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5.2 Options for improved decision-making by the governing bodies

Secretariat note: “The Secretariat will report ([EB134/6](#)) on the options for criteria for inclusion, exclusion or deferral of items on the provisional agenda of the Board, as well as the outcome of the in-depth study conducted to ensure coherence between the proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the governing bodies and the existing Rules of Procedure. In addition, information on the work undertaken to minimize the use of paper documents by the governing bodies and further proposals will be presented.”

The item also includes a paper ([EB134/6 Add.1](#)) on the use of an electronic voting system for the appointment of the Director-General.

Background

At its 132nd session, the Executive Board discussed several reports on improving the work of the governing bodies and, in decision [EB132\(15\)](#), requested the Director-General: (1) to take the necessary steps to improve capacity-building and training for new members of the Board and its Officers; (2) to improve electronic access to governing body meetings and documentation on a registered basis; (3) to prepare a study on the feasibility of holding sessions of the Executive Board and World Health Assembly that made minimal use of paper documents; (4) to prepare options for criteria for inclusion, exclusion or deferral of items on the provisional agenda of the Executive Board; and (5) to perform an in-depth study to ensure that the proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the governing bodies contained in document [EB132/5 Add.3](#) are coherent with the existing Rules of Procedure and to make such other proposals based on this study and discussions by the Board at its 132nd session, so as to improve the work of the governing bodies.

Document [EB134/6](#) deals with requests regarding capacity-building and training, electronic access to governing body meetings, and minimal use of paper documents or “paper-smart” meetings, and with options for managing the number of agenda items, and proposals for amendments to the Rules of Procedure.

In resolution [WHA66.18](#), the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly requested the Director-General "... to explore options for the use of electronic voting for the appointment of the Director-General, including the financial and electronic security implications thereof, and to report thereon, through the Executive Board, to the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly".

PHM comment

In the discussion about the modification of the criteria for establishing the agenda of the EB and the WHA, two options were put forward by the Secretariat with the final decision still open. In order to limit the number of agenda items and foster the alignment and coherence with WHO's work more broadly. The criteria for prioritising agenda items should match those used for the priority setting exercise of the GPW.

An explanatory memorandum regarding newly proposed items for the WHA agenda as proposed in para 30 would be useful. This document should include, along with an explanation of the relevance of the topic, a clear description of the motivations, both epidemiological and political, behind the request for inclusion and identification of sponsors.

In addition to greater use of electronic access and hyperlinks in documents we urge the Secretariat to make numerical data available as downloadable spreadsheets and not just as pdf files.

Document [EB134/6 Add.1](#) is a purely technological and procedural consideration. Governing bodies like WHO's EB should not spend the precious resource of their meeting time with such issues.

5.3 Streamlining national reporting and communication with Member States

In decision [EB132\(12\)](#), the Executive Board requested the Director-General to advance the work on streamlining national reporting and communication with Member States, taking into account the division of health responsibilities at national and subnational levels, and to report on progress in implementation, including relevant financial information. The Board is requested to note the report.

In document [EB132/5 Add.4](#), the Director-General had proposed the following reforms:

- *(a) the definition of a minimum set of health data and indicators;*
- *(b) a realistic reporting mechanism on the implementation of governing body resolutions and decisions;*
- *(c) a reporting mechanism on national health policy and laws;*
- *(d) the establishment of a secure web-based platform for formal communication between all three levels of the Secretariat and Member States that is accessible across the whole Secretariat and to focal points in each Member State; and*

- *(e) the creation of a harmonized platform for all reporting, and a web-based repository where all national reports are posted and made available to other Member States.*

This report (Document [EB134/7](#)) describes progress made to date towards the proposed reforms.

(Note that this item was listed on the agenda separately but discussed conjointly with 5.2)

Background

WHO has hitherto required member states to report in accordance with a range of different collection instruments with some duplication and no close coherence and perhaps some excessive requirements. The Organisation is moving towards a more coherent and strategic set of reporting requirements on member states.

Many WHA resolutions include obligations on member states to report back on various commitments. This adds up to quite an onerous reporting requirement. The Secretariat puts forward a number of possible ways of managing this. WHA needs to be a bit more pragmatic in this respect.

Member States often need to look at how other states are approaching particular issues. WHO sees the need to collect, categorise and make accessible a data base of national health policies and laws. The Secretariat is planning on holding a meeting with member states (including legal and policy experts) to discuss how best to approach this need.

There is a need for a web based communications platform to support communications between member states and the WHO. This would need to be part of a general information systems strategy. WHO is working on such a strategy. May be able to use the system in operation with the missions in Geneva in the meantime.

WHO will report to EB136 on progress towards a more comprehensive information and communications system.

The Board is invited to note the report and provide further guidance.

Notes from Debate

Wed Jan 22 (D3)

Second group: 5.2 (Decision, EB134/6, EB134/6 Add.1), 5.3 Streamlining (EB134/7)

Chair: it was discussion on that in the PBAC; orientation: my way of thinking: first, how we turn WHO into a modern organisation and not sacrifice more trees, how to facilitate access to our business electronically? We do not facilitate other people to access now, but we want to be more transparent and make our discussions available to other people outside the room; how we manage the volume of agenda items considering that the number will increase? we have some specific requests: to advise in ways to train new people into the governing bodies; asked to approve the secret proposed in para 4, asked to minimise paper; asked to consider the use of electronic vote for the DG appointment; requested to consider on the preparation of the agenda

of the EB and the WHA and how MSs want to manage the number of agenda items; consider how to manage late res and docs and how to report to the GBs; how to streamline national communication; two blocks: modernize and facilitate.

...

[While the Chair goes on and on about electronic communications the EB Agenda Items page is down!!]

Let's open the two items.

Japan: thank DG and team for this report; one question to Sect about volume of agenda items; if you look at 134/6 page 13 step 3 reference to max no of agenda items to be discussed by EB; but no reference to Assembly; does this mean the Sect does not plan to limit the no of items at Assembly or is it a step wise approach; at the end of the day we should put a limit on the no of items at the Assembly

DG: thanks Omi, yes your suggestion is correct; in due course we need to control assembly but the EB is the driver of items on the Assembly agenda; issues going straight to the assembly not good; once we get EB sorted out the Ass will settle

Saudi Arabia: welcome sect report on streamlining and comms; min indicators commendable; countries own reporting; not statistical models; but resulting data are too far from reality; presenting results to countries hinders work on progra evaluation' welcome proposition for meeting to discuss member needs; new platform of policy good; new information and comms policy; encourage limiting no of agenda items; look forward to Lebanon's proposals

Australia: Supports Secretariat's proposals (capacity building, electronic access, minimizing paper document use). EB agenda: capping and better managing items (part 1A of document). Support par. 33/34 on draft resolutions. Progress reports to be discussed by exception only, if there is need for steering. Support electronic voting (rent appropriate system). Streamline reporting: support suggestions. Support clearer reporting requirements for resolutions. Support for continued work on national regulations (?).

Nigeria: on behalf of AFRO Region; re to decision making of GB: including the capacity for new members, electronically ... concerned that one of the proposal tends to reduce the time to add items inclusion and will result in less possibility to add items; re streamline: regional links established but not impact on the number of requests from the HQ; support to establish mechanisms to report from the regional comm to sect; suggestion of including a report on implem of key interventions /7; support agenda of EB support option 2; support further consultations to identify other needs

Malaysia: takes note of report. Capacity building and training should be made available to all ms, and not just to the new ones. criteria approach to reduce the number of items. documents will continue to occur. they agree with electronic reporting.

Belgium: Welcomes report on improved decision-making. Current meeting shows that reform is urgent. Measures already taken supported. Timeliness of documents a concern. Support proposal by Lebanon (Monday). "Urgent/emergency" nature of new agenda items needs to be further defined. In Europe we adopted a rolling planning of agenda. Belgium supports any reflection process for improving reform at global level, referring to good practices in Regions.

Mexico: commends the secr. option to improve decision making and electr voting. hope to move to new modalities; use of techno innovatio to votation: secretariat can guarantee to MSs is it reliable? stabilisation framework, access code, security to make sure that vote process can be duplicated, make sure to solve tech problems; in favour of approved indicators to monitor global and regional health situation, methods for obtaining info: they should be proper analysed; transparency is important: procedure should be implemented; have a web plat to improve communication between secr and MSs based on general info sys; reform gov oriented: viewpoints of MSs are not always taken into account... on the financing part ensure that inputs from MSs have sufficient time and that they will agree within the WHA

Lebanon: aligns to statement made by saudi arabia. Electronic access to reduce paper consumed. Big concern on the high number of items, which affect the discussion. It will be soon impossible to conclude the agenda. To deal with this are proposed two solutions: 1) criteria approach; 2) fulfillment of all criteria to be included; If the total number is below the ceiling no problem, otherwise we should use the criteria approach; Suggest that the dg create a technical group that would evaluate the fulfillment of criteria before the the eb, thus avoiding diplomatic embassies. Have a flexible referral mechanism and a prior technical evaluation by the technical group .

Chair: interesting proposal by Leb, no objection to electronically paper, voting ...

Break for coffee.

Chair: Sit down so that I can start; Lebanon to clarify the proposal about a committee for set criteria: is it a secr committee or something else?

Leb: no precision on that item... 1° proposal: DG choose qualified people from the secr; 2° but if she wants people from outside we are open to it → so it's a DG decision.

Switzerland: endorse Australia and Belgium statement; wants to comment on 5.2 too many items to deal with... our organization is like a train having difficulties on going; to be efficient: to be selective and focus on priorities. otherwise WHO faces the risk of being lost; need for clear and transparent criteria to agenda item to be added but it up to MSs to be responsible for the number of agenda; EURO region has develop a toolkit to work effectively that can be used.

Myanmar: Refers to par 3 of 134/6 on training. EB members should attend Regional Committee meetings and get more information on regional perspectives. (2) High level policy meetings at Regional level with selected EB members. (3) national delegates should hold meeting with regional EB members in order to brief them on key issues. Use of paper documents vs.

electronic means: low connectivity in many countries, so need for availability of selected printed documents.

Argentina: proposal made by Mexico we align; a lot has been done. many of items are complex and make concrete proposal is hard; need for innovative ways to improve access info and use of technology to be more effective; part 1 A: the proposal should not be a way of restriction for the number on agenda item; concern of negative impact on active participation of MSs; need to find a mechanism to spur contribution from all countries; limited number of agenda item based on the budgetary impact needs to be based on concrete criteria; part 2: late submission: we take note of the progress; part 3: approach could be alternative and secr could make more proposal; part 4: prop in 45 is viable

Brazil: welcomes report. improved transparency and effectiveness. welcome the proposal for minimal use of paper. the item to stress is the need of improvement to modify the agenda and existing criteria. Other fundamental issue is how to increase transparency and preparation in the preparation of the agenda; adding a screening body that would have two representatives of all the regions would help to create a provisional agenda.

South Africa: Voting - supports idea. Reduction in paper: we would save 300 trees and 148'000 USD (we could then pay further interpreters). Lebanon's proposal: we need a ceiling, but prior technical assessment is difficult. Who would do it? Structure outside the governing bodies? The current EB includes 15 progress reports - remove them and finish on Friday. Reporting regularly on progress - using the platform to be established for reporting on WHO reform progress.

Cuba: to be a little bit polemic; accept electronic vote system and IT system for the info within the orga; it has to be a life span system and be compatible and as friendly as possible; we take note of the many items on the agenda; problem of having it is we have small time to focus on each and deepen it, lot of items is not a cause of sadness, it should be a source of satisfaction because the orga is upscaling its capacity and it's dealing well; upcoming decision: secr providing info on how other EB work such ILO, WMO... the only EB that lasts 6 day is the WHO one: think about extending the number of days and have more time; embrace Brazil proposal; lebanon is not so good; late proposal: look at them case by case; ensure the possibility of looking at each proposal with the due attention.

DG: in the past EB met for 1 months: how many of you can do it now? Need for congratulate yourselves because you reduced the number of days. I don't think we can go back. I would not recommend it.

Chair: we are talking about making our work visible, enabling the web-broadcast; The people who have the time to come are not necessarily the key persons

Egypt: thank to secr; in line with EMRO statement made by Saudi arabia and lebanon proposal; support the proposal: 1. preparation of set of criteria to include/exclude agenda items; 2. capacity building and training initiative for EB member new and old about rules and procedures

Panama: endorse the efficient use of papers, the use of IT resources, the training of EB members. all the things being proposed need to be properly examined. a lot of ideas we heard fit together and need to be looked at very carefully. what we have to do is to be as inclusive as possible. we are in favour of the proposal by Mexico.

Iran: thanks for the report. support the proposal from lebanon, independent technical committee should be created. Support direct electronic communication. support all electronic facilities for all ms. numbers of items should be implemented in national health system, especially in rural areas.

PBAC Chair: doc manag Germany mention the importance of PBAC meeting and participation of all the members. the necessity of having doc on time is imp for MSs and the chair because of the best preparation of the meeting. Also for me its impossible to contact; complexity of the document might not be an excuse to the late deliver. Make people more accountable to give on time their records; doc clearance process is critical in the delivery

Maldives: Efforts appreciated and supports proposals. Introduce results based approach with indicators. Establish clear communication channels. Issues should determine structure, and not structures determining issues.

Chair: suggestion: there is no opposition to streamlining. Non board members, if you are in concordance you don't need to tell us!! (Finally!) Proposal from lebanon to trial something. Don't need to lock it in stone, let's try an arrangement with the following features and then we will check it.

USA: we do not support any late doc this is a way to reduce the agenda; 5.3 appreciate the focus on streamlining; ok the work on data collection and a set of indicators; large number of op para should give us a pause; new res only when absolutely necessary; propose to have an on line library on resolution to enable MSs to know what has been done by GB.

Monaco: Support Switzerland statement and support idea of trialing solutions and taking stock. We MS are the ones to be responsible for this. Interesting proposal by Australia. Substance matters with decisions to be taken vs. progress reports. Finally proposing a "WHO app" for electronic devices.

Norway: recognize the need to improve decision makin by governing body. Ammended opt 2 is the best to streamline the 'agenda. minimize the late submission from governing bodies. ensure timely disposal of documents. report should be considered only once per year. proposal made by australia goes in the same direction.

UK: to make GB working we all need to play our part; secr in publishing earlier the doc, MSs to be effective members of GB: ok training; support option 3 (2 out of 3); ok concept of maximum numbers; interesting proposal from Norway and Lebanon; screening committee ok but not

sufficient; enquire to what extent you're taking on board good practices from outside, e.g. EURO region

Canada: Improvements priority for Canada. A culture shift is required at both MS and Secretariat - leading to more strategic agenda setting. in the meantime: incremental steps. Governing body at global and regional bodies need to be complementary. Secretary led by EB chair should be more active between the meeting. EB chair as focal point between all the bodies. Support application of proposed criteria, but might result in bundling issues under higher level topic. Culture shift also needed on proliferation of resolutions: Focus on new resolutions plus sound analysis on impact and resources needed.

China: endorse some of the elements of the report. endorse para 45. Missed the notes in some parts.

Germany: urgent need to establish clear rules to limit the number of agenda items; current regulations are not helpful on add agenda item and late submission; for MSs guidance is easier in a limited numbers of age rather than in a large number; ok limit the overall number of agenda item; ok proposal Aust and Norway on progress rep; concrete proposal on what is urgent: can only be proposed if supported of a certain numbers of MSs (at least 12) and a certain number of regions (at least 3); ensure that the item is urgent but still allows the flexibility and not unbalanced; support the view that MSs should facilitate the work of GB but also the role of secretariat is strategic; helpful if doc more clearer on specific decision to be taken and clearer options; transparency of decision making process would be strengthen

Sweden: also for (other Northern European states). Necessary strategic transformation needs true ownership and accountability by secretariat and MS. Until now we have not done well (referring to number of agenda items, late documents). We need to resist the temptation of dealing with everything (Chan: "a lot to say, but little to show" in introductory speech). Let us refer to strategic documents (GPW and program budget), linking proposals to these.

Switzerland: support the proposal of norway. assembly is the best opportunity to hold discussion. support the excellent purposal made by germany on agenda items; proposal: lebanon supported, submit proposal on the framework of the reform: can divide into two groups of items:health technical issues and reform and develop of policies and administration issues; each of this subject, in a specific session of the board; subcommittees of the board on each of the group and then submission to plenary session for decisions; MSs can participate in accord with their interests.

Panama: support proposal made by Norway and Sw about progress reports; they can be immediately included in the WHA agenda; add that we study the possibility to devote a web space of the org to these report to be available before.

Turkey: need for implementation of criteria in managing the items of the agenda. application of the criteria established by GPW12 can provide better consistency between the agenda and the workplan. Application of 48 hours for resolution is important to make the process more

transparent. Considering the number of items, it is appropriate to set up a ceiling. National reporting: we welcome the idea of the web platform. We need better structured databases.

Colombia: agree with the rec of the secr; support all the proposals using a pragmatism approach, wide discussion at the national level about governance; support Mexico proposal discuss the reform before the WHA;

Venezuela: thank the Secretariat for the progress report; support the Brazilian and Cuban proposal.

Cuba: respond to question you asked: extending time schedule of GB we are not gonna insist, only reflect; between 5 and 30 days there is a big difference... blah...

Chair: Cuba is ready to additional resources? Do you think colleagues?

Cuba: we can discuss; who shall evaluate which resolution is essential? We cannot accept any limitation of the agenda; we can work on the requirements; the Brazil proposal is coherent.

Chair: no objection about making us more transparent, about electronic voting and streamlining reporting. I ask the Sect to write a draft decision on this issue. We have some consensus about criteria and assessment. We have some proposals on the assessment (Lebanon, Brazil). Several people have spoken in support to limiting the agenda items. Progress report could go at WHA: none spoke against this proposal.

German proposal on the "late proposal": 12 countries from 3 regions. We ask the Sect to prepare a draft decision and reflect on it. We need informal discussions before coming back. I ask to the legal counsellor and then to the DG.

Legal Counselor: we can present them on a trial basis two years; one question: the expl memorandum not only from MSs but also for UN and other agencies under rule 9; maximum number of items: the use of the word ceiling as a target, but this target can be modified according to what the GB decides

DG: a lot of good suggestions. it seems that it is more important that you preserve your authority to raise agenda item, but some countries said it is important that the agenda item make a good link with the GPW 12 and the PB because there are resource implications; I encourage MS to support that notion and to use the PB as an accountability mechanism; We explain to you how the resolutions are linked to the programme of work. We need horizontal integration of our work. Concerning the late documents: often you think that it is just because of a lot of agenda item but there is also another reason. You ask us to organize intersessional meeting between the EB and the WHA and some of the meetings finish late, and if there are heavy reports they need to be translated and prepared. I would invite some of you to work with us and see! We need to improve the document clearance process but don't punish us if the fault is not with us. Thanks to South Africa for the good ideas. Moving the progress report to the WHA will allow us to have more time for discussion in the EB, we can start piloting.

Norway: you said the work exceed the governing body capacity and we need to increase the resources. We need a wrap up balance. we will look into details the inputs you gave to us, but please let's use governing bodies mechanisms. Not add another layer. None will dear say to a country not to present an agenda item. Thank you Switzerland for saying that the criteria will help only if we respect them.

Chair: the simple reality is an environment in which we have 3 weeks we could find time for all the agenda items. think on how to find broad consensus. We'll reopen this item again.

Friday 24 Jan (D5)

Chair: 5.2 Options for improved decision-making by the governing bodies (continued)

Documents [EB134/6](#), [EB134/6 Add.1](#) and [EB134/6 Add.2](#)

Chair: we agreed on electronic voting, saving paper, let's now focus on the latter part of this decision.(page 3 into 4

Croatia: on behalf of EURO. welcome the draft decision points, the good and constructive spirit show that MS are serious about governance reform. need for a balanced approach on management agenda item. the value of additional structure is not clear to us. we should wait. the; ready to adopt a s it is

Lebanon: I thank sec which integrates proposals in coherent way. consensus on several parts which includes para 1 6o 6 and 7,8,9 soft amendments; para 14 subject odebate. maximum number of items and selection mechanisms. opinion we understand the position of dg and accept her advice not to add more layers. reserv of several members and welcome their commitment to limit the; ready to withdraw third part of their proposal and count on ms to exercise self discipline

Argentina:thanks to secr. for our del we need more analysis to endorse drat decision. we don't have any info for 36 item and any detail. we want to limit this long debate but need to know why 36 is not specified. another point is 1.3 criteria 2.1. another item is 17. which undermine the possibilty of little delegation.

Brazil: expresss its appr of work of sect of prepareing draft; comfy to support most; re Para14 would highligh original intentoin was not to create a new body; acc would be beneficial that two members would be consulted virtually; not preparad to support Para 17 Two urgent items added to this were added to this agenda but they have not contributed much to the night sessions

Switzerland: support croatia (EU) and also thank lebanon. welcomes the text of this decision and appreciate the effort in order to enhance quality of work. this is about efficiency and focus. it is about trusting the who and the sec in the work . would like to reiterate support of text of decision . reiterate par 10 and 17. what would be acceptable for argentina in terms of numbers?

Chair: 1-13 agreed. Agreed! To Argentina re para 17 what numbers would be appropriate

Argentina: considering the maximum number of items, not sure that we need to have any maximum numbers. why do we need a ceiling? MS have agreed that they have to comply the criteria in EB121.R1 (?), but in the reform it is stated that we are not able to agree to all 3 at the same time. so "or" rather than "and". we could have an "or" in the footnote.

Chair: debate about the meaning of footnote 1 on page 3; the numbers are not a ceiling; they are an aspiration; 'endeavour'; You have made a good point re point 17

Cuba: like Argentina we would like to know the criteria that was adopted to arrive at 36 or 48. we are talking about a 50% decrease compared to the agenda of this EB. what was the rationale? basis of average? historical figure?

Sect: not high science; historical basis

DG: not rocket science

Chair: proposed as a trial

Lebanon: clarification: re to Argentina and Cuba para 17 sub b: those that are meeting only one criteria and cannot fit in the agenda are not rejected but postponed to future meetings

South Africa: if indeed we implement in para 10 and using this current agenda as an exercise that would mean reducing 15 items. leaves us with 50 and not 36.

optional additional elements: the assessment of proposed items of group composed of two rep. would these two rep be from board members? this is not a physical meeting. does this mean that members of the board or external?

Chair: Lebanon agreed to delete the optional add element (technical).

Brazil: consensus around the table agree the need to solve this issue of overloaded agenda

important to start... arrive at a concrete solution but we need transparency from MSs

this was expressed in Arg and Cuba

Hierarchy of criteria? number 36 this would include report or substantive matter

interesting to know what we are talking about

e.g. pesticide: very quickly but they are in the agenda and very urgent and need to be discussed.

DG: it is the consensus of countries that we need to manage the agenda. several recom for improvement should be taken together. if you have approved para 10 but moving progress report to assembly directly then 15 progress reports will be moved. can discuss around 50

substantive items. 36 and 48 are historical average. if ms agree on para 10 then para 14 a as a reasonable target; movement of progress reports will allow to study substantive agenda items; major decision in para 10.

Mexico: support the intervention by Argentina; we can understand that this was defined on the basis of history; not pulled out of sleeve; now regarding criteria 1,2 and 3 if we support what Argentina says we also try to understand why this cumulative aspect of this. For 17 yes, perhaps good to distinguish one criterion for urgent matters and another set of criteria for things submitted after the deadline; looking for consensus on 17

Chair: hear the 2 speakers and then tomorrow morning we can have some discussion to consider this issue further.

Cuba: consensus is on the basis of what DG said. para 10 is very important and will reduce our workload; remove para 14; reservations re importance could be attributed to diff themes... we in favour to 10 and remove 14; reservation on language: polio is important for one region, but not for other region... differences we have from a region to another and this is not addressed in 17's language

DG: volunteer to propose something, some risk, having heard countries, the willingness to do a trial, when you have so many moving targets hard to see impact; let us implement up to 13; remove 14 and 17. The more you put in here, more to put in here, the more difficult it is for Sect to juggle; the rules of procedure are very clear; just want

Myanmar: if we remove 14 won't say anything

Andorra: thank the DG, support the proposal made by DG, look further at the criteria at a later stage; Keep 15&16

UK: support the should try anything to have better solutions; observation on empirical evidence: we have 57... item in our agenda in 6 days, I do not know how this observation helps.

Brazil: totally support the proposal made by the DG

Cameroun: support the proposal by DG. keep 15

Chair: adopt 15? adopted