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

1. The thirty-ninth meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee was held in Geneva from 16 to 19 January 2024 and was chaired by Mr Feng Yong (China).¹ The Chair recalled that there had been two informal meetings of the members of the Committee since the thirty-eighth meeting in preparation for the new approach of the Committee involving more in-depth and inclusive discussions.

2. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO, outlined progress made and the challenges facing the Organization and stressed the need to set progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals back on track. The detailed discussion of the draft fourteenth general programme of work, 2025–2028 (GPW 14) and the lessons learnt through the evaluation of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 13) for the period 2019–2023 would help to ensure that GPW 14 was finalized by the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly.

3. The Committee adopted its agenda² with the deletion of item 3.13, Amendments to the Financial Regulations and Financial Rules, and agreed its programme and methods of work.

Agenda item 2. Matters for information or action by the Committee

2.1 Report of the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee (Document EBPBAC39/2)

4. The Chair of the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee introduced the Advisory Committee's report, highlighting the main sections and relevant recommendations, including in the areas of risk management, the Business Management System, the prevention and response to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PRSEAH), internal and external audit, evaluation, security and the handling of potential allegations against the Director, Internal Oversight Services. In addition, it provided some highlights from the Advisory Committee's visit to the WHO African Region and some of its country offices (Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa), commending the Regional Director for her collaboration and preparation and reminding the Committee of the health, economic and political challenges the Region faced.

5. The Programme, Budget and Administration Committee expressed appreciation and gratitude to the Advisory Committee for its report and for providing an independent view of the Organization. The Committee strongly supported the recommendations presented in the report and expressed its appreciation for the high implementation rate of past recommendations (90%). It further stressed that

¹ The list of participants is available in document EBPBAC39/DIV./1.

² Document EBPBAC39/1 Rev.1.

the Advisory Committee's work was essential in building confidence and trust towards the Organization among Member States and donors.

6. In this regard, the Committee would welcome greater interaction with the Advisory Committee, through intersessional briefings with Member States.

7. The Committee welcomed the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Secretariat work on a strategy to move to a higher level in the maturity model for risk management and requested that a plan be prepared. In relation to this, the Secretariat explained that work was already being conducted in this area and updates would be provided at future meetings.

8. The Committee also welcomed the revision conducted by the Secretariat of the charter of WHO's Office of Internal Oversight Services, and the contribution of the Advisory Committee to ensuring a proper process for handling potential allegations against the Director, Internal Oversight Services, noting the Advisory Committee's satisfaction that the revision was in line with best practice in the United Nations system. The Committee called on the Secretariat to sensitize staff and partners on that revised process, including on how individuals may file complaints. The Committee also expressed appreciation for both the call for enhanced and innovative approaches to resource mobilization and the collaboration of the Advisory Committee with the Joint Inspection Unit.

9. The Committee acknowledged the valuable insights provided by the visits of the Advisory Committee to the WHO Regional Office for Africa and the country offices in Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa.

10. As to investigations, the Committee supported the Advisory Committee's request for an analysis of the root causes of the high number of investigations of misconduct allegations and the large proportion of unsubstantiated cases.

11. With regard to the perceived deterioration of internal controls reported in the document, the Secretariat emphasized that the conclusions were based on partial data available in September 2023 and that the analysis of the year-end data, currently under way, provided a much more favourable picture. An update would be presented to the Committee in the coming meetings.

12. Responding to comments on the Business Management System, the Secretariat assured the Committee that it was committed to continuing work on the design of the future business processes to ensure optimization.

13. Finally, the Chair gave the floor to the Regional Director for Africa, who thanked the Advisory Committee for its visit and the constructive, informative and frank discussions and observations. She further confirmed the regional engagement to continue working on risk management, resource mobilization and PRSEAH, while highlighting the remaining challenges, in particular progressing towards gender parity at Country Representative level and creating conditions to recruit and retain staff, especially young women, and to provide career pathways. A solution was being sought through a partnership with the United Nations Volunteers programme.

14. Responding to comments about the importance of communicating the achievements of the Organization, including successes in the African Region, the Secretariat agreed that it was an area to be enhanced.

The Committee noted the report of the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee. It further proposed, as guidance for the Secretariat’s implementation of existing mandates, that the Secretariat should continue its work on implementing the recommendations in the Advisory Committee’s report.

The Committee requested the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee to provide more regular briefings to the Member States in preparation for the discussions at meetings of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.

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

3.1. Financing and implementation of the Programme budget 2022–2023 and outlook on financing of the Programme budget 2024–2025 (Document EB154/27)

15. The Secretariat presented the status of financing and implementation of the Programme budget 2022–2023. Based on the preliminary data available as at 31 December 2023, overall financing was US\$ 8.4 billion for the biennium. Country-level allocations had increased to 58% of all types of funds, reflecting the Secretariat’s ongoing commitment to increasing impact at country level. Overall implementation stood at US\$ 7.3 billion, but funding unpredictability (for example, US\$ 1.1 billion had been received in the last six months of the biennium 2022–2023) made it difficult to achieve higher implementation rates. At the same time, the fact that WHO remained reliant on a small number of donors was a continued source of concern.

16. The base budget segment was 88% funded, a strong result in view of the budget increase approved by Member States in 2022. At the same time, pockets of poverty remained, in some cases even within seemingly over-funded outcomes. Flexible funding was not sufficient to ensure even levels of funding across all outcomes and major offices. There had been a marked improvement in financing of all major offices over the last three bienniums.

17. The Secretariat also provided an overview of financing of the Programme budget 2024–2025, which currently stood at 74% overall (67% for the base budget segment). However, given the level of approved assessed contributions, the base budget reliance on voluntary contributions would be 77%. Nevertheless, the Secretariat confirmed its commitment to funding the high priority outputs of the Programme budget 2024–2025 to the extent that the financing of the Programme budget would allow it.

18. The Committee expressed appreciation for the report, which, while concise, contained much key information. It also expressed appreciation for the enhanced reporting transparency and periodicity, and for the complementary details made available on the WHO programme budget web portal. It praised the positive trend towards allocating more funding at country level and encouraged the Secretariat to pursue and even accelerate its efforts for the equitable allocation of resources to address gaps across the three levels, focusing on high priority outputs at country level, while preserving the normative functions of the Organization.

19. At the same time, the Committee expressed concern about underfunded areas, especially under strategic priority 3 (One billion more people enjoying better health and well-being), and about the uneven distribution of funds across major offices. The Committee also expressed concern about the continuing high level of earmarked funding and called on Member States and partners to ensure that the Organization obtains more predictable, flexible and sustainable funding. In that respect, it was hoped that the upcoming WHO investment round would have a positive impact.

20. Numerous Member States commended the Secretariat's efforts to improve management, transparency and accountability. They invited the Secretariat to explore the possibility of reallocating resources during the biennium in order to help cover needs in specific areas, such as noncommunicable diseases and neglected tropical diseases, and to ensure that funding was available for health emergencies. They emphasized the importance of mobilizing more predictable and flexible funds as foreseen in the investment round, including through cooperation with strategic partners.

21. In reply to Committee members' questions and comments, the Secretariat explained that the lower implementation rate of the special programmes segment was related to the fact that the UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction had received substantially less funding than originally anticipated.

22. The Secretariat also explained, regarding the uneven distribution of funding to the Region of the Americas, that the level of funding of that region cannot be compared with the others as the former only shows the WHO component of the funding (i.e. flexible funding and voluntary contributions raised by WHO for PAHO) and not the voluntary contributions raised by PAHO. In addition, over 80% of the current allocation of funds to the Region of the Americas consists of flexible funds. Therefore, increasing flexible funding in WHO would also improve allocations to the Region.

23. More broadly, in relation to the measures being taken to address the uneven distribution of funding across major offices, the Secretariat highlighted the role of the Resource Allocation Committee mechanism to improve the equitable allocation of resources, drawing on the information contained in the heat map for guidance.

24. Regarding the impact of the increase in assessed contributions on the heat map, the Secretariat said that key performance indicators had been agreed earlier with Member States and are presented on the digital portal of the Programme budget 2024–2025. One of the indicators directly addresses the issue of "greening the heat map".

25. Finally, in response to some questions raised by the Committee, the Secretariat explained that the WHO programme budget web portal contained detailed information, including on expenditures updated on a monthly basis, and that document length was limited under the ongoing reform process. It offered to provide analyses of certain categories of spending over time, perhaps at intersessional meetings, and further improve data analyses so that Member States could obtain a better understanding of their nature and provide guidance on their evolution.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the report. It further proposed, as guidance for the Secretariat's implementation of existing mandates, that the Secretariat should pursue its efforts to improve the persistent uneven financing across programmes, major offices and levels of the Organization.

3.2. Draft fourteenth general programme of work (Documents EB154/28 and EB154/INF./1)

26. The Chair introduced the item, the aim of which was to review the draft GPW 14 and provide guidance on its finalization in advance of the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly. The moderator, Mr Björn Kümmel (Germany), outlined the approach of the 'deep dive' as explained in the Concept Note that had been circulated previously with its guiding questions. The discussion would be organized into two thematic discussions: (1) overview and focus on strategic objectives, outcomes, the role of

WHO, and measuring joint results; and (2) WHO-specific results and contributions (outputs) and optimizing WHO performance for the period 2025–2028.

Overview and focus on strategic objectives, outcomes, the role of WHO and measuring joint results

27. Secretariat presentations covered the summary of the independent evaluation of (GPW 13) for the period 2019–2023, the four-part structure of the draft GPW 14 and related documents, how the Secretariat would support Member States and partners, and the ongoing work to update the results framework.

28. The Committee welcomed the presentations and appreciated the extensive consultative process for the development of the draft GPW 14, which was largely on track. It noted that the draft text set a global agenda that was aligned with the trends and challenges affecting health and well-being in an increasingly complex world. The Committee welcomed: the focus on broader engagement with health actors, including those outside the health sector, in the service of advancing WHO's core mission of health for all, while safeguarding WHO's core values; and on enhancing WHO capacity at regional and country levels. It concurred with the overarching goal for GPW 14 and appreciated the direction of the strategic objectives and outcomes and WHO's theory of change.

29. The Committee highlighted the importance of linking outputs and outcomes in a consistent way in the results framework. The need for outputs and intermediate outcomes to measure and monitor the Secretariat's performance was emphasized. The Committee agreed that WHO needed to focus on its strengths and unique value added, in particular its normative and technical role.

30. The Committee appreciated that the recommendations of the evaluation of GPW 13 had been taken into account. In consultation with Member States, the GPW 14 results framework should be further updated with outcome indicators, baselines and targets. The Committee urged the Secretariat to ensure horizontal ways of working and to ensure that the final version of GPW 14 reflects the need for programme budgets and resource mobilization efforts to be better aligned with the priorities as set by Member States and as reflected in the subsequent programme budget's costing. Similarly, it urged the Secretariat, through programme budget development and implementation cycles, to ensure better alignment and transparency of human and financial resources at three levels of the Organization in respect of the priorities and programmes set.

31. The Committee regretted the late delivery of documents and in particular translations, and the Secretariat committed to improve on this going forward.

32. The Secretariat explained that the consultative process on the draft GPW 14 would continue through March, particularly to finalize the ongoing refinements to strategic objectives, the major outcomes and impact measurement, reflecting the priorities of Member States and taking into account ease of implementation and measurement so as not to place an excessive additional burden on Member States. It recognized the value of using indicators for which information could be captured from existing sources. It reaffirmed that outputs and "intermediate outcomes" to measure the Secretariat's performance were under development. The Secretariat invited written comments on the draft GPW 14 by 6 February 2024, with a revised draft to be issued in mid-March.

WHO-specific results and contributions (outputs) and optimizing performance in 2025–2028

33. The Secretariat presented the ongoing work to develop indicative outputs and the indicative financial envelope and to implement WHO's transformation agenda and strengthen WHO's core capacities at the country level.

34. The Committee commended the approach taken to develop and disseminate the indicative outputs and asked for them to be further refined, in particular by ensuring that their formulation reflect WHO's added value and unique contribution. Outputs for WHO's cross-cutting technical, administrative, oversight and managerial functions should also be developed and linked to outcomes (potentially referred to as "intermediate outcomes"). Careful consideration should be given to the number of outcome indicators, taking into account recommendations from the GPW 13 evaluation.

35. The Committee noted the importance of clearly defining in the results framework the efforts to optimize WHO's performance over the period 2025–2028 in order to facilitate the Committee's monitoring and evaluating of the Secretariat's contribution to the draft GPW 14. The Committee welcomed work on measurable impact in countries on the delivery approach to support prioritization, planning, resource management and accountability.

36. The Committee appreciated the ongoing work to transform the Organization and welcomed the efforts to strengthen WHO's core capacities and presence at country level. Such work should be clearly linked to activities aimed at strengthening regional capacities and WHO's normative role.

37. The Committee welcomed the efforts taken to prepare the indicative financial envelope for the draft GPW 14 and expressed support for the proposed approach for refining its provisions in advance of the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly, in consultation with Member States.

38. The Secretariat welcomed the extensive feedback provided and confirmed that it would continue its consultations with Member States to further refine the outcomes, indicative outputs and financial envelope for the draft GPW 14 in advance of the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the draft fourteenth general programme of work, 2025–2028. It further proposed, as guidance for the Secretariat's implementation of existing mandates, that the Secretariat should:

(a) develop indicative outputs for the Secretariat's cross-cutting technical, administrative, oversight and managerial functions and incorporate the outcomes for Secretariat performance (referred to as 'intermediate outcomes') into the results framework as a basis for measuring and monitoring Secretariat accountability;

(b) further refine its proposed indicative outputs, and enunciate the linkage between these and the outcomes, including intermediate outcomes for the Secretariat, in the draft GPW 14 and results framework;

(c) continue work on updating the results framework and theory of change, particularly the outcome indicators, in consultation with Member States and on integrating the indicators into the draft GPW 14;

(d) continue to engage with Member States on the further evolution of the indicative budget envelope for the draft GPW 14 in advance of the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly;

(e) further clarify how recommendations from the independent evaluation of GPW 13 are addressed in the draft GPW 14.

3.3 Sustainable financing: WHO investment round (Documents EB154/29 Rev.1 and EB154/29 Rev.1 Add.1)

39. The Secretariat introduced the report and welcomed the active engagement of, and feedback provided by, Member States throughout the consultation process, which had guided the Secretariat in drafting the investment round plan. The WHO investment round is a key step towards sustainable financing of the GPW 14.

40. The Committee appreciated the consultation process that had led to the proposals made in the report contained in document EB154/29 Rev.1, and commended the work of the Secretariat in addressing and incorporating issues raised and suggestions made by Member States. The elements of the investment round plan outlined in the report garnered the broad support of the Committee. The Committee welcomed the investment round as an opportunity for Member States and other donors to improve WHO's sustainable, flexible, timely and predictable funding, with all types of contributions counted. The Committee anticipated that the investment round would strengthen collaboration with contributors, broaden the donor base and reduce the pockets of poverty. The Committee requested the Secretariat to incentivize and promote flexible funding and explore innovative options to broaden the donor base, including with non-traditional donors and non-State actors, while avoiding conflicts of interest. The Committee noted that a successful investment round would support the implementation of WHO's mandate, particularly at country level.

41. The Committee supported the next steps identified in the report. The Secretariat should continue to consult and update Member States, including on the innovative modalities, real cost and efficiencies, as well as risk management, of the investment round as they further develop. Continued Member State engagement on the financial terms that facilitate flexible contributions was highlighted, namely the modification of the definition of thematic flexible funding, improvement of the allocation process through the Resource Allocation Committee, and harmonized result reporting. The Committee underlined the importance of the investment case, which should align closely with the GPW 14 results framework and its outputs, outline the unique and added value of WHO and highlight its achievements and challenges in the regions in order to support clear messaging and communication for the investment round.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the report contained in document EB154/29 Rev.1 and adopt the draft decision contained therein. It further proposed, as guidance for the Secretariat's implementation of existing mandates, that the Secretariat should:

(a) continue to work with Member States to prepare the investment round, including the development of the investment case, and to build political momentum;

(b) provide regular updates, including on innovative modalities and planned events in the build up to the investment round, as well as additional transparency and information on the operations and decision-making of the Resource Allocation Committee;

(c) include, in its report on the outcome of the investment round, information on the resources mobilized, costs incurred and efficiencies gained.

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

Outcome of Agile Member States Task Group informal consultations with Member States (Documents EB154/34, EB154/34 Add.1, EB154/34 Add.2, EB154/34 Add.4 Rev.1 and EB154/35)

42. The former co-facilitators of the Agile Member States Task Group on Strengthening WHO's Budgetary, Programmatic and Financing Governance provided an overview of the outcome of informal consultations with Member States on the implementation of the Task Group's recommendations T1, T3, T5 and T6,¹ as well as on the process of handling and investigating potential allegations against WHO Directors-General pursuant to decision EB153(1) (2023).

43. The Committee thanked the co-facilitators for their efforts and expressed support for the proposal going forward to establish an inclusive informal model for discussions on ongoing Member State-led governance reform, following the conclusion of the mandate of the former Agile Member States Task Group and the tasking of its former co-facilitators. It further supported the proposal to convene a first informal meeting on Member State-led governance reform, with a view to developing a workplan for tracking the achievement of, and/or implementing, the remaining Task Group recommendations, and reporting progress to the Executive Board at its 156th session. As part of those informal consultations, it would be critical to identify ways of preventing duplication of effort and increasing efficiency among the governing bodies.

44. The Committee welcomed the proposed methodology for costing new initiatives and programmes developed by the Secretariat, noting that the implementation of that additional transparency measure would be sufficient to satisfy the remaining tasks set out in recommendation T1. It also agreed with the parameters on improving transparency in the creation and filling of senior-level positions under recommendation T5 and stressed the importance of ensuring gender parity and geographical representation in that regard. The Committee welcomed the Secretariat's report on follow-up to decision WHA69(8) (2016), operative paragraph (10), and noted that the approach described and commitments included in the report achieve the transparency that was sought in recommendation T5.

45. The Committee supported the assessment that the broad raft of measures taken to strengthen Member State consultation on programme budget prioritization and resource allocation were sufficient to satisfy the transparency request raised in recommendation T6.

46. In respect of the task relating to a process for handling and investigating potential allegations against WHO Directors-General, the Committee agreed with the former co-facilitators' proposed approach to addressing the remaining areas of divergence among Member States previously described in the report of the Independent Expert Oversight and Advisory Committee submitted to the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee at its thirty-eighth meeting.² Given the past two years of work on this issue and the few remaining divergent issues, the Committee remained optimistic that consensus could be reached on the fundamentals underpinning those areas of divergence and that the necessary amendments to finalize the process for handling and investigating potential allegations against WHO Directors-General could be made for Member State consideration at the Seventy-seventh World Health

¹ See document EB152/33, Appendix.

² Document EBPBAC38/2, Annex, paragraph 53.

Assembly, through the fortieth meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, on behalf of the Executive Board.

Secretariat remit reforms (Documents EB154/32, EB154/33, EB154/33 Add.1, EB154/33 Add.2, EB154/33 Add.3 Rev.1 and EB154/34 Add.4 Rev.1)

47. The Secretariat provided an overview of: progress to date on its implementation plan on reform; its efforts to strengthen the Organization's budgetary, programmatic and financing governance; its proposals for improving the effectiveness of the WHO governing bodies; its plan to implement digital solutions for interactions between the Secretariat and Member States on matters related to the governing bodies; and the cost recovery mechanisms applicable to voluntary contributions.

48. The Committee commended the Secretariat's ongoing reform implementation efforts and the progress made to date. It noted the Secretariat's current 70% implementation rate for the implementation plan on reform and the ongoing efforts to close the remaining 29 actions, noting also that closure for many of the open recommendations is dependent on Member States' decisions and/or related action to close remaining Task Group recommendations. The Committee acknowledged that some actions might take longer and be more costly to implement. It asked the Secretariat to continue reporting on progress on the matter as described in document EB152/4. In response to the Secretariat's presentation of risks and challenges for implementing reforms, notably the need for additional resources to support the expanded workload, the Committee suggested that the Secretariat consider drawing up a financing plan for the enabling functions to be submitted to the governing bodies.

49. The Committee again stressed the importance of governance reforms and expressed interest in the proposals made by the Secretariat to improve the effectiveness of the WHO governing bodies, including those addressing the value chain in the production of reports for governing body meetings. The Committee requested that those proposals be further discussed by Member States, as stated in the draft decision contained in document EB154/34 Add.4 Rev.1.

50. The Committee expressed support for the digital solutions outlined in document EB154/33 Add.2 and requested the Secretariat to consult with Member States when developing the event registration and the speaker management system, noting that event registration and speaker management fall outside the scope of the project plan outlined in the document. It expressed appreciation for the information provided on cost recovery mechanisms for voluntary contributions and requested that the recommendations and actions in document EB154/33 Add.3 Rev 1 be implemented.

51. In response to the proposal by some Committee members that progress on the Secretariat's implementation plan on reform should be tracked using high-level indicators, the Secretariat suggested that discussion of specific indicators proposed by Member States could be considered and reported at the fortieth meeting of the Committee.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the reports and adopt the two draft decisions, contained in documents EB154/34 and EB154/34 Add.4 Rev.1, together with the draft decision as amended, contained in document EB154/33 Add.3 Rev.1.

3.5 Prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (Document EB154/30)

52. The Secretariat introduced the report, pointing to progress that had been made, and acknowledging that challenges remained, including that of promoting a culture of prevention and response to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PRSEAH). The overarching policy framework

was in place, supplemented by the accountability framework for preventing and responding to sexual misconduct. The Secretariat required guidance in two areas. First, the Organization could only do so much on its own; it was essential to identify responsibilities particular to Member States, and for them to share accountability in those areas. Secondly, there was a need to ensure sustainable funding for PRSEAH action, especially in health emergencies. Victim/survivor assistance also required further consideration.

53. The Committee welcomed the substantial progress made by WHO, as set out in the report, noting that the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee agreed with this appreciation. The Committee recognized the Secretariat's strong efforts to proceed as transparently as possible and noted the information provided by it on the evaluation surveys under way, including the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network and United Nations Joint Inspection Unit reports that would be made available once the Secretariat had received them. It acknowledged the information provided on the case files related to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse during the 10th Ebola virus disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and requested further details on those files. It endorsed the organizational stance of zero tolerance of sexual misconduct, and WHO's victim- and survivor-centred approach.

54. The Committee noted the remaining challenges and encouraged the Secretariat to continue to focus on PRSEAH work. It highlighted the need to urgently consider developing and promoting new and innovative modalities for training and context-, culture- and behaviour-related tools and programmes in this field.

55. The Committee recognized and strongly supported the need for sustainable funding of all PRSEAH activities in all operations especially in health emergencies, and requested the Secretariat to propose additional options for such funding. In that connection, it observed that the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee had encouraged the Secretariat to explore ways of drawing on non-core funding sources and to consider prevention activities as a direct cost of implementing technical programmes, especially emergency programmes. The Secretariat confirmed that the authority exists to adjust the cost recovery mechanism as needed, noting that it will begin a review of direct cost charges in the near future, which will likely add PRSEAH as a direct cost.

56. The Committee requested the Secretariat to provide more information in this regard and to propose further options for such funding. It highlighted the need to continue work on culture change and urged the Secretariat to include programmatic and operational activities that address all forms of misconduct, including abusive behaviour as well as fraud and corruption.

57. The Director-General thanked the Committee for its endorsement of WHO's approach to this issue. The Organization was going above and beyond expectations, by taking proactive, not simply passive action. It actively sought out victims/survivors in need of support, and provided that support in the form of capacity building to allow victims/survivors to overcome their trauma. WHO was committed to ensuring proper funding from existing sources.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the report. It further proposed, as guidance for the Secretariat's implementation of existing mandates, that the Secretariat should:

(a) continue its strong focus on the prevention and response to sexual misconduct by the WHO workforce and its collaboration with the United Nations and other partners and Member States;

- (b) **implement the remaining PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) audit recommendations;**
- (c) **continue root cause analysis, policy development and policy impact monitoring to reinforce prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, including for children and adolescents;**
- (d) **provide an update on the investigative process and outcome data for all investigations related to the 10th Ebola virus disease epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo relating to WHO in the next iteration of the annual report of the Internal Auditor;**
- (e) **take forward organizational culture change and continue work on other forms of misconduct in the internal working environment;**
- (f) **further improve the sexual misconduct end-to-end management process and the presentation of sexual misconduct case reporting;**
- (g) **propose options for the funding and integration of safeguarding from sexual misconduct in health emergency operations;**
- (h) **elaborate proposals on how joint accountability of the Secretariat and Member States for safeguarding from sexual misconduct in WHO-led operations can be achieved;**
- (i) **pursue a comprehensive stocktaking review no later than January 2025 to assess whether the key actions and reforms contained in the three-year strategy have led to the intended results for WHO's accountability systems and culture, in line with the prior recommendation of the thirty-eighth meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administrative Committee.**

3.6 Evaluation: update and proposed workplan for 2024–2025 (Document EB154/31)

58. The Secretariat introduced the report, pointing out that the workplan for 2024–2025 presented therein was significantly different from previous workplans. It introduced the concept of joint management with regional offices for thematic evaluations, in order to enhance Organization-wide engagement in the evaluation process and function. Thus, a series of thematic evaluations was proposed, to be conducted together with regional offices, technical programmes and interested country offices. The workplan for 2024–2025 was presented with indicative cost estimates. A schematic, long-term evaluation plan over three bienniums was also presented to show the strategic intent to cover main thematic areas towards the end of the GPW 14 implementation.

59. The Committee commended the Secretariat for its work in producing the workplan for 2024–2025 and endorsed efforts made to decentralize the evaluation function by engaging the participation of regional and country offices. It welcomed this new way of working, which would certainly enhance the evaluation function across the three levels of the Organization. It also acknowledged the progress made in 2022–2023, despite the limited human and financial resources available. It supported conducting joint evaluations at country level to gauge the contribution and effectiveness of WHO in respect of national public health agendas and people's well-being. Such evaluations should be conducted more across regions. The Committee also observed that a culture of evaluation was needed to strengthen learning and accountability at WHO. It was a cornerstone in the results-based management cycle and critical for continuous learning.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the report and approve the Organization-wide evaluation workplan for 2024–2025. It further proposed, as guidance for the Secretariat’s implementation of existing mandates, that the Secretariat should:

- (a) engage with Member States to ensure that sufficient resources, including human resources, are allocated to the evaluation function at headquarters and in the regions;
- (b) working closely with Member States, increase the number of evaluations of contributions to individual countries, to the national public health agenda and to the well-being of the population;
- (c) provide information briefings to Member States on the results of evaluations, their management responses and efforts to reinforce the culture of evaluation in the Organization, as required;
- (d) make arrangements to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the Fourteenth General Programme of Work, 2025–2028, by 2027;
- (e) consider including an evaluation of the Secretariat implementation plan on reform, to enhance governance in 2026;
- (f) explore developing a training programme on evaluation with the WHO Academy.

3.7 Engagement with non-State actors

- **Report on the implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors** (Document EB154/36)
- **Non-State actors in official relations with WHO** (Documents EB154/37 and EB154/37 Add.1)

60. The Secretariat introduced the reports, whose focus was the key achievements of implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors, and the outcome of the mandated triennial review of non-State actors in official relations.

61. The Committee welcomed the reports of the Secretariat and the increased engagement with non-State actors, which had a positive impact on the work of the Organization, recognizing that non-State actors had an important role to play in global health and contribute to the work of WHO and public health. Such engagement harnessed cooperation between different stakeholders, including the private and public sectors, to increase quality and satisfaction for users while safeguarding WHO’s core values. The Committee further welcomed the simplification measures to allow for cooperation with non-State actors in emergencies.

62. All new and existing non-State actors in official relations were subject to due diligence and risk assessment, and the Committee suggested that an exit mechanism was required in any instances where the Framework’s principles or provisions were infringed.

63. Continued training and capacity-building were important and the Committee welcomed the preparation of the second edition of the *Handbook for non-State actors on engagement with the World Health Organization* and the development of an eLearning course. The finalization of the two useful tools was awaited keenly. Such tools should be tested and modified as necessary.

64. The Committee inquired about potential obstacles to engagement and sought more information on barriers and opportunities in those regional offices with low levels of cooperation with non-State actors. It repeated requests for a more data-driven report, the time taken from application for admission into official relations to a decision on that request, and the reported increase in workload of the specialized unit in the Secretariat.

65. It further expressed its expectation that non-State actors act in strict conformity with resolutions and decisions of the United Nations General Assembly and the World Health Assembly. Further consultation with Member States and non-State actors to improve participation of the latter in WHO's governing bodies had previously been decided on by the Executive Board.

66. The Secretariat observed that in simplifying the process for engagement in emergencies a certain amount of flexibility was required, while at the same time ensuring strict adherence to the rules, thus mitigating any risks, but that there was a need to capture the advantages of engagement to the maximum benefit of WHO. Such work was undertaken by many staff members at all levels across the Organization. Feedback, in particular about concerns, had been sought from non-State actors and, for instance, the elaboration of the second edition of the *Handbook* had gone through two rounds of consultations with non-State actors. Activities were monitored for adherence to the provisions of the Framework, WHO policies and norms and Health Assembly resolutions. The request for a data-driven report had been noted and a platform is to be established to capture information about all the engagements.

67. The Committee emphasized its trust in the Secretariat and had no issues with the application of the eligibility criteria for admission into official relations with WHO, due diligence and related processes set out for official relations in the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors. With regard to the applications from the two non-State actors mentioned in Action A of document EB154/37, the Committee noted the Secretariat's conclusion that both entities had met the criteria, but given diverging views, no recommendation has been made.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the reports contained in documents EB154/36 and EB154/37 and adopt the draft decision contained in document EB154/37, with the exception of operative paragraph 1(a), on which it made no recommendation; and invites the Executive Board to take a decision on that operative paragraph. It further proposed, as guidance for the Secretariat's implementation of existing mandates, that the Secretariat should:

- (a) continue to work on the implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors at all three levels of the Organization;**
- (b) provide more information on the barriers to engagement of non-State actors at regional level, including data on costs and the number of engagements;**
- (c) include data in the next report to the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee with information on successful collaboration, how feedback was incorporated and the time taken from submission of an application for admission into official relations to a decision;**
- (d) design an exit mechanism for non-State actors in violation of the provisions of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors.**

3.8 Statement by the representative of the WHO staff associations (Document EB154/INF./2)

68. The representative of the WHO staff associations, on behalf of the staff associations of WHO, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the Regional Office for the Americas, the Pan American Health Organization and UNAIDS presented the statement, focusing on transparent methodologies for the remuneration of staff and classification of duty stations, the internal justice system, career development opportunities, staff mobility and safeguarding the well-being of staff.

69. The Committee welcomed the report and, speaking on behalf of all Member States and joined by the Secretariat, it paid tribute to those staff members of WHO and other United Nations entities who had lost their lives recently in duty stations in areas of conflict and offered its condolences.

70. The Committee noted the concerns raised in the statement and emphasized the importance of promoting a safe, healthy and more respectful workplace. It supported the call for establishing a good work–life balance, gender balance and rotation of staff working in hardship duty stations.

71. The Secretariat confirmed the positive and constructive interactions with the staff associations. It further confirmed that attention to the duration of assignment for staff working in hardship duty stations is being addressed, especially in the context of mobility.

72. Responding to comments about mobility, the Secretariat indicated that the first voluntary phase of implementation had been completed, and that further details had been provided in the human resources update.¹

73. With regard to the internal justice system, the Secretariat stressed that it was making great efforts to resolve conflicts through mediation and informal dispute resolution before resort was made to the formal internal justice system, hence the work currently under way to strengthen employee relations services and improve access to legal support, across all levels of the Organization.

74. The Director-General stressed the importance of the workforce for the Organization and mentioned his frequent and cordial interactions with the staff associations, which are an important mechanism for dialogue and discussion of important issues in many areas. He further recalled the many initiatives triggered by the open discussions with staff associations, including the extension of parental leave. He further advocated for mobility as a way to give opportunities to staff, including those living in hardship duty stations and stressed the concept of mandatory managed mobility that would take into account professional specialization, medical, personal and family issues. The Director-General took particular note of the need for legal support for staff, as well as the issue of hardship classification of duty stations that will be brought to the attention of the International Civil Service Commission.

3.9 Report of the Ombudsperson (Documents EB154/INF./3 and EB154/INF./4)

75. The WHO Ombudsperson gave an overview of the report and highlighted the three systemic issues that her Office had identified during 2023 as requiring further consideration: providing greater support to individuals, including managers; promoting continued improvement in performance discussions; and the need for restorative processes.

¹ Document EB154/46.

76. The Committee stressed the importance of the Office of the Ombudsperson in promoting WHO's values of respect, integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination. It expressed appreciation for the work of the Office and supported the focus given in the report to making coaching and mentoring available to support managers, particularly in terms of handling evaluative/performance relationships.

77. The Committee remained in favour of promoting mediation and other forms of informal resolution mechanisms for workplace issues and welcomed the introduction of 360-degree feedback for managers on a developmental basis in that context, which also provided the opportunity for feedback to be given by supervisees. It also suggested that the Ombudsperson prepare for inclusion in future reports data on the number of cases handled via mediation, so Member States can better understand year-to-year trends on staff usage of that mechanism.

78. Acknowledging the need to address the remaining gaps in the protection of whistle-blowers, the Committee noted the recommendation that further discussion should take place among key stakeholders to address that area of concern. In that regard, it welcomed the action that had already been taken to restore a respectful workplace culture for staff members adversely affected by disciplinary processes and to minimize any unintended consequences resulting from those processes.

3.10 Human resources: update (Document EB154/46)

3.11 Report of the International Civil Service Commission (Document EB154/49)

3.12 Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules (Documents EB154/48 Rev. 1 and EB154/48 Add.1 Rev.1)

79. The Secretariat presented a summary of the information contained in documents EB154/46, EB154/48 Rev.1, EB154/48 Add.1 Rev. 1 and EB154/49. Regarding the update on human resources, workforce data showed that good progress had been made in terms of geographical representation and gender parity. In particular, WHO had achieved parity for longer-term appointments, with 50.3% of such appointments being held by women and 49.7% by men, across all staff contract types. While additional attention was required in certain categories, especially at the senior levels, it was highlighted that the five-year trend was positive in all categories. The Secretariat also provided an update on WHO's Global Geographical Mobility Policy and the successful implementation of the first voluntary phase.

80. With regard to the report of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), the Secretariat indicated that no related resolution would be submitted for consideration to the 154th session of the Executive Board, as the United Nations General Assembly had decided to take no action on the report of the ICSC to the General Assembly in December 2023.

81. As for the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules, the amendments proposed in the two draft resolutions contained in document EB154/48 Rev.1 were considered necessary in the light of experience and in the interests of good human resources management.

82. During its discussion of document EB154/46, the Committee commended the work done to enhance staff well-being and mental health, and to prevent sexual misconduct, which were areas of paramount importance. It also welcomed the efforts made to improve geographical representation but suggested that more needed to be done, in particular with regard to unrepresented or underrepresented countries and at P5 level and above. It suggested that future updates on human resources should provide a comparative analysis, by country, of changes in that regard with previous reports. It was suggested to

use the best United Nations system practices in increasing transparency of creation of posts, including through programme budget management.

83. The Committee further expressed its appreciation for the achievement of gender parity overall, but noted that the number of women in Director positions had in fact fallen, notably in the African Region. At the same time, it was reassured to note the work being done to recruit young women professionals, especially in the context of the joint United Nations Volunteers and UN Women Young Women Leaders programme.

84. The Committee expressed support for the WHO staff associations' suggestion to enhance access to dedicated legal support at all levels of the Organization in order to assist staff members with the internal justice system. It also expressed support for the changes made to WHO's Global Geographical Mobility Policy and encouraged the Secretariat to continue to implement it.

85. Committee members were generally understanding of the Organization's work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion that covers a broad range of diverse groups. However, some members expressed concern with the Director-General's report mentioning certain groups and requested consistency with agreed notions of diversity and the use of agreed language that respects the values and positions of all Member States. The Secretariat took note of the concerns.

86. Committee members expressed concern that the Organization had not yet implemented the revised post-adjustment multiplier for the Geneva duty station and asked for information on the Secretariat's plans in that regard. They also requested the Organization to apply all future changes to post-adjustment multipliers and to keep Member States informed about developments in that respect.

87. The Secretariat confirmed its intention to implement the revised post-adjustment multiplier in February 2024, as the next ICSC 12-month post adjustment review in Geneva is expected in mid-February. The Secretariat also confirmed its availability to consider special incentives for staff in hardship locations so as to enhance the Organization's capacity to attract and retain staff. However, this could only be done within the framework established by the ICSC. In this regard, the Secretariat called for the help of Member States to support its efforts to that end in their interactions with the ICSC.

88. In his final remarks, the Director-General confirmed the Organization's commitment to equitable geographical representation and to gender parity, and pointed to the improvement in these dimensions in recent years. He further highlighted that the Global Geographical Mobility Policy would help promote the geographical mix at all three levels of the Organization. Finally, the Director-General reaffirmed his support for the implementation of the revised post-adjustment multiplier in February 2024 to avoid a negative impact on staff.

The Committee recommended that the Executive Board note the reports contained in documents EB154/46 and EB154/49 and adopt the two draft resolutions contained in document EB154/48 Rev.1. It further proposed, as guidance for the Secretariat's implementation of existing mandates, that the Secretariat should:

- (a) continue making every effort to improve geographical representation across all levels of the Organization, especially in posts at P5 level and above;**
- (b) continue working towards gender parity at all levels of the Organization;**

(c) **implement the next revised post-adjustment multiplier for the Geneva duty station with effect as of February 1, 2024, as well as implementing all ICSC-provided post adjustments thereafter and keep Member States informed of relevant developments and Secretariat actions on this matter.**

3.14 Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee: membership renewal
(Document EB154/41)

89. The Committee considered the report outlining the process followed by the Secretariat to operationalize the revised terms of reference of the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee, with a particular focus on proposing transitional measures for the current membership of the Advisory Committee. In addition, the report proposed the appointment of two new members of the Advisory Committee.

The Committee noted the report and recommended that the Executive Board adopt the draft decision contained therein.

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

90. The Committee adopted its report.

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