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Background Note

Subject: Future working structure of the Health Security Committee 2007-2009

The following working structure is being proposed for the Health Security Committee (HSC) for the period 2007-2009, on the background of the Council conclusions of 22 February 2007 on the transitional prolongation and extension of the mandate of the HSC and following the discussions in the Priorities Working Group of the HSC of 18 June 2007 and in the Plenary Meeting of the Committee of 26-27 June 2007.

The Health Ministers, in their conclusions on the transitional prolongation and extension of the mandate of the HSC of 22 February 2007, recalled that the Health Security Committee was established as an informal cooperation and coordination body by the Health Ministers and the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection in 2001 and that its terms of reference are to:

- exchange information on health-related threats from acts of terrorism or any deliberate release of biological or other agents with intent to harm health;
- share information and experience on preparedness and response plans and crisis management strategies;
- be able to communicate rapidly in case of health-related crises;
- advise Health Ministers and the European Commission services on preparedness and response as well as on coordination of emergency planning at EU level;
- share and coordinate health-related crisis responses by Member States and the Commission;
- facilitate and support coordination and cooperation efforts and initiatives undertaken at EU and international level and help and contribute to their implementation at national level.

Membership

- One representative per Member State and of the European Commission;
- Observers from the ECDC and EMEA;
- Observers from applicant and EEA countries, Switzerland, and WHO at plenary meetings, the generic preparedness and response section, and the influenza preparedness and response section of the Health Security Committee; these observers will assist in the CBRN and generic preparedness sections of the Committee on a case by case basis;
- In this context, the initial arrangement that high level representatives, authorised to take decisions at national level, are nominated to the Committee should be adhered to¹;
- Each member of the plenary of the Committee and his or her deputy, and of the CBRN section needs to have security clearance to the level of "EU secret".

Working Methods

- Rules of procedure of the Committee will be prepared;
- It is envisaged to have two plenary meetings of the Committee per year;
 - Back to back with one of the plenary meetings, a "special" meeting between the Health Security Committee, the Crisis coordinators in Council, the "Friends of the Presidency" and the National Influenza coordinators might be held on request;
- The plan is to hold, in addition to the plenary meetings, telephone and video conferences on particular issues or ad-hoc meetings on short notice when an emergency arises;
- The Committee will report on its work to the Council once a year.
- The members of the Committee will be involved in setting up the agendas for the committee meetings;
- A list of priority actions for the Committee for the coming three years will be established;
 - A first draft has been prepared internally by DG SANCO

¹ The initial terms of reference of the Health Security Committee, which were agreed between the Member States and the European Commission on 17 December 2001, read on this point as follows:

"The Health Security Committee is comprised of high-level representatives of the Health Ministers of EU Member States authorised to take decisions and commitments with respect to preparedness planning and response in case of emergency.

Membership of the Committee is restricted to one representative and his or her deputy for each Member State. ... "

The members of the HSC, at their meeting of 26-27 June 2007, concluded that one of the main roles of the Committee consists in identifying actions and decisions that need to be taken related to the terms of reference of the Committee.

- The draft will be discussed with representatives of the present and coming five EU Presidencies in Council (Germany, Portugal, Slovenia, France, Czech Republic, Sweden) and Member States representatives who volunteered to participate in the exercise at the HSC meeting of 6-7 February 2007;
 - Work planned by ECDC and activities under the EU Public Health Programme will be reflected in HSC actions;
 - Activities by the Global Health Security Initiative of the G7+ partners will be taken into consideration when planning HSC actions.
- Dates for plenary meetings of the Committee will be agreed by its members for a period of 18 months ahead;
 - A calendar will be established in which all training events, e.g. seminars, workshops and exercises, related to health security planned by the Commission, the Member States, European Agencies and International Organisations and Partnerships (e.g. GHSAG) for the coming twelve months will be included; the calendar will be operated as a "rolling plan" and updated continuously; the calendar will be available in HEDIS

Structure

- Following the Council conclusions of 22 February on a transitional prolongation and extension of the mandate of the Health Security Committee, the Committee will be set up around three domains:
 - Public health preparedness and response to CBRN attacks;
 - * The Committee will deal with incidents of public health concern;
 - Generic preparedness and response;
 - * An arrangement for cooperation with the crisis coordinators in Council will be found.
 - Influenza preparedness and response;
 - * The Committee will deliberate on the subject in meetings where national influenza coordinators participate;

For each of these three domains an HSC section is created. Within these sections items are being prepared by senior experts for opinion by the plenary meeting of the HSC.

Invitations for nomination of members of the sections will be addressed to the members of the Health Security Committee; they will decide whom to nominate for the sections.

At plenary meetings the Committee will deliver opinions, identify actions and decisions that might be taken at political level or at the relevant responsible level, and endorse produced guidelines, recommendations; it will consider scientific assessments on specific subjects;

- * No in depth discussions on specific topics are foreseen to be undertaken at plenary meetings;

Topics will be progressed within the sections in physical and telephone and video conference meetings, by setting up ad hoc working groups, holding workshops and having written consultations.

- The plenary meetings of the HSC are chaired by the Commission representative nominated to the Committee;

The meetings of the sections of the HSC are chaired by the Commission representative at the respective section in collaboration with the representative of the Member State that holds the EU Presidency and in close liaison with the representatives of the troika of EU Presidencies.

- The subjects which are planned to be dealt with by the Committee will be prepared, if the subject so requires, by thematic ad hoc working groups for further discussion in the corresponding section of the Committee before the HSC will deliberate on the topics in plenary;

The Commission or Member States can take initiative to progress a subject.

- Conclusions by the Committee on specific topics will comprise specific action plans in which activities to be pursued by the European Commission and by the Member States will be identified.
- Deliverables will be identified for actions which are planned to be pursued (reports, workshops, training, exercise, guidance etc.)
- Ad hoc working groups
- Working groups will be established by the plenary on an ad-hoc basis, addressing singular needs;
- The mandates for ad hoc working groups will be defined in plenary meetings of the Committee.
- Working groups will be as much as possible chaired by MS, and the groups will be small with particular attention of sharing the organisational burden;
- When a particular need exists to prolong the life or extend the scope or representation of the groups, a "network" will be proposed by paying attention to the financial arrangements;
- Currently, the following groups are proposed to be created or extended; for each group, its composition and purpose will be listed:
 - Emergency planning (influenza and generic)
 - Modelling (NEMO – project on modelling)
 - Environmental sampling and incident investigation
 - Development of medicinal products
 - Laboratory cooperation
 - Chemical agents
(two subgroups: RAS CHEM and exercises)
 - Procedures for contact tracing
 - Priority setting

A graph on the structure of the Health Security Committee is attached to this note.

Future working structure of the Health Security Committee

