

France as a member of WHO's Executive Board 2015-2018



©WHO/P. Viot



Liberté • Égalité • Fraternité

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

MINISTÈRE
DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT
INTERNATIONAL

MINISTÈRE
DES AFFAIRES SOCIALES,
DE LA SANTÉ
ET DES DROITS DES FEMMES



© Frédéric de La Mure/MAEDI

“Health is an essential component of France’s international action. Health is not only vital to development, but it is also closely related to human rights and security, which are key focuses of our foreign policy. France therefore pays close attention to the World Health Organization’s role in the multilateral system. Through its mandate, expertise and programs, the WHO is an essential actor in the global health’s architecture. The increase in health challenges and recent crises, such as the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, have again underscored the world’s need for the WHO. For this reason, France supports the WHO’s efforts to tackle emerging health issues, to improve preparedness for and response to health crises, and to reform its governance and operation. I am therefore delighted that this term of office on the WHO Executive Board will give France the opportunity to work in partnership with other member states towards building an even stronger and more effective WHO.”

Laurent Fabius
 Minister of Foreign Affairs
 and International Development



© Elodie Grégoire, agence REA

“Health cannot be compared to other goods. We must ensure that everyone has access to quality healthcare. International cooperation is needed more than ever to adapt our health systems to the shared challenges of ageing populations, the emergence of new diseases, the rapid expansion of trade and movements of people, and climate change. We need a strong World Health Organization, reaffirmed in its role as the standard-setting and governance body for global health. The application of independently established standards and the implementation of coordinated mechanisms for prevention and intervention are essential to ensuring global health security. Persistent social and economic inequalities compel us to pursue that goal even more ardently. The WHO’s call for effective, inclusive health systems, particularly through universal health coverage, has never been more relevant and must be endorsed and advocated. France will vigorously defend these values and aspirations for the WHO throughout its term of office on the Executive Board.”

Marisol Touraine
 Minister of Social Affairs,
 Health and Women’s Rights

France and the WHO – renewal of a close partnership

With its universal and cross-sector mandate, the WHO has access to uniquely qualified expertise and is the leading authority for international health standards. This gives the WHO unquestionable legitimacy among all the organizations active in global public health, at a time when the number and variety of stakeholders (United Nations agencies, international organizations, health funds and partnerships, NGOs, foundations, and the private sector) present a considerable challenge to the global governance of health. France is strongly involved in global health issues – as an active member of the governing bodies of the WHO and UNAIDS, as a major contributor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, UNITAID and GAVI, and as a founder member of the Global Health and Foreign Policy Initiative – and has a deep commitment to multilateralism. France sees WHO's central role in this diverse architecture as more crucial than ever.

France enjoys excellent relations with the WHO, underpinned by our expertise in health, our long-standing involvement in the organization's governing bodies, and the level of our assessed contributions, which make France the fourth-largest contributor to the WHO. In December 2013 France signed its third framework cooperation agreement with the WHO for 2014-2019.

France will sit on the World Health Organization's Executive Board for three years, from May 2015 until May 2018. It will use this term to contribute actively to the fulfilment of the WHO's mandate, in close collaboration with the other member states on the board, and to promote and disseminate the WHO's values regarding global health.

France participates actively in the activities of the WHO Regional Office for Europe and is currently a member of the Standing Committee of the Regional Committee (SCRC). France is also a member of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific. France is a participating State in the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and has observer status on the WHO Regional Committee for Africa. Being involved in four of the WHO's six regional committees gives France an understanding of the diverse range of health issues in different regions of the world.

Third Framework Agreement between France and the WHO

The third multi-year agreement for the period from 2014 to 2019 formalizes a strengthened partnership between France and the WHO in four key areas of cooperation:

- Health security, in particular the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) and the activities of the WHO Lyon Office;
- The Millennium Development Goals on health to 2015 and beyond, including the fight against communicable diseases, and health at all stages of life;
- Reducing risk factors to tackle non-communicable diseases and the social and environmental determinants of health;
- Strengthening healthcare systems, including funding of healthcare and working towards the provision of universal health coverage, the provision of adequate human resources and quality medicines, and research and development on health issues.

The agreement sets out three ways in which France will contribute to the WHO projects:

- **Financial support** of €8 million-€9 million per year;
- Intense mobilization of French health **expertise**;
- **Joint advocacy** on global health priorities.

In addition to an assessed contribution of \$55.6 million for 2016-2017 (approximately €21 million per year), France's voluntary support for the WHO is primarily targeted towards:

- Maternal and child health, in line with France's commitments within the G8 (Muskoka Initiative): €4 million per year;
- Preparedness, surveillance and response, especially the implementation of the International Health Regulations: €2 million per year;
- Supporting expertise at WHO headquarters: €1 million per year.

France's Priorities on the Executive Board

During its term on the Executive Board, France intends to focus on several key strategic, institutional and thematic priorities:

- **Supporting the reform of the WHO to strengthen its central role in global health governance;**
- **Improving international health security, in particular through the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR);**
- **Moving towards achieving universal health coverage (UHC) by strengthening healthcare systems and taking account of the determinants of health.**

I. Supporting the reform of the WHO to strengthen its central role in global health governance

France is strongly committed to the WHO's role as the standard-setting, leader and coordinating body for global action on health. France supports the current reform aimed at adapting the organization to the changing field of global health, in terms of both epidemiological response and governance. The WHO will be able to operate more effectively once the reform process has been completed.

Reforming the WHO

The WHO has embarked on a reform process to better address the increasingly complex challenges of global health in the 21st century, with the constant aim of improving people's health. The WHO needs to be sufficiently flexible and equipped to respond to both recurrent problems and new emerging public health threats in a constantly changing environment.

The reform focuses as much on defining priorities as on the organization's governance and management. Firstly, it prioritizes actions (and their funding) in areas where the WHO is uniquely qualified or has a comparative advantage. The reform also aims to enhance worldwide governance in health, with the WHO as the lead institution playing a coordinating role. Furthermore, the reform seeks to optimize the organization's operational and management systems to improve its efficiency, responsiveness, objectivity, transparency, consistency and accountability – at global, regional and national levels.

During its term on the Executive Board, France will endeavor to:

- Strengthen **the WHO's central role** as the standard-setting agency for global health;
- Take advantage of **the expertise of all the actors**, while safeguarding the member states sovereignty and the organization's independence;
- Support and promote practical, tangible initiatives to **improve the working methods** of the WHO's governing bodies;
- Support initiatives to measure the financial impact of resolutions;
- Achieve effective, lasting improvements to the **predictability, flexibility and transparency of the organization's funding**, through the financing dialogue;
- Ensure the **highest possible level of transparency** in decision-making, resource allocation, staff management, selection of experts and accountability – at the WHO headquarters, regional offices and country offices – taking care to preserve the WHO's scientific independence.

II. Improving international health security, in particular through the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR)

Major pandemics and epidemics (such as SARS, flus and coronaviruses) and most recently the Ebola crisis highlight the recurrent importance of health security and the obstacles to achieving it. As international movements of people, animals and goods are intensified, health security is a truly global public health challenge, whether in terms of the implementation of the IHR, controlling major health crises, preparing for flu pandemics, monitoring and eradicating infectious diseases, or combating antimicrobial resistance.

France makes an important contribution to health security. French funding accounts are responsible for over one-quarter of the financing available to the WHO headquarters for the implementation of IHR.

The WHO Lyon Office and the International Health Regulations

The **International Health Regulations** came into effect in 2007, and States have until June 2016 to bring their national systems into compliance. This legally binding instrument is the main mean of protecting the global population against new and resurgent diseases, microbial hazards and other threats to public health and health security. Maintaining operational capability is a major ongoing challenge for responding to any public health emergency.

The **WHO Lyon Office** was set up in 2000 as a satellite of the WHO department in charge of implementing the International Health Regulations. The office is tasked with supporting countries in strengthening their surveillance and response systems so they become more capable to detect, assess and report events of international concern and, furthermore, to handle international-scale emergencies that could constitute a threat to public health. The WHO Lyon Office plays a vital role in the international surveillance of infectious diseases and in drafting the WHO's recommendations on prevention and control. The resources of the office were fully mobilized during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

III. Moving towards achieving universal health coverage by strengthening healthcare systems while taking into account the determinants of health

The Ebola epidemic that struck West Africa once again highlighted the structural weakness of many healthcare systems. **More robust healthcare systems and prevention of public health crises can only be achieved if vital health services, of good quality, are made more accessible to all income groups without causing financial hardship. That is the objective of universal health coverage (UHC)** – a sustainable, cross-sector solution that takes full account of the economic and social aspects of strengthening health systems and that contributes to the preparedness and resilience of these systems in handling health crises.

In many developing countries, a fragile healthcare system is one of the main obstacles to access vital treatments. Nevertheless, this is not only an issue for low- and middle-income countries. In some developed countries even today, a large swathe of the population does not have guaranteed access to healthcare. In other countries, inefficient resource allocation is leading to an unchecked escalation of healthcare costs. Healthcare systems in all countries are stretched by the rising impact of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). By 2030, NCDs will be the most common cause of death. **Multi-sector prevention policies must be implemented to tackle NCDs, by addressing risk factors and the social and environmental determinants of health.**

During its term on the Executive Board, France will endeavor to:

- **Strengthen the WHO's role as the lead institution in health security**, in accordance with the International Health Regulations and with a view to their full application;
- **Encourage further action by States that have not yet achieved the capabilities required by the IHR framework** and support continued efforts by those that have reached the required standards;
- **Learn lessons from the 10 years of IHR implementation** and from the WHO's management of epidemics such as H1N1 and Ebola;
- Ensure that the WHO continues to **provide support to States by developing technical references and appropriate tools** beyond 2016;
- **Assist long-term capacity-building** to enable rapid detection and effective management of global health crises, as well as risk reduction;
- Support full implementation of the **global action plan on antimicrobial resistance**.

Social and environmental determinants of health

A person's health is the result of the continuous interaction between the individual and the environment. The natural, social, economic and political environment thus influences the health of populations, creating health inequalities between countries, as well as between different sections of society within a country.

The combination of these determinants must be taken into account if a population's health is to improve. Everyone should have access to appropriate care and benefit from preventive and promotional health policies, without discrimination. Living environments must be made healthier, by ensuring access to water, sanitation, safe housing, safe working conditions, air quality and adaptation to climate change.

The quality, governance and resilience of **healthcare systems** are also essential (access to care and affordable quality medicines dispensed by adequate numbers of dedicated, competent, trained healthcare staff). Lastly, the general environment that people live in must be taken into account (political stability, incorporation of health in all sector policies, research and development, health security).

Health systems can be strengthened through **support for sustainable and inclusive health funding, developing reliable health information systems, access to quality healthcare products, designing prevention policies, research and development in health, and training for competent, committed healthcare practitioners.**

During its term on the Executive Board, France will endeavor to:

- **Encourage** measures to support countries in moving towards **universal health coverage**;
- **Promote the strengthening of healthcare systems** as the sine qua non of sustainable development, better prevention, and higher resilience in the face of health crises, as well as an essential building block to enable more effective international cooperation;
- Encourage the implementation of the Abuja Declaration, in which African governments pledged to spend at least **15% of their national budgets on health**;
- **Promote the incorporation of health in all policy-making** and strategy implementation, beyond the health sector (food, housing, education, employment, etc.);
- **Strengthen prevention and promotion programs** recognized for their efficiency in reducing risk factors (smoking, alcohol, obesity, lack of physical activity) and **take action on the social determinants of health**;
- **Strengthen the WHO's leadership role** in combating non-communicable diseases and taking action on the social and environmental determinants of health;
- **Stress the impact of climate change and air pollution** – the main environmental determinants of health – on public health and the role of the healthcare sector in raising awareness and contributing to an agenda of solutions.



Professor Benoît Vallet, representing France on the Executive Board

Professor Benoît Vallet was appointed as France's Director General for Health in October 2013, upon a recommendation from the Minister of Social Affairs, Health and Women's Rights, Marisol Touraine. He previously served as Head of Anesthesia and Intensive Care and as a medical practitioner at Lille University Hospital in northern France, where he also chaired the medical committee. Professor Vallet has been a member of numerous European and international scientific associations, including the European Union of Medical Specialists, the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine and the European Society of Anesthesiology. As a member of the European Union of Medical Specialists, he initiated work on the common framework for postgraduate training in intensive care.

Professor Vallet is vice-chair of the Standing Committee to the Regional Committee (SCRC), the governing body of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, and his membership runs from September 2013 to September 2016. Professor Vallet will hold the chair of the SCRC and the vice-chair of the Regional Committee from September 2015, and the chair of the Regional Committee from September 2016.

In all of these forums and at the meetings of the Executive Board, Professor Vallet will express France's position, taking account of the multi-disciplinary and cross-sector nature of the themes dealt with by the WHO and in accordance with the principle of incorporating health in all policy-making. He will receive specific support from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, as well as from France's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, which is the interface for all of our partners, including the WHO, UN member States, EU member States and other stakeholders.



Professor Benoît Vallet's Statement

The globalization of trade and travel, and the environmental and infectious hazards it brings, call for stronger international cooperation on health, in which the WHO should be the central institution. For this reason, I am greatly honored to have been appointed by France's Minister of Social Affairs, Health and Women's Rights, Marisol Touraine, to hold such a position of responsibility as a member of the Executive Board of this organization for the next three years, while continuing my work on the Standing Committee to the Regional Committee of the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

As movements of people and commodities increase, my priority will be to improve health security. We need to learn lessons from the past ten years of the International Health Regulations process and improve IHR implementation. To achieve this, we need to develop better tools for assessing effective implementation on the ground and further support countries to close the gaps. The other key issue for me is combating non-communicable diseases. NCDs continue to gain ground and need to be tackled by addressing the social and environmental factors of health, and by developing multi-sector preventive and promotional health policies. This is one of the key components of the new Health Act in France. It is an approach to health that I would like to see strengthened everywhere in the world.

