

## 3.2 WHO reform

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### In focus

[EB142/5](#) addresses issues concerning the rules of procedure of the governing bodies including:

- A. Measures to improve the efficiency of the governing bodies and their focus on strategic issues;
  - strengthen the strategic role of the Executive Board - suggestions (a) to (d)
  - improve agenda management - suggestions (e) and (f)
  - streamline management of the session - suggestions (g) to (i)
- B. Interpretational ambiguities and gaps in the process for the inclusion of additional, supplementary and urgent items to the Assembly agenda - options for Rule 5 revision
- C. Further ambiguities, gaps and other shortcomings in the rules of procedure of the governing bodies - suggestions (a) to (j).

The analysis presented in EB142/5 is accompanied by a corresponding series of questions and draft decisions for the Board to consider.

[EB142/6](#) reports on the evaluation by the Officers of the Board of their experience in using the criteria and prioritization tool in respect of proposals for additional agenda items including an amended tool and draft decision.

[EB142/7 Rev.1](#) presents a strategy and implementation plan for value for money in WHO. Document [A70/INF./6](#) addressing value for money was considered briefly during WHA70 discussion of PB18-19 (see [PSRA3](#)).

### Background

#### Rules of procedure for governing bodies

Responding to [WHA69\(8\)](#), OP (5), the Secretariat produced [A70/51](#) which presented two options regarding the role of the January EB in determining the provisional agenda for the Assembly. Discussing this in the 3rd meeting of Committee B ([A70/B/PSR/3](#)) Switzerland, the US, UK and Australia argued for Option 1 giving the Board the power to exclude 'additional items' from the Assembly provisional agenda. Thailand, China, Zimbabwe, Liberia (for Afro) and Argentina argued for Option 2 which would give the Board the right to

recommend deferral of 'additional items' subject to further decision by the General Committee of the Assembly. The item was reopened at the [5th meeting](#) where the lack of consensus was still evident and the item was deferred to EB142.

In EB141 following WHA70 the Board decided (in [EB141\(8\)](#)) broadened the request to the Secretariat for further analysis of possible improvements in the Rules of Procedure.

[EB142/5](#) responds to these requests. In developing EB142/5 the Secretariat, in consultation with the officers of the Board, prepared a [discussion document](#) which was subject to consultation with member states in Aug and Sept of 2017,

## Prioritisation of 'additional items' proposed for EB consideration

Responding to [WHA69\(8\)](#), OP (3), the Secretariat produced [EB141/5](#) for the consideration of the EB141 in May 2017. The Board decided (in [EB142\(8\)](#)) to proceed with the trial of the tool. It is this trial upon which the officers of the Board report in [EB142/6](#).

## Value for money in WHO

A big issue for WHA70 was the proposed 3% increase in assessed contributions which was considered in the context of the Programme Budget 2018-19. Among the papers tabled for consideration under this item was an information paper [A70/INF./6](#) entitled "Better value, better health Towards a strategy and plan for value for money in WHO".

The PB with the 3% increase was endorsed by the Assembly in [WHA70.5](#) including a request (OP11(4)) to control costs and seek efficiencies. It maybe that the 'value for money initiative' was part of a deal to get the 3% through. During the debate over the PB18-19 the UK representative said that:

*While he supported the 3% increase in assessed contributions, it was not sufficient to solve the situation; voluntary funds were also required. Furthermore, WHO should ensure that its funding expenditure was set with a focus on value for money. The Secretariat must communicate its plans in that regard to assure Member States of the optimum use of the funds they contributed. He commended the preparation of document A70/INF./6, which set out possibilities for the implementation of a value for money plan. He would welcome further information concerning value for money plans and ways to engage Member States in such efforts, which would be vital to the proposed programme budget and forthcoming thirteenth general programme of work*

The report tabled for this discussion at EB142 ([EB142/7 Rev.1](#)) represents the next step in elaborating the 'value for money' plan.

See [Tracker Links](#) to previous discussions of WHO Reform including documents, debates and decisions as well as previous PHM commentaries.

# PHM comment

## Rules of procedure for governing bodies

There is clearly scope for improving the efficiency and strategic focus of the governing bodies. Many of the suggestions included in EB142/5 make sense and maybe worth trialling.

However, there does appear to be a trade-off, between efficiency and voice, in the decisions before the Board. In view of the progressive transfer of operational priority-setting from the governing bodies to the donors a reduction in opportunity to be heard will further disempower L&MIC member states.

The proper response to this threat is lift the freeze and to restore sovereignty to the member states.

## Value for money in WHO

At face value, no-one could object to a value-for-money initiative.

However, allegations of inefficiency (waste, lack of transparency, duplication, lack of prioritization) have been used by a clique of the rich member state donors for many years to resist calls for lifting the freeze on ACs, lifting the budget ceiling and untying earmarked voluntary contributions. It appears that the Secretariat has been forced to acknowledge that it has a value for money problem as a condition of getting a miserable 3% increase in ACs.

WHO is a unique organisation delivering unique outputs which are extremely hard to measure and cost. Producing valid and reliable measures of economy and efficiency would be extremely difficult and expensive. WHO's outcomes and impacts (and hence its effectiveness, as depicted in the Figure in EB142/7 Rev.1) are co-produced by the Secretariat, member states and other partners. Apportioning the influence of various players is virtually impossible.

There is scope for increasing value for money in virtually all organisations but pursuing such opportunities is a management responsibility at all levels. It cannot be imposed as a separate top down intervention.

What is missing from EB142/7 Rev.1 is any mention of the degree to which WHO's funding crisis contributes to inefficiency and ineffectiveness, in particular:

- time spent mobilising funds, developing and redeveloping 'investment cases' for different donors;
- managing the uncertainties associated with unpredictable, delayed and tightly earmarked voluntary contributions;
- working collaboratively despite the competition between different units, and programs, for donor attention;

- managing for collaboration in a vertically fragmented institutional environment (a consequence of donors refusing to contribute funds to WHO and instead setting up new global health initiatives (GHIs).

PHM urges the Secretariat to focus its efforts on continuing improvement in the quality of management at all levels and to avoid applying unnecessary and unproven methodologies, meetings and metrics in the name of value for money.

PHM urges member states to recognise how the ACs freeze, budget ceiling and tight earmarking constitute barriers to achieving value for money in WHO's work.