



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

FIFTY-FIFTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
Provisional agenda item 17

A55/32
23 March 2002

Review of the working methods of the Executive Board

Report by the Secretariat

1. In resolution WHA54.22 (May 2001), the Health Assembly requested the Executive Board to conduct a review of its working methods and those of its subsidiary bodies in order to ensure that they are effective, efficient and transparent, and to ensure improved participation of Member States in its proceedings, including working groups and drafting committees.
2. The resolution also requested the Executive Board to establish an ad hoc open-ended intergovernmental working group to make recommendations to the Executive Board for improvement of its working methods.
3. The Executive Board, at its 109th session, established the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group under the chairmanship of Professor T. Zeltner (Switzerland).¹
4. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group held its first meeting on 16 January 2002, under the chairmanship of Professor Zeltner. On the basis of resolution WHA54.22, the Working Group proposed that its terms of reference should be (1) to conduct a review of the working methods of the Executive Board and those of its subsidiary bodies in order to ensure that they were effective, efficient and transparent, and that participation of Member States in the proceedings of the Board, including working groups and drafting committees, was improved. The review would include the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board in light of the functions of the Board, and interaction between the Board and other organs of WHO; (2) to make recommendations to the Executive Board on the working methods that may need improvement, and to include relevant cost implications; (3) to report on its work at every session of the Executive Board; (4) to prepare draft provisions and other measures for implementing its recommendations and to submit them to the Board for consideration. The Executive Board agreed on the terms of reference.²
5. At the second meeting of the Working Group (21 January 2002), China, Cuba, Egypt, India and Pakistan submitted proposals in order to facilitate discussion on working methods. In a broad-ranging discussion, the main issues considered were methods of work of the Working Group, participation and transparency, and the timetable.

¹ See document EB109/2002/REC/2, summary record of the fifth meeting.

² Decision EB109(2).

6. Concerning the calendar and modalities of work, it was agreed that the Chairman would write to all Member States by the end of January 2002 to solicit views on the issues that should be discussed in the reform process. It was agreed that submissions would be sent to him, care of the Department of Governing Bodies of WHO, and that the deadline for their receipt would be 15 March. They would then be compiled and dispatched in all official languages of WHO by 15 April to the relevant ministries of all Member States and Permanent Missions of those Member States with permanent representation in Geneva.

7. It was also agreed that the third meeting of the Working Group would be held on Friday 10 May 2002 and, if needed, continued on Saturday 11 May. At that meeting, the Working Group would debate on the basis of the submissions received and report to the Executive Board at its 110th session (May 2002). It was also agreed that, following consideration by the Board and taking into account its comments, a drafting process would begin with a view to preparing specific recommendations for the 111th session of the Executive Board in January 2003. The Working Group decided to consider participation in the drafting exercise at its next meeting. It was also understood that the Chairman of the Executive Board would report orally to the Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly on the work of the Working Group.

8. On the issue of participation, it was agreed that, although all Member States should be involved at all stages, it was not realistic to subject the progress of work to the presence of all Member States, in particular those which did not have a permanent mission in Geneva. Alternative means to ensure exchange of information and involvement of all Member States would be explored and utilized. Particular reference was made to the role that regional coordinators could play in this respect. It was also agreed that the regional committees would be informed about the progress of work.

9. On the issue of transparency, it was agreed that all submissions from Member States would be posted upon receipt in their original language, in the two formats commonly used for downloading (PDF and HTML), on a dedicated web site to be established within the WHO web site. It was decided that summary records of the meeting of the Working Group would be prepared and distributed to Member States.

10. At its 109th session, the Executive Board, in discussing the subject of its methods of work, decided to propose to the Health Assembly a resolution on reimbursement of travel expenses for members of the Executive Board.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

11. The Health Assembly is invited to note progress on the review by the Executive Board of its working methods and those of its subsidiary bodies.

12. The Assembly is invited to consider the draft resolution contained in resolution EB109.R7.

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