



REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA

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Provisional agenda item 10.5

**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE MEETING
OF AFRICAN DELEGATIONS TO THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

Information document

Executive Summary

1. The WHO Regional Office for Africa has been providing technical information on agenda items to be discussed by the World Health Assembly and Executive Board to ministers of health and their delegations.
2. During the fifty-fifth session of the Regional Committee, the ministers of health, appreciating the value of the support they are receiving, further requested the Regional Director to continue the practice of daily meetings of delegations of Member States from the African Region at the World Health Assembly.
3. This document, based on the current practice, contains possible terms of reference that delegations of Member States of the African Region could refer to in the continuation of this practice. This information is in response to the request made by the ministers of health.
4. The Regional Committee is invited to note these terms of reference.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The ministers of health in the African Region and their delegations have been supported in recent times by the WHO secretariat and permanent missions of the Member States in Geneva with information and critical analysis of agenda items to be discussed by the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board. The WHO secretariat also facilitated regular meetings during the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board that enabled the delegations of Member States of the WHO African Region to deliberate on issues and adopt common positions on matters of regional interest. The African Union Commission was also invited to participate at the meetings.

2. Ministers of health of the African Region, appreciative of the benefits of the meetings and technical briefings, encouraged the Regional Director during the fifty-fifth session of the Regional Committee “to continue the practice of daily coordination meetings of the African Region at the World Health Assembly”.¹ During the Fifty-ninth World Health Assembly, the ministers invited the Regional Director to select the most relevant agenda items of regional interest, produce technical briefings and propose that countries of the Region draft common positions on those agenda items to be analysed during the meeting of the African delegations at the WHA.

3. The holding of meetings of WHO Regional delegations at the occasion of the WHA is a current practice. Delegations of Member States of other WHO regions also hold informal meetings during the WHA.

PURPOSE

4. The purpose of this document is to inform the Regional Committee about the Regional Director’s understanding of the practice of daily meetings of delegations of Member States of the African Region at the World Health Assembly and how this practice may be continued. These meetings are for ministers of health of Member States of the African Region and their respective delegations for the purpose of facilitating the coordination and development of a regional position on agenda items being discussed by the WHA or the Executive Board. Such meetings carry considerable political weight and may be crucial for a more effective representation of the interests of the African Region within the WHA and the EB. At the same time, it should be clarified that the meetings are not within the governance structure of WHO (such as, for example, sessions of the Regional Committee), and that consequently their functions, outcomes and deliberations should reflect their nature and role.

THE DAILY MEETING

5. The objectives of the daily meeting of delegations from the African Region to the World Health Assembly are:

- (a) to share information about agenda items of the Executive Board and World Health Assembly;

¹ WHO, *Fifty-fifth session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa, Maputo, Republic of Mozambique, 22-26 August 2005, Final report*. Brazzaville, World Health Organization, Regional Office for Africa, 2005 (AFR/RC55/20), p. 36, para. 76.

- (b) to review technical briefs and draft statements reflecting the African Region position in relation to specific agenda items;
 - (c) to recall positions or decisions of previous sessions of the Regional Committee which may have a bearing on the deliberations of the WHA;
 - (d) to propose issues that may require further attention by the Regional Director.
6. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the meeting of the African delegations to the World Health Assembly will generally be the same as those of the preceding session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa, or in case of their absence, representatives from the same countries.
7. Participation is open to all ministers of health and the accredited delegates of Member States of the WHO African Region. The respective permanent missions in Geneva, as members of their country delegations, assist in the preparation and analysis of issues as well as the preparation of country or regional statements. The African Union Commission may be invited as an observer at such meetings.
8. Positions adopted during a meeting of African delegations to the World Health Assembly are not binding on individual Member States, which may choose to express different positions at the Executive Board or World Health Assembly, except that any such position will be expressed in the name of that country alone. Where one or several Member States choose to express different positions, the position of the majority shall be expressed as the position of the collective Member States of the African Region with the exception of the Member States that have chosen to take a different position.
9. The role of the WHO secretariat at the meetings of African delegations shall be:
- (a) to provide relevant documents on the agenda of the EB and WHA;
 - (b) to provide technical briefs or information on selected agenda items of regional interest;
 - (c) to suggest tasks to countries in relation to expected draft statements;
 - (d) to facilitate arrangements for meetings, introduction of technical documents and distribution of documents;
 - (e) to facilitate, depending on available resources, simultaneous interpretation at meetings.