

WHO reform processes, including the transformation agenda, and implementation of United Nations development system reform

Report of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board to the Seventy-second World Health Assembly

1. The Committee heard reports on two complementary reform processes, namely, the WHO transformation agenda and the United Nations development system reform.¹
2. With regard to the WHO transformation agenda, the Committee was provided with an update that included: the principles of the transformation agenda and its areas of focus, including the core technical, external relations and business processes – beginning with the programme budget process – that had been prioritized for redesign; the introduction of a new Organization-wide operating model; and ongoing culture change. The operational aspects of transformation would form the basis on which WHO would approach the new budget period.
3. The Committee heard that a recent survey of WHO staff showed that understanding of transformation in the Organization had grown, as had the readiness and willingness of staff to change. The Committee stressed that the transformation process should adequately reflect the views of staff members and that efforts to further engage staff members should be intensified.
4. The Committee expressed its appreciation of WHO's focus on Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) and welcomed the idea of a flexible and agile WHO with stronger, country needs-driven normative work and consistent approaches to standard-setting throughout the Organization.
5. The Director-General informed the Committee that he and senior staff hold regular "open door" sessions at which individual staff members can bring their ideas and voice any concerns. The Committee also noted the Director-General's statement that many of the new ideas that will be implemented in the transformation process have been proposed by staff members.
6. The Committee welcomed the commitment to strengthen WHO's presence and work at country level, and pointed to the importance of ensuring that the Organization continue to align its country-level work with national priorities while keeping in mind the decisions of global and regional governing bodies. The Committee called for a strategic discussion by the governing bodies on WHO's work in countries and on the consequences in terms of accountability to those governing bodies.

¹ See also documents A72/48, A72/49 and A72/INF/4.

7. With regard to United Nations development system reform, the Committee welcomed the report and expressed appreciation of the Secretariat's stated commitment to embracing the reform process in order to achieve not only Sustainable Development Goal 3 but also the full 2030 Agenda. The Committee noted that implementation had begun in January 2019 when 129 Resident Coordinators were put under the direct authority of the United Nations Secretary-General.

8. In response to questions on the impact of the reform on WHO country offices, the Secretariat informed the Committee that WHO's work at country level is strengthened when working with United Nations country teams, especially on multisectoral coordination for health and including the health component in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. While fully participating in the Resident Coordinator system, in order to promote coherence at country level the WHO Representative will retain flexibility and engage directly with host governments and other partners on health matters. WHO will maintain and preserve its normative role in support of countries.

9. In response to questions about the potential role of country offices in the Region of the Americas, the Committee was informed that these offices have usually participated in the United Nations teams at country level, and PAHO/WHO country representatives will be supplied with the same guidance as WHO Representatives on collaboration with the Resident Coordinator system.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

10. The Committee, on behalf of the Executive Board, recommended that the Health Assembly note the reports contained in documents A72/48, A72/49 and A72/INF./4.

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