

Reform of the global internship programme

The Seventy-first World Health Assembly,

Having considered the human resources annual reports of 2015, 2016 and 2017;¹

Recognizing, consistent with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and progress toward the attainment of universal health coverage, the need for effective public health leadership, resilient health systems and strong health workforce capacity;

Guided by the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, outlining the WHO's strategic vision for the period 2019–2023, which commits to, inter alia, promoting greater access to, and equity in, the internship programme;

Affirming the internship programme's goal to build future leaders in public health through professional training and capacity-building opportunities across headquarters, regional and country offices, and the valuable contributions interns make to the Organization;²

Recalling Member States' concerns over the persistent imbalance in geographical participation on the internship programme, due in large part to the absence of financial support for talented future health leaders and insufficient attention paid so far to geographical diversity and gender equity among interns;

Underscoring the commitment of all Member States towards improvements in the WHO reform process across the three levels of the Organization, including balanced geographical participation and gender equity;

Recognizing WHO's efforts and changes to improve the transparency and accessibility of the internship programme and its ambition to implement comprehensive reform,

1. DECIDES that continued improvements to the internship programme be achieved through:

(1) the development of a sustainable and equitable internship programme based on an internship strategy and semi-structured training curriculum for interns to maximize their training experience and reinforce the learning objectives of the programme, which are, inter alia, to build

¹ Documents A69/52, A70/45 and A71/35.

² The WHO e-Manual defines an intern as an individual who is at least 20 years old, enrolled in a university or equivalent institution leading to a formal qualification (graduate or postgraduate). Applicants who have already graduated may also qualify for consideration provided that they apply for an internship within six months after completion of their formal qualification. Interns do not have the status of WHO staff members and cannot represent the Organization in any official capacity.

a diverse pool of future leaders in public health and provide experience in the technical and administrative programmes of WHO;

(2) the strengthening of a transparent, merit-based intern recruitment process that promotes the widest possible geographical participation and gender equity, through objective review of all intern applicants who meet the criteria;

(3) the setting of a target that by 2022, at least 50% of accepted interns on the programme originate from least developed countries and middle-income countries with the objective of achieving balanced participation among WHO regions and gender equity;

(4) the provision by the Secretariat of financial assistance, as soon as possible and no later than 2020, and where applicable, in-kind assistance, including through collaboration with host countries, for all accepted interns without sufficient existing support, at a level set for the duty station, to cover reasonably incurred travel and living expenses for the duration of the internship;

2. URGES Member States, development partners and donors to support WHO in mobilizing the resources necessary for financial sustainability and where applicable in-kind assistance for the internship programme, thereby ensuring that talented future health leaders from all Member States can equally access the programme, irrespective of economic circumstance;

3. INVITES international, regional, national and local stakeholders, to engage in and support the implementation of the actions set out in this resolution;

4. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to take the necessary measures and, in keeping with the aims of broader human resources policy, to operationalize the objectives of this resolution, across all three levels of the Organization, drawing from the best practices of other United Nations agencies and in line with United Nations rules, regulations and relevant resolutions;

(2) to include as part of the human resources annual report, statistics on applicants' and accepted interns' demographic data, including gender and country of origin, as well as information on progress towards the implementation of this resolution;

(3) to submit a report to the Executive Board at its 144th session in January 2019, detailing by which mechanism financial and in-kind support to accepted interns will be provided commensurate with their needs;

(4) to submit a stand-alone report to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly through the Executive Board in 2023, outlining the progress made in achieving the targets set out in this resolution and the future steps planned.

Seventh plenary meeting, 26 May 2018
A71/VR/7

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