

Statement to the Special Session of the Executive Board of WHO on Agenda Item 3.3: Governance

Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to address the Executive Board on Agenda Item 3.3 on behalf of Churches Action for Health and the People's Health Movement and Democratising Global Health Coalition.

We agree that the Governance of WHO and WHO's role in global health governance are critical issues for attention in this present WHO Reform.

Considering first the role of the Executive Board, we are apprehensive regarding the proposal for the EB to take the role of gatekeeper to the Assembly. We recognise that not all draft resolutions are strategically oriented, well structured and include consideration of financial implications, however the solution does not lie in gate-keeping; rather the EB needs to work to improve the quality of the resolutions.

We agree that there is a need to strengthen the executive role of the EB and to ensure that it more effectively oversees the work of the Secretariat. The proposals advanced to this end need further elaboration and discussion.

We are concerned about the proposals: to impose tighter time limits on speakers at both the Board and the Assembly; to limit the number of resolutions coming before the Assembly (CI 68); and to filter resolutions coming before the Assembly for their perceived priority (CI 72). The capacity of member states to submit resolutions is part of the democratic spirit of the Constitution and should not be compromised lightly.

We have reservations about the proposal to 'standardise' the work of regional committees but some process of benchmarking to find and share best practice models with respect to regional practice would make sense.

Finally Chair, the paper fails to deal with WHO's relations with public interest NGOs. This issue has been raised for decades by civil society but has thus far been ignored.

We urge that WHO re-launch the 2001 Civil Society Initiative with a view to deepening dialogue and cooperation with public interest NGOs at all levels of WHO's work. The criteria and processes for organisations entering into official relations with the WHO need to be reviewed including a clear distinction between public-interest NGOs and business-interest NGOs.

Thank you.