



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

FIFTY-SECOND WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
Provisional agenda item 2

A52/2
12 April 1999

A year of change

Reports of the Executive Board on its 102nd and 103rd sessions

1. The Executive Board held two sessions during the past year: the 102nd session, on 18 and 19 May 1998, and the 103rd session, from 25 January to 1 February 1999. In addition, Board members participated in a retreat with the Director-General, held from 16 to 18 October 1998. The main outcomes are summarized below.

102nd SESSION (May 1998)

2. In response to decision WHA51(10), in which the Fifty-first World Health Assembly decided to refer resolution EB101.R24 on the **revised drug strategy** back to the Executive Board for further consideration, the Board adopted a decision (EB102(14)) establishing an open-ended ad hoc group to explore the complex issues raised by the resolution. The decision called for the ad hoc group to draft a resolution for consideration by the Board at its 103rd session. The group met from 12 to 16 October 1998 and after intense negotiations approved a draft resolution by consensus (see paragraph 12 below).

3. The Board considered a progress report on an initiative for **health systems development** which it had requested at its 101st session (decision EB101(4)). The Board noted the report, taking into account that the Director-General elect had expressed particular interest in the subject. The project on Partnerships for Health Sector Development which was subsequently established responds to the need to increase the relevance of work from different parts of WHO to health sector development.

4. After consideration of a report on **WHO country offices: criteria for classifying countries on the basis of need**, the Board adopted a decision (EB102(1)) recommending *inter alia* that the Director-General should determine whether the type of WHO representation in each country is appropriate and that she should report on progress made to the Board at its 105th session in January 2000.

5. For the first time, the Board established an informal **“virtual working group”** to consult with the Secretariat on the preparation of a report on the legal situation concerning entry-into-force of amendments to the Constitution (Article 73) in order for the Board to consider the issues further at the 103rd session.

6. The Board adopted a resolution (EB102.R1) amending the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board with respect to the **term of office of Regional Directors**. The amendment establishes a limit for Regional Directors of a five-year term, renewable once, subject to the proviso that it applied only to future new appointments and not to a reappointment of any current Regional Director. This amendment brings Rule 48

of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board into alignment with Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure of the Health Assembly, which governs the term of office of the Director-General.

7. The Board also adopted a resolution (EB102.R2) recommending that the present functions and independent role of the **United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR)** be maintained and further recommending that WHO be consulted prior to any decision not to maintain the present functions and role of UNSCEAR.

8. Having considered a report by an ad hoc working group on **extrabudgetary resources**, the Board adopted a decision (EB102(2)) requesting the Director-General to draw up a policy document based on the report and any comments of the Board thereon, for consideration by the Board in 1999, and a draft resolution for consideration by the Health Assembly.

9. The **Director-General elect addressed the Board** and outlined her plans for focusing the work of the Organization. She called on the Board to follow more closely the work of the Secretariat and to advise on how to better structure the agenda and working arrangements for Board meetings, and on how interaction between the Executive Board and the Secretariat might be strengthened. She invited the Board to join her in a two-day retreat to discuss the tasks ahead in an informal setting before its January 1999 session.

RETREAT (October 1998)

10. During the course of the retreat, a number of ideas were put forward on expansion of the Board's terms of reference, the approach to the agenda, the initial briefing of new members, mechanisms for facilitating collaboration between sessions, continuity between Chairmen of the Board, participation in the budgetary process, and ways to improve the effectiveness of committees established by the Board. These ideas were brought together in a Note by the Chairman, which was submitted to the Board for discussion at the 103rd session (see paragraph 16 below).

103rd SESSION (January 1999)

11. In a departure from previous formats, the Board devoted the first day of the session to a broad policy discussion on the way ahead for WHO and trends and challenges in world health.

12. The Board considered the report of the ad hoc group on the **revised drug strategy** and the draft resolution prepared by the group. The resolution (EB103.R1), adopted without amendment, recommends a draft resolution to the Fifty-second World Health Assembly. In inviting the Board to adopt the resolution, the Chairman remarked that the very wide range of people represented on the ad hoc group provided a good illustration of the new ways of working adopted by the Board and the Director-General.

13. The Board reviewed a report on the Tobacco Free Initiative and adopted a resolution (EB103.R11) entitled "**Towards a WHO framework convention on tobacco control**". This resolution recommends a draft resolution to the Fifty-second World Health Assembly which will start the drafting process with a view to completing the preparation of the draft text of the framework convention for consideration by the Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly (2003).

14. Following consideration of a report on **Roll Back Malaria**, the Board adopted a resolution (EB103.R9) which recommends a draft resolution to the Health Assembly requesting the Director-General *inter alia* to

draw on the whole Organization in supporting Member States and to report regularly on progress of the global Roll Back Malaria partnership to the Executive Board and the Health Assembly.

15. The Board also adopted a resolution on **poliomyelitis eradication** (EB103.R10) recommending a draft resolution to the Health Assembly. The resolution is aimed at accelerating eradication activities and enhancing surveillance and urges Member States to begin the process leading to the laboratory containment of wild poliovirus.

16. The Board considered a Note by the Chairman on the **Role of the Executive Board** (document EB103/8) summarizing the discussions held at the retreat for Board members. The principal outcomes were:

C The Secretariat and the Director-General will continue their reflection on the optimum role of the Board in the context of change in WHO;

C The Legal Counsel is to prepare an amendment to the Board's Rules of Procedure concerning new methods for electing the Board's Chairman to be considered at the Board session in May 1999;

C The Board adopted a resolution (EB103.R8) establishing an Audit Committee.

17. Consideration of the Director-General's **proposed budget 2000-2001** was a major focus of the Board's work at its 103rd session. The Board adopted a resolution on budget presentation and process (EB103.R6) which *inter alia* requests the Director-General, prior to the Fifty-second World Health Assembly, to consider providing additional information related to targets and results, evaluation findings, staffing, budgetary allocations and actual expenditures, and to consider presenting the budget in a format that aligns regional programme activities with the headquarters structure. In response to this resolution, the Director-General has updated the proposed programme budget for the Health Assembly.

18. The Board reviewed the annual report on **Employment and participation of women in the work of WHO**. The Board commended the Director-General for demonstrating movement towards the expressed targets of the United Nations system on parity for men and women in the workforce, and it added an item on the subject to the provisional agenda for the Fifty-second World Health Assembly.

19. The Board reappointed Sir George Alleyne as **Regional Director for the Americas** for a four-year term as from 1 February 1999, and Dr Uton Muchtar Rafei as **Regional Director for South-East Asia** for a five-year term as from 1 March 1999. It appointed Dr Shigeru Omi as **Regional Director for the Western Pacific** for a five-year term as from 1 February 1999.

20. Following consideration of comments from the regional committees on a **proposal to amend Article 2 of the Constitution** and a report by the Secretariat in consultation with a "virtual working group" of Board members on a **proposal to amend Article 73**, the Board decided that both articles should remain unchanged.

21. The Board adopted a resolution (EB103.R17) approving the terms of reference for the **WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health** (CCH) as proposed by the Director-General in consultation with the Executive Director of UNICEF, the Executive Director of UNFPA and as recommended by CCH at its first meeting.

22. Finally, the Board considered a supplementary agenda item on **reform of the Health Assembly**, proposed by a member of the Board. In introducing the item, the Director-General noted that recent changes in the conference arrangements of other United Nations bodies provided scope for interesting debate. While

any reform of current Health Assembly arrangements would require formal approval by the Assembly, it would be possible to organize meetings during the Assembly to allow for a more constructive exchange of views at ministerial level. As an interim measure, and on a trial basis, she proposed that ministerial round table meetings be introduced at the forthcoming Health Assembly, in addition to the general discussion in plenary meetings on the theme of *The world health report 1999*. The Board adopted a resolution (EB103.R19) endorsing this interim arrangement and recommending that the Health Assembly evaluate the interim arrangement with a view to revising the arrangements for the conduct of its proceedings at subsequent Assemblies.

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