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Report of the Twentieth Standing Committee of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe— report of the fifth session

This document contains the report of the Twentieth SCRC's fifth and final session (held in Çeşme Izmir, Turkey, on 15 September 2013, the day before the opening of the sixty-third session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe. It should be read in conjunction with the consolidated report on the work of the Twentieth SCRC (document EUR/RC63/4).

Introduction

1. The Twentieth Standing Committee of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (SCRC) held its fifth and final session at the Sheraton Çeşme Hotel, Çeşme Izmir, Turkey, on Sunday 15 September 2013, the day before the opening of the Regional Committee's sixty-third session (RC63) and was chaired by the Vice-Chairperson of the Standing Committee.
2. The Regional Director welcomed the members of the SCRC and expressed her gratitude to the host country, Turkey, for the great efforts made to prepare for RC63; much had been achieved in a very short time. Briefing the SCRC on developments since its previous session, she said that many of the working documents for RC63 had been discussed through teleconferences over the summer months. The Regional Office was particularly thankful to the SCRC members for their feedback and support, often called for at short notice and on complex issues. The high quality of the preparations for RC63 was testament to the SCRC's commitment. Another significant development since the Standing Committee's last session was the receipt of an offer from the Government of Turkey to host the new geographically dispersed office (GDO) on preparedness for humanitarian and health emergencies.
3. The SCRC expressed its deep gratitude to the Chairperson for her commitment and dedication during her tenure. The Standing Committee welcomed the new member from Bulgaria.

Report of the fourth session of the Twentieth Standing Committee (Geneva, 18–19 May 2013)

4. The report of the Standing Committee's fourth session, held in Geneva on 18 and 19 May 2013, had been distributed and approved electronically.

Final review of the provisional agenda and programme of the sixty-third session of the Regional Committee (RC63)

5. The Regional Director introduced the provisional programme and agenda of RC63 and said that neither had been much altered since the SCRC's last session. She drew the SCRC's attention to the fact that an annotated agenda had been prepared, available in English only, containing explanations of how the Regional Committee's various discussions would be conducted. Although the Director-General would not be attending the session, the Deputy Director-General would be present. Since it was not the practice for him to address the Regional Committee, the time originally allocated to the Director-General's address would be used to extend the discussions on Health 2020 and the outcome of the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Nutrition and Noncommunicable Diseases in the Context of Health 2020.
6. The SCRC reviewed the provisional agenda and programme, including the programme of ministerial lunches and technical briefings, and welcomed the preparation of the annotated agenda, which was particularly useful.

Membership of WHO bodies and committees

7. The SCRC was informed that the shortlist of candidates for membership of WHO bodies and committees, as approved at its previous session, would be distributed, confidentially, to heads of delegations to RC63.

8. The Standing Committee welcomed the development of a long-term overview of vacancies on the governing bodies, which it hoped would be helpful to guide Member States when considering nominating candidates. The SCRC agreed, as previously, to establish a credentials committee, which, in the absence of the Chairperson, would comprise the Vice-Chairperson and the member from Israel, supported by the legal officer.

WHO reform

9. The Regional Director informed the SCRC that there would be two parts to the Regional Committee's deliberations on WHO reform: implications of the reform in the European Region and key global reform initiatives. Discussions on the implications of the reform for the Regional Office for Europe would include a briefing on the Regional Office's operational planning for 2014–2015; information on the use of the Health 2020 framework in the planning process; and a review of the financial situation of the Regional Office. The Regional Committee would be informed about short-term challenges to operational planning, where staffing and activity plans had to be finalized without a known resources envelope. Discussions on the global aspects of reform would focus on two major elements: the new process for planning for 2016–2017, and a stock take of the first Financing Dialogue, held in June 2013. The latter would be a good opportunity to receive feedback from Member States, in order to optimize the results of the second Financing Dialogue.

10. Governance discussions would include consideration of the governance packages adopted by the Regional Committee in 2010 and developed by the SCRC working group on governance in 2013, as well as a discussion on how to improve links between the global and regional governing bodies. On regional-level managerial reform, a European Region-specific business model would be introduced, outlining how technical capacity would be provided through the Regional Office and the GDOs, with the country offices providing country-level support. The Director, Administration and Finance informed the SCRC that the Regional Committee would have before it a working document and an information document on implementing the programme budget, the latter of which contained a breakdown of Member States' demand for each programme area. That analysis had shown a high demand for WHO services, which did not always match the Regional Office's capacity in all areas; further work was therefore needed to align supply and demand for those services. Efforts had been made to develop the operational plan, including a human resources plan, on the assumption that corporate resources for 2014–2015 would be at least equal to those received for the biennium 2012–2013. Further consideration must therefore be given to how to obtain funding for staffing as well as activities. The new human resources plan had reduced staff spending to 55% of the Regional Office's total expenditure. This was being achieved through tough measures, including the offer of a voluntary separation package for administrative and support staff. Those measures would result in a critical level of staffing, after which further reductions would be very difficult to achieve. It was hoped that, as a result, the Office would be put on a more sustainable financial path.

11. The SCRC welcomed the measures taken to secure the financial sustainability of the Office in a complex situation in which demands were increasing and resources were limited. Members agreed that it was important for the SCRC to have a clear picture of all of the Regional Office's activities in order to set priorities and optimize planning. Two outgoing members who had agreed to serve on the SCRC working group on the strategic allocation of

resources, the work of which would be taken forward by the Twenty-first Standing Committee, expressed their willingness to continue to serve as members of that group.

12. The Regional Director said that the working group's composition and terms of reference would be finalized after developments had begun at global level.

Matters arising out of resolutions and decisions of the World Health Assembly and Executive Board

13. The Deputy Director, Communicable Diseases, Health Security and Environment informed the SCRC that the Regional Committee would consider five items referred to it by the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly, namely: follow-up to the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases; health in the United Nations post-2015 development agenda; International Health Regulations (2005); the Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011–2020; and the Consultative Expert Working Group on Research and Development: financing and coordination. Each item would be introduced by a member of the Secretariat and time would be allocated for discussion. Further to those five items, the member of the Executive Board on the SCRC, Norway, would present an overview of the technical resolutions and decisions adopted by the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly of particular relevance to the WHO European Region.

14. The SCRC asked how the Regional Committee's discussions would be reported back to the World Health Assembly. Several of the issues for discussion should not be considered exclusively in a European Regional context, but rather from an interregional perspective, since the European Region had borders with other regions. True progress on cross-border issues could only be achieved through a coordinated, holistic approach.

15. The Regional Director explained that the outcome of the Regional Committee's deliberations would be reported back to the World Health Assembly through the report of the Regional Committee and a specific report requested by the World Health Assembly on the five issues it had referred to regional committees.

16. The Deputy Director, Communicable Diseases, Health Security and Environment said that the Regional Office was engaged in cross-border activities and was hoping to revitalize Operation MECACAR, its project that had been very successful in coordinating polio vaccination efforts between the European and Eastern Mediterranean regions.

A review of the status of resolutions adopted by the Regional Committee during the past ten years (2003–2012), and recommendations for sunseting and reporting requirements

17. The Deputy Director, Communicable Diseases, Health Security and Environment said that in light of a number of suggestions made by four Member States, for which the Secretariat was very grateful, the document on the review of the status of resolutions adopted by the Regional Committee during the past ten years, and recommendations for sunseting and reporting requirements had been revised and a number of clarifications made. The review of resolutions would be a continuous process.

18. The SCRC welcomed the improved clarity of the document and commended the initiative to review the status of resolutions, in particular open-ended ones. An overall review was an effective way of assessing how resolutions overlapped. A similar process would be useful at

global level. It could be interesting to develop an online resource to monitor the dynamics of the implementation of resolutions; such a system could be used to foster support between stakeholders in fulfilling their responsibilities under the various resolutions and could constitute a valuable contribution to results-based planning efforts. Consideration should be given to providing guidance on when and how to draft new resolutions to ensure that they were only adopted on essential issues and were in line with the new approach to planning being developed for the biennium 2016–2017. Efforts should be made to ensure that new resolutions contained a reference to how they related to Health 2020. In future, statements on the financial implications of resolutions, such as were produced at global level, would be appreciated.

19. The Regional Director agreed that further assessment of resolutions would be an interesting new process for the SCRC, which could be included on its agenda in the future. Whereas in previous years statements on the financial implications of resolutions had been presented to the Regional Committee, that system could not be applied for the biennium 2014–2015, since the allocation of resources was still unknown. Each draft resolution would, however, be presented to the Regional Committee with an indication of how it linked to the programme budget 2014–2015. A new formula for presenting the financial implications would be developed in line with the new approach to operational planning for 2016–2017.

Draft resolutions and decisions for RC63

20. The Executive Manager, Strategic Partnerships and Resource Mobilization informed the SCRC that since its previous session revisions had been made to five of the draft resolutions to be presented to RC63. Proposed amendments to two draft resolutions had been received from the European Union well in advance of the Regional Committee's discussions, which was particularly appreciated.

Statements of the SCRC members

21. The SCRC reviewed and approved the statements to be made by its members on its behalf on each of the technical items on the Regional Committee's agenda and said care should always be taken to ensure that such statements remained as concise as possible.

Other matters, closure of the session

22. The Vice-Chairperson thanked the outgoing members of the SCRC for their dedication and commitment during their terms of office.