

Highlights from the third day of the 130th Executive Board

Geneva, 19.01.12

Nomination of the Director-General

Dr Margaret Chan was nominated by the Executive Board for a second term as Director-General of the Organisation. This nomination will be submitted for approval to the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly in May 2012.

The first part of this session was not open to NGOs. When the session was opened again, Dr Chan took the floor thanking the Board for their confidence and support.

She stated that the work in public health is never done, with the exception of disease eradication, and reaffirmed her commitment by saying: *"First time I promised to work tirelessly. I have done so. [...] I will work even harder to ensure everyone reaches the highest attainable status of health"*.

All Member States expressed their appreciation and congratulated Dr Chan for the nomination.

However, it has to be mentioned that no other candidates were proposed for the DG position and this situation leaves room for some considerations about the impact of geopolitics on the Organisation management.

WHO Reform

Programmes and priority setting (EB Document 130/5 Add.1)

The discussion about the WHO reform began with comments on document EB 130/5 Add.1 "Programmes and Priority Setting". Commenting on the 7 proposed categories for the next general programme of work, some Latin American countries asked how these categories came to be suggested. Following this observation, Norway and Switzerland, explicitly suggested, at this point in time, to focus on the process and criteria for priority setting rather than on the priorities themselves. On the same issue, Estonia, talking on behalf of EU, directly asked the Secretariat to set up a drafting group that should work separately during the EB, to define the Terms of Reference for priority setting through a Member States-driven process.

Beyond technical arrangements, Estonia as well as Japan and Germany pointed out that priority setting should be linked with the financial reform and that resource mobilization and allocation should necessarily be subordinated to the identified areas of work.

According to Member States suggestions, priority definition should be based on a bottom-up approach taking individual country needs as a starting point. Striking a discordant note, US suggested that global objectives should guide regional and local ones and eventually go back to the centre. The discussion on country needs led to question the resource allocation among the three level of the Organisation and the concept of country grouping proposed in the document (Par. 12). India and China highlighted how the 5 categories proposed are almost entirely based on level

of development rather than on the burden of diseases and how countries in the same group can have different health needs.

Last but not least, Ecuador and France complained about the late release of the document EB130/5 Add. 1 and Add.2, which prevented Member States to adequately analyze and react on them.

Afterwards, three NGOs took the floor: Medicines Sans Frontiere, Medicus Mundi International and the People's Health Movement, and Democratizing Global Health Coalition (a group of public interest organizations that have come together to focus on the WHO Reform). Civil society comments were recalled also in the final speech by the Director General who congratulated them by saying "*You have done a lot of work and you could really highlight the important points*" but she didn't really answered the question posed.

At this point, Dr. Chan summarized the discussion and cleverly clarified that the EB documents prepared by the Secretariat were not meant to be the basis for a negotiation, but just an instrument to stimulate the discussion. She also said: "*This is not a decision making time*".

Addressing Member States suggestions and concerns, she grouped the interventions into two broad categories: process and content.

Concerning the content, she declared to be happy to hear that many countries agreed that priority setting should give very strong attention to country needs. Trying to address Member States concerns about the 5 typologies of country and the 7 categories of work, Dr. Chan declared that these were just a first attempt to systematize the available information as well as the current activities of the Organization.

Regarding the process, she fully agreed on the EU proposal to create a working group to set ToR and the scope for the Member State-driven process. Moreover she proposed to adopt the first option mentioned in paragraph 55 which means starting the Member States-driven process with a main meeting to be held in late February. Although this option was fully supported by many countries, others, especially the furthest (Japan) and the smallest (Bahamas and Barbados), expressed their concerns on the economical and human resources sustainability.