



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

72nd World Health Assembly and other news of interest to the Global Fund partnership

DECISIONS AT THE 72nd WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

The 72nd World Health Assembly, the annual meeting of WHO's 194 Member States, took place in Geneva from 20 to 28 May. The outcomes of the meeting included agreeing [a new global strategy on health, environment and climate change](#); the adoption of "a landmark agreement" to enhance the transparency of pricing for medicines, vaccines, and other health products; a decision to accelerate and scale up action to prevent and treat non-communicable diseases; [three resolutions on universal health coverage](#) (UHC), regarding primary health care, the importance of community health workers, and the upcoming High-Level Meeting on UHC in September; an [agreement on a common approach to anti-microbial resistance](#); the establishment of World Patient Safety Day (17 September every year); the establishment of World Chagas Day (14 April every year), to recognize this neglected tropical disease that affects 6-7 million people every year; the declaration of 2020 as the [Year of the Nurse and the Midwife](#); the adoption of the 11th Edition of the International Classification of Diseases; and the [announcement of four new goodwill ambassadors](#) for the promotion of global health: President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Cynthia Germanotta (aka Lady Gaga's mother), Brazilian soccer star Alisson Becker, and Dr Natalia Loewe Becker.

But, as WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus tweeted on May 26: "The ultimate outcome of our work this week is not resolutions and decisions. We all have a duty to make sure the decisions we make this week take root in our countries and our communities."

Dr Tedros's headline messages in his [closing remarks to the Assembly](#) on 28 May 2019 were:

“Celebrate our achievements. Commit to the work ahead of us. Keep ourselves accountable and the commitments made, and drew particular attention to the recent attacks on Ebola responders in DRC, highlighting that “Ebola is more than just a health crisis,” which needs a “coordinated and strengthened effort across the UN system” and all stakeholders, as well as political leadership, if it is to end – a statement that could well be applied to all activities in the global health arena.

He also highlighted WHO’s own transformation efforts to become “more modern, responsive, and effective,” including its new Science division, its emphasis

on support to Member States to “maximize the opportunities of digital technologies,” establishing “agile teams to break the siloes and work on cross-cutting issues,” and the establishment of the WHO Academy, to train WHO staff and public health professionals worldwide.

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OP-ED IN WHO BULLETIN HIGHLIGHTS PROCUREMENT CHALLENGES FOR COUNTRIES TRANSITIONING FROM GLOBAL FUND SUPPORT

In a recent edition of the Bulletin of the World Health Organization (volume 97, number 5, 2019), published before the Global Fund’s mid-May Board meeting and WHO’s late-May World Health Assembly, International Medical Secretary of Médecins sans Frontières Mercedes Tatay and the Access Campaign’s Els Torreale wrote [an opinion piece](#) calling on the Global Fund and the WHO – in addition to other partners, governments, donors, and countries – to take “joint action” in order to ensure the availability and affordability of quality medicines and tools to address HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria. The shift to increased national procurement, she writes, “risks sacrificing the lower prices, quality assurance and sustainable supplies that come with Global Fund Procurement.

Writing on behalf of Médecins Sans Frontières, Tatay calls all stakeholders to action: “We suggest that the Global Fund, its partners and governments should undertake several steps to address this issue. The Global Fund should conduct risk and readiness assessments for countries shifting to national procurement, exempting them from such co-financing commitments if problems are identified. Donor countries should meet funding targets of the Global Fund, support affected countries in establishing strong procurement practices, and fund mechanisms that help countries optimize procurement. Countries should also revise their procurement requirements to allow the use of global and pooled mechanisms for certain life-saving products. Lastly, national tenders should adopt quality assurance requirements.”

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