

Note for the Record

Meeting of the Director-General with the Officers of the Executive Board 30 September 2021

Participants

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General
Dr Patrick Amoth (Kenya), Chair
Mr Chansik Yoon (Republic of Korea) Director General for International Cooperation Bureau, Ministry of Health and Welfare, for Vice-Chair
Mrs Carla Moretti (Argentina), Vice-Chair
Dr Clemens Martin Auer (Austria), Vice-Chair
Mr Zahid Maleque (Bangladesh) Rapporteur

Observers

Dr Sujin KONG, Director, International Cooperation Office, Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (Republic of Korea)
Ms Jiyeong SON, International Relations Assistant, International Cooperation Office, Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (Republic of Korea)
Mr Jose Acacio, Health Advisor, Permanent Mission, Geneva

Secretariat

Dr Catharina Boehme, Chef de Cabinet
Ms Jane Ellison, Executive Director, External Relations and Governance
Dr Timothy Armstrong, Director, Governing Bodies (GBS)
Mr Derek Walton, Legal Counsel
Ms Gina Veal, Unit Head, Governance, GBS
Mr Jude Osei, Unit Head, Protocol, GBS
Mr Nicolas Ashforth, Senior Editor, GBS
Mr Carmen Savelli, External Relations Officer, Governance, GBS
Ms Denise Cipriotti, External Relations Officer, Governance, GBS
Ms Laurence Vercammen, Protocol Assistant, Protocol, GBS

1. The Officers of the Executive Board met with the Director-General on 30 September 2021. The meeting was organized using a hybrid format, with some participants physically present in Geneva and others attending virtually by means of video conference technology. Dr Wahid Majrooh (Afghanistan) Vice-Chair was unable to attend.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

2. In accordance with Rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, the meeting would review the existing draft Provisional agenda of the 150th session of the Board, to be held in January 2022, in order to prepare the Provisional agenda. In addition, the Officers would discuss possible modalities for the forthcoming governing bodies meetings, namely: the second special session of the World Health Assembly, the 150th session of the Executive Board and the thirty-fifth meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board.

3. Welcoming the Officers and other attendees, the Director-General expressed his satisfaction at being able to meet the Chair of the Executive Board and other Officers in person. It was to be hoped that the positive trend would continue.

4. The meeting was chaired by the Chair of the Executive Board. In his opening comments, the Chair welcomed the Officers, noting that the Regional Coordinators had been invited to attend as observers.

5. The Officers agreed to the proposed method of work. At the proposal of the Chair of the Executive Board, they also agreed to discuss together the items on (i) the prioritization of proposals for the Provisional agenda and (ii) the preparation of that agenda.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE 150TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Existing subitem proposed for deletion

6. In line with the Chair's proposal, the Officers of the Executive Board first considered the proposal made by the Government of Oman to delete the bullet point under item 15.2 of the draft Provisional agenda, contained in the section under Pillar 2 (One billion more people better protected from health emergencies). The item, entitled "The Coalition for Universal Health Protection Architecture Initiative", had originally been proposed by the Member State for inclusion on the agenda of the Executive Board at its 149th session in May 2021. In their deliberations at the time, the Officers had recommended that consideration of the item should be deferred to the Board's 150th session. However, the Government of Oman's view was that the subject did not, in fact, require discussion at the current time. The Officers decided to **recommend** that the item should be **removed** from the Provisional agenda.

New items proposed by the Member States

7. The Chair informed that Officers that 10 proposals for new agenda items had been received by the deadline of 22 September.

8. The Chair reminded Officers of the template, requested by the Executive Board at its 144th session, which invited Officers to bear in mind two further criteria when considering proposed additional items, namely: whether the items covered an urgent topic or involved a subject that was time-sensitive and that had not been considered recently by the governing bodies. The template further suggested that Officers should consider: the last time the proposed item was considered by the governing bodies; any work performed currently by WHO in relation to the proposed item; and the existence of reporting requirements in relation to the proposed item.

9. The Chair proposed that, following their review, the Officers should decide between five options:

Option 1: accept the proposal as a new agenda item

Option 2: combine the proposed item with an existing item

Option 3: defer the proposed item to a later session

Option 4: refer the proposal to another governing body, such as the regional committees or the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board

Option 5: exclude the proposal.

10. The Chair also drew the Officers' attention, in their consideration of the proposals, to the points set out below.

- The 150th session of the Executive Board, held over six working days was already going to deal with 25 items, more per day than at the Board's 148th session, held over eight days, which had considered 23 items. If all the proposed additional items were accepted, the Board would be considering 35 items in January 2022.

- Certain matters already due to be covered in the draft Provisional agenda of the 150th session of the Executive Board would inevitably involve lengthy discussions, namely: the report of the Working Group on Sustainable Financing, the Programme budget 2022–2023 and the election of the Director-General.
- It was important to ensure that the attention given to the various pillars of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 was balanced.

11. Mindful in their decision-making of the importance of allowing nothing to distract the Organization from its focus on ending the pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Officers of the Board agreed to make the **recommendations** set forth below:

Pillar 1: One billion more people benefitting from universal health coverage

- that the item proposed by the Government of Spain on transplantation in the continuum of care of noncommunicable diseases should be **excluded**, having heard from the Secretariat that the matter was already due to be discussed at the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in 2022;
- that the item proposed by the Governments of Colombia, Israel, Kenya and Rwanda on “Strengthening Rehabilitation in Health Systems” should be **deferred** to a future meeting;¹

Pillar 2: One billion more people better protected from health emergencies

- that the item proposed by the Government of Austria, entitled “Standing Committee on Pandemic and Emergency Preparedness and Response (SCPPR)”, should be **combined** with **existing item 3** on the Provisional agenda of the **150th session of the Executive Board**, becoming a **new second subitem under that item**, which itself should be **renamed “Strengthening WHO”**; that the original item title “Outcome of the special session of the World Health Assembly to consider developing a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response” should be used to create a **new subitem 3.1**; and that the Secretariat should decide whether the item was best placed under Pillar 2 or Pillar 4;
- that the item proposed by the Government of Colombia on the implementation of smart vaccination certificates in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and international travel worldwide should be **excluded**, with the Officers noting that the Secretariat was already undertaking work on the matter, and that differences between Member States in levels of access to vaccines meant that the initiative was premature;

Pillar 3: One billion more people enjoying better health and well-being

- that the item proposed by the Government of Sri Lanka entitled “Rapid phase-out of all highly hazardous pesticides from agricultural use by 2030, in line with the SDGs” should be **referred** for review by the **regional committees**¹ as there was agreement among the Officers that the issue, although important, was of regional rather than global public health significance;
- that the item proposed by the Government of the United Arab Emirates on well-being should be **excluded**, with the Officers commenting that the proponents might wish to consider revising the proposal to make it more specific before resubmitting it for a future meeting, taking into account also the outcomes of the 10th Global Conference on Health Promotion due to be held in December 2021;

¹ The Secretariat will provide information on a specific meeting in due course.

- that the item proposed by the Government of Fiji on the outcomes of the first Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Summit for Health should be **deferred** to the **152nd session of the Executive Board** in January 2023, with the Officers noting that, notwithstanding its growing urgency, the subject had already been discussed at the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly in May 2021, and that the recommendations of the Summit for Health could be reported to the Executive Board at its 152nd session;
- that the item proposed by the Government of the Netherlands, entitled “Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals of mammalian species in traditional food markets – Infection Prevention and Control”, should be dealt with under **the existing item** on food safety on the Provisional agenda of the **150th session of the Executive Board**;

Pillar 4: More effective and efficient WHO providing better support to countries

- that the item proposed by the Government of Nigeria, entitled “World Cervical Cancer Elimination Day”, should be **excluded**, with the Director-General suggesting that the time had come to consider taking a comprehensive approach to such proposals, rather than dealing with them in a piecemeal manner;
- that the item proposed by the Government of Bahrain, entitled “Global Health Diplomacy Framework: to advance the integration of health in all policies”, could rather be **integrated** into the **curriculum** of the recently inaugurated **WHO Academy** and work on the outcome of the 10th Global Conference on Health Promotion, as the proposal was essentially academic in nature.

12. Two further additional items – on the implementation of the community care model in mental health in times of COVID-19 and the development of an emergency rapid response team – proposed, respectively, by the Governments of Peru and Iraq, were not considered by the Officers as they had been received after the deadline of 22 September.

MODALITIES FOR THE SECOND SPECIAL SESSION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

13. The Director, Governing Bodies provided the Officers with information on the Secretariat’s capacity to provide Member States with physical access to governing bodies meetings at headquarters. If the prevailing epidemiological situation permitted in-person meetings and should the Member States decide to ensure equitable access, a hybrid format would need to be employed as the new building at headquarters could accommodate a maximum of two representatives only per Member State delegation. Other delegates would need to participate online.

14. The Officers heard in a presentation given by the Legal Counsel that special procedures would be required if a hybrid format was used for the forthcoming special session of the World Health Assembly. The proposed special procedures covered the following:

- Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly (the current Rules would apply, except when inconsistent with the special procedures)
- Attendance (for Member States this would be virtual or a combination of in-person and virtual participation; for Observers, Intergovernmental organizations and non-State actors, participation would be virtual only)
- Quorum (virtual attendance would count)

- Rules on addressing the Health Assembly (the normal rules would apply, adjusted as necessary to allow for video or other virtual statements to be made)
- Committees (business would be conducted in plenary without establishing the General Committee or Committees A and B; only the Committee on Credentials would be needed)
- Official records (these would be written summary records rather than recorded verbatim ones)
- Points of order
- Right of reply
- Decision making (decisions would be taken by consensus as far as possible; in the absence of consensus, a roll-call vote would be taken. There would be no secret ballot or show of hands).

15. Following any comments made by the Officers, together with those made at a recent mission briefing organized on the subject, the Secretariat would circulate draft special procedures to Member States to obtain comments in a formal context. After that, the final draft would be issued for Member States' agreement through a silence procedure, with formal adoption to take place at the opening of the special session.

16. In their interventions, the Officers expressed support both for the proposal to hold the special session as a hybrid meeting and for the proposed special procedures. In line with the provisions of decision EB149(11) (2021), the Bureau **recommended** that the decision not to hold the special session in person should be taken by the Executive Board through a written silence procedure.

MODALITIES FOR THE 150TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE THIRTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE PROGRAMME BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

17. Although at the current meeting no recommendation was expected of the Officers in respect of the governing bodies meetings in January 2022, the Legal Counsel explained what the process would be in case it became necessary in the future to take a decision to move from a physical meeting to virtual or hybrid meeting.

18. As decision EB149(9) (2021) on future sessions of the Executive Board had assumed that the 150th session of the Executive Board would be an in-person meeting, there was no provision for taking a decision to change modality. Such a decision would need to be recommended by the Officers and agreed through a written silence procedure, with a similar process being followed for the special procedures that would also be required should the modality of the meetings change.

19. A significant consideration in the event of the 150th session of the Executive Board being held in anything other than an in-person format, was the handling of the election of the Director-General at that session. Regardless of the number of candidates, a secret ballot would need to be conducted. As it was not possible to organize a secret ballot remotely, an adjustment would be needed to the normal approach – for example, using an appointments system in which voters would go into a room separately. Subject to the agreement of Member States, Executive Board members could be invited to empower their permanent mission in Geneva to attend for the secret ballot if they themselves were unable to be physically present. An appointments system was already being used for a secret ballot in the context of Codex Alimentarius.

20. However, thought would also need to be given to the participation of the two Executive Board members without a permanent mission in Geneva. Special arrangements would be required to enable those members to cast their vote in the secret ballot.

21. The relevant decisions would need to be taken relatively soon, once there was clarity as to the epidemiological situation, in order to allow time for consultations in respect of adjustments to the secret ballot process.

22. In their comments, the Officers supported the Secretariat's proposed way forward, expressing a clear preference for in-person meetings and satisfaction at the improving chances of a return to such meetings in the near future.

23. The Chair proposed to consult with the Officers at a future point in order to make a recommendation to the Executive Board on the modalities for its 150th session and for the thirty-fifth meeting of the Board's Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, based on prevailing epidemiological trends. The Officers agreed to the proposal.

NEXT STEPS

24. The Director, Governing Bodies explained that following the closure of the meeting a Note for the Record would be prepared and shared with the Officers for comment. The Provisional agenda for the 150th session of the Executive Board would be adjusted to take account of the Officers' recommendations. Eight weeks before the opening of that session, the Provisional agenda, together with the invitation to the session and the annotated agenda, would be circulated to all Member States.

25. In respect of the special session of the World Health Assembly, a letter would be sent to Executive Board members inviting them to decide on the modalities of that meeting through a written silence procedure. Following that decision, convocation letters would be sent to Member States and other participants.

26. Regarding the modalities of the 150th session of the Executive Board and the thirty-fifth meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, the Secretariat would consult again with the Officers nearer to the dates of those meetings

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