

Note for the Record

Meeting of the Director-General with the Officers of the Executive Board 14 October 2022

Participants

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General
Dr Kerstin Vesna Petrič (Slovenia) Chair
Dr Noor Hisham bin Abdullah (Malaysia) Director-General of Health, for Vice-Chair
Mr Bonifacio Mau Coli Dos Reis (Timor-Leste) Vice-Chair
Dr Qasem Mohammed Buhaibah (Yemen)
Mr Moses Keetile (Botswana) Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, for Rapporteur

Observers

Mr Andrej Vujkovic (Slovenia) First Secretary, Permanent Mission, Geneva
Ms Mor Eliyahu (Israel) Adviser, Permanent Mission, Geneva for Regional Coordinator for the European Region
Ms Stephanie Marion-Landais, (Australia) Health Policy Officer for Regional Coordinator for the Western Pacific Region

Secretariat

Dr Catharina Boehme, Chef de Cabinet
Dr Timothy Armstrong, Director, Department of Governing Bodies (GBS)
Mr Derek Walton, Legal Counsel
Dr Andrew Ball, Senior Executive Officer, Director-General's Office
Dr Egle Granziera, Senior Legal Officer
Mr Jude Osei, Head of Unit, Protocol, GBS
Dr Carmen Savelli, Head of Unit a.i., Governance, GBS
Mrs Paidamoyo Takaenzana, External Relations Officer, Governance, GBS
Mr Nicolas Ashforth, Senior Editor, GBS
Ms Patricia Durand-Stimpson, Protocol Assistant, GBS
Ms Laurence Vercammen, Protocol Assistant, GBS

1. The Officers of the Executive Board met with the Director-General on 14 October 2022. 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.

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 152nd session of the Board, to be held in January 2023, together with proposals received for additional items, in order to prepare the Provisional agenda. In respect of the same session, the Officers would also discuss agenda management. In addition, they would consider preparations for the forthcoming Executive Board retreat.

3. Welcoming the Officers and other attendees, the Director-General expressed the hope that it would be possible to move towards holding more in-person meetings in the future.

4. The meeting was chaired by the Chair of the Executive Board. In her 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, they also agreed to discuss together the items on (i) the prioritization of proposals for the Provisional agenda of the 152nd session of the Executive Board and (ii) the preparation of that agenda.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE 152ND SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

6. The Chair informed the Officers that 12 proposals for new agenda items had been received by the deadline of 19 September.

7. The Chair reminded Officers of the template, requested by the Executive Board at its 144th session, which invited the Officers to consider several elements, including whether the proposed items addressed a global public health issue, a new subject within the scope of WHO, or an issue that represents a significant public health burden.

8. 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.

9. The Officers of the Board agreed to make the **recommendations** set forth below:

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

- that the item proposed by the Government of Thailand – entitled “Preparation for a High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on Universal Health Coverage” – should be **combined** with the bullet point under **existing item 5** on the Provisional agenda of the **152nd session of the Executive Board**; and that **the bullet point** should be **renamed** “Reorienting health systems to primary health care as a resilient foundation for universal health coverage and preparations for a high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage”;
- that since the item proposed by the Government of Malaysia on strengthening surgical care systems by 2030 needed further preparation (which could include a side event at the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly in May 2023), it should be **deferred to the 154th session of the Executive Board** in 2024;
- that the item proposed by the Government of Guatemala – entitled “Draft global strategy on the prevention and control of noncommunicable chronic diseases” – should be **excluded** as it duplicated **existing item 6** on the Provisional agenda of the 152nd session of the Executive Board, particularly in view of the Secretariat’s explanation that the proposal had not been accompanied by an explanatory memo as required under Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board;
- that the item proposed by the Government of Denmark on mental health should be **combined** with **existing item 6** on the Provisional agenda of the 152nd session of the Executive Board; and that item 6 should be **renamed** “Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, and mental health”; and that the Member State might also wish to organize a side event at the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly;
- that the item proposed by the Government of Ireland – entitled “Draft WHO global action plan on oral health” – should be **excluded** in view of the fact that: a report on the global strategy on oral health was already to be provided to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly;

work on the draft action plan was already under way as mandated by decision WHA75(11) (2022); and the action plan was not mandated to be presented to the governing bodies;

- notwithstanding the importance of the subject, that the item proposed by the Government of Oman on antimicrobial resistance should be **excluded** as the matter was already well covered by reporting under the dual mandate conferred by resolutions WHA68.7 (2015) and WHA72.5 (2019), with a progress report already scheduled for discussion at the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly in 2023;
- that the item proposed by the Government of Morocco on extrapulmonary tuberculosis should be **excluded**, noting that the subject of the proposal could be discussed as part of reporting on resolution WHA73.3 (2020) on the global strategy for tuberculosis research and innovation to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly in 2024, through the 154th session of the Executive Board;

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

- that the item proposed by the Government of Guatemala – entitled “Strengthening of clinical trials in the Region of the Americas to improve the quality and coordination of research in this Region, considering that 75% of all research is at present conducted in Europe and the United States” – should be **excluded** since the proposal had not been accompanied by an explanatory memo as required under Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, and as the subject was of regional rather than global significance;
- having heard from the Secretariat that an oversight needed correcting, that a proposal should be **accepted** to add a third bullet under existing item 12.1, entitled “Proportional division of funds for the Partnership Contribution of the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework Benefit Sharing System”, with the associated report to contain a draft decision;

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

- that the item proposed by the Government of Bangladesh on accelerated action for drowning prevention should be **excluded**, but that aspects related to the proposal should be combined with reporting to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly on the implementation of decision WHA74(24) (2019) on the WHO global strategy on health, environment and climate change: the transformation needed to improve lives and well-being sustainably through healthy environments, and that the proponents should consider organizing a side event on the subject;
- that the item proposed by the Government of Peru – entitled “the impacts of chemicals, waste and pollution on human health” – should be **excluded**, noting that aspects in the proposal could be combined with scheduled reporting to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly on the implementation of existing mandates in respect of chemicals management and environmental health;
- that the item proposed by the Government of Argentina on urban health should be **excluded** as the subject of urban health had already been discussed by the governing bodies in the context of related mandates, but that the proponents should consider organizing a side event on the subject at the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly;

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

- that the item proposed by the Government of India on a Hosted Partnership for Digital Health should be **excluded**, with the Officers noting the Secretariat’s explanation that the subject of hosted partnerships was a standing item on the agenda of the May session of the Executive Board;

10. The Secretariat indicated that on the basis of the Officers’ recommendations, it would liaise with the Member States that had made proposals.

AGENDA MANAGEMENT FOR THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AT ITS 152ND SESSION

11. In their comments, the Officers expressed a shared view of the importance of making the discussions at the Executive Board more efficient and effective – overlong discussions and statements on national activities risked losing both momentum and the attention of participants.

12. In support of that aim, a number of approaches were mentioned, including: rigorous chairing of the discussions to limit the length of interventions and discourage one-way national statements; encouraging regional statements; using the official documentation to set out specific questions on which the Secretariat would appreciate guidance from the Member States; and providing an alternative, dedicated space for information on national experiences and good practices.

13. There was broad agreement that the Executive Board retreat represented a good opportunity to consider such measures in greater detail.

PREPARATION FOR THE EXECUTIVE BOARD RETREAT

14. The Officers heard from the Chair that, building on the most recent retreat organized in 2021, the forthcoming retreat represented an excellent opportunity to discuss strengthening the role of the Executive Board in the governance of WHO, in line with the wishes expressed by Member States. The retreat should focus on its objective and avoid political issues and technical public health matters. In order to ensure effective communication among Board members, participation at the retreat should be limited to that group and an independent moderator with excellent knowledge of the workings of the Executive Board should be chosen, perhaps from among former Board members who had shown themselves to be active in that role. No decisions on the retreat were required of the Officers at the present time as the intention was to send a Concept Note to all Board members, setting out the proposed method of work and topics for the retreat. In her efforts to canvas the opinions of Member States in respect of the recent retreat the Chair had received only one comment, namely, that there had been insufficient transparency as no report had been issued. With that in mind, a short summary of discussions at the forthcoming retreat would be prepared, but comments recorded would not be attributed to individual participants.

15. In their comments, the Officers recognized the opportunity afforded by the retreat to explore issues and challenges and share views. Its informal nature would encourage communication among Board members, fostering mutual understanding.

16. Answering the Officers' queries, the Secretariat indicated that the retreat would be hybrid to allow for virtual participation; however, the Director-General reiterated his view that in-person participation was to be encouraged as it allowed for a better quality of participation, for example, enabling those present to take advantage of opportunities for exchange outside the daily sessions. The Officers also heard that no moderator had yet been chosen, although certain former Board members stood out as good candidates.

NEXT STEPS

17. The Secretariat indicated that the draft Note for the Record of the present meeting would be shared with the Officers for comment in a timely manner, together with a revised Provisional agenda. Following the Officers' review, the Note for the Record would be shared with Member States and the Provisional agenda posted on the web. For the Executive Board retreat, the Secretariat would work with the Chair of the Board to prepare a draft agenda and the Director-General would contact Board members to encourage them to attend in person.

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