

Collaboration within the United Nations system and with other intergovernmental organizations

Report by the Director-General

INTRODUCTION

1. This report provides a summary of WHO's engagement with the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations in 2023.

Working with the United Nations system to advance the health agenda and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

2. WHO supported Member States within the main bodies of the United Nations, including the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council and the General Assembly. WHO aimed to position health in the development narrative and United Nations processes.

3. WHO provided technical guidance for General Assembly resolutions, including resolutions: 77/287, "Community-based primary health care: a participatory and inclusive approach to universal health coverage"; 77/285, "Implementation of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025)"; 77/300, "Mental health and psychosocial support"; 78/130, "Sustainable, safe and universal water, sanitation, hygiene, waste and electricity services in health-care facilities", and 78/173, "Addressing the challenges of persons living with a rare disease and their families".

4. WHO participated in the 2023 United Nations Water Conference, supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Six (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all). WHO advocated for improved water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) standards; strengthening health-based water regulation; and improving WASH in health care facilities.

5. WHO engaged with United Nations partners to heighten visibility of global health priorities and provided technical and strategic guidance to those advocating for: universal health coverage, solidarity for global health security, mental health and well-being, tackling antimicrobial resistance, drowning prevention, ageing populations, vision, water and sanitation in health care facilities, defeating neglected tropical diseases, and hepatitis elimination. WHO collaborated with these groups to build political will and raise the profile of health within the United Nations system.

6. WHO participated in Economic and Social Council thematic sessions including: the Coordination Segment, where WHO promoted the use of digital technologies in health and food security; the Commission on Population and Development briefing, where WHO highlighted the importance of comprehensive sexual education and WHO's role to correct misconceptions and promote equity; the Economic and Social Council Humanitarian Affairs Segment, where WHO provided technical advice to support negotiations on emergency humanitarian assistance; the Permanent Forum on Indigenous

Issues, where WHO addressed health issues affecting Indigenous Peoples; the Forum on Financing for Development, where WHO discussed financing sustainable development priorities and highlighted the need for equitable access to health tools and stronger health systems; the Commission on Population and Development, where WHO hosted a side event on assistive technology for inclusive development; and the session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, where WHO emphasized the importance of health equity for persons with disabilities and participated in discussions on digital accessibility and reproductive health services for persons with disabilities.

7. During the high-level week of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, WHO co-sponsored side events concerning children with developmental disabilities, universal health coverage global monitoring, strengthened monitoring and accountability to prevent the next pandemic, child survival in hunger and malnutrition crises, the Pandemic Fund, mental health, the Tuberculosis Vaccine Accelerator Council, the Global Noncommunicable Disease Compact, primary health care investment to achieve universal health coverage, advancement towards SDG Three (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) and health security, access to medical countermeasures against pandemic threats, and the Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer.

8. WHO engaged with the Security Council on health issues related to international peace and security. On 10 November 2023, the WHO Director-General briefed the Security Council on the health situation and humanitarian needs in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. WHO followed Security Council meetings on Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Somalia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen.

9. WHO supported preparations for health-related high-level meetings of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly on universal health coverage; tuberculosis; and pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. WHO supported the multistakeholder hearings and the six Member State co-facilitators who coordinated negotiations on the related political declarations.

10. On 20 September 2023, the President of the General Assembly convened the high-level meeting on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The political declaration, adopted on 5 October 2023, enhances political support for WHO and commits governments to take concrete steps to strengthen the global health architecture, ensure equity and strengthen country-level capacity.

11. On 21 September 2023, the President of the General Assembly convened the high-level meeting on universal health coverage. The political declaration, adopted on 5 October 2023, outlines a global strategy to improve health outcomes and achieve universal health coverage. The strategy emphasizes the importance of collaboration and innovation and the need to address the social determinants of health in order to build resilient health systems and achieve the SDGs.

12. On 22 September 2023, the President of the General Assembly convened the high-level meeting on tuberculosis. The political declaration, adopted on 5 October 2023, outlines a comprehensive plan to combat tuberculosis globally and emphasizes the importance of national monitoring systems, multisectoral actions and accountability.

13. WHO engaged with the Sustainable Development Group, which coordinates the United Nations system to support Member States' achievement of the SDGs.

14. WHO engaged with the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, which consists of the heads of entities of the United Nations system. The Board provides strategic guidance and facilitates coordination among United Nations organizations.

15. WHO participated in the Secretary-General's senior management meetings and engaged in other United Nations activities concerning public health issues, including the United Nations Biorisk Working Group.

16. WHO aligned its humanitarian priorities with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, where it is the lead agency for health and co-chairs the Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings.

Supporting United Nations development system reform

17. WHO has 152 country offices, serving as collaboration hubs with Member States and United Nations entities to build capacity and advance the global health agenda. Country offices align their work under the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2025 with the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework to ensure coherence among United Nations entities. WHO participates in business operations at the country level and in thematic groups to promote inter-agency collaboration on health issues. WHO's participation in joint programmes increased significantly in 2023.

18. WHO conducts briefings for United Nations resident coordinators, United Nations country teams and orientation sessions for newly appointed resident coordinators. In 2023, WHO provided induction briefings for 18 new resident coordinators, highlighting the Organization's mandate, strategic priorities, and organizational structure.

19. WHO supports the United Nations Funding Compact, a mechanism to accelerate achievement of Agenda 2030, by strengthening the Organization's programmatic, financial and governance processes, and accountability mechanisms. Examples of progress include alignment of all WHO country cooperation strategies with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, enhanced reporting and transparency through improvements to the Programme budget portal, published data that meets International Aid Transparency Initiative standards and financial and SDGs expenditure data reported to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

20. WHO is committed to the efficiency agenda of the United Nations development system reform and is active in the Business Innovations Group. WHO adopted the efficiency reporting methodology of the Efficiency Reporting Task Team of the SDGs and uses it to report efficiencies to WHO governing bodies. In 2023, WHO contributed to updates of the Business Innovations Group's guidelines on business operations strategies, in line with the outcomes of an audit. WHO also participated in the work of local and global shared service centres.

21. WHO participates in cost-sharing for the United Nations development system.¹ The allocation for each United Nations entity is calculated using a three-step formula involving: (i) an annual base fee; (ii) the entity's staff size and expenditures; and (iii) participation in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks at the country level. Based on this formula, WHO's allocation in 2023, including the Pan American Health Organization, amounted to US\$ 8 318 293, (10.48% of the

¹ Document A75/39; see also document WHA75/2022/REC/3, summary records of the third meeting, section 4, of Committee B; and document A76/36; see also document WHA76/2023/REC/3, summary records of the sixth meeting, section 4, of Committee B.

total share), making WHO the third-largest contributor to the United Nations development system, following the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme. As a specialized agency with a significant portion of its budget devoted to normative work at the global and regional levels, WHO has argued that its allocation should be reassessed and its expenditure considered under the global agenda and specialized assistance category.

22. WHO is developing an institutional approach to participation in Multi-Partner Trust Funds and related new joint programmes that align with the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2025. In 2023, WHO's collaboration with the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office resulted in a US\$ 37 million transfer in pooled funding to WHO.

23. WHO provided inputs to the 2023 annual progress survey of United Nations entities regarding General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

Collaboration with other intergovernmental organizations

24. WHO worked with other intergovernmental organizations, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie, to advance the global health agenda.

25. WHO intensified its collaboration with the African Union, provided technical support to the African Union Commission, and aligned efforts with the declarations of the African Union to guide implementation. In its collaboration with the African Union Commission, WHO facilitated a side event on the African Medicines Agency at the seventy-third session of the Regional Committee for Africa and provided technical and financial support for operationalization of the Agency. Through the WHO/African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention Joint Emergency Preparedness and Response Action Plan, WHO coordinated health security efforts at the country and continental levels. WHO also advocated for health security and universal health coverage together with the Pan-African Parliament and collaborated with the Economic Commission for Africa to strengthen national civil registration and vital statistics systems.

26. During Indonesia's term as Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2023, WHO facilitated implementation of the ASEAN Leaders' Declarations on: the One Health Initiative, adopted in 2023; ending inequalities and getting on track to end AIDS by 2030, adopted in 2022; and the reformulation and production of healthier food and beverage options, adopted in 2021. In addition, WHO supported the completion of ASEAN's multiyear project on pandemic preparedness and response, funded by the European Commission, and the operationalization of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases, a commitment to bolster emergency preparedness and response capacities within the region. Furthermore, WHO provided technical expertise during ASEAN consultations on the development of regional guidelines to manage child wasting and maternal nutrition. WHO participated in ASEAN senior official meetings, sessions on mitigating biological threats, consultations on food safety and nutrition, and the publication of a policy brief on gender-responsive approaches to the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework. WHO also organized webinars on sustained genomic surveillance for coronavirus disease (COVID-19), and on food and nutrition in ASEAN cities. WHO's engagement with ASEAN aligns with the Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations (2021–2025). In August 2023, the WHO Director-General addressed a special meeting of ASEAN health ministers convened by Indonesia as ASEAN Chair.

27. WHO's contributions to European Union (EU) policies and strategies improve public health in the EU and globally. WHO collaborates with EU institutions, Member States and civil society, to ensure thematic and strategic engagement for global health. WHO advocates for the integration of WHO's evidence-based policies in key EU initiatives such as the European Health Union, the EU Health Security Framework and the new EU Global Health Strategy. Recognizing WHO as a central partner in global health governance, the EU Global Health Strategy emphasizes strengthened collaboration to achieve common health objectives. This partnership has aligned priorities and resulted in the adoption of European Council conclusions in January 2024 placing global health at the forefront of the EU's agenda. WHO's partnership with the European Commission includes active cooperation across directorates and services, and collaboration with other EU bodies and agencies. Strategic discussions and senior official meetings between WHO and the EU facilitate exchanges on key health priorities, and have led to the Global Digital Health Certification Network, the extension of the Universal Health Coverage Partnership, and support for local vaccine manufacturing in Africa. In 2023, WHO continued strategic interaction with the EU Council through support and collaboration with EU Member States. In addition, WHO prioritized efforts to strengthen partnerships with the EU and enhance country engagement on global health priorities.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

28. The Health Assembly is invited to note the report and provide any comments or guidance it deems pertinent, particularly with respect to the following questions:

- (a) How best can the Secretariat strengthen collaboration with the United Nations development system and other intergovernmental organizations?
- (b) Are there any other areas that the Secretariat should focus on when implementing the current United Nations reform?

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