

WHO Executive Board, 130th Session
Agenda Item 5- WHO reform,
Intervention by Oxfam
delivered by Romain Benicchio

Oxfam is strongly supportive of the WHO as the lead global agency in public health. Guided by its member States, its services must be relevant and available to countries with differing income levels and health profiles.

These are difficult times; in order to maintain and improve its role, the WHO will require realistic levels of predictable financing from its donors. And Member States have the duty to set overall priorities for the long-term strategically – ensuring also that short-term risks are well managed.

We believe that the short-term management of reform will be critical to its long-term success. Most particularly we believe that it is essential that Member States are vigilant to identify and protect WHO's core functions, the norms, standards and guidelines that countries depend on to develop sound policies and services.

Oxfam is particularly concerned that inadequate funding could further damage the Essential Medicines Department which for more than three decades has enabled low-income countries to access affordable medicines. Many of its duties are at risk or are in danger of being discontinued. Ad hoc out-sourcing of these functions, supported by private entities, would do irreparable damage to the WHO's credibility.

In addition to its Member States, NGOs, industry and related agencies such as the Global Fund, UNTAID and the public private partnerships depend on WHO's evidence based and regularly updated tools to do their work. We ask the Secretariat, under the direction of the Executive Board, to prevent further erosion of these core functions, which should be supported from the regular budget.

Taking this step would reverse the current brain drain, restore confidence, and provide a secure basis for successful completion of the overall reform agenda.