

Interim report of the seventh meeting of the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005)

1. The seventh meeting of the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) (WGIHR) was held from 5 to 9 February 2024 in a hybrid format under the leadership of Dr Abdullah Assiri of Saudi Arabia and Dr Ashley Bloomfield of New Zealand as Co-Chairs, with the following Vice-Chairs: Dr Sultani Matendehero of Kenya, Mr Colin McIff of the United States of America, Ambassador François Rivasseau of France and Ambassador Achsanul Habib of Indonesia.
2. In accordance with the Working Group's decision on webcasting and participation of relevant stakeholders, agenda items 1, 5 and 6 were considered in open sessions that were webcast.¹ Agenda items 2, 3 and 4 were reserved for the drafting group and were considered in closed sessions.
3. Following the adoption of the agenda² and programme of work,³ the Co-Chairs provided an update on intersessional activities and coordination with the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (INB). They reported that since the sixth meeting of the WGIHR, the Secretariat had received additional inputs from Member States in relation to Articles 4, 5, 8, 9, and Annex 2. The Bureau has also been working closely with the Secretariat to prepare proposed Bureau's text for 17 Articles and five Annexes, which were shared with Member States ahead of the seventh meeting of the WGIHR.
4. Regarding coordination between the two processes, the Working Group Co-Chairs joined the INB Co-Chairs and the WHO Director-General in a joint informal briefing with members of the WHO Executive Board at its 154th session on 22 January 2024. The briefing was an opportunity to update members of the WHO Executive Board and relevant stakeholders on the work of the INB and WGIHR. The Co-Chairs reported that both the INB and the WGIHR processes have the full support of the Executive Board, and acknowledged the Chair of the Executive Board, Her Excellency Dr Hanan Mohamed Al Kuwari, for her willingness to support both processes.
5. In addition, a joint meeting of the INB and WGIHR Bureaus was held on 31 January. The meeting was used to discuss issues related to pandemic prevention, preparedness, surveillance, One Health, including the public health alert – public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) – pandemic continuum, capacity-building and financing and key areas of overlap between the two processes. It was

¹ Document A/WGIHR/2/8 Rev.1.

² Document A/WGIHR/7/1.

³ Document A/WGIHR/7/2.

again clear from these discussions that a coordinated approach is needed to continue to ensure these important issues are properly reflected across the two processes.

6. Following an initial discussion on the proposed amendments held in an open session, the Working Group transitioned into a drafting session and considered the Bureau's proposed text for Articles discussed at previous meetings of the WGIHR and during the intersessional period. The proposals were considered in the following groups:

- Group 1: Article 35, Article 36, Annex 6, Annex 8, Article 37 and Annex 3;
- Group 2: Article 4, Article 1, Article 5, Article 8, Article 9, Annex 2 and Article 45;
- Group 3: Article 15, Article 16, Article 17 and Article 18;
- Group 4: Article 42, Article 43 and Article 56;
- Group 5: Article 24 and Annex 4.

7. The Bureau's proposed text on collaboration, capacity-building and financing, Articles 13, 44 and Annex 1, were tabled and discussed during the meeting. The Co-Chairs had discussions during the week with the proponents of Article 44A on financing, with a view to developing an updated text proposal, taking into account the work happening on this topic in the INB.

8. Bureau Vice-Chair Ambassador Rivasseau, with support from co-facilitators, the United States of America and Zambia, shared updates on the proposed approach to Articles 1, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 48 and 49 related to the public health alert – PHEIC – pandemic continuum. The Bureau will provide updated proposals based on the outcome of discussions during the seventh meeting.

9. Regarding Articles 53A, 53 bis-quater, 54 and 54bis. related to governance, monitoring and oversight, the Co-Chairs held discussions with the proponents with a view to producing a combined text proposal for consideration by the drafting group. This proposal will be circulated along with updated text proposals on other Articles and Annexes, including Articles 44A and 13A and new Annex 10, after the meeting.

10. The Co-Chairs provided an update on the proposed approach for further work on Articles 1, 2 and 3, and proposals for which consensus, in principle, was reached during the sixth meeting of the WGIHR and the seventh meeting of the WGIHR – relating to Articles 9, 19, 23, 27, 28, 31, 37, and Annexes 3 and 8.

11. The drafting group provided constructive feedback on the Bureau's draft text proposals, including those shared during the meeting. The drafting group underscored the need to continue working on draft text proposals on all the Articles and Annexes with proposed amendments so that an overall package of amendments could be finalized and agreed. The Bureau's text proposals on Articles and Annexes that were shared during the meeting will remain open for further written feedback from States Parties until the end of the day (Central European Time) on Friday 23 February 2024.

12. The Working Group agreed that efforts should continue during the intersessional period, supported by the Bureau and the Secretariat, including as follows:

- discussions among the proponents of various proposed amendments, with a view to the presentation of any outcomes for the consideration of the drafting group;
- discussions with relevant subgroups of INB on issues of common interest;
- intersessional briefings and facilitated intersessional consultations, in a hybrid format and open to all drafting group members, as well as joint intersessional work with the INB at dates and times to be announced, covering articles, annexes and topics discussed during the seventh and previous meetings of the WGIHR, including those that had been the subject of intersessional work. The outcomes of facilitated intersessional consultations are understood not to constitute agreed text and would be made available in advance of the eighth meeting of the WGIHR in April 2024;
- preparation, as relevant, by the Bureau, with the assistance of the Secretariat, of draft text proposals based on the discussions so far, for consideration by the Working Group at its eighth meeting, without prejudice to the status of the proposed amendments by States Parties;
- holding of a joint plenary session of the WGIHR and INB during the eighth meeting of the INB on Friday 23 February 2024 with the time and modalities to be determined and announced by the WHO Secretariat.

13. The Working Group further agreed that a dedicated session should be held to discuss the Bureau’s text proposals on Articles 13A and 44A and other Articles addressing equity not covered during the week. The Working Group supported the Bureau’s proposal to suspend this seventh meeting of the WGIHR and hold a resumed session ahead of its eighth meeting. The date, which is proposed to be during the period 4–15 March 2024, and modalities would be determined and announced by the WHO Secretariat as soon as possible. Articles 13A and 44A will also be considered by the drafting group on the first day of the eighth meeting of the WGIHR, taking into account discussions in the eighth and the ninth meetings of the INB.

14. The Working Group then considered proposals from Member States for entities to be included in Annex D and/or Annex E of document A/WGIHR/4/6. The Working Group was reminded that, ahead of the meeting, the Secretariat had invited Member States to put forward the names of additional entities to be included in those annexes. It was noted that no proposals for additional entities had been shared with the Secretariat by the deadline. The list of relevant stakeholders would remain a living document, to be updated as necessary.

15. The Working Group considered and approved its interim meeting report, and the Co-Chairs suspended the meeting.

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