



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Europe**

**Nineteenth Standing Committee
of the Regional Committee for Europe**

First session

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Gulustan Palace, Baku, Azerbaijan, 15 September 2011

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Report of the first session

Introduction

1. The Nineteenth Standing Committee of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (SCRC) held its first session at the Gulustan Place in Baku, Azerbaijan on 15 September 2011, the last day of the Regional Committee's sixty-first session (RC61). Apologies for absence were received from Dr Krunoslav Capak (Croatia) and Dr Veronika Svortsova (Russian Federation). The incoming Chairperson of the Nineteenth SCRC extended a welcome to the new members from Belgium (Dr Daniel Reynders), Malta (Dr Ray Busuttil) and the Russian Federation (represented by Dr Mark Tsechkovsky).

Election of the Vice-Chairperson of the Nineteenth SCRC

2. Ms Dessislava Dimitrova (Bulgaria) was unanimously elected as Vice-Chairperson of the Nineteenth SCRC.

Brief review of the outcome of the sixty-first session of the Regional Committee

3. The Regional Director drew attention to the important role that could be played by the Standing Committee in facilitating political consultation on technical matters before they were considered by the Regional Committee. She paid tribute to Member States for their full engagement in RC61 and for the spirit of consensus that they had demonstrated. However, the ministerial panels had perhaps been too large, and the resulting discussions had not been as interactive as had been hoped. She also acknowledged that the agenda of the session had been too heavy. The Chairperson noted that the Standing Committee had drawn attention to the same shortcomings in its review of RC60 the previous year. Members recognized that the SCRC needed to do more to help the Regional Director manage the agenda of Regional Committee sessions in an efficient way.

4. On the other hand, SCRC members welcomed the experiment of introducing parallel working groups at RC61, although they suggested that it might be advisable in future to clarify the different expectations of such working groups and of discussions in plenary. Similarly, the SCRC recommended that a clear distinction should be made between reactions to points raised in ministerial panel discussions and comments on draft resolutions under consideration by the

Regional Committee. One member of the SCRC put forward the idea of inviting ministers to constitute a small panel that would give political input to discussions in parallel working groups.

5. On practical matters, the SCRC welcomed the new seating arrangement used at RC61, where delegations had been seated around an open square rather than “classroom-style” in rows.

6. Lastly, the SCRC noted the request made by the representative of one country for the cost implications of draft resolutions to be made explicit. It would further examine the question of whether those cost implications bore on the Member States themselves or on the WHO Secretariat.

Initial discussion on technical and policy items for inclusion on the agenda of the sixty-second session of the Regional Committee

7. The Regional Director noted that the agenda of RC62 was likely to be heavy, since it would be necessary to complete consideration of the new European health policy, Health 2020, and related topics such as a public health action plan and the final report of the review of social determinants of health and the health divide in the European Region; to take up items that had been postponed from RC61 (European strategies on health information, communication for health, the Regional Office’s work with countries, and its geographically dispersed offices); to deal with statutory items such as the Organization’s proposed programme budget 2014–2015 and WHO reform; and to tackle a small number of technical issues (mental health and healthy ageing). In general, she expected that once the new course for the Regional Office had been fully set the following year, subsequent Regional Committee sessions could have more limited agendas.

8. The Nineteenth Standing Committee called for a very early draft of the agenda of RC62 to be presented at its second session, and for feedback information to be provided on the High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (New York, 19–20 September 2011).

Other matters

9. On the occasion of her forthcoming retirement from WHO, the Standing Committee paid tribute to Ms Anne Jakobsen, Technical Assistant, Governance, for the excellent administrative support she had provided to sessions of the Regional Committee and the SCRC over many years.