
Report of the first meeting of the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005)

1. The Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) held its first meeting on 14–15 November 2022 in a hybrid fashion with some participants online and some physically present at WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The Working Group elected Dr Abdullah Asiri of Saudi Arabia and Dr Ashley Bloomfield of New Zealand as Co-Chairs, with the following Vice-Chairs: Dr Sultani Matendechero of Kenya, Mr Colin McIff of the United States of America, Ambassador François Rivasseau of France, and Ambassador Grata Endah Werdaningtyas of Indonesia.

2. As per decision WHA75(9) (2022), the Working Group is constituted as a continuation of the Working Group on Strengthening WHO Preparedness and Response to Health Emergencies, with a revised name – the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) – and a revised mandate to work exclusively on consideration of proposed targeted amendments to the Regulations, consistent with decision EB150(3) (2022), for consideration by the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly in 2024.

3. Following the adoption of the agenda¹ and programme of work,² the Working Group turned to the organizational aspects of its work. The Secretariat first provided an overview of the process of receiving proposed amendments and establishing and convening a review committee regarding amendments to the Regulations. The Co-Chairs asked the Working Group whether and how the proposed amendments should be made publicly available online. They also asked the Working Group to consider how to handle proposed amendments received by the Secretariat after 30 September 2022. Following the discussion, the following was agreed.

(a) The Secretariat shall publish the proposed amendments online, as submitted by Member States unless otherwise informed by the submitting Member States; further, the Secretariat shall also publish online an article-by-article compilation of the proposed amendments, as authorized by the submitting Member States, in the six official languages, without attribution of the proposals to the Member States proposing them.

(b) Noting the two submissions that did not meet the deadline and mindful of the respective roles of the World Health Assembly and the Working Group, the Working Group takes the view

¹ Document A/WGIHR/1/1.

² Document A/WGIHR/1/2.

that, *ad referendum* to any decision of the Health Assembly,¹ the contributions of Malaysia and the Republic of Korea be considered as part of the package of proposed amendments within the Working Group process, as well as part of the work of the Review Committee on the Functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) regarding amendments to the Regulations.

4. The Working Group then considered the proposed method of work contained in document A/WGIHR/1/3. The Co-Chairs asked the Working Group about the participation of relevant stakeholders in meetings and about web-streaming some or all sessions of the Working Group. Following the discussion, the proposed method of work was adopted, with amendments.² In addition, the following was agreed.

(a) With respect to proposed modalities of engagement for relevant stakeholders, the working basis will be the modalities adopted by the Working Group on Strengthening WHO Preparedness and Response to Health Emergencies (document A/WGPR/1/6). At the second meeting of the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005), Member States will populate the various annexes to that document in accordance with the mandate of the Working Group and provide their approval, with it being understood that the document will be considered a living document, open to further consideration by the Working Group as appropriate. Prior to the second meeting of the Working Group, modalities for this work will be set out by the Bureau, noting the importance of advancing work during the intersessional period and noting that relevant documentation will be provided at least three weeks prior to the second session of the Working Group.

(b) With respect to web-streaming of Working Group meetings (or parts thereof), the Bureau will provide Member States with a proposal in this regard, to be considered by the Working Group through a written silence procedure in advance of the Working Group's second meeting.

5. The Working Group then considered the coordination with the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, and the Secretariat provided an overview. The Co-Chairs asked the Working Group about the possible modalities to ensure coordination with the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body process. The Working Group considered a provisional timeline to outline the schedule of future meetings of the Working Group and related meetings. Following discussion, it was agreed that:

(a) with respect to the provisional timeline, the Working Group will decide on its timeline in accordance with the method of work (para. 7, document A/WGIHR/1/4); and

(b) in furtherance of coordination, it is the view of the Working Group that joint meetings of the respective Bureaus of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body and the Working Group may make recommendations to their respective bodies for approval, including on joint meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body and Working Group and on potential areas of overlap between the Working Group and the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body.

¹ As the Working Group operates as a subdivision of the Health Assembly, the position of the Working Group on the receivability of the two proposals for amendments submitted after the deadline of 30 September 2022 is without prejudice to the consideration by the Health Assembly.

² Document A/WGIHR/1/4.

6. Referring to paragraph 26 of the method of work, the Working Group invited the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body to consider providing for the reciprocal invitation by the latter's Bureau to the Bureau of the Working Group to meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body and/or meetings of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body on modalities to be determined by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body itself.

7. The Working Group may allow the Bureau to use written silence procedures as a tool for decision-making on procedural matters, while limiting its use to the extent possible.

8. The Working Group considered and approved its meeting report, and the Co-Chairs closed the session.

= = =