB148/5, paragraph 43.

The Board noted the report and concurred with the Committee’s guidance in respect of WHO transformation.

Engagement with non-State actors: Item 19.5 of the agenda

Report on the implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (document EB148/39)

Non-State actors in official relations with WHO (documents EB148/40 and EB148/40 Add.1)

The CHAIR drew attention to the reports contained in documents EB148/39 and EB148/40. He also drew attention to the draft decision contained in document EB148/40 on non-State actors in official relations with WHO, the financial and administrative implications of which were set out in document EB148/40 Add.1, and to the recommendations of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board contained in document EB148/5, paragraph 65.

The Board noted the reports and concurred with the Committee's guidance in respect of non-State actors in official relations with WHO.

The decision was adopted.¹

4. STAFFING MATTERS: Item 21 of the agenda

Statement by the representative of the WHO staff associations: Item 21.1 of the agenda (document EB148/INF./1)

Report of the Ombudsman: Item 21.2 of the agenda (documents EB148/INF./2 and EB148/INF./3)

Human resources: update: Item 21.3 of the agenda (document EB148/44)

Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules: Item 21.4 of the agenda (documents EB148/45 and EB148/45 Add.1)

Report of the International Civil Service Commission: Item 21.5 of the agenda

The CHAIR drew attention to the recommendations of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board contained in document EB148/5, paragraph 56. He also drew attention to the three draft resolutions, contained in document EB148/45, on the remuneration of staff in the professional and higher categories, on the remuneration of staff in ungraded positions and the Director-General, and on payments and deductions, recruitment policies, and abolition of post. The financial and administrative implications of the three resolutions were contained in document EB148/45 Add.1.

The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA welcomed the written statement by the staff associations. Efforts to control the pandemic through public health advice on diverse media platforms were commendable and should be continued. The proactive approach seen in the weekly technical briefings on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) should also be applauded. The new administration of the United States had reversed the previous decision to withdraw from WHO and stood ready to partner with the Organization in support of its critical mission. He encouraged all involved to continue working collaboratively and constructively to meet WHO's organizational, administrative and workforce challenges.

The DIRECTOR (Human Resources and Talent Management) said that, owing to the challenges in holding sessions of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) in 2020, the ICSC report had not been released until December 2020. As a result, no Executive Board document had been issued on the report of the ICSC for 2020.² The United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution on the United Nations common system adopted on 31 December 2020, had approved the Commission's revised unified base/floor salary scale reflecting a 1.90% adjustment; taken note of the decision of the Commission to increase danger pay for internationally and locally recruited staff; taken no action on the Commission's recommendation on child and secondary dependant allowances; decided to continue the pilot project of

¹ Decision EB148(8).

² Accordingly, the planned document EB148/46 was not issued.

granting US\$ 15 000 for staff members with eligible dependants in duty stations with E hardship classification conditions in 2021; and welcomed the decision of the Commission to establish a working group to review the implementation of the current contractual framework by the organizations.

The representative of the WHO STAFF ASSOCIATIONS, speaking on behalf of the staff associations of WHO, PAHO, UNAIDS and IARC, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had aggravated certain issues of concern to staff members. Welcoming progress to date on the WHO transformation agenda, she underlined the difficulty of providing an overview of the restructuring process, given the diversity of timelines and approaches in different areas. Aligning the functional reviews and the restructuring process under way in regional and country offices would contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023. The process should focus on job security; the staff's trust and motivation must not be tested during the pandemic. An independent evaluation of the restructuring process across the Organization should be conducted, with a focus on values. She looked forward to the outcome of the geographical mobility simulation exercise and the implementation plan to allay concerns, including about human resources support measures. The draft geographical mobility policy did not address certain issues crucial to the implementation of mobility, such as a unified system of position descriptions and classifications, and situations generated by the pandemic, which had implications for mobility.

Addressing all forms of harassment must be a priority for the Organization, and the new WHO policy on preventing and addressing harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority and its implementation plan should be finalized and adopted. Given that many staff members had reported the negative effects of the pandemic on their mental health and well-being, the Organization should encourage a cultural change to promote mental health in the workplace. Mental health and psychosocial support should be integrated into the essential services offered routinely to the staff. Since there was a direct correlation between staff members' mental health and many of the issues emphasized in the staff associations' statement, delays in addressing such issues would have a significant impact on the WHO workforce.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL, responding to the staff associations' statement, said that the WHO staff associations held regular meetings with both senior management and the human resources department to discuss issues raised by the staff and address challenges jointly, which was proving fruitful. As part of the WHO transformation agenda, open one-to-one sessions had also been introduced to enable staff members to discuss private matters, raise systemic problems or offer new suggestions to senior management, all of which were followed up. There were plans to designate 2021 the year of the workforce, with the aim of improving the working environment to boost productivity and addressing diversity and inclusion to serve better at the global level. The previous year had had an impact on the staff's mental health, and a plan was being developed to support mental health in the workplace, which would be the starting point for sustainable improvements to the working environment. Upon appointment, all staff members committed to geographical mobility and to serving wherever they were assigned. It was nevertheless important that mobility contributed to increasing staff impact and productivity; the mobility simulations served to address any challenges in that respect.

The OMBUDSMAN, speaking on behalf of all WHO ombudsmen, noted that the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee had concluded that the Secretariat should proceed to implement the Ombudsman's recommendations, including those from past years. Consideration should be given to a thorough review of previous recommendations that had not been implemented.

Turning to the current recommendations, he said that his first recommendation related to the problems faced by staff members owing to working conditions during lockdown. Staff members had had to adapt quickly to working at home and carrying out new tasks against the backdrop of the urgency of a global crisis. Ensuring the staff's well-being must therefore be a priority for the Organization and for supervisors. A lack of support risked disengagement, which had a negative impact on work. He

expressed concern that, for a variety of reasons, not all supervisors had maintained open communication with their staff. Senior management must emphasize the need for supervisors to communicate regularly and genuinely with their teams, and provide adequate support for that task, in order to prevent any impact on mental health and on WHO's ability to deliver at such a critical time.

The second recommendation related to the need for further work on diversity and against racism. The honest conversations with the staff on the matter, which the Ombudsman had recommended before the Board in 2019, were long overdue. While commendable steps had been taken, including the Director-General's unambiguous support for equality, there was a need to move beyond formal policy announcements to engage in a soul-searching exercise that should involve all staff members and be aimed at working towards a more open and inclusive Organization.

A remarkable aspect of the Organization's response to the COVID-19 crisis was the extraordinary efforts of its staff, despite the anxieties brought about by the crisis, challenging living and working conditions, and tremendous pressure and little rest, especially for those involved in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, staff cohesion had suffered as a result of criticism issuing from a social media campaign that had made accusations regarding the integrity and professionalism of the Organization and its leadership. Greater support from Member States would have contributed to reassuring WHO staff that their work was making a real difference and that, as health professionals, they deserved public recognition. Recent statements from Member States' representatives to that end were appreciated. He paid tribute to all WHO colleagues for their dedication and loyalty and their exemplary efforts during the current challenging times.

The Board noted the report contained in document EB148/44 and concurred with the Committee's guidance in respect of the report of the Ombudsman.

The CHAIR took it that the Board wished to adopt the three draft resolutions contained in document EB148/45, on the remuneration of staff in the professional and higher categories, on the remuneration of staff in ungraded positions and the Director-General, and on payments and deductions, recruitment policies, and abolition of post.

The Board noted the report and adopted the resolutions.¹

5. GOVERNANCE MATTERS: Item 19 of the agenda (resumed)

WHO reform: Item 19.2 of the agenda

- **WHO reform: governance** (documents EB148/33 and EB148/33 Add.1)
- **WHO reform: World health days** (document EB148/34)
- **WHO reform: involvement of non-State actors in WHO's governing bodies** (document EB148/35)

The CHAIR drew attention to the draft decision on WHO reform: governance, contained in document EB148/33, the financial and administrative implications of which were set out in document EB148/33 Add.1. He also drew attention to a draft decision on World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day, proposed by Brazil, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, which read as follows:

¹ Resolutions EB148.R3, EB148.R4 and EB148.R5.

The Executive Board, having considered the report on WHO reform: world health days,¹ and recalling decision WHA73(33) on the new road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030, decided to recommend to the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly the adoption of the following decision:

The Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly, having considered the report on WHO reform: world health days, decided to welcome the Secretariat's support of initiatives that celebrate the date of 30 January as a day dedicated to neglected tropical diseases and invites Member States and relevant stakeholders to consider taking appropriate measures to continue celebrating that day.

The financial and administrative implications of the draft decision for the Secretariat were:

Decision: World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day
A. Link to the approved Programme budget 2020–2021
<p>1. Output(s) in the approved Programme budget 2020–2021 to which this draft decision would contribute if adopted:</p> <p>1.1.2. Countries enabled to strengthen their health systems to deliver on condition- and disease-specific service coverage results</p>
<p>2. Short justification for considering the draft decision, if there is no link to the results as indicated in the approved Programme budget 2020–2021:</p> <p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>3. Any additional Secretariat work during the biennium 2020–2021 that cannot be covered by the approved Programme budget 2020–2021:</p> <p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>4. Estimated time frame (in years or months) to implement the decision:</p> <p>No end date is envisaged, but the decision costed here is up to biennium 2024–2025.</p>
B. Resource implications for the Secretariat for implementation of the decision
<p>1. Total resource requirements to implement the decision, in US\$ millions:</p> <p>US\$ 2.44 million.</p> <p>Some technical and communications staff time plus opportunity costs will also be accommodated as part of regular, planned work but these are integrated with existing plans and are not disaggregated here. The budget plans shown in the present document represent the amounts that will be committed exclusively for delivering World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day.</p>
<p>2.a. Estimated resource requirements already planned for in the approved Programme budget 2020–2021, in US\$ millions:</p> <p>US\$ 0.47 million.</p> <p>This represents the resources required for the first World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day, in January 2021.</p>

¹ Document EB148/34.

2.b. Estimated resource requirements in addition to those already planned for in the approved Programme budget 2020–2021, in US\$ millions:
Not applicable.
3. Estimated resource requirements to be considered for the proposed programme budget for 2022–2023, in US\$ millions:
US\$ 0.98 million. This represents the resources required for two World Neglected Tropical Diseases Days, in January 2022 and January 2023.
4. Estimated resource requirements to be considered for the proposed programme budgets of future bienniums, in US\$ millions:
US\$ 0.99 million. This represents the resources required for two World Neglected Tropical Diseases Days, in January 2024 and January 2025.
5. Level of available resources to fund the implementation of the decision in the current biennium, in US\$ millions
– Resources available to fund the decision in the current biennium: US\$ 0.47 million.
– Remaining financing gap in the current biennium: Not applicable.
– Estimated resources, not yet available, if any, which would help to close the financing gap in the current biennium: Not applicable.

Table. Breakdown of estimated resource requirements (in US\$ millions)

Biennium	Costs	Region						Headquarters	Total
		Africa	The Americas	South-East Asia	Europe	Eastern Mediterranean	Western Pacific		
2020–2021 resources already planned	Staff	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.09	0.31
	Activities	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.10	0.16
	Total	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.19	0.47
2020–2021 additional resources	Staff	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Activities	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Total	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2022–2023 resources to be planned	Staff	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.18	0.65
	Activities	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.21	0.33
	Total	0.11	0.10	0.09	0.10	0.09	0.10	0.39	0.98
Future bienniums resources to be planned	Staff	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.18	0.65
	Activities	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.22	0.34
	Total	0.11	0.10	0.09	0.10	0.09	0.10	0.40	0.99

The representative of the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, highlighting the serious impact of neglected tropical diseases, recalled resolution WHA66.12 (2013) on neglected tropical diseases, Member States' commitment to target 3.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Political Declaration of the 2019 United Nations High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage to strengthen

efforts to address neglected tropical diseases as part of universal health coverage, and decision WHA73(33) of 2020 on the road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030. A World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day would help international health communities to overcome such diseases. The Secretariat’s proposal was not appropriate since, although already celebrated, the day should be made official. The call for a World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day was aimed at aligning partners, underlining the urgent need for political and financial commitment, and raising public awareness to strengthen sustainable advocacy. He called for the adoption of the draft decision on World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day.

The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA said that engagement with non-State actors was essential to WHO’s work. Their meaningful participation in the Organization’s governing bodies, in parallel with greater efficiency in the governance process, should be ensured. The participation of non-State actors, including the private sector, must be allowed in a transparent and accountable manner. The proposed approach for non-State actor involvement, including testing it ahead of the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly, was welcome. She supported the proposal for the development of criteria to establish world health days and requested the Secretariat to continue consultations to that end during the intersessional period. She expressed support for the draft decision on World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day and the draft decision on governance relating to sunseting reporting requirements.

The representative of AUSTRALIA said that she supported the draft decision on sunseting reporting requirements. She welcomed the proposal to link world health days to WHO’s Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 and to consult with Member States on criteria for the establishment of new world health days. The significance of non-State actor involvement in the work of the Organization had been highlighted by the response to the pandemic. While she supported the principle of an informal meeting with non-State actors, the proposed format for trialling it was ambitious, given the crowded intersessional agenda in 2021. She suggested that the number of meetings proposed should be reviewed and that non-State actors should have an opportunity to provide reflections on technical areas well in advance of governing body meetings; the Secretariat should revise technical guidance and governing body papers in response to contributions from non-State actors; Member States and non-State actors should be informed of whether input from non-State actors had been applied; and side events for the proposed informal meeting should be limited so close to the Health Assembly. She appreciated efforts to consider all time zones when scheduling virtual meetings, as the timing of governing body meetings was often a challenge in the Western Pacific Region.

The representative of the UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND said that she supported efforts to clarify the process for the establishment of world health days and the associated costs and benefits. She expressed support for sunseting reporting requirements and the criteria set out for areas exempt from sunseting. The current pandemic had highlighted the need to work with all relevant partners to achieve ambitious health goals. She therefore supported the proposed trial informal meeting with non-State actors prior to the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly, in order to test the most appropriate timing to enable genuine influencing of Member States’ positions, taking into account the need for timely availability of documents. She supported the introduction of non-State actor constituency statements, underlining the importance of full consultation with non-State actors in establishing new mechanisms.

The representative of INDONESIA welcomed the proposal to recognize 30 January as World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day and urged all stakeholders to strengthen their capacities in that regard. The marking of such a day must ensure the achievement of its inherent goals, including by promoting technical and political efforts. Guidance or a specific mechanism should be introduced for proposals for new world health days. In the future, world health days could be linked to the general programme of

work to enable the Organization to, inter alia, determine action for advocacy and communication. She wished to be added to the list of sponsors of the draft decision on World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day.

The representative of CHINA said that she supported the draft decision on governance, which would allow more time to be dedicated to substantive discussions on strategic priorities. She welcomed the proposal to hold informal consultations on the establishment of new world health days. Certain details regarding the involvement of non-State actors remained unclear, and information would therefore be appreciated on the scope of the WHO technical units with respect to the meetings with non-State actors; the manner in which the outcomes of those meetings would be communicated and linked to the Health Assembly; and the participation of Member States in those meetings.

The representative of TONGA said that the coronavirus disease pandemic had highlighted the importance of solidarity between Member States and the Secretariat. It was important to present the country-level view; the voices of her Government and the Pacific island States should be heard with respect to WHO reform, as there were specific issues that needed to be addressed. Online meeting platforms should be used to enable delegations without representation in Geneva to attend meetings. Attention should be given to emerging issues and future projected needs to ensure that WHO reform remained relevant and funding was secured.

The representative of AUSTRIA welcomed the proposed trial of virtual informal meetings ahead of the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly. Detailed information on the procedures for those meetings would be appreciated. To ensure meaningful interaction with non-State actors, documentation for the Health Assembly should be finalized in advance of the informal meetings; the meetings should be carefully timed to ensure that all Member States could process the input from non-State actors; and a virtual consultation should be carried out following the trial to gather the views of all involved. The results of that consultation should be included in the report to the 150th session of the Executive Board.

The representative of KENYA, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the African Region, said that, overall, she supported the proposals for sunseting reporting requirements. However, the number of resolutions being compressed into the reporting cycle on maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health was a matter of concern, and the Secretariat should reconsider that aspect to ensure that area received adequate attention. World health days were powerful tools for raising awareness on priority public health issues and she therefore supported the proposal to develop a list of criteria for the establishment of new world health days and review the current ones. Expectations of support from the Secretariat should be identified. Given the need to strengthen collaboration between Member States and non-State actors, she welcomed the proposal to trial an informal meeting with non-State actors prior to the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly, which must nonetheless not be negatively impacted by that temporary arrangement. She looked forward to receiving the report on the trial meeting.

The representative of THAILAND¹ said that, while she welcomed the proposal on sunseting reporting requirements, she was nevertheless concerned about the number of issues included in the consolidated reporting procedure. She supported the proposal regarding the establishment of world health days and the draft decision on World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day. WHO's efforts to foster closer collaboration among stakeholders were appreciated, particularly the virtual informal meetings with non-State actors. Enabling the participation of all remained a challenge, given the differences in

¹ Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

time zones. She asked how the Secretariat intended to link the outcome of those informal meetings with governing body meetings.

The representative of BRAZIL,¹ highlighting the draft decision on World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day, called for action to achieve the goals relating to neglected tropical diseases set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the road map for neglected tropical diseases 2021–2030. World health days helped to generate collective action on pressing public health issues; he urged the Secretariat to convene further consultations with Member States on that issue. While world health days should be closely linked to WHO's mandates and work, blanket criteria, such as potential costs or current levels of public engagement, should be avoided. While the involvement of non-State actors was appreciated, it was not clear how a meeting exclusively for non-State actors and the Secretariat would meet the standards, spirit and purpose of transparent dialogue with the Member States of an intergovernmental organization.

The representative of GERMANY said that the issue of non-State actor involvement had been discussed for some time, as there was general agreement among non-State actors and Member States that the current arrangements were suboptimal and limited meaningful engagement. Frequent and coordinated exchanges between the Director-General and non-State actors were commendable and enabled WHO to fulfil its leading role in global health. Holding a virtual informal forum for non-State actors ahead of the World Health Assembly would ensure transparency and inclusiveness. He supported the notion of group statements, provided that the interaction remained meaningful and that Member States were informed prior to making their own statements to allow them to respond to non-State actors' input. Irrespective of the informal meetings, non-State actors should still attend the Health Assembly, in keeping with current practice.

The representative of JAPAN,¹ applauding the reports on WHO reform, said that he supported sunseting reporting on certain resolutions and the proposals for world health days. While the involvement of non-State actors to promote global health was welcome, it must be approached in a transparent and responsible manner. Informal meetings between non-State actors and both WHO technical units and Member States were important. Given the large number of Member States and non-State actors, however, the Secretariat should start with small-scale plans for meetings.

The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, expressing appreciation of the contributions of non-State actors to the work of the Organization, said that he looked forward to further proposals for improvements from reputable actors. He called on Member States to engage actively in the proposed meetings with non-State actors. Substantive proposals by experts put forward by non-State actors in official relations with WHO should be taken into account in the work of the governing bodies.

The representative of STICHTING HEALTH ACTION INTERNATIONAL, speaking at the invitation of the CHAIR, said that, while he appreciated the proposal for enhanced technical exchanges between non-State actors and WHO governing bodies, the lack of details regarding the process and rules of procedure remained a concern, given diminishing consultation with non-State actors in recent years. Public interest-driven nongovernmental organizations had a legitimate role to play in WHO's governing bodies that was distinct from that of all other entities. The proposed technical exchanges could mask the disappearance of meaningful engagement in other areas. The proposal regarding joint statements presented by constituencies was unworkable, as it was based on a misconception that all non-State actors were the same. Additionally, inviting non-State actors to form constituencies themselves only delivered

¹ Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

WHO of its role as broker and exacerbated conflicts of interest inherent in multi-non-State actor engagement.

The representative of the INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS, speaking at the invitation of the CHAIR, said that there was a troublesome decrease in non-State actor engagement at WHO high-level meetings and the importance of the current proposal should therefore be underscored. She called upon all Member States to ensure more meaningful engagement and dialogue at all high-level meetings. WHO should send out invitations to non-State actors in a timely manner, taking into account that the expertise they contributed was because of, and not despite, their work.

The representative of the UNION FOR INTERNATIONAL CANCER CONTROL, speaking at the invitation of the CHAIR and also on behalf of World Cancer Research Fund International, the World Heart Federation and the World Obesity Federation, said that she welcomed proposals to address non-State actor involvement and use virtual platforms to broaden participation, given the barriers faced by certain actors. Informal discussions must complement and not replace comprehensive online consultations and must not clash with formal preparatory meetings. Holding consultations between non-State actors and WHO technical teams from the outset of document preparation would better support those teams. She asked the Secretariat to clarify the proposed modalities for informal discussions. While she would support the use of constituency statements on a voluntary basis, she requested clear information on related incentives, such as additional time. She opposed the proposal for mandatory statements, which risked excluding marginalized groups. The regional committees should consider adopting similar proposals.

The representative of the EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR MEDICAL ONCOLOGY, speaking at the invitation of the CHAIR, said that non-State actors should contribute their expertise earlier in WHO decision-making processes. Direct interaction between WHO offices and non-State actors would allow for more in-depth exchanges, and this procedure should also be implemented for WHO regional meetings. Informal meetings should complement comprehensive consultations with non-State actors and the formation of constituencies should remain voluntary. She would welcome the earlier dissemination of WHO documents to facilitate the preparation of official non-State actor statements. The opportunity to organize side events both before and during the Health Assembly was appreciated, and she looked forward to further information on arrangements for the virtual meetings.

A representative of GOVERNING BODIES, responding to comments on the report on governance reform, said that work on sunset reporting requirements had stemmed from requests by Member States to manage the agenda in order to promote strategic decision-making and create more opportunities for exchange on agenda items. An end date of six years had subsequently been established for reporting on resolutions and decisions. The report under discussion was a response to the further request from Member States to consider resolutions and decisions that were more than six years old and make recommendations on establishing reporting requirements and streamlining reporting. To that end, a series of meetings had been held with WHO technical teams to consider the development of issues and their reporting requirements. Based on input from Member States, the recommendation was made to return to the governing bodies before the expiration of a reporting period, in order to gather further guidance on reporting going forward. In some instances, adjustments would need to be made to reporting requirements, and strategies and action plans might need to be adapted.

The DIRECTOR (Health and Multilateral Partnerships) said that the proposed virtual informal meetings were, indeed, in addition to other engagements and were aimed at the more meaningful involvement of non-State actors. He recalled that the Director-General had established a regular dialogue with civil society, through meetings held approximately every six weeks with a great number of

representatives of civil society organizations. The informal session with non-State actors would be organized in one series of 3–6 meetings, taking into account internal discussions and the Board’s guidance. He noted the request to reconsider the number of meetings and their timing. Information on arrangements and reporting modalities would be provided; a verbal report was the most likely format for communicating the meetings’ outcomes, as there would be insufficient time to produce a formal document prior to the Health Assembly. While the invitation would be extended to all non-State actors in official relations with WHO and all Member States, the purpose of holding some meetings without Member States was to provide a platform for communication among non-State actors and with the Secretariat, prepare constituency statements and avoid overloading Member States. It would be proposed that the Secretariat should set the agenda for the informal session, in consultation with non-State actors and Member States, as there was no existing mechanism to enable non-State actors to perform that activity alone. Noting the request for virtual consultation following the trial, he said that the feedback would be reported at the 150th session of the Executive Board.

The ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL (Universal Health Coverage/Healthier Populations) said that the Secretariat would organize an intersessional meeting before the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly to discuss criteria for the establishment of world health days.

The DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL said that, regarding the issue of agenda management, the move towards an integrated way of working was evident in the Sustainable Development Goals and the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023. An integrated approach was also central to the WHO transformation agenda and the Organization’s work overall. During the resumed Seventy-third World Health Assembly, in November 2020, the agenda had been organized around the “triple billion” goals, and diverse agenda items had been grouped together in omnibus reports and discussions. That approach had proved advantageous as it had saved time and allowed for more effective and efficient working methods. It had also enabled the Organization to focus on results relating to the Thirteenth General Programme of Work and “triple billion” goals, and to remain accountable by measuring progress based on the associated results framework. The integrated approach had served to address the commonalities of public health areas together. There were therefore justified grounds for adopting such methodology and moving towards omnibus discussions and resolutions, provided that agenda items were grouped together with care.

The Board noted the reports.

The CHAIR took it that the Executive Board wished to adopt the draft decisions on WHO reform: governance, contained in document EB148/33, and on World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day.

The decisions were adopted.¹

Process for the election of the Director-General of the World Health Organization: Item 19.4 of the agenda (documents EB148/38 and EB148/38 Add.1)

The CHAIR drew attention to the draft decision contained in document EB148/38. The financial and administrative implications of adopting the draft decision were set out in document EB148/38 Add.1.

¹ Decisions EB148(9) and EB148(10).

The representative of SLOVAKIA¹ said that her Government was committed to WHO reform. The fair and systematic participation of Member States should be part of the reform process. Her Government had surveyed the practice of Member States in different regions regarding the submission of their candidatures to the WHO governing bodies. That survey had revealed significant regional differences, with only the European Region lacking a coordinated procedure for introducing candidatures within the Region. She expressed appreciation for the establishment of a subgroup on governance of the Standing Committee of the Regional Committee for Europe, aimed at exploring ways to improve the transparency, inclusiveness and predictability of nomination and election procedures.

The representative of INDONESIA, welcoming several proposed measures set out in the Note by the Legal Counsel contained in document EB148/38, said that she supported option 3 regarding the panel discussion modalities at the second candidates' forum, as it would best demonstrate candidates' potential while focusing on the issues of interest to Member States. She looked forward to receiving the cost-benefit analysis and technical evaluation of the optical scanners at the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly. She supported the draft decision.

The representative of SINGAPORE said that it was unlikely that in-person meetings would be held in 2021, owing to the current pandemic. Contingency planning must therefore incorporate the option of virtual meetings, including for prospective candidates' attendance at regional committee sessions and the first candidates' forum. In the event that physical meetings could be held, he supported providing economy-class airline tickets and a per diem for candidates participating in those two forums. He asked the Secretariat to clarify whether it would provide other financial support directly to the candidates and, if so, in which instances.

The representative of GABON, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the African Region, said that the proposals set out in the note were laudable as they sought to increase fairness and transparency in the electoral process for the Director-General, including the proposed measures regarding the leave status of internal candidates. Coverage of travel expenses for candidates participating in the forums ensured the provision of support on an equal footing, and that issue should be addressed by the Health Assembly. The Secretariat should pursue the study on the optical scanners with a view to presenting a report at the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly. Candidates should have the opportunity to speak before the Health Assembly.

The representative of CANADA¹ said that she welcomed efforts to improve the election process for the post of Director-General. She supported the study covering a cost-benefit analysis of optical scanners, the results of which would enable Member States to determine whether their use was in the Organization's best interest. She welcomed the efficient use of time during the current Executive Board and the practice of referring directly to the recommendations of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board.

The representative of FRANCE¹ said that, if there was consensus as to the need for a study on the optical scanners, that was noted, even though the study on the optical scanners appeared to have attracted little interest, particularly in relation to the costs and risks involved, and it would be preferable for votes to continue to be counted by tellers. He requested detailed information on the impact of the provision of financial support for candidates participating in the forums. He asked when the Secretariat would submit proposals regarding the modalities for the interactive discussions with candidates at the second candidates' forum.

¹ Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

The LEGAL COUNSEL, thanking Member States for their feedback, said that, while the overall format of the first candidates' forum had been determined by the Health Assembly, the specific modalities would be decided by the Executive Board in May 2021. Responding to a question from the representative of France, he said that, further to the feedback provided by Member States at the current session, the Secretariat would submit a proposal on the modalities of the second candidates' forum – for which there was no precedent and which would be more interactive – to the Board in January 2022. Responding to the issues raised by the representative of Singapore, he said that, while there was currently no firm proposal concerning virtual arrangements for the forthcoming meetings, as it would depend on the situation at the time, contingency planning would consider the implications of such arrangements for election activities. He also said that, in addition to the financial support provided to the candidates to enable them to participate in the candidates' forums, they received additional financial support for their attendance at the interviews by both the Executive Board and the Health Assembly. The financial implications of the draft decision covered the cost of financial support for candidates to attend the two candidates' forums and the cost of the study on optical scanners.

The representative of FRANCE¹ said that, regarding the modalities of the second candidates' forum, he supported the designation of an external moderator and separate speaking time for candidates during the interactive discussions. He expressed support for options 1 and 3 for the panel discussion modalities, as they both included question and answer sessions. He also supported submitting questions for candidates prior to the forum, drawing the questions by lot and limiting candidates' speaking time.

The VICE-CHAIR, speaking at the request of the CHAIR, said that, in accordance with the financial implications of the draft decision, the total resource requirements to implement the decision were US\$ 0.02 million. That funding was already in the Programme budget 2020–2021 and included the cost of the study on the optical scanners, for which Member States had expressed strong support. Based on the preferences expressed by two representatives for the modalities of the second candidates' forum, option 3 on a question and answer format followed by an open discussion on the subject matter of each question had received the most support.

The Board noted the report and adopted the decision.²

The meeting rose at 12:35.

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¹ Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

² Decision EB148(11).