

## **Special procedures**

### **Report by the Director-General**

1. Responding to organizational difficulties caused by the pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), at the *de minimis* meeting of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly in May 2020, the Health Assembly adopted decision WHA73(8), in which it decided inter alia, “that the Seventy-third session shall be suspended and shall resume at such date and either in Geneva or through such means as to be decided by the Executive Board or, exceptionally, by the Officers of the Executive Board in consultation with the Director-General”. Accordingly, Members of the Executive Board decided through a written silence procedure that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly (resumed) would open on Monday, 9 November 2020 and close no later than Saturday, 14 November 2020.
2. The Executive Board further decided through a written silence procedure that the resumed session of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly would be held using a hybrid format (allowing for a limited number of delegates to be physically present, with other participants, as appropriate, participating through the virtual platform). However, taking into account the evolution of the COVID-19 epidemiological situation in October 2020, the Secretariat’s expert view that, as a result, the Health Assembly should rather meet through a virtual modality, and following a series of consultations with Member States on the holding of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly, the Executive Board recently decided through a written silence procedure that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly would resume virtually, using video conference technology.
3. As a consequence of the Board’s most recent decision, special procedures need to be put in place so that the Health Assembly can pursue its work in such a virtual meeting. This report is intended to enable the Health Assembly to take a decision in that regard. The special procedures to regulate the conduct of virtual meetings of the Health Assembly are set out in the Annex to the draft decision below.

### **ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

4. In view of the foregoing, the Health Assembly may wish to consider the following draft decision.

The Seventy-third World Health Assembly, having considered the report on special procedures<sup>1</sup> decided to adopt the special procedures set out in the Annex to this decision to regulate the conduct of virtual meetings of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly (resumed), opening on 9 November 2020 and closing no later than 14 November 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> Document A73/42.

## ANNEX

### **SPECIAL PROCEDURES TO REGULATE THE CONDUCT OF VIRTUAL MEETINGS OF THE SEVENTY-THIRD WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY (RESUMED)**

#### **RULES OF PROCEDURE**

1. The Rules of Procedure of the Health Assembly shall continue to apply in full, except to the extent that they are inconsistent with these special procedures, in which case the Health Assembly's decision to adopt these special procedures shall operate as a decision to suspend the relevant Rules of Procedure to the extent necessary in accordance with Rule 122 of the Rules of Procedure of the Health Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

#### **ATTENDANCE**

2. Attendance by Member States, Associate Members, Observers, invited representatives of the United Nations and of other participating intergovernmental organizations, as well as non-State actors shall be through a secured access to videoconference or other electronic means allowing representatives to hear other participants and to address the meeting remotely.

#### **QUORUM**

3. It is understood that virtual attendance of Member States shall be taken into account when calculating the presence of a quorum.

#### **ADDRESSING THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

4. Member States, Associate Members, Observers, invited representatives of the United Nations and of other participating intergovernmental organizations as well as, at the invitation of the presiding officer, non-State actors in official relations with the Organization, shall be provided with the opportunity to take the floor.

5. Member States and Associate Members shall also have the opportunity, if they so wish, to submit individual pre-recorded video statements of no more than three minutes, and regional and group statements of no more than four minutes. Pre-recorded video statements should be submitted in advance of the opening of the session. The video statements so submitted shall be broadcast in lieu of a live intervention.

6. Any Member State wishing to raise a point of order or exercise a right of reply in relation to either an oral or a pre-recorded video statement made at the Health Assembly should signal their intention to

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<sup>1</sup> This will affect notably the relevant provisions of the following Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly as they appear in the 49th edition of the Basic Documents:

- Rule 49 (formal proposals for items on the agenda);
- Rules 73, 78-79 and 81 through 86 (voting by show of hands and secret ballot);
- Rule 121 (amendments and additions to the Rules of Procedure) insofar as these Special Procedures may be regarded as additions to the Rules of Procedure and to the extent that Rule 121 requires receipt and consideration of a report thereon by an appropriate committee.

do so. It is understood that, in accordance with well-established practice, any right of reply to either an oral or a pre-recorded video statement shall be exercised at the end of the relevant meeting.

## **COMMITTEES**

7. The General Committee, the Committee on Credentials and the Main Committees of the Health Assembly shall be established. The Committee on Credentials shall meet only in the event that a matter is referred to it by the Health Assembly or by the President of the Health Assembly.

## **REGISTRATION AND CREDENTIALS**

8. The Health Assembly accepted the credentials presented by the 190 Member States listed in decision WHA73(3) as being in conformity with the Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly. Those credentials remain valid for the resumed meetings of the Health Assembly taking place from 9 to 14 November 2020.

9. Nonetheless, for the sole purpose of registration, credentials already submitted by Member States for the meeting in May 2020 must be re-submitted through the WHO online registration system for the resumed meetings in November 2020.

10. If a Member State wishes to modify the composition of its delegation, credentials submitted during registration should reflect such changes. This may take the form either of supplemental credentials or of new credentials indicating the revised composition of the full delegation. In line with past practice, changes to the composition of a delegation will not normally require a decision of the Health Assembly thereon.

11. Member States not among those listed in decision WHA73(3) shall submit credentials in accordance with Rule 23 at the time of registration. Those credentials shall be reviewed by the President and Vice-Presidents of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly, before the opening of the resumed meeting of the Seventy-third session, in order to assess their conformity with the Rules of Procedure and to report to the Health Assembly thereon.

12. All credentials shall be communicated electronically to the Director-General through the WHO online registration system, if possible, no later than 4 November 2020.

## **SUBMISSION OF FORMAL PROPOSALS FOR THE RESUMED SESSION**

13. The first day of the resumed session of the Health Assembly shall be regarded as the first day of the session for the purposes of Rule 49, by which date formal proposals relating items of the agenda may be introduced.

## **DECISION-MAKING**

14. All decisions of the Health Assembly should as far as possible be taken by consensus. In any event, no decision shall be taken by show of hands or secret ballot.

15. In the event that a vote is required, voting shall take place by roll-call conducted through the virtual system.

16. During a roll-call vote, should any delegate fail to cast a vote for any reason during the roll-call, that delegate shall be called upon a second time after the conclusion of the initial roll-call. Should the delegate fail to cast a vote on the second call, the delegation concerned shall be recorded as absent.

17. The procedures set out above are adopted for the purpose of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly (resumed) only as exceptional measures to enable the work of the Organization to continue during the extraordinary situation arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and they should not be considered as setting a precedent for future Health Assemblies.

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