

Report of the Executive Board on its 145th and 146th sessions

1. The Executive Board held its 145th session on 29 and 30 May 2019 and its 146th session from 3 to 8 February 2020. This report summarizes the main outcomes of the two sessions.

145TH SESSION (29 AND 30 MAY 2019)

2. The Board adopted its **agenda** containing 16 items and subitems, with 17 accompanying documents. It adopted one resolution and seven decisions.

3. The Board agreed to request the Secretariat to undertake further work on the complex matter of **standardization of medical devices nomenclature**, taking account of members' comments and consulting with Member States, and if necessary resubmit the item to the Board for further consideration.

4. Following broad discussions of the **involvement of non-State actors** in governing body sessions as part of the consideration of the **WHO governance reform processes**, the Board approved a proposal for the Secretariat to refine its recommendations through a web-based consultation.

5. In further consideration of **WHO governance reform processes**, the Board requested the Secretariat to update the draft guidelines for Member States to post written statements to the governing bodies on the WHO website. See paragraph 43 for subsequent action by the Board.

6. The Board noted the report of the thirtieth meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee and the annual report on evaluation.

7. The Board considered the report on meetings of three **expert committees** and discussed the range of issues raised by the representative of the **WHO staff associations**, including teleworking, investigation of claims of harassment, and the mobility policy.

8. Although it noted the report on membership of the **Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee**, the Board declined to extend the terms of office of two members of that Advisory Committee (see paragraph 46 below).

9. The report describing major developments in three **WHO-hosted partnerships** was noted, as was a more detailed review of the **European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies**, its contribution to improved health outcomes, the harmonization of its work with the relevant work of WHO, and the WHO Secretariat's interaction with the partnership.

10. **Amendments to the Staff Rules** concerning the effective date of amendments to the Staff Rules, definitions, payments and deductions, annual leave and retirement were confirmed.

11. The Board also appointed members to fill the seven vacant positions on the **Programme, Budget and Administration Committee** and three on the **Foundation Committees**. It also decided to defer action on the Nelson Mandela Prize for Health Promotion, pending possible revision of the award's statutes (see paragraph 46 below).

12. With regard to the request for **Palestine to attend future meetings of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee** of the Executive Board as an observer, the Board asked for a report on the technical and political considerations to be submitted at its next session date so as to enable an informed decision to be made. (See paragraph 48.)

146TH SESSION (3 TO 8 FEBRUARY 2020)

13. The Board adopted its **agenda** containing 50 items and subitems, with 71 accompanying documents. It adopted 10 resolutions and 29 decisions.

14. In the extensive discussion of the report by the Director-General, numerous constructive and positive comments were made.

15. The Board noted the report of the **regional committees**.

PILLAR 1: ONE BILLION MORE PEOPLE BENEFITING FROM UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

16. Two reports on **primary health care** were considered: one presented a draft operational framework, as requested in resolution WHA72.2 (2019), and the other provided an executive summary of a review by the Evaluation Office of 40 years of implementing primary health care at country level. The Board noted both reports. In a decision, the Board emphasized the importance of strengthening health systems as the basis for delivery of primary health care services and requested the Director-General to finalize the draft operational framework for submission to the Seventy-third World Health Assembly.

Follow-up to the high-level meetings of the United Nations General Assembly on health-related issues

17. In their discussion of the report on **universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier world**, Member States were supportive of the work being done and provided guidance. The Board noted the report.

18. Following extensive discussion, two reports on the **political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases** were noted. The reports presented menus of policy options and cost-effective interventions as well as the findings of the consultative process on implementation of the global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol and the way forward. The Board also adopted a decision on accelerating action to reduce the harmful use of alcohol, requesting the Director-General inter alia to develop an action plan (2022–2030) for effective implementation of the global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol as a public health priority as well as to prepare a technical report on the harmful use of alcohol related to cross-border alcohol marketing, advertising and promotional activities.

19. The report on the **global vaccine action plan** was considered and noted. The Board then adopted two decisions. In the first, on **meningitis prevention and control**, it requested the Director-General to finalize the development of a draft global strategy to defeat meningitis by 2030, for submission to the Seventy-third World Health Assembly. Similarly, in the second, on **strengthening global immunization efforts** to leave no one behind, it requested the Director-General to finalize an immunization vision and strategy (“Immunization Agenda 2030”), also to be considered by the Seventy-third World Health Assembly.

20. Having considered and noted the report on accelerating the **elimination of cervical cancer** as a global public health problem, the Board recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly adopt the global strategy and its associated goals and targets for the period 2020–2030. In the relevant resolution the Health Assembly would call also on relevant international organizations and stakeholders to coordinate their efforts and work collaboratively, in conjunction with the Secretariat.

21. The Board noted two reports on **ending tuberculosis**: a progress report on implementing the global strategy and targets for tuberculosis prevention, care and control after 2015; and the draft global strategy for tuberculosis research and innovation. It recommended that the Health Assembly adopt the global strategy, whose strategic objectives included better data sharing and promotion of equitable access to the benefits of research and innovation.

PILLAR 2: ONE BILLION MORE PEOPLE BETTER PROTECTED FROM HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Public health emergencies: preparedness and response

22. The Board engaged in a wide-ranging and thorough discussion of the report of the **Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme** and the report on **WHO’s work in health emergencies**, including the two public health emergencies of international concern: the outbreak of Ebola virus disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the outbreak of COVID-19. An epidemiological update on the latter outbreak was provided to the Board. The two reports were noted. The Board recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly adopt a resolution on strengthening preparedness for health emergencies: implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005). In it, the Health Assembly inter alia urged full compliance with the Regulations and the building of core capacities; called for multisectoral support from all stakeholders and collaboration with the United Nations Secretary-General and relevant United Nations organizations; and requested the Director-General to participate in United Nations operational reviews after major health emergencies and to investigate possible complementary mechanisms for alerting the global community about the severity and/or magnitude of a public health emergency. In his report to the Board, the Director-General had signalled that the current system for determining a public health emergency of international concern was unsuitable for complex emergencies.

23. Although it noted the report on **epilepsy**, the Board decided to request the Director-General to expand the scope of the document for consideration by the Seventy-third World Health Assembly by adding a new section on synergies in addressing the burden of epilepsy and other neurological disorders.

24. After noting the report on **integrated, people-centred eye care, including preventable blindness and impaired vision**, the Board recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly adopt a resolution that urged Member States to implement the recommendations in the *World report on vision* and requested the Director-General to develop additional guidance on interventions and approaches as well as to support the creation of a global research agenda for eye health.

25. After discussing and noting the report on **neglected tropical diseases**, the Board decided to request the development, through a consultative process, of a draft road map for the period 2021–2030 for consideration by the Seventy-third World Health Assembly. The Board also agreed that the Health Assembly would discuss the matter of world health days at that session. After a proposal for a world neglected tropical diseases day was formally withdrawn, the Board asked the Secretariat if a way could be found to include discussion of that proposal by the Health Assembly.

26. The Board noted the report on the **global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation and intellectual property** but reiterated the need to present an implementation plan. It also recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly adopt a decision that urged reinforced implementation of the recommendations made by the expert panel for the overall programme review of the global strategy and plan of action, allocation of necessary resources, and further discussion of recommendations on promoting and monitoring transparency of medicines prices and actions to prevent shortages.

27. In its consideration of **influenza preparedness**, the Board noted the relevant report as well as the release of WHO's Global influenza strategy 2019–2030. It recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly adopt a decision that made several requests to the Director-General. These included providing support to Member States that wanted to develop or update national influenza preparedness plans and promoting instruments such as the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework and international surveillance systems.

28. The Board noted the interim report on the **public health implications of implementation of the Nagoya Protocol**. It endorsed the proposed next steps for the Secretariat in implementing decision WHA72(13) (2019) for the period February 2020 to March 2021, including encouragement of health ministries to raise awareness about the public health implications of regulations under the Protocol before the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity later in 2020.

29. After considering the report on **polio eradication**, the Board expressed great concern about the increasing emergence of outbreaks due to circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2, particularly in parts of Africa, and noted the development of a draft strategy for the control of that vaccine-derived virus for the period 2019–2021. It decided to urge Member States to expedite the process of national approval of the import and use of the vaccines to respond to polio outbreaks, including the novel oral polio vaccine type 2, and requested the Director-General to ensure supply of the type 2 vaccine and facilitate its equitable allocation.

30. Also under the agenda item on poliomyelitis, the Board noted the report on **polio transition planning and polio post-certification**.

31. In discussing **cholera prevention and control** the Board emphasized multisectoral collaboration and the need for political commitment. It noted the report.

PILLAR 3: ONE BILLION MORE PEOPLE ENJOYING BETTER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

32. The Board welcomed the proposal for a **Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020–2030** and recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly endorse it. That endorsement should be transmitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the consideration of the proposal by the United Nations General Assembly.

33. In the discussion of **maternal, infant and young child nutrition** the Board commented on the slowness of progress, acknowledged the contribution of nutrition to initiatives to attain universal health coverage and recognized concerns about the digital marketing of breast-milk substitutes as well as other challenges. It recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly adopt a decision which requested a streamlining of reporting requirements on maternal, infant and young child nutrition but contained unresolved text – it was expected that wording would be agreed through consultations before the Health Assembly.

34. Noting the report on accelerating efforts on **food safety**, the Board recommended to the Seventy-third World Health Assembly the adoption of a resolution on strengthening efforts on food safety which inter alia urged numerous actions upon Member States, starting with the maintenance of commitment at the highest political level. It also requested the Director-General to undertake a similarly broad range of activities, including collaborative updating of the WHO global strategy for food safety, coordinating strategic work with FAO and preparing by 2025 a new report on the global burden of foodborne diseases.

PILLAR 4: MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT WHO PROVIDING BETTER SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES

Staffing matters

35. The Board reappointed Dr Matshidiso Moeti as **Regional Director for Africa**; it also appointed Dr Hans Kluge as **Regional Director for Europe**, expressing its profound gratitude and appreciation to Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab for her invaluable and long-standing contribution to the work of WHO in the European Region.

36. The Board confirmed **amendments to the Staff Rules** concerning the remuneration of staff in the professional and higher categories, and in another resolution it recommended to the Seventy-third World Health Assembly the adoption of a resolution on the salaries of staff in ungraded positions and of the Director-General.

37. The Board noted the following documents: the **statement by the representative of the WHO staff associations**; the **report of the Ombudsman**; the **update on human resources**; and the **report of the International Civil Service Commission**, concurring with the respective guidance of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.

38. The Board welcomed the **draft global strategy on digital health** and the framework for action to advance digital technologies for health, as well as the creation of the Department of Digital Health and Innovation within the Secretariat. It noted the report on **data and innovation: draft global strategy on digital health** and recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly endorse that global strategy.

Budget and finance matters

39. The Board noted the reports on the **financing and implementation of the Programme budget 2018–2019**, the **Programme budget 2020–2021** and the **outlook for the financing** of the latter. It concurred with the guidance of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee in respect of the Programme budget 2020–2021 and its financing and implementation as well as that regarding the WHO resource mobilization strategy.

Governance matters

40. The Board noted the report on **WHO reform: governance** and decided to request the Director-General to streamline reporting requirements and execute a sunset exercise for resolutions and decisions six or more years old and with an unspecified reporting requirement. It also recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly adopt a decision that inter alia requested the Director-General to systematically include as substantive items on the agendas of sessions of WHO's governing bodies any global strategies or action plans that were scheduled to expire within one year.

41. In noting both the fourth annual report on the implementation of the **Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors** and the summary of the initial evaluation of its implementation and the impact on the work of WHO, as requested by the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly, the Board concurred with the guidance of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee to the Secretariat on implementing existing mandates. After considering a report on the review of one third of the **non-State actors in official relations** with WHO, the Board adopted a decision on the outcome of that review, including the admission into official relations of three bodies and discontinuance of official relations with three others.

42. The Board agreed to recommend to the Seventy-third World Health Assembly a decision on **travel and other entitlements of the Chair of the Executive Board and other Board members**. The Director-General was requested to prepare a report on the entitlements of Board members for consideration by the Board at its 147th session.

43. As requested in the previous session (see paragraph 5), the Secretariat amended the text of the **guidelines for Member States on written statements** to the governing bodies for posting on the WHO website so as to encourage the provision of translations. The Board decided to apply the guidelines on a trial basis for two years from the closure of the 146th session of the Board.

Management matters

44. In further consideration of the Organization's **evaluation** work, the Board noted the progress made and approved the workplan for the biennium 2020–2021, concurring with the guidance provided by the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee. A review by the Evaluation Office examined 40 years of primary health care implementation at the country level (see paragraph 16).

45. In considering the **update on the Infrastructure Fund** the Board took account of the guidance provided by the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee in respect of both the Organization's **strategy on information management and technology** and the update on the **Geneva buildings renovation strategy**. With regard to the latter, the Board recommended that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly adopt a decision inter alia authorizing further within-budget construction.

Committees of the Executive Board

46. The Board noted the reports on membership of the **Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee**. It appointed two new members of that Committee as well as members to fill the vacant positions on the foundation and memorial prize committees and **selection panels**. The Board adopted revised statutes for the **Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion**, broadening the Award Selection Panel.

47. The report of the **Programme, Budget and Administration Committee** included concrete and specific guidance on a broader range of matters than in previous years. The Board welcomed the new approach and supported the guidance to both the Secretariat and itself. It specifically requested the Secretariat to submit a full update on the WHO transformation agenda, with reforms mapped to timelines, to the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly in 2021, through the Executive Board at its 148th session, with preceding updates for sessions of the regional committees in 2020.

48. Having considered a report on **participation in the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee**, the Board decided to amend the Committee's terms of reference, to allow Observers to attend meetings of the Committee, as well as representatives of the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations with which WHO has established effective relations under Article 70 of the Constitution and the European Union, subject to specific conditions. The decision would apply from the end of the 146th session of the Board.

49. The Board noted the reports on meetings of **two expert committees** and on **expert advisory panels and committees and their membership**.

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