

## **Note for the Record**

### **Meeting of the Director-General with the Officers of the Executive Board 31 July – 1 August 2017**

#### **Participants**

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General  
Dr Assad Hafeez (Pakistan) Chairman  
Mr Philip Davies (Fiji) Vice-Chairman  
Dr Isaac Minani (Burundi) (by teleconference) Alternate Member of the Executive Board  
Ms Sarah Lawley (Canada) Vice-Chairman  
Dr Viroj Tangcharoensathien (Thailand) Vice-Chairman  
Professor Maksut Kulzhanov (Kazakhstan) Rapporteur

#### Secretariat

Dr Anarfi Asamoah-Baah, Deputy Director-General  
Dr Ian Smith, Executive Director, Office of the Director-General  
Dr Tim Armstrong, Director Governing Bodies  
Dr Peter Singer, Senior Adviser to the Director-General  
Mr Steven Solomon, Principal Legal Officer  
Ms Gina Vea, External Relations Officer, Governing Bodies  
Mr Derek Walton, Legal Counsel

#### Observers

Burundi: Mr Philippe Minani, Adviser, Permanent Mission, Geneva  
Canada: Ms Johanna Krüger, Counsellor Health, Permanent Mission, Geneva  
Fiji: Mr Ajendra Pratap, First Secretary, Permanent Mission, Geneva  
Pakistan: Dr Mariam Saeed, First Secretary, Permanent Mission, Geneva  
Thailand: Ms Benjaporn Niyomnaitham, First Secretary, Permanent Mission, Geneva

#### **1. Purpose of the meeting**

1. The Director-General and the Officers of the Executive Board met in Geneva on 31 July–1 August. The meeting was chaired by the Chairman of the Executive Board. The Director-General, opening the meeting, welcomed the Officers of the Board and observed that this was the first meeting of its kind between an incoming Director-General and the Officers of the Board (the Bureau). While meetings between the Director-General and the Bureau traditionally took place in September of each year to review the draft provisional agenda of the forthcoming meeting of the Board in January, he had proposed this earlier meeting, during the period of transition, with a more strategic purpose. Thus, the aim of this first meeting with the Bureau in his term of office as Director-General was to bring the Officers of the Board together in person, not only to consider the provisional agenda but also to review the methods of work of the Officers of the Board, including their role. He proposed that more regular meetings of the Bureau could strengthen the work and effectiveness of the Executive Board itself. He referred also to the new realities facing the work of the Board. These included, among other things, the imperative of the Sustainable Development agenda and related priorities, the mandate he had been given through his election to address priority strategic issues, and the need to accelerate governance reform and improve the effectiveness of the meetings of the governing bodies.

2. The specific objectives of the meeting were to:

- establish a common understanding of the role of the Executive Board, its evolution, and strengths and challenges in the work of the Board in the current setting and in view of new realities;
- review the role of the Officers of the Board and opportunities for strengthening engagement with other members and non-members of the Executive Board;
- establish priorities and propose outcomes for the 142nd session of the Executive Board and propose a structure for the agenda that is supportive thereof;
- explore improved modalities and methods of work of the Board;
- identify options for differentiating between the work of the WHO governing bodies that will promote strategic decision-making.

3. The Officers of the Board noted that the evaluation of WHO reform, third stage, presented to the World Health Assembly in May 2017 (A70/50 add. 1), had identified the need for continued work on governance reform, and that the Executive Board and the Health Assembly had found it challenging to identify the key priorities for their work and to differentiate the work of the individual bodies involved in strategic decision-making.

4. They agreed that a review of roles and working methods was timely. They welcomed the opportunity to engage with the Director-General, to support him in his commitment to change and to move efforts on governance reform forward, within the limits set out by the Legal Counsel. They agreed that more regular meetings would undoubtedly be of value in this regard and would help to further the changes that Member States expected to see in WHO and its work. Officers of the Board noted that they were attending in their national capacity as they had not had time to consult their regions nor was this their traditional role. The Director-General, Secretariat and the Officers of the Board emphasized their wish to engage all Member States in governance reform and to receive their input into the debate.

## **2. Executive Board and its Officers: role, evolution and objectives**

5. The Officers of the Board considered the role, evolution and objectives of the Executive Board and its officers as currently set out in the WHO Constitution and Rules of Procedure of the Board.

6. The Secretariat outlined the status, functions and powers of the Board which are mainly derived from three sources: the WHO Constitution; the rules of procedure of the Board; and the various resolutions and decisions adopted by the Health Assembly and the Board. While Article 18 of the Constitution indicates the overriding function of the Health Assembly as 'to determine the policies of WHO', Article 28 points to the main function of the Board as 'to give effect to the decisions and policies of the Health Assembly'. The evolution and expansion of the Board since 1998 was described, in particular the increase in the number of Board members (now 34), the change to allow participation of Member States not represented on the Board (rules 3 and 16 of the Rules of procedure), and the development of the Board's committee system since 2004.

7. It was noted that the Board has two roles: an executive role, ensuring that the decisions and instructions of the Health Assembly are carried out, and providing guidance and direction to the Secretariat; and an advisory role, supporting the preparation of the work of the Health Assembly's sessions. The Board submits a general programme of work to the Health Assembly for its consideration. It also has the power to take emergency measures.

8. The Board's objectives are set through the agendas of individual Board meetings. The Officers of the Board noted that they had a collective responsibility in this regard since they must be consulted by the Director-General when he draws up the provisional agenda of each session of the Board. The Legal Counsel explained that, since the role of the Bureau is not further delineated in a specific way,

the Officers of the Board have the ability to be flexible in its methods of work and management of its meetings, both within the Bureau itself and within the Board, and in its approach to agenda setting.

9. The Secretariat observed that while the Board and its subcommittee were more inclusive than originally, since non-Members could also take part in the discussion and make proposals, decision-making itself had become more complex. Inclusiveness and broader participation had sometimes been at the expense of efficiency, and there was sometimes apparent duplication in the decision-making processes. The Bureau also observed that since participation of non-Members is dependent on ability and capacity to attend, the inclusiveness of recent years had, paradoxically, probably led to more inequitable participation overall, with Member States that are better resourced or face lower travel costs more able to be represented from capitals. The Director-General supported the Secretariat's view that the challenge for the Bureau therefore was to improve the effectiveness of Board meetings without losing the confidence that Member States had gained from wider participation. Officers of the Board expressed caution at the creation of any perception that meetings of the Board might become less inclusive. It was proposed that the role of Board members as spokespersons for their respective regions, which has not been their traditional role but more so the role of regional coordinators, be reinforced. It might also be useful to consider prioritizing agenda items that required broad participation and to encourage more focused regional responses to items where wide debate might not be as necessary.

10. A further challenge to effective meetings was the size of the agenda. This challenge had been noted frequently by the governing bodies in recent years. The Officers of the Board noted that public health policy should be the focus of the agenda of the Board, together with governance, finance and management issues of strategic significance for the Organization, rather than detailed technical issues which are the responsibility of the Secretariat. They acknowledged, nevertheless, that a mandate from the Health Assembly on technical issues was sometimes necessary to promote the health agenda at national level. They noted also that greater synchronization, harmonization and engagement with regional committees would help in streamlining the agenda of the Board.

11. The Officers of the Board concluded that review of the roles and responsibilities of the Officers and the Board was timely, and the Director-General suggested that they should make use of the flexibilities inherent in the WHO Constitution and Rules of Procedures of the Board in this regard. The Officers of the Board agreed with the Director-General that, while the overall lead for action between each Health Assembly was the Executive Board, the Bureau provides a bridge between individual meetings of the Board and could contribute substantially to improving the overall effectiveness of the work of the Board, strengthening engagement with members and non-members of the Executive Board, regional coordinators and the Secretariat.

12. **The Officers of the Board recommended** that the Executive Board review the structure and conduct of its meetings, including consideration of participation and speaking rights, in the interests of both efficient and equitable decision-making, and that it strengthen linkages and coordination with regional committees.

### **3. Modalities and methods of work of the Executive Board**

13. The Officers of the Board noted that the Executive Board and Health Assembly had requested the Secretariat to review the rules of procedure of the governing bodies, in particular the processes for inclusion of additional, supplementary and urgent agenda items (WHA69 (8)), as well as other ambiguities, gaps and shortcomings (EB141(8)). To this end the Secretariat had established a working group which would produce a paper for an informal consultation process scheduled for August–September 2017.

14. With regard to methods of work, the Officers of the Board noted, among other things, that, despite the provisions of the WHO Constitution, country statements (simply describing the current

state-of-affairs in a Member State) offered limited value to proceedings and could, perhaps, be contributed by other means. Similarly time was often spent discussing issues that were only presented to the governing bodies for 'noting'.

15. The Officers of the Board considered a comparison, provided by the Secretariat, of the methods of work of the governing bodies of a number of other international organizations and entities, in order to benchmark the practices of WHO governing bodies against those of other entities.

16. **The Officers of the Board recommended** that the Secretariat's consultation paper on the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board include a request for Member States to contribute their views on the roles and methods of work of the Executive Board and its Officers, with a view to improving efficiency and equity in decision-making.

17. **The Officers of the Board recommended** further research and analysis in regard to possible methods of work of the WHO governing bodies, including review of the academic literature in this area as well as looking more widely at the governing bodies of sister organizations among the UN specialized agencies and other international organizations.

#### **4. Documentation**

18. The Officers of the Board acknowledged that the trend of recent years for longer agendas had been previously highlighted as a challenge in governance reform. The Director-General expressed his vision for meetings of the governing bodies to be more strategic. The Secretariat noted that there had also been an increase in substantial global technical strategies and in length of documents generally which had also substantially increased the volume of documentation for governing body meetings. As a result, the Secretariat had faced particular challenges in documentation management and timely dispatch. It was important to ensure a balance between the work of the Member States, on the one hand, and the work of the Secretariat on the other. It was observed that around 80% of agenda items were mandated through the governing bodies themselves and that therefore the major challenge was to improve agenda management.

19. The Secretariat suggested that another area that could help with the timely provision of documentation would be to review the annual cycle for agenda setting, including the timelines for agreement on the final agenda and dispatch of documents (Rules 8 and 5, respectively), both of which had been set prior to the introduction of electronic methods of work. It was also noted that, while the provision of costing documents on the financial implications of resolutions of the governing bodies was potentially useful, it was not currently effective, in part because such documents were usually not provided at the same time as the working document and draft recommendations therein, and also because they did not adequately spell out the additional cost to the Organization, whether in financial terms or in terms of impact on or trade-off with other areas of work.

20. **The Officers of the Board recommended:** prioritizing strategic issues, whether these were programmatic, governance or managerial; reducing discussion of items intended only for information and noting; limiting the number of reports requested by the Health Assembly for submission through the Executive Board to critical policy issues; reconsidering the timeline for proposal of draft resolutions to ensure their dispatch at the same time as documentation; enforcing restriction on the length of documents; establishing a clear structure for global strategy documents so that these are focused on the core policy issues requiring endorsement of the governing bodies and needed by Member States for domestic advocacy; presentation of the financial implications of resolutions within the working documents and/or through statements from the Secretariat at the time when resolutions are presented rather than through costing documents; and establishing a clear annual cycle for agenda-setting.

## 5. 142nd session of the Executive Board

21. The Secretariat explained that the draft provisional agenda for EB142 had been dispatched without its usual structure, other than to differentiate between matters of a technical and administrative nature. The Director-General indicated that this format had been prepared in this way in order to stimulate the consideration of alternate approaches, as he was seeking more dynamic and strategic meetings. The Officers of the Board might consider whether there were any items that could be removed from the agenda or directed to other bodies in the future, and whether the agenda could be structured in such a way as to reflect strategic priorities and guide the Board's discussions. The Legal Counsel explained that agenda items mandated to EB142 could not be removed at this point but that reordering of the agenda was permissible.

22. The Officers of the Board noted also that the draft provisional agenda included preparation of the 13th General Programme of Work (GPW13), representing a 5-year strategic plan for the work of WHO. While this process would normally be expected to take up to two years, it was timely to consider a process that would facilitate inclusion of the Director-General's strategic priorities and clearly position the Organization in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, they noted that making GPW13 available sooner would allow more time for considered development of the draft Proposed Programme Budget 2020-2021 and for resource mobilization.

23. **The Officers of the Board supported the Director-General's recommendation** that the preparation of GPW13 be fast-tracked so that the Board might already approve a draft in January 2018 for endorsement by the Health Assembly in May 2018. They further supported the Director-General's recommendation that GPW13 focus on high-level policy directions, centred around the Sustainable Development Goals and in line with the Director-General's vision and other global commitments. They proposed an agenda for its development that might be feasible to attain this target, including consultation on an initial draft with Member States and regional committees, and a mission briefing outlining the process. The Officers of the Board also considered the possibility of holding a session of the Executive Board in November 2017, dedicated to the development of the General Programme of Work, as well as to discuss some of the ideas on changes to the Executive Board and Bureau suggested by the Director-General and the Secretariat. They requested the Director-General to highlight the recommendation of the Bureau for an accelerated process in his address to regional committees.

### **Proposed timeline for preparation of 'A 5-year strategic plan for the work of WHO: Thirteenth General Programme of Work'**

2017

- August: Circulation of the report of the meeting of the Director-General with the Officers of the Executive Board and Mission briefing on process of preparation of GPW13 – A 5-year strategic plan for the work of WHO
- August–September: 1st draft
- September–early October: Online consultation and comments by Member States parallel with regional committees
- October: 2nd draft
- November: Possible meeting of the Executive Board to discuss, if requested

2018

- January: Discussion by Executive Board at its 142nd meeting
- February–May: Further consultation/amendment as appropriate or requested by Executive Board
- May: Submission to World Health Assembly for consideration and adoption

24. In order to establish other agenda priorities for EB142, the Officers of the Board supported the proposal to apply a structure to the agenda based on the actions and outcomes expected from the Board. They also supported the idea of reflecting the Director-General's priorities, on which he was elected. They considered that strategic issues of high priority should be highlighted and grouped separately, and perhaps allocated more time in the programme of work, while matters to be noted by the Board could be designated as for information only and need not necessarily be discussed.

25. The Bureau therefore proposed to group agenda items under the draft provisional agenda, comprising the mandated items, into six categories, as follows.

**1. Opening and adoption of the agenda**

- 1. Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda

**2. Dialogue with the Director-General**

- 2. Report by the Director-General, which would include reference as appropriate to the report on the regional committees and other technical reports.

**3. Strategic priority issues: programmatic, governance and managerial**

- 25. A 5-year strategic plan for the work of WHO: Thirteenth General Programme of Work
- 26. WHO reform
- Items 4, 5 and 6 to be combined: Draft five-year global strategic plan to improve public health preparedness and response (WHO Health Emergencies Programme and IHR), report in response to resolution WHA65.20 and IOAC report
- 9. Polio transition planning
- 16. Health, environment and climate change
- 20. Addressing the global shortage of, and access to, medicines and vaccines
- 21. Global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation and intellectual property

**4. Other technical issues**

- 11. Global snakebite burden
- 13. Physical activity for health
- 17. Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030): early childhood development
- 18. mHealth
- 19. Improving access to assistive technology
- 14. Maternal, infant and young child nutrition
  - Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition: biennial report
  - Safeguarding against possible conflicts of interest in nutrition programmes

**5. Managerial, administrative and governance issues**

- 7. Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework for the sharing of influenza viruses and access to vaccines and other benefits
- 23. Report of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board
- 24. Amendments to the Financial Regulations and Financial Rules [if any]
- 27. Evaluation of the election of the Director-General of the World Health Organization
- 28. Evaluation: update and proposed workplan for 2018–2019
- 29. Engagement with non-State actors
- 30. Reports of committees of the Executive Board
  - Foundations and awards

- 31. Future meetings of the governing bodies
  - Provisional agenda of the Seventy-first World Health Assembly
  - Date and place of the 143rd session of the Executive Board
- 32. Appointment of the Regional Director for the Americas
- 33. Statement by the representative of the WHO staff associations and report of the ombudsmen
  - Statement by the representative of the WHO staff associations
  - Report of the ombudsmen
- 34. Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules [if any]
- 35. Report of the International Civil Service Commission

**6. Matters for information**

- 3. Report of the regional committees to the Executive Board
- 10. Global vaccine action plan
- 12. Preparation for the third High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of NCDs, to be held in 2018
- 22. Reports of advisory bodies
  - Expert committees and study groups

26. The Bureau proposed that the following items be moved from the draft provisional agenda to the agenda of WHA71, as they concerned reports intended directly for the Health Assembly.

- 8. Eradication of poliomyelitis
- 15. Progress towards the health related sustainable development goals

**6. Way forward**

27. With regard to the preparations for the next meeting of the Director-General with the Officers of the Board, at which additional items to the agenda for EB142, to be proposed by Member States by 21 September 2017, would be decided upon, it was noted that such proposals would be rated for the first time using the tool adopted by the Executive Board (EB141(8)). The Bureau had been asked to apply the tool on a trial basis and to report back to the Board on its usefulness, together with suggestions for improvement, if any.

28. The Chairman proposed that the next meeting, to consider proposals for additional items to the agenda, as well as any other business, be held on Saturday 7 October in Islamabad, Pakistan, prior to the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean. The Officers of the Board agreed to this proposal. The Director-General and the Officers of the Board reiterated their wish to engage all Member States in governance reform and discussion of the issues raised during the meeting. The Chairman thanked the Director-General for his time throughout the meeting and for the opportunity he had provided for the fruitful discussions. He expressed the hope that the Officers of the Board would take the discussions forward within their respective regions and through the regional coordinators, and that members and non-members of the Executive Board would respond with their views.

29. **The Officers of the Board recommended** that the record of the meeting be shared with members and non-members of the Executive Board and that a mission briefing be held in order to communicate what took place.

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