

PHM daily briefing of the WHO 140 EB Meeting: Day 2 (January 24, 2017)

The second day of the Executive board 140 dealt with the short-listing process of candidates and was followed by discussions on technical topics.

Short listing of candidates for the post of DG

The executive board has commenced the process of short listing candidates for the position of Director General-WHO. The process of selecting DG has been spread over EB140 and 70th World Health Assembly in May 2017. On Tuesday, the Member States took part in voting, wherein 5 candidates were shortlisted from 6 candidates who were in the race. Dr Miklos Szocska was the candidate who could not make it to the top 5.

The 5 selected candidates – Sania Nishtar (Pakistan), David Nabarro (UK), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (Ethiopia), Flavia Bustreo (Italy) and Philippe Douste-Blazy (France) -- would be interviewed by the EB and the list would be further shortened to 3. These 3 candidates would be eligible to contest for the post of DG, which will be finalised in WHA-70.

New Regional Director for Mediterranean region

Dr Mahmoud Fikri took charge as the new Regional Director for WHO Mediterranean region (EMRO).

Technical Topics

1. Health emergencies

The topics that were discussed under Health emergencies are as follows

1) WHO response in severe, large scale emergencies

The countries expressed that the work done by WHO during the Ebola and Zika crisis was commendable. A request was made by few countries to help them in strengthening their laboratory and diagnosis capacity, while ensuring standards in the quality of work. The countries stressed on the importance of coordination and collaboration between different agencies and organizations in the United Nations and also of the departments belonging to country governments. All countries agreed on the fact that, there was a necessity to increase the funding for emergency response.

Response of WHO Secretariat: Noted the suggestions and comments made. Executive director of World Health Emergency program (WHE) said that personnel were being recruited for 24 clusters. Also recommended the Member States to undertake the Joint Evaluation of the emergency response. The need for a strong decentralized mechanism for implementation was stressed. The ED of WHE accepted that, there is a need for increase in funding.

2) Health workforce coordination in emergencies

The countries appreciated the WHO for the coordination by WHO for Human Resources. It was stressed that better coordination is required for mobilization of internal and external Human Resources. Member Countries felt that WHO should also take a lead in coordinating with other 'stakeholders' and

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Humanitarian Aid organizations. Countries stressed on the fact that HR should be protected from any kinds of attacks and the culprits should be punished. It was also requested that WHO should facilitate necessary logistics.

3) Research and development

Member states supported the document on R&D blueprint. Countries felt that there should be a platform for the exchange of information and materials for better Research and Development. Need was also felt to have strong systems of laboratories for developing countries. Countries felt that WHO has to take into consideration that time taken for development of new vaccines and medicines needs to be reduced. This reduction in the time gap would mitigate the effects of the health emergency. USA felt that WHO should not be directly involved in issues related to Research and Development, but rather coordinate and provide necessary environment for R&D. It also asked WHO to protect the interests of stakeholders' Intellectual property rights.

India and Brazil raised the issue that they were concerned with absence of discussions in the EB documents on de-linkage (delinking cost of development of new medicines from their price) and affordability of medicines. Countries also felt that principles of CEWG and UN High Level Panel report on access to medicines regarding access and affordability should be included in the R&D blueprint.

PHM's statement on the issue that was read out by Aletha Wallace is available here: <http://www.ghwatch.org/sites/www.ghwatch.org/files/EB140-PHM%20MMIstatementHealthEmergencies.pdf>

2. International Health Regulation- draft global implementation plan

Countries expressed their support for the draft proposal for a 5 year strategic plan and for core capacities to be strengthened. Countries spoke about the importance of Joint External Evaluation plan, but raised concerns on it going beyond the health sector preparedness. They indicated that this should be a voluntary measure and not a mandated activity as the EB document appears to suggest. Countries stressed on the importance of inter/intra sectoral coordination for the implementation of IHR. It was also felt that WHO should support countries in framing and implementing national level plans. They mentioned that it would be optimal for partners to join WHO if resources were available, rather than creating parallel structures and coordinating later on.

WHO reply: Clarified the issues raised and informed that the draft will be reviewed by the Secretariat and then sent to the WHA for adoption in May.

3. AntiMicrobial Resistance (AMR)

Members States welcome the outcome of the UN high level Commission report on AMR and acknowledged the work of WHO with FAO and OIE (world organization for animal health) under the 'One Health Approach'. Countries supported the formation of National Action Plans, and requested the WHO to provide technical help necessary for countries to accelerate the process of forming National Action Plans. Countries also stressed on the importance of Health systems strengthened to use Antimicrobials

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appropriately. Need was felt for increase in the surveillance, monitoring and infection control activities as regards AMR.

The AMR document also incorporates a section on sepsis. Some questions were raised as to why awareness should be increased only about Sepsis while it needs to be done about all infections regardless of whether they lead to sepsis. Also, some countries asked if the goals on sepsis were realistic for developing countries to follow.

PHM's concern on the draft resolution on AMR that incorporates the issue of Sepsis: The resolution: "Improving the prevention, diagnosis and management of sepsis", in agenda item 7.2 inter alia asks member states to "engage further in advocacy efforts to raise awareness of sepsis, in particular through supporting existing activities³ held every year on 13 September in Member States". The reference here is to the 'World Sepsis Day' (www.world-sepsis-day.org) which is supported, among others, by 229 corporate entities. It is important for member states to exercise vigilance before committing to an activity that involves a range of pharma cos. diagnostics and device manufacturers.

The AMR discussions continue on 25 January.