

Note for the Record

Meeting of the Director-General with the Officers of the Executive Board 27 November 2020

Participants

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General
Dr Harsh Vardhan (India) Chair of the Executive Board
H.E. Mr Cleopa Kilonzo Mailu, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations in Geneva for Vice-Chair
Mr Björn Kümme (Germany) Vice-Chair
Dr Frank Anthony (Guyana) Vice-Chair
Dr Amelia Afuha'amango Tu'ipulotu (Tonga) Rapporteur

Observers

The following Regional Coordinators were invited to observe :

- Americas: Guatemala – H.E. Ms Carla Rodriguez, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations Office in Geneva and Mr Luis Erick Gudiel, Permanent Mission, Geneva
- South-East Asia: Indonesia – Ms Meutia Hasan
- Europe: Norway – Ms Kari Hoel
- Eastern Mediterranean: Iran – Mr Farhad Mamdouhi
- Western Pacific: Australia – Ms Madelaine Heyward, Permanent Mission, Geneva

Secretariat

Dr B. Schwartländer, Chef de Cabinet
Ms Jane Ellison, Executive Director, External Relations and Governance
Dr Timothy Armstrong, Director Governing Bodies (GBS)
Mr Nicolas Ashforth, Senior Editor, GBS
Ms Patricia Durand-Stimpson, Protocol Assistant, GBS
Ms Gina Vea, Unit Head, Governance, GBS
Ms Laurence Vercammen, Protocol Assistant, GBS

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

1. The Officers of the Executive Board met virtually with the Director-General on 27 November 2020, using video conference technology. Dr Ahmed Mohammed Al Saidi (Oman) and Dr Patrick Amoth (Kenya) Vice-Chairs were unable to attend. H.E. Ambassador Mr Cleopa Kilonzo Mailu (Kenya) participated on behalf of the Vice-Chair from Kenya. The Regional Coordinators also attended as observers.

2. The meeting would consider feedback on the recent Seventy-third World Health Assembly (resumed) and 147th session of the Executive Board (resumed). Following that, it would discuss the modalities for the thirty-third meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administrative Committee of the Executive Board (PBAC) and the 148th session of the Executive Board, both due to be held in January 2021. In order to finalize the Provisional agenda of the 148th session of the Executive Board, the meeting would then consider the

implications for the Provisional agenda of the outcome of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly (resumed).

3. In his opening remarks, the Chair of the Executive Board congratulated the Director-General on the successful resumed sessions of the governing bodies; the virtual mode had enabled the Organization to maintain its routine functions. Welcoming the Officers, the Director-General thanked the Member States for their unified support. Unity was an essential prerequisite for producing results.

HEALTH ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE BOARD RESUMED SESSIONS: FEEDBACK

4. The Officers considered that the Seventy-third World Health Assembly (resumed) had been a success; nevertheless, discussions on agenda management should be held earlier, so that delegations would have more time to prepare. It was also noted that under the virtual modality, interaction – an essential ingredient of good governance and oversight – was negatively affected.

FORMAT OF NEXT MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND ITS PROGRAMME, BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

5. The Officers agreed that in the current epidemiological situation it was wise to prepare for virtual meetings of the Executive Board and the PBAC in January 2021, and to take a clear decision on that modality as early as possible. Nevertheless, if the situation changed, allowing for the use of a hybrid modality in January, the Secretariat would need to make use of clear communication, perhaps returning to the Bureau to seek its opinion.

6. The Bureau therefore **recommended** that the January meetings of the governing bodies should be organized using a virtual modality, while retaining the option of discussing the format again if the epidemiological situation evolved positively in the intervening period.

MANDATES OF THE SEVENTY-THIRD WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY (RESUMED): IMPLICATIONS FOR PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF 148TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

7. The Bureau then reviewed an updated version of the draft Provisional agenda of the 148th session of the Executive Board. The agenda had been prepared in order to indicate changes proposed to the draft Provisional agenda currently posted on the web. The proposed changes fell into two categories:

- changes recommended by the Bureau at its previous meeting in September (including those mandated by resolutions and decisions adopted in August through the written silence procedure)¹
- changes stemming from recommendations of the thirty-second meeting of the PBAC in October and resolutions and decisions adopted at the resumed sessions of the Health Assembly in November.

¹ See the Note for the Record of the meeting of the Director-General with the Officers of the Executive Board on 16 September 2020 (https://apps.who.int/gb/gov/en/chair-and-officers-of-the-executive-board_en.html).

8. The following changes were proposed, relating to mandates provided by the October and November sessions of the governing bodies:

- following adoption of resolution WHA73.8, a second bullet point to be added under the subitem on WHO's work in health emergencies, entitled "Strengthening preparedness for health emergencies: implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005)";
- following the discussions at the thirty-second meeting of PBAC and in Committee B of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly (resumed), a bullet point to be added under the subitem on the Proposed programme budget 2022–2023, entitled "Sustainable financing";
- following the adoption of decision WHA73(31), under the item on Budget and finance matters, a new subitem 17.4 to be added, entitled "Status of collection of assessed contributions, including Member States in arrears in the payment of their contributions to an extent that would justify invoking Article 7 of the Constitution";
- following the PBAC's request to the Secretariat, at its thirty-second meeting, to submit a report on cybersecurity, the title of the item on Geneva buildings renovation strategy to be changed to read "Update on the Infrastructure Fund", with the old item title becoming the title of a second subitem; a new first subitem to be added, entitled "Update on information management and technology";
- following the discussion in Committee B of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly (resumed), under the item on Governance matters, a bullet point to be added below the subitem on WHO reform, entitled "WHO reform: World Health Days".

9. **United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).** In respect of requests made by PBAC and in Committee B of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly, the Secretariat did not propose to add an item on the UN-SWAP process, as the matter could be covered under the relevant section of the Proposed programme budget and under the subitem on the human resources update.

10. In their discussions, the Officers asked the Secretariat to provide an assessment of whether the Executive Board could realistically deal with its agenda as amended. The Secretariat was also asked whether, in view of the paramount importance to Member States of the fight against COVID-19, it might be better to start the Board's discussions with the COVID-19 response under Pillar 2. Lastly, the Secretariat was reminded of the importance of sending Member States, at the earliest possibility, a clear plan for agenda management.

11. The Secretariat recognized that the agenda was a full one, for which draft resolutions and decisions were already being prepared. Nevertheless, the Secretariat had learned lessons from the recent virtual session of the Health Assembly. On that basis, the Secretariat would make proposals for agenda management and begin discussions thereon with the Member States. The Secretariat expressed support for the idea of opening the Board with the discussion on the COVID-19 response under Pillar 2.

12. On the basis of the foregoing, the Officers of the Board **agreed** that the Provisional agenda should be finalized by making the changes mentioned above; and that the Board should start its discussions by taking up the items under Pillar 2.

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