

FIRST MEETING OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS (2005) DURING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

8-9 September 2020, Geneva, Switzerland

Report of the First Meeting of the Review Committee on the Functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) During the COVID-19 Response

BACKGROUND

1. In view of the evolving pandemic of COVID-19, pursuant to resolution WHA73.1, and in accordance with Article 50 of the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR), the Director-General has convened the Review Committee on the functioning of the IHR during the COVID-19 response.

2. The Review Committee is expected to review, *inter alia*, the functioning of the IHR during the COVID-19 response, including IHR provisions related to, but not limited to, the following areas:

- the convening of the Emergency Committee and its working modalities, including the binary mechanism for declaring a public health emergency of international concern;
- the international coordination and collaboration for response, including the role and functioning of national IHR focal points;
- outbreak alert, verification and risk assessment, information-sharing and communication;
- additional health measures in relation to international travel;
- implementation and reporting of IHR core capacities, including the possibility of establishing peer review processes for capacity assessments;
- examining progress made on the implementation of the relevant recommendations of previous IHR Review Committees.

SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

3. In accordance with Article 50 of the IHR and the WHO Regulations for Expert Advisory Panels and Committees, the Director-General selected and appointed 23 members of the Review Committee from among the persons serving on the IHR Expert Roster. Members were appointed based on the principles of equitable geographical representation, gender balance, a balance of experts from developed and developing countries, representation of a diversity of scientific opinion, approaches and practical experience in various parts of the world, and an appropriate interdisciplinary balance. A list of members may be found in the Annex.

ORGANIZATION AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING

4. The first meeting of the Review Committee was convened by WHO Director-General via a videoconference platform on 8-9 September 2020.
5. Of the 23 members appointed, 21 attended this first meeting. Two members were unable to attend (see Annex).
6. The Director-General [welcomed](#) the members of the Committee and informed them that the Review Committee will operate independently and in parallel with other mechanisms as requested by resolution WHA73.1 for the comprehensive assessment of the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to avoid duplication of efforts and exchange of findings with the other existing mechanism, a special mechanism is at the disposal of the Chairs of each of these mechanisms.
7. WHO Legal Counsel reviewed the procedural arrangements for the Review Committee and reminded that, in the exercise of their functions, the members of the Committee shall participate in their personal capacity exclusively; in that capacity, they may not request or receive instructions from any government or any other external authority.
8. The Ethics Officer from the WHO Department of Compliance, Risk Management and Ethics (CRE) provided the members and advisers with an overview of the WHO Declaration of Interest process. The members and advisers were made aware of their individual responsibility to disclose to WHO, in a timely manner, all circumstances of a personal, professional, financial, intellectual or commercial nature that may give rise to a perceived, potential or direct conflict of interest. They were additionally reminded of their duty to maintain the confidentiality of the meeting discussions and the work of the Review Committee. All members in attendance submitted their declaration of interest and confidentiality undertaking prior to the meeting and no conflict of interest has been reported.
9. The Committee members agreed on the following officers of the Review Committee: Dr Lothar Wieler, President of the Robert-Koch-Institute in Germany as Chair of the Committee, Dr Lucille Blumberg, Deputy Director of the National Institute for Communicable Disease, National Health Laboratory Service of South Africa, as Vice Chair, and Dr Preben Aavitsland, Professor of Infectious disease prevention, health and the environment at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health as Rapporteur.

SUMMARY OF THE DELIBERATIVE MEETING

The Committee discussed the Terms of Reference and scope of work and identified several areas for consideration during the review process. Depending on the progress made, the Review Committee may present to the Director-General an interim progress report for the resumed session of the Seventy-third World Health Assembly in November 2020, and a final report for the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly in May 2021.

Day 2 (9 September 2020 from 12:00 to 13:30 – open meeting)

10. The Director-General welcomed representatives of Member States, the United Nations (UN) and its specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-state actors in official relations with WHO, and reminded of the role of the Review Committee, in addition to the role of other mechanisms reviewing the international response to COVID-19: the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPR), and the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (IOAC). He stressed the importance of avoiding duplication of efforts between them and mentioned that a mechanism will be established, through the Chairs of each body, for exchanging findings and avoiding duplication of efforts.

11. The open meeting was attended by representatives of 60 Member States, five UN agencies, and 25 non-state actors in official relations with WHO. Representatives of seven Member States and one UN agency took the floor.

12. The Chair of the Review Committee stated that the Committee will continue its work by holding weekly meetings in order to prioritize and examine in-depth the areas, if necessary, in smaller technical groups, and reiterated that the Committee very much welcomes the input from the States Parties, through subsequent open meetings and that, in accordance with Article 51 paragraph 2 of the IHR, designated representatives may submit memoranda to the Committee, through the Review Committee Secretariat.

Annex: List of Members of the Review Committee on the Functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) During the COVID-19 Response

(*Absence)

Dr Preben AAVITSLAND (Rapporteur)

Senior Consultant, Professor, Domain for infectious disease prevention, health and the environment, Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Oslo, Norway

Dr Ximena AGUILERA

Director, Center of Epidemiology and Health Policy, Faculty of Medicine, Universidad del Desarrollo, Santiago, Chile

***Dr Yasir Ibrahim AHMED**

Medical Director and Senior Consultant, Medical Hospital, Maldives

Dr Seif Salam AL-ABRI

Director General for Disease Surveillance and Control at the Ministry of Health of Oman

Colonel (retired) Vincent ANAMI

Continent Representative (Africa), Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine, Uniformed Services University of the Health and Sciences, Friends International Centre, Nairobi, Kenya

Dr Thouraya ANNABI ATTIA

Former Director of Health Protection and Control, National Agency of Health Protection, Ministry of Health, Tunisia

Dr Carmen ARAMBURU

Director of Health and Social Policy, Delegation of the Spanish Government in Catalonia, Spain

Dr Kalpana BARUAH

Joint Director, National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi, India

Professor Lucille BLUMBERG (Vice-Chair)

Deputy Director, National Institute for Communicable Diseases, National Health Laboratory Service, Johannesburg, South Africa

Ms Malinee CHITTANGANPITCH

Medical Scientist Advisor, Department of Medical Sciences, MoPH Thailand

Mr John LAVERY

Executive Director, Health Emergency Management British Columbia, Provincial Health Services Authority, Canada

Professor James LeDuc

Director of Galveston National Laboratory, University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, United States of America

Dr Dexin LI

Director, National Institute for Viral Diseases Control and Prevention, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, People's Republic of China

Dr Rinat MAKSYUTOV

Director General, Federal Budgetary Research Institution - State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology VECTOR, Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Well-being, Koltsovo, Russian Federation

***Dr Talat MOKHTARI-AZAD**

Director, Iranian National Influenza Center, Department, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, School of Public Health, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Dr Mohammad MOUSSIF

Chief of Public Health, Mohammad V International Airport, and National Coordinator of the Points of Entry Program, Morocco

Ms Olubunmi OJO

Former Director, Disease Surveillance, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, Abuja, Nigeria

Dr Jean-Marie OKWO-BELE

Public health consultant, Democratic Republic of the Congo

Dr Tomoya SAITO

Director, Department of Health Crisis Management, National Institute of Public Health of Japan

Dr Amadou Alpha SALL

Director, Institut Pasteur de Dakar and WHO Collaborating Center for Arboviruses and Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers, Senegal

Dr Mark SALTER

Consultant in Global Health, Public Health England, London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Professor Myongsei SOHN

Professor Emeritus, College of Medicine, Yonsei University, Korea

Professor Lothar H. WIELER (Chair)

President of the Robert Koch Institute, Germany