

## Governance of WHO

### CONCEPT PAPER

1. In resolution WHA64.2 the World Health Assembly requested the Executive Board to establish an appropriate process to examine the issues related to WHO's governance identified in the report of the Director-General.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, at its 129th session, the Board requested the Secretariat to prepare three concept papers by the end of June 2011, the content of which would continue to evolve throughout the consultative process.
2. In line with the Executive Board's decision,<sup>2</sup> this paper is the first draft of a concept note in relation to the governance of WHO. It summarizes the main issues identified in recent consultations as well as those raised by the Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly and the Board at its 129th session, and proposes possible ways to continue the discussion.
3. The salient aspects raised by Member States can be grouped into four broad areas. The first relates to priority setting and the need for the **governing bodies' work to be more focused and strategic so that they effectively carry out their Constitutional functions**. The key reform here will be the alignment of the governing bodies' resolutions with corporate priorities, ensuring a more strategic and disciplined approach to decision-making by the Health Assembly, and enabling the necessary oversight of programme and financial implementation, including the fiscal soundness of Organizational practices.
4. The second area relates to the **need for better alignment between the global and regional governing bodies**. The main issue is the achievement of greater coherence between the regional and the global governing bodies, with better coordination of the respective agendas promoting complementarity and synergy and avoiding duplication of debate.
5. The third area can be summarized as **better sequencing of the different governing body meetings**. The issues identified include the need to strengthen the role of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board and to review the timing and duration of its meetings in order to increase its oversight and preparatory functions, in particular with regard to the consideration of the Proposed programme budget; to ensure that the Board and its committees address a number of issues – especially managerial matters – more effectively and take final executive decisions on them without referral to the Health Assembly; to plan a leaner but more substantive agenda of agreed technical and policy priorities for the Health Assembly and thus facilitate more strategic debate; to explore the need for further subsidiary bodies of the Board, for example on programme development; and to consider a more tactical use of the Independent Expert Oversight Advisory Committee, for example requesting it to perform thematic reviews.
6. The fourth area can be described as the promotion of more active **engagement and participation of all Member States in the governance of the Organization**. The issues identified are the following: more informed participation by all Member States so that the governance processes are truly inclusive; and increased attention to the re-balancing of the way in which Member States exercise their role as informed and active participants of the governing bodies by, for example, provision of sufficient briefing on the historical and technical background of issues under consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Document A64/4.

<sup>2</sup> Decision EB129(8).

7. To ensure a thorough process of governance reform that is driven by Member States, the areas for improvement and issues identified above need to be assessed and debated in sufficient depth. Member States may wish to consider establishing an open-ended working group of the Board, with the mandate of developing the agenda for change in the domain of WHO's governance. This is a proven, effective method of work that has previously been employed by the Board and some regional committees to identify solutions in similar change processes.

**Points for discussion**

8. Member States are invited to comment on the key issues identified, to suggest others, to propose possible solutions to the points identified, and to comment on the proposed ongoing process.