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Overview of issues to be considered at the sixty-first session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe

This paper provides an overview of the conceptual and practical linkages between the main issues to be considered at the sixty-first session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe. It covers items that are on the formal agenda of the session, as well as subjects that will be addressed in ministerial and expert panel discussions and at technical briefings. To that end, the paper describes the arrangements and the content of the main topics as a whole. It concludes with a one-page overview of the entire provisional programme of the session.

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Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the main topics that are to be considered by the WHO Regional Committee for Europe at its sixty-first session (RC61). The paper also identifies the conceptual and practical linkages between the items on the formal agenda and the subjects that are to be taken up in ministerial and expert panels, in technical briefings and during ministerial lunches.

Monday 12 September 2011

Overview of the programme for the day

- 2. Following the opening formalities and election of officers of the session, the WHO Regional Director for Europe will report on the work of the WHO Regional Office for Europe since the sixtieth session of the Regional Committee in September 2010. This will be followed by a discussion on the issues raised by the Regional Director.
- 3. Two components of Health 2020, the new European policy for health (governance for health in the 21st century, and the social determinants of health) will be subjects for discussion at a ministerial lunch, while a third element (setting Health 2020 targets) will be covered in a lunchtime technical briefing. This will set the scene for discussion in plenary at the end of the day.
- 4. In the early afternoon, the Regional Committee will receive a report from its Standing Committee (SCRC) on the work of that body in the past year and will review matters of relevance to the WHO European Region arising from resolutions and decisions of the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board.
- 5. The development of Health 2020 (focusing on the underlying vision, values, main directions and approaches) will then be considered and discussed by the Regional Committee. The day will conclude with a ministerial panel discussion focusing on governance for health in Europe in the 21st century.

Summary of selected topics of the day

Developing the new European policy for health – Health 2020 (EUR/RC61/9, Inf.Docs./4–7)

- 6. At its sixtieth session in 2010, the Regional Committee called for the development of a new European policy for health. Health 2020 both sets out the Regional Director's vision and forms the basis for the strategic priorities that will guide the work of the Regional Office in the years ahead.
- 7. Health 2020 will be developed over a period of two years and will be presented to the Regional Committee for adoption at its sixty-second session in 2012. Elaboration of the policy is based on four process priorities:
- gathering and using state-of-the-art public health concepts and the best evidence of the causes of ill health, health inequalities and effective solutions;

- consulting with a wide range of stakeholders, decision-makers, public health professionals, civil society organizations and international agencies;
- developing a policy framework that fits the context of the 21st century and which is informed by a forward-looking and strategic analysis of health trends and drivers and of the policy context related to health and well-being, with a 10-year outlook;
- engaging with countries to strengthen their expertise and capacity to address major policy and governance challenges.
- 8. The following working papers and information documents will presented at RC61:
- Working paper: The new European policy for health Health 2020: vision, values, main directions and approaches. This will consist of an annotated outline of the Health 2020 policy; summaries of findings from the studies on governance for health and on the social determinants of health; conclusions from an analysis of past Regional Committee resolutions and from an assessment of the economics of disease prevention; information on the rationale, methods and process of setting targets; a summary of the outcomes of consultations with Member States and the advisory steering groups set up to guide the process of elaborating new policy; and a "roadmap" of the steps leading to adoption of the policy in 2012.
- Information document: a first working draft of the Health 2020 policy.
- Information document: the final report on the study of governance for health in the 21st century, led by Professor Ilona Kickbusch.
- Information document: an interim report on the review of the social determinants of health and the health divide, led by Professor Sir Michael Marmot.
- Information document for the Regional Committee password-protected site: the reports from the two External and Internal Steering Group meetings and the report from European Health Policy Forum of High-Level Government Officials meeting in Andorra.
- 9. A draft resolution is submitted for the Regional Committee's consideration.

Tuesday 13 September 2011

Overview of the programme for the day

- 10. The WHO Director-General will address the Regional Committee in the morning, followed by discussion of issues raised.
- 11. The Regional Committee will then continue its consideration of Health 2020, when a ministerial panel will discuss "The health divide: European experiences in addressing the social determinants of health". In addition to the interim report of the review led by Professor Sir Michael Marmot, this discussion will be informed by the final report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health. The discussion of the previous day will also feed into this ministerial panel debate. Similarly, the totality of the Regional Committee's discussions on

(http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241563703 eng.pdf).

Subsequently endorsed by the Executive Board in resolution EB124.R6. The European perspective on this issue has been addressed in several Regional Committee documents in recent years (e.g. EUR/RC60/13).

¹ Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2008

Health 2020 will be taken forward into its consideration of the topic of strengthening health systems in the afternoon.

- 12. During the ministerial lunch, participants will review the progress made towards the Millennium Development Goals in the WHO European Region and will be informed about the Decade of Vaccines. A technical briefing will also be held on WHO reform for a healthy future, in preparation for a plenary discussion of the topic on Wednesday 14 September.
- 13. The afternoon will be devoted the subject of strengthening health systems in the WHO European Region. A ministerial panel will discuss an interim report on implementation of the Tallinn Charter: Health Systems for Health and Wealth. After the coffee break, an expert panel will look at a framework of action for strengthening public health capacities and services in Europe. Participants in the session will have the opportunity to take part in these discussions, as well as to comment on the two working documents in question.

Summary of selected topics of the day

Interim report on implementation on the Tallinn Charter (EUR/RC61/11, Inf.Doc./2)

- 14. At the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Health Systems, held in Tallinn in June 2008, Member States expressed their strong political commitment to strengthening health systems. This was marked by the signing of the Tallinn Charter: Health Systems for Health and Wealth (later endorsed by the Regional Committee in its resolution EUR/RC58/R4 on Stewardship/governance of health systems in the WHO European Region).
- 15. The global financial and economic crisis that started in 2008 put the commitments made in Tallinn to the test. In 2009, the Regional Committee adopted resolution EUR/RC59/R3 on the outcomes of a conference held in Oslo on the subject of "Health in times of global economic crisis: implications for the WHO European Region". Both resolutions requested the Regional Director to report back to the Regional Committee in 2011 and, because of the close links between the Tallinn Charter commitments and the Oslo recommendations, both aspects are covered in the interim report.
- 16. The interim report illustrates some of the ways in which the various commitments and messages from the Charter have been made operational by Member States and highlights the related support provided by the WHO Secretariat. The interim report also presents some preliminary lessons learned at the regional level in the handling of the economic crisis. The report, compiled by a team of WHO and external experts aided by an external working group, takes account of responses to a questionnaire sent to Member States and contributions by heads of WHO country offices and other WHO staff. It is expected that the final report in 2015 will assess the extent to which the Tallinn Charter commitments have been implemented by Member States and will derive lessons learned from this experience.

Strengthening public health capacities and services in Europe: a framework for action (EUR/RC61/10, Inf.Doc./1, Inf.Doc./9)

- 17. This framework is submitted to the Regional Committee for guidance as part of the process of developing a European action plan to strengthen public health capacities and services in all Member States. That action plan will accompany the new European health policy, Health 2020; both will be submitted to the Regional Committee at its sixty-second session for approval.
- 18. The document outlines some of the major challenges facing health policies and systems in the European Region. In view of the differences in the way that European health systems and public health services are organized, operated and governed, the paper proposes a clear

statement concerning public health and health systems, including concepts, definitions and boundaries. A set of ten horizontal "essential public health operations" (EPHOs) is proposed, with the intention that they should become the unifying and guiding basis for any European health authority to set up, monitor and evaluate policies, strategies and actions for reforms and improvement of public health. The document goes on to highlight a framework of the avenues that the Regional Office intends to take in order to secure delivery of the ten EPHOs in an equitable way across the whole Region. The document concludes by proposing specific actions and measures to move towards attainment of the objectives described.

19. A draft resolution is submitted for the Regional Committee's consideration.

Wednesday 14 September 2011

Overview of the programme for the day

- 20. The whole of the morning is devoted to consideration of the question of WHO reform for a healthy future, building on the technical briefing held on Tuesday 13 September. The item has been placed on the agenda of all WHO Regional Committee sessions this year, following decision EB129(8) taken by the Executive Board in May 2011.
- 21. The afternoon will start with a private meeting of the Regional Committee to nominate or elect members of the Executive Board, the SCRC and the Policy and Coordination Committee of the Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction, as well as to confer the award of the Jo Asvall Public Health Research Fellowship, created in memory of the late Regional Director Emeritus.
- 22. After a coffee break, the Regional Committee will consider the Action plan for implementation of the European strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2012–2016. Under this agenda item, the Regional Committee will also be invited to endorse the European Declaration on the Health of Children and Young People with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families, adopted at a WHO conference in November 2010. Following this agenda item, the Regional Committee will discuss the European alcohol action plan 2012–2020.
- 23. The day will conclude with a session on partnerships, including a panel discussion.

Summary of selected topics of the day

WHO reform for a health future (EUR/RC61/21, EUR/RC61/Inf.Doc./10)

- 24. Following the decision taken by the Executive Board at its 129th session, three concept papers have been drafted on the following issues: the governance of WHO; an independent evaluation of WHO; and the World Health Forum, as outlined in World Health Assembly resolution WHA64.2. The Director-General has created a platform for web-based consultations with Member States on these papers, and Regional Committees are requested, on the basis of the updated concept papers, to engage in strategic discussions regarding the WHO reform process.
- 25. A special session of the Executive Board open to all Member States will be held in November 2011 to consider the reports on these discussions, the outcomes of the consultative process on the three papers, and the draft proposals prepared by the Secretariat or proposed by Member States on other aspects of the reforms outlined in World Health Assembly document A64/4.

Action plan for implementation of the European strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2012–2016 (EUR/RC61/12)

- 26. In 2000, the World Health Assembly adopted the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases, and a global action plan followed in 2008. These two documents form the basis for all regional action on the prevention and control of NCDs. For its part, the Regional Committee adopted a European strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases in 2006 (resolution EUR/RC56/R2).
- 27. The document presented to RC61 contains an action plan for implementation of the regional strategy. Taking account of Members States' existing commitments, as well as of European disease- and risk factor-specific strategies, it identifies (within a comprehensive and integrated framework) the key areas in which specific actions should be taken by Member States and WHO over the five-year period 2012–2016.
- 28. The action plan has been developed through a consultative process, including the European Health Policy Forum for High-Level Government Officials, a meeting of NCD focal points, and the SCRC. Its formulation has taken place against a backdrop of the European Commission's Framework for Action in Public Health, as well as of the First Global Ministerial Conference on Healthy Lifestyles and Noncommunicable Disease Control (Moscow, April 2011) and the forthcoming United Nations high-level meeting on NCDs (New York, September 2011).
- 29. Two draft resolutions are submitted for the Regional Committee's consideration.

European action plan to reduce the harmful use of alcohol 2012–2020 (EUR/RC61/13)

- 30. A reinvigorated European alcohol action plan is considered to be all the more important given that WHO's European Region remains the area of the world with the highest levels of alcohol consumption and alcohol-related harm. The European alcohol action plan is closely linked to the interventions in the NCD action plan but is more detailed in its targets and action.
- 31. The document has been developed through a consultative process with Member States, a core editorial board and a larger editorial group. It proposes ten action points, with the overall aim of reducing the harmful use of alcohol. Although all the action points should be addressed, the emphasis on individual areas will vary from country to country. For each action point, a number of options for action are listed.
- 32. A draft resolution is submitted for the Regional Committee's consideration.

Thursday 15 September 2011

Overview of the programme for the day

33. The morning is devoted to the overall topic of "Strategic coherence of the work of the WHO Regional Office for Europe". The will include consideration of the Office's new strategy on relations with countries, informed by a report from an external group tasked by the Regional Director with reviewing WHO's work in countries and country presence. After the coffee break, the Regional Committee will consider the Regional Office's policy on its geographically dispersed offices (GDOs) and on the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. Here, too, the discussion will be based on a report by an external review group.

- 34. There is no ministerial lunch or technical briefing scheduled for Thursday 15 September.
- 35. After lunch, three technical items will be considered: European action plans on antibiotic resistance, multidrug- and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS. The session will conclude with confirmation of dates and places of future sessions of the Regional Committee and adoption of the report.

Summary of selected topics of the day

Strategic coherence of the work of the WHO Regional Office for Europe (EUR/RC61/16)

- 36. The Regional Office has made substantial efforts during the past year to lay the foundations for its future policies. Among these steps are the development of Health 2020, a renewed priority and commitment to public health, new approaches to working with countries and partners, more effective communication, and the revision of responsibilities at different layers of the Office. These and other initiatives are incorporated into a broader vision of the coherence of the Regional Office's functions and structures.
- 37. Building on WHO's mandate and its comparative advantage, six core functions have been defined for the Organization:²
- providing leadership on matters critical to health and engaging in partnerships where joint action is needed;
- shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, translation and dissemination of valuable knowledge;
- setting norms and standards, and promoting and monitoring their implementation;
- articulating ethical and evidence-based policy options;
- providing technical support, catalysing change, and building sustainable institutional capacity; and
- monitoring the health situation and assessing health trends.
- 38. To these should be added the topics of "Disaster preparedness" and "Humanitarian assistance".
- 39. Carrying out these functions requires well-defined structures, with clear divisions of responsibilities between the Regional Office, its geographically dispersed offices and its country offices, as well as maximum complementarities of functions across structures.

Country relations strategy (EUR/RC61/17 Rev.1, BD/1)

40. Equitable improvement in the level of health is WHO's ultimate goal. The Organization's country structures play an important role in attainment of this objective. The Regional Director for Europe brought together an external working group (RWGCo) to review the Regional Office's strategic relations with countries. RWGCo prepared an extensive report (available to the Regional Committee as background document EUR/RC61/BD/1).

² Engaging for health. Eleventh General Programme of Work, 2006–2015. A global health agenda. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2006.

- 41. The paper presents the Regional Director's views on the recommendations of the Group and her vision of the Regional Office's country strategy. It first provides a brief overview of developments in the WHO European Region, before going on to outline the country strategy that is envisaged for today's context.
- 42. A draft resolution is submitted for the Regional Committee's consideration.

Policy on the Regional Office's geographically dispersed offices and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (EUR/RC61/18, /20, /BD/2–3)

- 43. At its sixtieth session in Moscow in 2010, the Regional Committee requested the Regional Director to further clarify the roles, responsibilities and mandates of all WHO entities in the European Region and to draw up an architecture that would bring clarity to the situation and ensure that all core functions were located at the Regional Office in Copenhagen. As part of efforts to adapt the Regional Office to the rapidly changing European environment, the Regional Director accordingly commissioned an external review of WHO's geographically dispersed offices (GDOs) in the European Region, given their potentially crucial role in contributing to the work of the Regional Office and making it a centre of public health excellence.
- 44. The new policy aims to clarify and strengthen the role of the GDOs as an integral part of the Regional Office, as providers of evidence for the development and implementation of regional policies and actions, and as important resources in supporting Member States. The overall intention is to ensure that the best use is made of the work of the GDOs and possible duplications eliminated. The new policy has been informed by the findings and recommendations of the abovementioned review and by the SCRC's discussions of them.
- 45. The World Health Assembly's new policy on partnerships and the Regional Committee's request have also made it necessary to review the governance of the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, in order to clarify the division of labour between the Regional Office, its GDOs and the Observatory and to ensure that the Observatory's administrative arrangements comply with the constitutional framework and rules of its host and secretariat. A progress report on the review process, which is being carried out in close cooperation with the Observatory's partners, is presented to the Regional Committee for information.
- 46. A draft resolution on the Regional Office's GDOs is submitted for the Regional Committee's consideration.

European strategic action plan on antibiotic resistance (EUR/RC61/14)

- 47. Considering that the use, but especially the overuse, misuse and underuse, of antimicrobial agents give rise to serious concern in the European Region a number of key strategic actions are proposed to mitigate, prevent and control antibiotic resistance. These include promoting national coordination to implement national strategic plans of action and develop regulatory functions and guidance; promoting the prudent use of antibiotics across many sectors; strengthening surveillance systems to monitor the use of antibiotics and resistant bacteria; and creating awareness of the prudent use of antibiotics and the fact that new antibiotic drugs are not coming onto the market soon. The proposed regional action plan has eight overall goals and seven strategic objectives.
- 48. A draft resolution is submitted for the Regional Committee's consideration.

Action plan to prevent and combat multidrug- and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis in the WHO European Region (EUR/RC61/15, /lnf.Doc./3)

- 49. The action plan has been developed to strengthen and intensify efforts to address the alarming problem of drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB) in the European Region. The action plan is based on the core principles of the Health 2020 policy, with its vision of equitable access to health care, and is in line with the Beijing Call for Action on Tuberculosis Control and Patient Care and the Berlin Declaration on Tuberculosis. The targets and objectives in the action plan are aligned with those of the MDR-TB section of the Global Plan to Stop TB 2011–2015 and World Health Assembly resolution WHA62.15, which urges all Member States to prevent and control M/XDR-TB.
- 50. The plan was prepared in consultation with all 53 European Member States, experts, patients and communities suffering from the disease. A joint task force with partners will be established to follow up and assist with implementation of the action plan.
- 51. A draft resolution is submitted for the Regional Committee's consideration.

European Action Plan for HIV/AIDS 2012–2015 (EUR/RC61/19, Inf.Doc./8)

- 52. The action plan addresses the priorities of the European Region and reflects the European regional context, within the framework set by Getting to zero: 2011–2015 strategy of UNAIDS and the WHO Global Health Sector Strategy for HIV, 2011–2015. The Plan directly supports existing global and regional commitments and contributes to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.
- 53. The Action Plan is structured around four strategic directions: optimizing HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care outcomes; leveraging broader health outcomes through HIV responses; building strong and sustainable systems; and reducing vulnerability and structural barriers to accessing services (addressing the social determinants of health).
- 54. The Regional Office used a fully participatory and inclusive approach to developing the Action Plan. Contributions were elicited from Member States, civil society, donor and development agencies, nongovernmental organizations, multilateral agencies, UNAIDS and its cosponsors, the European Commission and European Union institutions, scientific and technical institutions, networks, and leaders and experts in HIV and related programmes.
- 55. A draft resolution is submitted for the Regional Committee's consideration.

RC61 – Programme overview

NCO1 - Flogramme overview			
Monday, 12 September Health 2020	Tuesday, 13 September Renewed commitment to public health	Wednesday, 14 September Regional Office: increased relevance	Thursday, 15 September Regional Office business
09:00–10:00 Opening of the session Adoption of agenda and programme 10:00–10:45 Address by the Regional Director: report; policy roadmap	09:00–10:15 Address by the Director-General Discussion	09:00–10:30 WHO reform for a healthy future	09:00–10:30 Strategic coherence of the work of the WHO Regional Office for Europe — Geographically dispersed offices — The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies
10:45–11:15 Coffee break	10:15–10:45 Coffee break	10:30–11:00 Coffee break	10:30–11:00 Coffee break
11:15–12:30 Discussion of the RD's address and general debate	10:45–12:30 The health divide: European experiences in addressing the social determinants of health (<i>ministerial panel</i>)	11:00–12:30 WHO reform for a healthy future (cont'd) – The programme budget as a strategic tool for accountability	11:00–12:30 Strategic coherence of the work of the WHO Regional Office for Europe (cont'd) – The Regional Office's country strategy
12:30- 14:30 Lunch break Developing the new European health policy—Health 2020 Governance for health in the 21 st century & social determinants for health 13:00 Technical briefing Developing the new European health policy—Health 2020: setting Health 2020 targets			12:30– 14:00 Lunch break
14:30–14:45 Ceremony: A strengthened partnership with the Global Fund 14:45–15:30 Report of the 18th SCRC and Matters arising from the World Health Assembly and Executive Board	14:30–16:00 Health systems strengthening in the WHO European Region Interim report on implementation of the Tallinn Charter Ministerial panel: Critical health system challenges in the WHO European Region and the role of the WHO Regional Office	14:00–15:00 Elections and nominations (Private meeting)	14:00–16:00 Strategies/action plans: – Antibiotic resistance – Multidrug- and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis – HIV/AIDS
15:30-16:00 Coffee break	16:00–16:30 Coffee break	15:00-15:30 Coffee break	16:00-16:30 Coffee break
16:00–18:00 Developing the new European policy for Health – Health 2020 Introduction of policy framework Debate – Governance for health in 21 st century (ministerial panel)	16:30–18:00 Health systems strengthening in the WHO European Region (cont'd) Strengthening public health capacities and services in Europe: a framework for action Ministerial panel: Way forward in strengthening public health services and capacities in the WHO European Region and the role of the WHO Regional Office	- Endorsement of the European Declaration on the Health of Children and Young People with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families European alcohol action plan 17:15–18:30 Partnerships	16:30–17:00 Date and place of future sessions of the Regional Committee Other matters 17:00–18:30 Approval of the report (report up to end of the day on Wednesday) and closure of the
19:30 Reception hosted by the Minister of Health of Azerbaijan Venue: Buta Palace	19:30 Reception hosted by the Regional Director, WHO/EURO Venue: State Philharmonic Hall, Baku	18:30 Commemoration of the 25 th anniversary of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion	session 18:30 Joint meeting of the SCRC and European Members of the EB