

Matters emanating from the Agile Member States Task Group on Strengthening WHO's Budgetary, Programmatic and Financing Governance

Report by the Director-General

The Director-General has the honour to transmit to the Executive Board at its 153rd session the reports of the co-facilitators of the Agile Member States Task Group on Strengthening WHO's Budgetary, Programmatic and Financing Governance (Annexes), which have been prepared in line with decision EB152(15) (2023) paragraphs 2(a) to 2(d).

ANNEX 1

PROPOSAL ON A FINANCIAL THRESHOLD FOR ADDITIONAL SCRUTINY OF NEW INITIATIVES/PROGRAMMES

Introduction

1. This proposal identifies, inter alia, a financial threshold for the costs of a new WHO initiative or programme that would be incurred beyond the programme budget, above which that initiative or programme would attract a defined costing process.
2. This proposal is prepared in accordance with paragraph 2(b) of Executive Board decision EB152(15), with reference to Task Group recommendation T1. In the Task Group discussions, Member States expressed concerns about having no/little prior visibility of significant new initiatives of programmes announced by the Director-General or Secretariat in recent years. The proposal introduces greater scrutiny of new initiatives or programmes for which the financial impact is large enough to be considered separately by Member States.

Matters to be defined

3. The **defined costing process** described in paragraph 1 above is to be elaborated by the Secretariat (Department of Planning, Resource Coordination and Performance Monitoring) in January 2024 and submitted to the 154th session of the Executive Board, as requested by Member States in recommendation T1 of the report of the Task Group (document EB152/33). The reference in the recommendation to a “second pass” costing methodology refers to a level of scrutiny greater than what would be applied when initially costing (for example) a resolution.
4. For the purposes of this proposal, an initiative or programme is considered **new** if it is not already costed in the programme budget and if the Director-General or Secretariat:
 - (a) introduces it with a new remit or purpose; and/or
 - (b) proposes to feature in it the establishment of a new facility requiring infrastructure, especially in a new location.
5. A new **initiative or programme** is considered within scope for this proposal if:
 - (a) its notional expected life span is 10 years or more; and
 - (b) its annual budgetary impact is US\$ 10 million or more; or the initial investment upon announcement is US\$ 10 million or more, regardless of the financing source.

Requirements to be imposed on initiatives or programmes within scope

6. Any new initiative or programme falling within the scope of this proposal would be subject to the following:

- (a) it must undergo the defined costing process set out above, which would take place after the initial proposal has been submitted to Member States (and following any further revisions to the proposed initiative);
- (b) the results of that costing would be submitted, in the context of the discussion of the budget (proposed programme budget or budget implementation update, as applicable), to the first World Health Assembly following the announcement of the new initiative or programme, through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee to the World Health Assembly or the Executive Board, whichever body meets first following the announcement;
- (c) together with the costing, details of the new initiative or programme must be reported to the same governing body meeting(s), including:
 - (i) an explanation of its contribution to achieving the General Programme of Work;
 - (ii) the responsible business unit and division; and
 - (iii) an initial proposal for financing the first 10 years;
- (d) it must be listed in the next version or update to the programme budget papers, in a dedicated section that identifies new initiatives and programmes.

Implementation and further context

7. This proposal is intended to give effect to relevant elements of Task Group recommendation T1. If the Task Group's recommendations are adopted by the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly, this proposal would commence implementation at the conclusion of the 154th session of the Executive Board, at which the defined costing process is due to be published.
8. The Chair of the Executive Board could consider inviting Member States to submit any proposals for changes to the parameters set out in this proposal, for the Chair to compile and submit to the 156th session of the Executive Board (representing one year following implementation), for approval. This does not preclude Member States from submitting further changes for approval to future sessions of the Executive Board.
9. The implementation of this proposal is intended to be simple: established by the adoption of the Task Group's recommendations, which themselves request actions to be taken by the Secretariat. This proposal is not intended to introduce changes to the Financial Rules or Regulations unless the Secretariat deems this necessary for implementation.
10. This proposal does not preclude Member States from requesting from the Secretariat further information on significant initiatives or programmes that do not fall within the scope of this proposal.
11. While this proposal's actions are triggered by a financial threshold, Member States maintain a broader expectation of new initiatives or programmes, regardless of whether they fall within the scope of this proposal. Member States expect new activities to make a material and identifiable contribution to the General Programme of Work and the outcomes of the Organization; to be identifiable in the presentation of the programme budget; to have measurable goals, with planned evaluation; to have gone through relevant internal technical, financial and legal assessments; and to be consistent with the aims of WHO sustainable financing.

ANNEX 2

**EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION (DRAFT) ON A TEMPLATE
AND RECOMMENDED TIMELINE FOR PROPOSING RESOLUTIONS
AND DECISIONS¹**

The Executive Board,

PP1. Having established, through decision EB151(1) (2022), an Agile Member States Task Group on strengthening WHO budgetary, programmatic and financing governance, to analyse challenges in governance for transparency, efficiency, accountability and compliance, and to devise recommendations;

PP2. Recognizing the need to address the significant preparatory work by Member States and the Secretariat in the weeks leading up to governing body meetings, and that deadlines for the proposal of new resolutions and decisions to the Executive Board in the current Rules of Procedure can exacerbate demands on Member States and the Secretariat during this period; and

PP3. Noting its decision EB152(15) (2023) to request the Director-General to give effect to those recommendations of the Task Group where actions are proposed ahead of their consideration by the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly,

Decided:

(1) to note that Member States agreed, in developing proposed World Health Assembly resolutions and decisions for consideration by the 154th or the 156th session of the Executive Board, without prejudice to existing Rules of Procedure, which this decision does not change:

(a) to demonstrate their commitment to better governance practices in the lead-up to governing body meetings, by developing any such proposals, in accordance with the timeline set out in Annex 1 below and the deadlines therein;

(b) that, if such proposals miss the deadlines set out in that timeline, the proposing Member State will share the rationale with all Member States via email regarding the urgency of having their proposal considered in the current cycle and the consequences of delaying its consideration until the following governing body cycle;

(c) to be guided by a template, to be prepared by the Secretariat, in preparing the zero draft of such proposals for the Health Assembly;

(2) to request the Director-General, in preparation for the 154th and 156th sessions of the Executive Board, by the end of September 2023 and September 2024, respectively, to:

¹ See also document EB153/4 Add.1 for the financial and administrative implications for the Secretariat of the draft decision.

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- (a) organize the Secretariat's planning and support for Member States, in the development and consideration by Member States of proposed resolutions and/or decisions, in accordance with the timeline set out in Appendix 1 below;
- (b) prepare a template to guide Member States in their preparation of World Health Assembly resolutions and/or decisions and circulate this to Member States in accordance with the timeline set out in the Appendix below;
- (c) develop and maintain a checklist to guide Member States in their preparation of resolutions and/or decisions (including to address duplication and/or synergies with other resolutions or decisions; as well as the applicability of sunset clauses), and also circulate this in accordance with the timeline set out in the Appendix below;
- (3) to request the Director-General to:
- (a) following the 154th session of the Executive Board, and again following the 156th session of the Executive Board, invite Member States to respond to a written questionnaire assessing their experience with the use of the aforementioned templates, timeline and checklist;
- (b) by the end of March 2024, submit the questionnaire results with respect to the 154th session of the Executive Board to Member States for information;
- (c) prepare a report for consideration by the 157th session of the Executive Board that includes the questionnaire results with respect to the 154th and 156th sessions of the Executive Board and prepare a report for consideration by the 158th session of the Executive Board with guidance on the steps required (such as, potentially, changes to the Rules of Procedure) to advance the preparation of Member State draft resolutions and/or draft decisions for consideration by the Executive Board and recommendation to the World Health Assembly;
- (4) to request the Director-General, when addressing the Task Group's recommendations, to develop a project plan, with associated costs for the implementation of digital solutions for governing body services' interactions with Member States, including an option for a searchable online database of WHO resolutions and decisions.

Appendix. Timeline for proposing World Health Assembly resolutions and decisions for consideration by the 154th and 156th sessions of the Executive Board

Actions		Typical/recommended timing	Deadline for completion
0.	Preparatory guidance before Member State actions Secretariat circulates to Member States: timeline; guidance templates for resolutions and decisions; guidance checklist	To align with circulation of draft Executive Board provisional agenda	For 154th session: 1 October 2023 For 156th session: 1 October 2024
1.	Initiation of the process (Member States can commence this at any stage, and as early as they deem necessary to accommodate, inter alia, any planned internal and/or stakeholder consultations) 1.1 Member State(s) decide to introduce a draft Health Assembly resolution or decision 1.2 Lead Member State sponsor to contact the Secretariat to discuss the process and the instrument 1.3 Lead sponsor to contact technical unit to discuss the content, including assessment of potential duplication/synergies	For 154th session: early October 2023 For 156th session: early October 2024	
2.	Concept and zero draft proposal 2.1 Lead sponsor to develop a concept paper (including, inter alia: contribution to the relevant General Programme of Work; potential duplication and/or synergies; consideration of sunseting) and circulate to Member States (recommended ahead of preparation of zero draft) 2.2 Lead sponsor to prepare and submit zero draft text to Secretariat for initial costing estimates	For 154th session: October 2023 For 156th session: October 2024	Trigger deadline 1: For 154th session: 1 November 2023 For 156th session: 2 November 2024
3.	Actions upon trigger deadline: Submission of zero draft text for costing (2.2) will trigger: 3.1 Secretariat to coordinate (with lead sponsors) scheduling, room reservations, technical/logistical support for consultations (Note: Lead sponsors who complete step 2 early may request scheduling etc. at an earlier stage) 3.2 Secretariat is expected to make available to Member States (and/or publish on a secure platform) a complete list of proposed resolutions and decisions meeting the trigger deadline. Similarly, texts meeting the deadline will proceed to consultations and through to governing bodies for consideration		

Actions	Typical/recommended timing	Deadline for completion
<p>4. Consultations among Member States</p> <p>4.1 Secretariat to publish dates for informal consultations on the online informal list of intergovernmental meetings and provide connection details to lead sponsor</p> <p>4.2 Lead sponsor to circulate zero draft text, initial costing and meeting invitations to Member States</p> <p>4.3 Lead sponsor to conduct consultations, supported throughout by the Secretariat (including moderation, on-screen text editing, costing, technical advice and other support, as needed)</p> <p>4.4 Lead sponsor to achieve consensus text and finalize co-sponsors</p>	<p>Aim to complete consultations for 154th session by 8 December 2023</p> <p>Aim to complete consultations for 156th session by 6 December 2024</p>	
<p>5. Submission of text</p> <p>5.1 Lead sponsor (or, if non-Executive Board member, then Executive Board co-sponsor) to submit text to the Secretariat (by email to governanceunit@who.int)</p> <p>5.1.1. Co-sponsors to be confirmed by email to cosponsorship@who.int.</p> <p>Actions upon trigger deadline 2:</p> <p>Submission of consensus text to GBS (5.1) will trigger:</p> <p>5.2 Secretariat to produce a conference paper containing the proposal for consideration in all official languages, as well as the final version of the document, outlining the relevant financial and administrative implications</p>		<p>Trigger deadline 2:</p> <p>For 154th session: 12 January 2024</p> <p>For 156th session: 10 January 2025</p>
<p>Later actions for information:</p>		
<p>6. Consideration by governing bodies</p> <p>6.1 The Executive Board may decide whether to recommend the proposal for adoption to the World Health Assembly, or indicate that further consultations are required</p> <p>6.2 If adopted by the World Health Assembly, Secretariat to reflect financial impact of resolutions and decisions in subsequent update to the programme budget, where applicable</p>	<p>Relevant scheduled governing body meeting</p>	
<p>7. Evaluation and reporting</p> <p>Secretariat reports back to the governing bodies on the implementation (including evaluated performance) of the resolution or decision according to the mandate</p>	<p>3 biennial reports over a 6-year period</p>	

ANNEX 3

PROPOSAL ON REFORM OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE PROGRAMME, BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Introduction

1. This proposal sets out a pathway for Member States to consider reforms to the Executive Board and its Programme, Budget and Administration Committee that consider, inter alia, meeting structure, cadence, agenda management and preparation of reports (prioritization, timing and structure), exploration of need for additional Member State engagement with external auditors, internal auditors and/or the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee beyond standing agenda items as well as proposals for positioning Member States to give strategic guidance based on governing body documents.
2. This proposal is prepared in accordance with paragraph 2(d) of decision EB152(15), referring to Task Group recommendation T3.

Scope

3. In line with the Task Group's recommendation, reforms outlined in this proposal relate only to the Executive Board and Programme, Budget and Administration Committee. However, the elaboration of options should be modular, to leave open the possibility of building upon reforms to apply to other governing bodies.
4. This proposal acknowledges the contemporary and/or parallel reforms being trialled by the Executive Board and the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee respectively, as well as other reforms to the governing bodies set out in the Secretariat Implementation Plan on Reform. It is through the governing bodies themselves, and their office-bearers, that Member States have the authority to embark upon reform, and thus any proposals must work in harmony with other reform activity under the auspices of the Executive Board and the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.
5. Member States recognize the large potential scope of possibilities for governing bodies reform, as evidenced by written and verbal submissions to the Task Group in 2022. In considering a practical and manageable approach that remains faithful to the clear interest of Member States in exploring reform to governing bodies, we acknowledge that change may variously require deliberations among Member States; possible associated changes to WHO Basic Documents (such as the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board) and other governing documentation; and navigating other consultative and governance processes to prioritize, plan, agree, assess and implement any proposed reform. This approach necessarily moderates what can be achieved in the short, medium and long term.

Target principles to underpin approaches to reform

6. The following do not elaborate on specific proposals for reform to the governing bodies, but set out principles that Member States agree should guide prioritization and other decision-making processes in approaching reform.

7. **Strategic guidance.** Proposals should aim to improve the quality and capacity of the governing bodies to advise WHO on governance and technical matters alike, to achieve the Organization's objectives as set out in the general programme of work. This includes building upon (and, where applicable, evaluating) practices already introduced to the Executive Board, such as: the use of guiding questions; posting written statements in advance; and providing guidance and support to new members and officers of the Board and its subcommittees.
8. **Coherence among WHO's governing bodies.** The governing bodies do not operate in isolation. Any changes proposed to them should be considered from a holistic perspective, with the objective of each of those bodies working more effectively themselves, as well as collectively.
9. **WHO current and past practice and United Nations context.** Member States' proposals will seek to address identified difficulties or gaps in the conduct of WHO governing body meetings, as well as learn from previous efforts to introduce and implement reform. They should aim to strengthen the Organization and its role in the global health architecture – and thus be tailored for WHO – but should also be informed by best practice in other United Nations and multilateral institutions.
10. **Member State organization.** The Thirteenth General Programme of Work states that “WHO is and will remain a Member State organization”. Reform proposals in this context aim to preserve, protect and further advance the longstanding objective of Member States' consensus decision making in WHO's governing bodies.
11. **Capacity of Member States and the Secretariat.** Proposals should ensure the most efficient and effective use of the finite resources of Member States and of the Secretariat, including time and money. While Member States accept that the proposals may have a net financial cost (and that decisions will need to be made regarding financing those that are ultimately agreed), they should also aim to address unnecessary duplication. Further, proposals should aim to improve the technical capability and capacity of Member States to participate in and contribute to governing body meetings, including by bearing in mind particular challenges faced by Member States with smaller and/or lower-resourced missions and ministries.
12. **Implementation costs.** Proposals must acknowledge the issues of sustainably financing the Organization, including identified challenges in the resourcing of its enabling functions, which are central to the conduct of the governing bodies. As such, Member States should work with the Secretariat to model the costs of implementation (including assessments about efficiency gains) to inform the design and planning of reform proposals.
13. **Self-accountability and evaluation.** Where relevant, proposals should plan a pilot phase, and all proposals should be evaluated to assess whether the reforms, as designed, achieve their intended effect, before changes are embedded into practice and/or codified in any applicable governing documentation. Proposals should also consider whether to include a longer-term review mechanism after a certain period.
14. **Engagement with non-State actors.** While ensuring that WHO remains a Member State organization, and respecting other target principles relating to cost, time and efficiency savings, proposals should give consideration to how to support and/or complement ongoing efforts to improve the engagement of non-State actors in governing body processes, where appropriate.

Proposed short-term actions for Member States

15. Recognizing the practicalities of the pace of reform in paragraph 5 above, and assuming that the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly endorses the recommendations of the Task Group, Member States propose to continue a role for co-facilitators, in consultation with Member States and the Chairs of the Executive Board and Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, to map out a work plan from June to December 2023, including a timeline, milestones and modalities for the membership to (based on the target principles set out herein) prioritize, plan and agree stepwise reform options for the Executive Board and Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, and report these to the Executive Board at its 154th session through the thirty-ninth meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee in early 2024.

16. In this connection, Member States also propose that this work plan include the Member State actions associated with other recommendations of the Task Group.

ANNEX 4

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION (DRAFT) ON FUTURE WORK

The Executive Board,

PP1. Having considered the report on matters emanating from the Agile Member States Task Group on Strengthening WHO's Budgetary, Programmatic and Financing Governance;

PP2. Acknowledging decision EB152(15) (2023), in particular the request to the Director-General in paragraphs 1(a) through 1(i), and looking forward to receiving the relevant reports at the 154th session of the Executive Board through the thirty-ninth meeting of the Programme Budget and Administration Committee,

Decided:

(1) to welcome the proposals relating to the identification of a financial threshold for additional scrutiny of new initiatives/programmes as well as the reform of the Executive Board and the Programme Budget and Administration Committee;

(2) to note the need for informal consultations with Member States to finalize the proposals identified under paragraph (1) above as well as those requested in paragraph 2(a) of decision EB152(15) for a draft decision to decide on a contemporary acceptable lead time for publication of reports in all official languages ahead of meetings of the governing bodies;

(3) to request the former co-facilitators of the Task Group, as appropriate/where available, to continue informal consultations referred to in paragraphs (1) and (2) of this decision with Member States and provide a report to the 154th session of the Executive Board, through the thirty-ninth meeting of the Programme Budget and Administration Committee.

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