

Report of the meeting

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

1. The eighth meeting of the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) (WGIHR) was held from 22 to 26 April 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. The Director-General welcomed participants to the meeting. In his opening remarks, the Director-General commended the Working Group for its progress regarding the possible new designation of a “pandemic emergency” within the public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) process. He also urged the Working Group to capitalize on this progress and focus on the provisions related to equity and closing the gaps in the global health architecture that had been exposed during the pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).
3. In accordance with the Working Group’s decision on webcasting and the 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.
4. 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 seventh meeting of the WGIHR, Member States had continued to provide written feedback on the proposed Bureau text. Building on this, the Bureau had developed a full suite of text proposals and related rationales, which had been shared with Member States ahead of the meeting. The text proposals had been published online. The questions and answers regarding the WGIHR process had also been updated online thanks to Member State contributions.

¹ Document A/WGIHR/2/8 Rev.1.

² Document A/WGIHR/8/1.

³ Document A/WGIHR/8/2.

5. Regarding coordination between the two processes, the Working Group Co-Chairs had met with the INB Co-Chairs on Friday 12 April 2024 to continue discussions on issues of common interest. The members of the INB and the WGIHR Bureau would continue to work closely to ensure that these important issues were 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 updated text proposals. During the drafting session, Member States expressed their appreciation to the Bureau and the Secretariat for their work in preparing the updated text proposals. The drafting group provided constructive feedback on the Bureau's text proposals.

7. Member States discussed the following articles and annexes and reached convergence on many of the topics therein:

- Text proposals regarding the public health alert/PHEIC/pandemic continuum, initially relating to Articles 11, 12, 48 and 49 and relevant related definitions;
- Part I. Definitions, purpose and scope, principles and responsible authorities: Article 4 and relevant related definitions;
- Part II. Information and public health response: Articles 5 and 13 and Annex 1; and Articles 6 to 10;
- Part III. Recommendations: Articles 15 to 18;
- Part IV. Points of entry: Article 19;
- Part V. Public health measures: Articles 23 and 24; and Articles 27, 28 and 31;
- Part VI. Health documents: Articles 35 and 37;
- Part VIII. General provisions: Articles 42 and 43.

8. The Bureau's text proposals on articles and annexes that were shared in advance of the meeting will remain open for further written feedback from States Parties until 24:00 CEST on 6 May 2024.

9. The Co-Chairs introduced the text proposal for new Article 54 bis, which relates to proposals for amendments to Article 54 and proposals for new Articles 53A, 53 bis, 53 ter, 53 quater and 54 bis.

10. The Co-Chairs introduced the WGIHR draft resolution for consideration by the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly, which would be considered separately from the INB draft resolution in order to ensure clarity. The two draft resolutions would contain cross-references to each other, as needed.

11. The Working Group supported the Bureau's proposal to suspend the eighth meeting of the WGIHR and hold a resumed session to continue and conclude its work according to the mandate provided by the Health Assembly. The proposed dates for the resumed session were 16–17 May 2024, with the meeting times and modalities to be determined and announced by the WHO Secretariat. The Bureau would circulate its revised text by 10 May 2024.

12. 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/7/6. 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.

13. The Working Group considered and approved the interim meeting report and the Co-Chairs suspended the session.

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