

**Statement to the 136th Session of the WHO Executive Board  
on agenda item 5.3 Overview of Reform implementation**

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the opportunity of addressing the distinguished Members of the Executive Board on behalf of Medicus Mundi International and the People's Health Movement.

We commend substantial portions of the work to reform WHO, which are both necessary and welcome. However, it is unfortunate that the reforms program fails to address several issues related to WHO's capacity and functioning, which have been highlighted by the Ebola epidemic.

Instead of the WHO Secretariat recognizing its own failures, it attempts to pass WHO's failure to respond adequately on to the MSs that are feeling the brunt of the epidemic. Further the Secretariat's response outlined in its document does not acknowledge the role of a range of social, economic and political determinants in the epidemic.

The Ebola epidemic is in large measure, a consequence of the inability of the WHO to promote robust and resilient health systems in affected countries. The lesson to draw from the Ebola epidemic relates to the critical necessity for the WHO to reclaim its role as the principal steward of global health.

While the Secretariat's report highlights challenges in mobilizing human resources, the staff associations' report to EB135 in May 2014 commented on the negative impacts of discontinuing long-term appointments on the technical capacity of WHO. We urges MSs to ask for an evaluation of the impacts of human resource cuts and lay off of technical employees on WHO's response capacity. While there has been a trend to push the WHO to be reduced to a mere technical body, today, even its technical capacity stands eroded.

WHO's budget saw cuts in WHO's outbreak and crisis response of more than 50% from 2012-13 to 2014-15. This is the very budget line that the organisation needed to rely upon in order to respond to the Ebola epidemic. We urge MSs to address WHO's financial crisis, which has a debilitating effect on its capacity and competence. It is imperative that the crippling effect of a freeze on assessed contributions be recognized and remedied.

Thank you.

***The statement will be delivered by Susana Barria***

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