

168th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Virtual Session, 21-25 June 2021

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A. SEVENTY-FOURTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

1. The Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly (WHA) of the World Health Organization (WHO) was held from 24 May to 1 June 2021. Owing to the unprecedented circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Health Assembly was held virtually. Representatives and delegates of 194 Member States were in attendance. The President of the Assembly was Bhutan, represented by Mrs. Dechen Wangmo. Five countries served as Vice Presidents: Benin, Estonia, Guatemala, Mongolia, and Qatar in representation of their respective regions.

2. Guatemala, served as Vice President of the Assembly, representing the Region of the Americas. Paraguay served as Chair of Committee A and Barbados as Rapporteur of Committee B. The Region was also represented at the General Committee by Canada, Chile, Cuba, and the United States of America, and in the Committee of Credentials by Haiti and Panama.

3. In his opening remarks (1), Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO, recognized health and care workers at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic for their dedication, service, and sacrifices, and expressed his hope that every Member State would take action to protect and invest in its health and care workforce.

4. Reflecting on the epidemiological situation, Dr. Tedros cautioned that despite a downturn in the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths being reported, the world remains in a very dangerous situation. He addressed the inequitable distribution of vaccine, noting that over 75% of all vaccines have been administered in just 10 countries. The Director-General expressed his concern over the vast gap between the number of doses available to COVAX and those being administered in a small group of countries and warned that the ongoing vaccine crisis was only perpetuating the pandemic.

5. To this end, Dr. Tedros appealed to Member States to enhance their efforts to control transmission and support a massive push to vaccinate at least 10% of the population of every country by September, and at least 30% by the end of 2021. To achieve this goal, Dr. Tedros explained that it would be key to: *a*) provide support to and share doses through COVAX; *b*) scale up manufacturing; and *c*) fully fund the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator. He also underscored the need to waive intellectual property protections

on vaccines is needed to help end the pandemic and praised those Member States that had done so.

6. Dr. Tedros reminded Member States of the broad scope of WHO's work beyond the pandemic in line with the "triple billion" targets and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals, summarizing achievements, as well as ongoing and future initiatives. Member States of the Americas received a variety of acknowledgments for their efforts from the Director-General. Dr. Tedros announced WHO's plans to publish interim guidance for validation of viral hepatitis elimination, with assessments to start in five countries, including Brazil. Dominica received recognition for its recent certification for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis. Additionally, El Salvador was lauded as first country in Central America to be certified as malaria-free by WHO.

7. Noting that, "this will not be the last time the world faces the threat of a pandemic" the Director-General reinforced the Organization's commitment and willingness to listen to Member States and make the necessary changes to *a)* enhance WHO's work in emergency preparedness and response, and *b)* support Member States in preparing for and preventing emergencies. Dr. Tedros was pleased that many Member States had recognized the need for a significant increase in more predictable and sustainable financing for WHO to carry out its work. In closing, he reiterated his call for cooperation, solidarity, and equity and stated, "A safer world is not a zero-sum game; it is the opposite. If anyone is left behind, all are held back" (*1*).

8. During the Assembly, there was active participation and involvement from Member States of the Region of the Americas, though no joint statements from the countries of the Americas were presented. The discussion focused on the theme, "Ending this pandemic, preventing the next: building together a healthier, safer and fairer world." Speaking at the plenary of the Assembly, Member States of the Americas reaffirmed their commitment to ending the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as their support for a strengthened WHO.

9. The agenda of the Assembly included general items related to technical and health issues, as well as administrative, budgetary, and institutional items.¹ As on previous occasions, these matters were dealt with in committees A and B, and in plenary sessions.

10. Approximately 15 intergovernmental/intersessional processes were mandated by the WHA which have major implications for Regional Offices and Regional Committees (e.g. the establishment of a working group on strengthening WHO preparedness and response to health emergencies; the request for a special session of the WHA to discuss a possible pandemic treaty or other instrument, and others). Concerns were expressed about the capacity of some Member States to effectively engage in such processes. A list of selected resolutions and decisions adopted by the World Health Assembly that are of

¹ The agenda of the 74th World Health Assembly, as well as other related documents discussed at the Assembly, are available from: https://apps.who.int/gb/e/e_wha74.html

interest to the Region, the related resolutions of the Pan American Health Organization, and some of the implications that the WHA resolutions have for the Region can be found in the Annex.²

Other Matters: Executive Board

11. The 149th Session of the Executive Board was held on 2 June 2021. The Chair of the Executive Board was Dr. Patrick Amoth, of Kenya. Argentina was elected as Vice-chair. Colombia, Grenada, Guyana, Paraguay, and Peru currently occupy the other five seats of the Board that represent the Region of the Americas. Furthermore, with the end of term of Chile and the United States of America, Argentina and Grenada will occupy the two seats of the Americas in the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee.

12. The agenda of the 149th Session of the Executive Board consisted of 16 items, including the process for the election of the Director-General of the World Health Organization and future sessions of Governing Bodies meetings, among others.³ Regarding dates for future sessions of the Executive Board and the Health Assembly, the Board agreed on the following timetable:

- a) The special session of the World Health Assembly to be held from 29 November to 1 December 2021 at WHO headquarters, Geneva, in person, or virtually if limitations to physical meetings preclude the holding of the special session in person.
- b) The Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board to hold its thirty-fifth meeting from 19-21 January 2022 at WHO headquarters.
- c) The 150th Session of the Executive Board to begin on 24 January 2022, at WHO headquarters in Geneva, and end no later than 29 January 2022.
- d) The Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly to be held at the Palais des Nations, in Geneva, starting on 22 May 2022 and ending no later than 28 May 2022.
- e) the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board to hold its thirty-sixth meeting from 18-20 May 2022 at WHO headquarters.

Action by the Executive Committee

13. The Executive Committee is invited to take note of this report and provide any comments it deems pertinent.

Annex

² A more exhaustive analysis of the implications of the WHO Resolutions for the Region will be presented during the 59th Directing Council to be held 20-24 September 2021.

³ The full versions of these reports, as well as other related documents discussed at the 149th Session of the WHO Executive Board, are available from: https://apps.who.int/gb/e/e_eb149.html

References

1. World Health Organization. Opening address by Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General [Internet]. 74th World Health Assembly; 24 May 2021; Geneva, Switzerland. Geneva (Switzerland): WHO; 2021. Available from: <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-world-health-assembly---24-may-2021>.

Annex

Table 1. Selected Resolutions Adopted by the 74th World Health Assembly, Documents of Reference, and Implications for the Region of the Americas

| Resolution | Reference Documents | PAHO Resolutions and Documents | Implications for the Region ¹ |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>WHA74.3 Programme budget 2022–2023</p> | <p>Proposed programme budget 2022–2023 Documents A74/5 Rev.1, A74/5 Add.1, A74/9 and A74/46</p> <p>Sustainable financing: Report of the first and second meeting of the Working Group on Sustainable Financing Document A74/6 and decision EB148(12)</p> | <p>OD358 and CD57.R5 (2019)</p> <p>Program Budget of the Pan American Health Organization 2020–2021</p> | <p>The Programme budget 2022–2023 (PB22-23) of the World Health Organization (WHO) includes a 16% budget space increase in base programs compared to 2020-2021. For the Regional Office for the Americas (AMRO), this is reflected in a 17% increase with respect to 2020-2021 (from US\$ \$215 million² to \$252.6 million) however, AMRO receives the smallest share of WHO’s budget (less than 6%).</p> <p>Incorporating existing lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and implementing WHO’s transformation initiatives (with a major emphasis on Digital Health) are the main justifications for the global proposed budget increase in 2022-2023. To finance the PB22-23, assessed contributions remain at the same level of 2020-2021, hence there is no expected increase in quota contributions for next biennium at this stage. The programmatic structure remains the same as for WHO’s PB20-21 however, the budget is presented by the 13th General Programme of Work (GPW 13) outcomes and not by Strategic Priorities/Billions as in the WHO PB20-21. The GPW 13 Results Framework will continue to be used to report on the WHO PB22-23, building on the previous biennium.</p> <p>A revised WHO PB is expected to be submitted to the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in May 2022, reflecting the forthcoming recommendations of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPPR) and the Working Group on Sustainable Financing. The Working Group was established by Executive Board decision EB148(12), which also requests the Working Group to submit an interim report on its work to the regional committees (paragraph 7). The development timeline for the PB22-23 of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) will allow for the incorporation of relevant recommendations and decisions of the approved WHO PB before it is finalized and submitted for approval to the Directing Council in late September 2021. The proposed extension to 2025 for the</p> |

¹ A more exhaustive analysis of the implications of the WHO resolutions for the Region will be presented during the 59th Directing Council to be held 20-24 September 2021.

² Unless otherwise indicated, all monetary figures in this document are expressed in United States dollars.

| Resolution | Reference Documents | PAHO Resolutions and Documents | Implications for the Region ¹ |
|--|---|---|--|
| | | | <p>GPW 13 targets would allow for more time for the materialization of impact and outcome-level changes and would also bring PAHO and WHO strategic planning frameworks closer in alignment, given the period of the PAHO Strategic Plan 2020-2025. This will facilitate implementation, monitoring, and reporting efforts.</p> |
| <p>WHA74.7 Strengthening WHO preparedness for and response to health emergencies</p> | <p>WHO's work in health emergencies Document A74/9</p> <p>Strengthening WHO's global emergency preparedness and response Document A74/9</p> <p>Strengthening preparedness for health emergencies: implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) Documents A74/9 and A74/9 Add.1</p> | <p>CD58/INF/14-C (2020) Plan of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction 2016-2021: Progress Report</p> <p>CD58/INF/12 (2020) Plan of Action for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance: Final Report</p> <p>CD55/17, Rev. 1 and CD55.R10 (2016) Plan of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction 2016-2021</p> <p>CD53/12 and CD53.R9 (2014) Plan of Action for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance</p> | <p>The resolution establishes a Member States' Working Group on Strengthening WHO preparedness and response to health emergencies, open to all Member States, to <i>a</i>) review recommendations and findings of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, the IHR Review Committee and the Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, and <i>b</i>) submit a report with proposed actions for WHO, Member States, and non-State actors, as appropriate, for consideration by the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly, through the Executive Board. The Working Group shall have a Bureau comprising two Co-Chairs and four Vice-Chairs, to be appointed at the first meeting which will be convened no later than 17 September 2021.</p> |

Table 2. Selected Decisions Adopted by the 74th World Health Assembly, Documents of Reference, and Implications for the Region of the Americas

| Decision | Reference Documents | PAHO Resolutions and Documents | Implications for the Region ³ |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>WHA74(16) Special session of the World Health Assembly to consider developing a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response</p> | <p>WHO's work in health emergencies Document A74/9</p> <p>Strengthening WHO's global emergency preparedness and response Document A74/9</p> <p>Strengthening preparedness for health emergencies: implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) Documents A74/9 and A74/9 Add.1</p> | <p>CD58/INF/14-C (2020) Plan of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction 2016-2021: Progress Report</p> <p>CD58/INF/12 (2020) Plan of Action for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance: Final Report</p> <p>CD55/17, Rev. 1 and CD55.R10 (2016) Plan of Action for Disaster Risk Reduction 2016-2021</p> <p>CD53/12 and CD53.R9 (2014) Plan of Action for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance</p> | <p>The decision requests the Director-General to convene a special session of the World Health Assembly in November 2021 for Member States to consider developing a WHO convention, a agreement or other international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response.</p> <p>The Member States Working Group on Strengthening WHO Preparedness and Response to Health Emergencies is requested to prioritize the assessment of the benefits of developing a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response and to provide a report to be considered at the special session of the Health Assembly.</p> |

³ A more exhaustive analysis of the implications of the WHO decisions for the Region will be presented during the 59th Directing Council to be held 20-24 September 2021.