

Note for the Record

Meeting of the Director-General and the Officers of the Executive Board 5 and 6 October 2019

Participants

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General (on 5 October, by teleconference)
Dr Hiroki Nakatani (Japan) Chairman of the Board
Dr Anil Jasinghe (Sri Lanka) for Vice-Chairman of the Board
Dr Päivi Sillanaukee (Finland) Vice-Chairman of the Board
Dr Codjo Didier Agossadou (Benin) Vice-Chairman of the Board
Mr Colin McIff (United States of America) (on 5 and 6 October, by teleconference) for Rapporteur
Mr Björn Kümmel (Germany) (on 5 October, by teleconference) Chairman of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board
Mr Nilo Dytz Filho (Brazil) Vice-Chairman of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board

Observers

Ms Outi Kuivasniemi (Finland)
Dr Hiroshi Matsumura (Japan)
Dr Sathasivam Sridharan (Sri Lanka)
Ms Gabrielle Lamourelle (United States of America)

Secretariat

Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, Deputy Director-General (on 5 October, by teleconference)
Mr Bernhard Schwartlander, Chef de Cabinet (on 5 October, by teleconference)
Ms Jane Ellison, Executive Director, External Relations and Governance
Dr Timothy Armstrong, Director GBS (on 5 October, by teleconference)
Mr Nicolas Ashforth, Senior Editor, GBS
Mr Issa Matta, Senior Legal Officer
Ms Gina Vea, External Relations Officer, GBS
Ms Laurence Vercammen, Protocol Assistant, GBS (on 5 October, by teleconference)

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

1. The Officers of the Executive Board met in Manila on 5 and 6 October 2019, with the Director-General joining them by teleconference. Dr Rajitha Senaratne (Sri Lanka) and Mr Abdul Rahman bin Mohamed Al Owais (United Arab Emirates) were unable to attend. The meeting reviewed the draft provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Board to be held in February 2020, in accordance with Rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board. It also gave consideration to other issues specific to the forthcoming session of the Executive Board and to wider matters relating to the scope and management of the different governing bodies and their effectiveness.

2. The Chair opened the meeting, and, at his invitation, the Director-General addressed the Officers of the Executive Board. The Director-General stressed: the Executive Board's heavy agenda, the reduced intersessional period with little time to prepare reports for the Health Assembly and the fact that the Health Assembly itself had been shortened to four-days. He told the Officers that they had the opportunity to improve the efficiency of governance processes. The unprecedented number of additional items proposed for the agenda of the 146th session of the Executive Board constituted a further challenge and he encouraged the Officers of the Executive Board to examine them closely. The Director-General

further encouraged discussion of the roles and responsibilities of the different governing bodies and how they could be refined and improved within the existing rules of procedure. Referring to the recent successful high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the theme “Universal Health Coverage: Moving Together to Build a Healthier World”, he emphasized the need to ensure adequate attention was given to universal health coverage in the forthcoming cycle of governing bodies meetings in order to realize the promise of this new momentum.

3. In respect of the placement of additional items, the Secretariat added that the Deputy Director-General might wish to look at the matter as under the Thirteenth General Programme of Work outcomes were shared between departments. The Deputy Director-General further emphasized universal health coverage, which provides an integrated approach to the pillars of the General Programme of Work. The Chair wondered how this conceptual framework might be reflected on the agenda.

Overview of the Provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Executive Board and key issues

4. The Secretariat indicated that there were currently 52 items in the agenda with 20 draft resolutions or decisions expected. There were 4 strategies or plans of action, all of which had benefitted from extensive consultations at the regional and global levels. They covered the following subjects: cervical cancer, tuberculosis research and innovation, healthy ageing and digital health. Other matters deserving special attention included:

- **WHO reform** – covering draft guidelines on posting statements for governing bodies meetings; sunseting decisions and resolutions; and a proposal to return consideration of progress reports to the Board, in keeping with the Board’s function of reviewing Secretariat actions;
- **non-State actors** – concrete proposals would be presented;
- **the timetable for the 146th session of the Executive Board** – the contracts of two Regional Directors were coming to an end in January and, in order to avoid a gap, the Regional Director appointment process was being brought forward to the first day of the Executive Board;
- **Nelson Mandela Award** – it was proposed to amend the statutes in order to enable the selection panel to convene during the 146th session of the Executive Board;
- **The report of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee to the Executive Board** on the Committee’s items that are also on the Board’s agenda – particularly significant given the emphasis on sharpening the direction given to the Board’s discussions and on finding ways to manage the Committee’s and Board’s time better in order to avoid unnecessary repetition of previous debates. It was proposed to take that report under Pillar 4, when taking up the item on budget and finance in order to focus discussion on any recommendations from the Committee.

5. In addition to proposing a few minor adjustments to the agenda, the Secretariat indicated its intention to present an overview of accountability and the prevention of misconduct to the governing bodies. The matter had been the subject of comments by a number of Member States at the Executive Board’s 145th session. The Officers of the Board heard from the Chef de Cabinet that the Secretariat was undertaking a number of reviews of key policies, functions and processes. In addition to understanding the Secretariat’s overarching objectives in this regard, Member States had indicated that they would welcome exchanges with the Secretariat with a view to sharing institutional best practice. The Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, which dealt with matters of accountability and compliance, was the most logical body to discuss the subject; the Officers of the Executive Board were asked whether they were comfortable with that idea in view of the fact that the initial request had mentioned consideration by the Board. The Officers did not take issue with the proposal as the Committee was a subsidiary body reporting to the Board. The Officers of the Executive Board considered and agreed a way of organizing a discussion by means of a new agenda item placed

immediately following the item on the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee, which appears under “Matters for information or action by the Committee”. In that way, the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee could have an initial discussion of the matter before reporting on its views to the Executive Board.

6. In a general discussion, the Officers of the Executive Board noted that although the number of proposed additional items seemed large, certain proposals were duplicated as they had been proposed separately by more than one Member State (e.g. neglected tropical diseases and digital health), while others were linked to items already on the agenda. Consideration of certain items could be pushed back to later meetings or governing bodies cycles and the additional information provided by the Secretariat on how each item was to be handled was a useful tool. Also, the dates of the 147th session of the Executive Board have not yet been fixed; that session could therefore be used for discussing proposed additional items needing to be deferred to the next cycle.

Distribution of work between the governing body meetings

7. In a general discussion, the Officers of the Executive Board noted that certain items were on the agendas of both the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee and the Executive Board – potentially doubling the time devoted by the governing bodies to those items. The Committee’s agenda was much lighter than the Board’s: it was due to deal with 12 items in 3 days, while the Board would consider 52 items in 6 days. The schedule for the forthcoming session of the Board was not finalized, but previous experience indicated that the Executive Board could deal with a maximum of six items per day without having recourse to evening or night sessions. For a six-day Board that therefore meant a total of 36 items. It was suggested that the Committee could be used in an innovative way to facilitate the work of the Board by conducting an in-depth consideration of items and by making clear recommendations to the Board, which would enable the Chair of the Board to manage more concise discussions. The new practice could be piloted at the forthcoming Board as long as members and non-members of the Board were advised in advance (including through the present note for the record). However, the importance of ensuring enough time for substantive discussions, in order to enable Member States to give strategic direction to the Secretariat, should not be forgotten.

8. Another innovative idea discussed by the Officers of the Executive Board was to organize a third, substantive session of the Executive Board, to be held after the short session in May. The Secretariat noted the suggestion and explained it already had some experience of handling such meetings as special sessions of the Executive Board had been organized for example for the election of the Director-General and the Thirteenth General Programme of Work. In any case, for May 2020, a short, administrative Board was needed after the Health Assembly in order to elect officers for the next governing bodies cycle. If there was an appetite for a substantive Board, November might be an option but the implications, including those linked to costs and document preparation, would need to be examined. The Secretariat undertook to provide information at a later point regarding both the cost of adding a substantive session of the Board in 2020 and other modalities, such as a virtual Executive Board. The latter option was generally perceived as not being very practical as, for example, it was not suited to the large number of Board members (34) who would need to be able to participate; nor was it easy to organize in relation to considerations of time difference. Some Officers of the Board felt that a revised structure of governing bodies meetings, with two substantive sessions of the Board and one short, administrative session could contribute to more efficiency and fuller discussions. However, the cost implications would need to be examined. Nevertheless, it was important to try solutions, to “learn by doing”.

9. The Chair indicated that the matter would need to be the subject of another meeting of the Officers of the Executive Board as they would need to be able to make a clear proposal to the Board at its 146th session. The difficulty with the May session of the Board arose from the conflicting imperatives of the need to elect officers and deal with other administrative and management issues on the one hand, and some Board members’ family commitments in respect of the Muslim festival of Eid al-Fitr on the other. Indeed, the provisional agenda of that session had been drawn up with the latter in mind and had been

kept voluntarily short. Returning a second time to Geneva would be challenging for many delegations. The Officers of the Executive Board considered it was worth exploring further the proposal to organize a third, substantive session of the Board given the difficulty that the Board was likely to have at its session in February 2020, completing an agenda that was already very heavy. The Officers of the Board also considered the idea of holding a session of the Board in conjunction with the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, to be held in The Hague. Although that option involved the potentially sensitive matter of meeting outside Geneva, organizing the additional session of the Board around the Conference of the Parties could at least cut down on travel for those already attending the latter meeting. A further option was to meet on the margins of another governing bodies meeting such as a Regional Committee. In the African Region, for example, six Board members would already be attending the Regional Committee, making the exercise easier and less costly to organize. There was agreement on the need to organize a teleconference of the Officers of the Executive Board in advance of the 146th session of the Executive Board in order to permit a fuller discussion of the idea. The Officers noted the importance of having access to the forward-looking planning schedule (“rolling agenda”) in this regard as it would provide a future context in support of informed decision-making. By providing mid-term thematic priorities, it would reduce pressure on the Officers of the Executive Board in managing agendas. The Secretariat confirmed that the rolling agenda would be made available in the near future. As the Chair of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee had only been able to participate in the first day of the meeting, the Officers of the Executive Board agreed that their Chair should contact the Chair of the Committee so that they could both discuss the possibility of using the Committee more strategically, and in a transparent manner to lighten the Executive Board’s burden of work, keeping the Board free for engaging in substantive discussions.

Methods of work and proposals for handling items

10. In a general discussion, the Officers of the Executive Board considered a number of matters, including inclusion in the “action lines” of pre-session documents of Secretariat questions to the governing bodies. Although such questions could encourage a focused debate, the Secretariat expressed concern that Member States might interpret such an approach as an attempt to “steer” them. The Secretariat subsequently provided a document summarizing proposals on agenda management that would be implemented during the 146th session of the Executive Board on a trial basis. The text read as follows:

1. Agenda

- (a) Minimize additional agenda items by (i) merging proposals with existing items, or (ii) deferring proposed items to a future session of the Board, such as May 2020 or January 2021.
- (b) Agree that the Officers should discourage Member States from tabling for the supplementary agenda¹ of EB146 any proposals that the Officers of the Executive Board have recommended should not be included on the EB146 provisional agenda.

2. Timetable

- (a) Rather than taking up agenda items on staffing and other important management issues at the end of the Board, agree to dedicate up to a day earlier in the week to these issues.

3. Speaking time and speaking order

- (a) It is proposed that the following speaking times and order be applied:
 - Regional statements – five minutes,

¹ See Rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

- Executive Board members – two minutes,
- Member States not represented on the Board – 1.5 minutes.

(b) It is proposed that non-State actors be invited to provide statements on agenda items central to their respective organization’s core mandate and be set at 1.5 minutes. In principle non-State actors should each speak on only a few items and should be encouraged to post their statements on the website prior to the meeting.

(c) Following statements by non-State actors, members of the Executive Board may be invited to provide any additional comments set at 1.5 minutes.

(d) Secretariat is encouraged to be concise in their responses and focused on the specific questions posed during the discussion.

4. Methods of work

(a) It is proposed that where necessary agenda items be introduced in a concise manner (e.g. by the Chair of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee on items appearing on the Committee’s agenda, an Officer of the Executive Board or member of the Secretariat) and documentation be improved and provided within the deadline, with a view to highlighting discussion points, key issues and/or draft decisions/resolutions.

(b) Speakers may intervene as they see fit; however, they will be encouraged to focus on key issues raised or on decisions/resolutions under consideration.

Prioritization of proposed additional items for the Provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Executive Board

11. The Officers of the Executive Board were invited to apply the template for prioritizing additional items proposed for inclusion on the Board’s provisional agenda in line with the request made to the Secretariat by the Executive Board at its 144th session. On this occasion, few Officers had completed the template and it was considered that the ranking, made in terms of global health importance and urgency, was not of significance in view of the very low sample size. However, the preliminary results seemed congruent with the overall direction of the discussion. Consequently, it was felt that in the future the template could be a useful tool to support decision-making in respect of the agenda. It was also suggested that aligning the template for proposing additional items with the one for prioritizing proposals might enable the Officers to compare proposals more easily.

Preparation of the Provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Executive Board

12. The Secretariat reminded the Officers of the Executive Board that previous experience indicated that a six-day Board could deal effectively with a maximum of 36 items. Unfortunately, the items currently on the draft Provisional agenda of the Board’s 146th session already exceeded that number. The proposed method of work, with the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee taking more management and staffing items, might help to make time savings. Nevertheless, it was agreed that at least two night sessions were already likely to be needed and should be planned for. The Officers of the Executive Board, however, expressed optimism that many of the proposed additional items could be integrated into reports under existing items on the agenda.

13. The Chair proposed that, following their review, the Officers decide between five options.

Option 1: accept the proposal onto the agenda as a new 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 Programme, Budget and Administration Committee

Option 5: turn down the proposal

14. The Officers of the Executive Board agreed to recommend the following:

Changes and one new item proposed by the Secretariat¹

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

- **to accept** for addition to the provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Board the item proposed by the Director-General on Universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier world

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

- **to add two bullet points** under existing item 18.2 – Engagement with non-State actors – as follows: Report on the implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA); and Non-State actors in official relations with WHO
- **to change the title** of existing item 19.3 – Update on the infrastructure fund strategy – to read “Update on the Geneva buildings renovation strategy”

Changes and new items proposed by the Member States¹

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

- **to merge and integrate into former item 7** – Follow-up to the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases – the items proposed by the Governments of Iraq and Thailand on, respectively, Early detection of noncommunicable diseases and their risk factors and Strengthening the control of harmful use of alcohol.
- **to accept** for addition to the provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Board the item on Preventable blindness and impaired vision/vision for all, proposed by the Government of Indonesia, and the item on Integrated people-centred eye care – proposed by the Governments of Australia, Austria, Burkina Faso, Indonesia supported by the Member States of the South-East Asia Region, Mexico, Pakistan, Singapore and Tonga – **merging them in a single standalone item.**
- **not to include** on the provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Board the item proposed by the Government of Iraq on Draft global integrated action plan for combatting means of spreading and communicating the VAPE – including the electronic cigarette with nicotine, on the understanding that the Secretariat would organize an informal briefing, involving the secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and technical experts, with the aim of presenting the emerging scientific evidence in this area. Ideally, this would be organized to coincide with a break during the Executive Board’s 146th session.
- **not to include** on the provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Board the item proposed by the Government of Guyana on Development of a new World Health Assembly resolution

¹ The exact placement of new agenda items under the pillars will be the subject of a review to be undertaken by the Deputy Director-General.

for rehabilitation as the subject matter was already being dealt with through the recent mandate provided by resolution WHA71.8 (2018) on improving access to assistive technology and the item on Healthy ageing already on the agenda of the 146th session of the Executive Board.

- **to accept** for addition to the provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Board the item on Road map on neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) 2021–2030, proposed by the Governments of Brazil, Burkina Faso and Togo, and the item on Neglected tropical diseases: extending the strategy to 2030, proposed by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the 47 Member States of the African Region, the Governments of Costa Rica, Mexico and the United States of America, and the European Union and its 28 Member States, **merging them in a single standalone item** on Neglected tropical diseases.
- **not to include** on the provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Board the item proposed by the Government of Sri Lanka on Patient Safety initiatives in achieving Universal Health Coverage as the matter could be taken up with the global patient safety action plan, which is already due to be submitted to the Executive Board at its 148th session in line with the reporting requirements of resolution WHA72.6 (2019).
- **to accept** for addition to the provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Board the item proposed by the Government of Brazil on Global strategy and plan of action public health, innovation and intellectual property.
- **not to include** on the provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Board the item proposed by the Government of Peru on Declare the interest of Member States of WHO in the comprehensive management of drinking water, the subject to be included under reporting on resolution WHA72.7 (2019) on water, sanitation and hygiene in health care facilities.
- **merge and defer** to the 148th session of the Board the items proposed by the Governments of Peru and South Africa on, respectively, Access to medicines and vaccines with emphasis on rare or orphan diseases and Expanding access to effective medical treatments for cancer, including drugs, vaccines, medical devices, diagnostics, assistive products, cell- and gene-based therapies, and other health technologies.
- **not to include** on the provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Board the item proposed by the Government of Peru on Nurturing care as the subject was discussed recently at the Seventy-second World Health Assembly under the item on Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030).

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

- **to include within existing item 12.2** – WHO's work in health emergencies – reporting on the items proposed by the Governments of Iraq and Russian Federation on, respectively, Rehabilitation of the health system after crisis and WHO's role as the health cluster lead in humanitarian emergencies.
- **to accept the request** from the Governments of United States of America and Brazil that the title of existing item 12.3 be changed to read "Influenza Preparedness."

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

- **to merge and integrate into existing item 14** – Decade of Healthy Ageing – the items proposed by the Government of Peru on Focus on the life-course and Life-course of persons between 30 and 59.
- **to defer** to the 148th session of the Board the item proposed by the Government of Peru on Social determinants of health so that the necessary preliminary work can be undertaken.

- **to accept** for addition to the provisional agenda of the 146th session of the Board the item on Accelerating efforts on food safety proposed by the Governments of the United States of America, Member States of the European Union, Japan, Canada, Australia, Ethiopia, Mexico, and Member States of the Africa Group.

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

- **to merge and integrate into existing item 16** – Data and innovation: global strategy on digital health – the items proposed by the Government of India on Status of the global digital health strategy 2020–2024 and Discussion on the potential of a hosted partnership on digital health in accordance with the World Health Assembly resolution on partnerships (resolution WHA63.10 (2010)).

Proposed date for EB147

15. As new officers need to be elected for the next governing bodies cycle, it was essential to hold a meeting of the Board immediately after the Health Assembly. Many Board members will already be in Geneva for the Health Assembly and the Officers of the Executive Board agreed that a session of the Board should be held the day following the Health Assembly. The Officers discussed options to start and end the meeting early with a view to facilitating the travel plans of Board members beginning the Islamic family holidays. With this in mind, it was proposed that the next session begin at 08:00 and continue until 13:00 without a lunch break. The Officers considered that the proposal to hold a substantive additional session of the Board later in the year should be explored, despite the associated cost implications; and they decided to discuss the matter at their next meeting, which would be held on 7 November at 15:00 Geneva time. The Secretariat was asked to provide information on the costs and practicalities of implementing the proposal.

Other business

16. The Secretariat was encouraged to ensure greater transparency in the preparation and management of future meetings. For example, once the deadline for submitting requests for additional items was past, the Secretariat should make available to all Member States a list of the items concerned.

17. The Chair explained to the Officers of the Executive Board that according to the relevant regulation the Chair of the Board was entitled to first-class travel – the only Officer of the governing bodies to enjoy this advantage – despite the fact that a report by the United Nations’ Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in 2017 had recommended that the practice be discontinued.¹ In fact, in the preceding eight years no-one had made use of the entitlement. He intended to take advantage of his period of tenure as Chair of the Executive Board to propose that the Board amend the regulation. The Officers of the Executive Board agreed to the course of action proposed.

18. The Officers of the Executive Board also recommended that it should hold daily morning meetings with the Secretariat during the 146th session of the Executive Board.

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¹ Document JIU/REP/2017/3.