

Proposed programme budget 2022–2023

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

1. The Secretariat presented the Proposed programme budget 2022–2023,¹ which responded to the comments and concerns raised by Member States during discussions at the thirty-third meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administrative Committee and the Executive Board at its 148th session.
2. The Secretariat highlighted the 16% increase in the base budget against the Programme budget 2020–2021, and drew attention to the four key areas of strategic focus that shaped the Proposed programme budget: rethinking preparedness and readiness, and bolstering response capacities, in respect of health emergencies; building resilience through health systems strengthening and the health security nexus; advancing WHO's leadership in science and data; and accelerating progress towards the triple billion targets and the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. The Committee welcomed the Proposed programme budget, supported the strategic focus in the document and noted the adjustments that had been made following its earlier discussions. Acknowledging the need to reflect the recommendations made by the various independent panels and review committees whose work was still in progress, the Committee supported the proposal to present a revised version of the programme budget to the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in 2022, through the Executive Board at its 150th session, and in consultation with Member States, including through Regional Committee meetings.
4. Additionally, the Committee encouraged the Secretariat to continue using the WHO programme budget web portal for presenting financial data and to ensure comparative analysis with previous budgetary periods. The Committee also supported the extended implementation of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work from 2023–2025, in view of the obvious delays in implementation arising from the pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).
5. In reply to questions raised by the Committee, the Secretariat confirmed that the strategic budget space allocation principles and formulas approved by the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly in 2016 had been applied to produce the Proposed programme budget 2022–2023. However, comparison was complicated by the fact that the polio transition element did not exist at the time that the formula was approved. The Secretariat further noted that the new structure presented in the Proposed programme budget under the third strategic priority of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work (One billion more people enjoying better health and well-being) had been shared with Member States in previous briefing sessions held in March and April 2021. With regard to the WHO Academy, the Secretariat confirmed that the Academy was a vehicle to deliver all the learning activities conducted under the different programmes and technical areas, across all outcomes and outputs of the Programme budget, hence the limited impact on the Proposed programme budget 2022–2023.

¹ Document A74/5 Rev.1.

6. The Secretariat also pointed out that efficiencies had been built in and indicated that, in line with the United Nations reform framework, efficiencies are defined as cost avoidance and time savings as opposed to budget cuts.

Sustainable financing

7. The Committee received a progress report based on the first two meetings of the Working Group on Sustainable Financing, held, respectively, in March and April 2021.¹ The Chair of the Working Group presented an update on the discussions of the Working Group, which is open to all Member States. He noted in particular that all current independent reviews and WHO oversight bodies have called for radical change in the way the Organization is funded, to make funding more sustainable in the longer term. Additionally, he explained that the first successful outcome of the Working Group was the increased common understanding of the challenges WHO is facing with its current financing model.

8. Finally, the Chair expressed appreciation for the constructive participation of the Member States, partners, independent panels and oversight bodies and, in particular, for the Secretariat's efforts to facilitate the process.

9. With the objective to ensuring that essential functions are financed through sustainable funding sources, several approaches had been developed to prioritize those functions within WHO's base programme. They would be further explored in future meetings of the Working Group.

10. The Committee welcomed the update and expressed its appreciation for the inclusive nature of the Working Group. The Committee noted that the issue being addressed was not the need for more financing but the need to make financing sustainable, which in turn would help make WHO fit-for-purpose, less reliant on a few donors, more authoritative and more agile in carrying out its role.

11. The Committee stressed the Member States' major expectations of WHO. Such expectations needed to be backed by adequate and sustainable funding. It was proposed that further to the ongoing work of the Working Group on Sustainable Financing, a subsequent process to refresh governance processes that support approval of the programme budget be taken forward. That was also important in relation to the costing of governing bodies resolutions and decisions. Also, funding discussions should be linked to efficiency, accountability and transparency.

12. The Secretariat confirmed its commitment to transparency and efficiencies, and quoted the words of the Chair of the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee during the work of the Working Group, stressing the high degree of transparency compared with other agencies and entities and the overall efficiency of the Organization, even if pockets of inefficiency still exist, partly attributable to the need to manage and report on a high number of specified grants.

13. The Committee stressed that any increase in sustainable financing, including assessed contributions, should be allocated equitably, and that the allocation process should take account of the specificities of different regions and countries. In that regard, the Secretariat reiterated that the building of capacity at the country level of the Organization is essential.

14. It was also suggested that the Organization should seek new sources of sustainable funding and not focus only on increase of assessed contributions.

¹ Document A74/6.

15. As the next meeting of the Working Group would take place in June 2021, the Chair of the Working Group was urged to ensure that all relevant documentation be provided to Member States in advance.

16. Member States confirmed their commitment to continue participating in the work of the Working Group for the submission of the final recommendations to the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in May 2022, through the Executive Board at its 150th session in January 2022. A report of the Working Group will also be presented to the regional committees.

17. The Regional Director for Europe noted that a regional working group on sustainable financing had been established in the European Region and that this was coordinating its efforts with global Working Group.

18. Noting the importance of focusing on results and ensuring accountability and transparency, the Director-General emphasized that more sustainability would strengthen the independence of the Organization.

19. The Chair of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee thanked the Chair of the Working Group for his work and expressed the full support of the Committee for the Working Group's continued work.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY AND PROPOSALS

20. The Committee, on behalf of the Executive Board, recommended that the Health Assembly should note the reports contained in documents A74/5 Rev.1 and A74/6 and adopt the draft resolution contained in document A74/5 Add.1.

21. The Committee, on behalf of the Executive Board, further recommended that the Health Assembly should request the Secretariat to present a revised Programme budget 2022–2023 to the Executive Board at its 150th session, for final approval at the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in May 2022.

22. The Committee proposed, as guidance for the Secretariat's implementation of existing mandates, that the Secretariat should submit a report on the impact of the polio transition on the strategic budget space allocation to the Executive Board at its 150th session.

23. While supporting the results-based management budgeting approach, the Committee further proposed as guidance for the Secretariat's preparation of future programme budgets, that the Secretariat should submit, as background information to such proposals, high-level estimates by key items of expenditure based on the previous biennium, and should continue with the practice of providing preliminary estimates by output, broken down by staffing and activity costs, for information purposes.

= = =