



European Union

Statement

WHO

156th Executive Board

(3-11 February 2025)

Agenda item 24.2 - Governance reform

Geneva, 3 February 2025

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Chair, distinguished delegates,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States.

The candidate countries Türkiye, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina* and Georgia as well as Armenia align themselves with this statement.

The EU would like to express our gratitude to the Director-General for the comprehensive reports provided on governance matters. We value the commitment to transparency and accountability demonstrated in this work.

We acknowledge the progress made in strengthening the governance of the World Health Organization in recent years- including the follow-up work of the Working Group on Sustainable Financing and Agile Member State Task Group and the significant contributions of previous Executive Board chairs.

We appreciate the inclusive process in the development of the Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW14), which represents a step forward in fostering greater engagement and ownership by Member States and in reaching consensus among Member States. Furthermore, we welcome the discussions on the role and functions of the Executive Board bureau, as these deliberations are critical to enhancing the effectiveness of our governance mechanisms.

However, we must recognize that room for improvement remains. In order to ensure that the Executive Board is equipped to perform its functions, we need a better understanding of the interconnections between the proposed resolutions and the GPW, and their effect on the programme budget. Too often, these discussions occur in silos, limiting our ability to grasp the

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

cause-and-effect relationships that underpin our decisions. This fragmentation hinders our collective capacity to prioritize and allocate resources effectively.

We therefore call for enhanced efforts to elucidate how resolutions align with the relevant GPWs and their essential priorities and contribute to reaching its objectives. Evidence of impact, including the potential to achieve meaningful health gains; considerations of reaching equity in health outcomes are also issues according to which we could prioritize interventions.

Enhanced financial transparency and a comprehensive understanding of the costs and impacts of proposed resolutions, such as detailed estimates of implementation costs, resource requirements for staffing, and long-term financial sustainability are also fundamental to ensure responsible and evidence-based decision-making. This, would enable us to identify which elements of proposed resolutions are both meaningful, potentially impactful and feasible, ensuring that our decisions are evidence-based and financially viable. Moreover, we need to prioritize the number of proposed resolutions according to available funding and resources, both in terms of resources and agenda management. This is a responsibility of the Member States, but also requires the support of the secretariat.

Given the funding and budget constraints expected for the organization, the EU pauses its co-sponsorship to resolutions, while awaiting the revised and reprioritized proposal for PB 2026/2027. We request the WHO secretariat to share an updated overview of the expected costs of all resolutions, taking into consideration the expected availability of financing in 2025 and the revised Programme and Budget 2026-2027 proposal, which we will take into account when deciding on resolution co-sponsoring in the run up to WHA78.

Chair, let me end by emphasizing once again the importance of accountability as well as independent oversight. The EU strongly believes that an independent body, selected and appointed by the Executive Board should be made responsible for investigating allegations against the Director-General, rather than the WHO Executive Board itself. This is key to ensuring impartiality and fairness and is important to achieve an objective, unbiased assessment that is free from any political pressure or conflicts of interest that may influence decision-making of member states. On the basis of such an assessment, the EB can subsequently decide on the follow-up on the findings. This approach would not only preserve the WHO's commitment to accountability and independent oversight but also safeguard the organization's integrity, credibility and effectiveness in addressing global health challenges.

Governance is the cornerstone of WHO's ability to lead global health efforts effectively. Specific improvements, such as enhancing decision-making transparency, streamlining resolution processes, and ensuring robust mechanisms for crisis management are important. By continuing to build on recent progress and addressing the challenges identified, we can ensure that the Executive Board remains a robust and agile body capable of navigating the complexities of global health governance.

Thank you.