Amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the
WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia

In alignment with the WHO Reform processes, including the implementation of United Nations Development System reform, as well as to align itself to the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board and the World Health Assembly, it is proposed to amend the Rules of Procedure of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia along the same lines and principles into a gender-neutral variant.

It is to be noted here that the Regional Office for South-East Asia (SEARO) holds its Governing Body sessions such as the Regional Committee with English as the only working language.

The High-Level Preparatory Meeting for the Seventy-sixth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia was presented these proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure to the Regional Committee, and the Seventy-sixth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia is requested to confirm the introduction of such relevant gender-neutral language by way of suitable amendments to the relevant sections of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee.

This Working Paper was presented to the High-Level Preparatory Meeting for its review and recommendations. The HLP Meeting reviewed the paper and made the following recommendation for consideration by the Seventy-sixth Session of the Regional Committee:

**Action by WHO**

(1) The proposed amendments and the draft Decision are to be presented to the Seventy-sixth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia, and the amendments as approved and endorsed by the Committee are to be affected immediately following the close of the Regional Committee Session.

This Working Paper and the HLP Meeting recommendation are submitted to the Seventy-sixth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia for its consideration and decision.
Introduction

1. Vide its Decision EB144(4) (2019), the 144th Session of the WHO Executive Board in January 2019 amended its Rules of Procedure in order to introduce or supplement gender-specific language so as to indicate both feminine and masculine forms in the English language versions and to follow United Nations’ practice for the other five official and working languages of WHO’s Governing Bodies.

2. Thereafter, on recommendation of the Executive Board, the Seventy-second World Health Assembly through its Decision WHA72(21) decided to amend its Rules of Procedure in the same manner, thus replacing or supplementing gender-specific language so as to indicate both feminine and masculine forms of the English language, and to follow United Nations’ practice for the other five official and working languages of WHO’s Governing Bodies. It is to be noted here that the WHO Regions of Africa, Europe and Eastern Mediterranean have also made similar changes.

Current situation

3. In alignment with the WHO Reform processes, including the implementation of United Nations Development System reform, as well as to align itself to the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board and the World Health Assembly, it is proposed to amend the Rules of Procedure of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia in the same manner.

4. It is to be noted here that the South-East Asia Regional Office holds its Governing Body sessions such as the Regional Committee with English as the only working language. Though all Governing Body reports and documentation produced have been compliant with gender-neutral and gender-sensitive language for the past several years, this is now being institutionalized by enshrining the relevant changes in the Rules of Procedure for the Regional Committee for South-East Asia.

5. Examples of the proposed amendments of the Rules of Procedure of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia are set out in Annex 1 to this report.

6. The High-Level Preparatory Meeting for the Seventy-sixth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia discussed these changes to the Rules of Procedure to the Regional Committee. It requested the Seventy-sixth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia to confirm the introduction of such relevant gender-neutral language by way of suitable amendments to the relevant sections of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee.
The way forward

7. The High-Level Preparatory Meeting for the Seventy-sixth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia suggested the review of the draft decision on “Use of gender-specific language in the Rules of Procedure of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia: proposed amendments” as Annex 2.
Annex 1

Examples of the use of gender-specific language in the Rules of Procedure of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia and proposed amendments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases where gender-specific language is used</th>
<th>Examples from Rules of Procedure of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia</th>
<th>Proposed amended version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Chairman” and “Vice-Chairman” (masculine singular nouns)</td>
<td>The Committee shall elect its officers, a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman, from among the representatives each year at its first session held during that year. (Rule 10)</td>
<td>The Committee shall elect its officers, a <strong>Chairman</strong> and a <strong>Vice-Chairman</strong>, from among the representatives each year at its first session held during that year. (Rule 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Him” (masculine singular objective pronoun)</td>
<td>The Director, or a member of the Secretariat designated by him, may at any time make either oral or written statements concerning any question under consideration. (Rule 18)</td>
<td>The Director, or a member of the Secretariat designated by <strong>her or him</strong>, may at any time make either oral or written statements concerning any question under consideration. (Rule 18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“He” (masculine singular pronoun)</td>
<td>Any delegate may speak in a language other than the official language. In this case, he shall himself provide for interpretation into English. (Rule 22)</td>
<td>Any delegate may speak in a language other than the official language. In this case, <strong>She or he</strong> shall <strong>herself or himself</strong> provide for interpretation into English. (Rule 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“His” (masculine singular possessive pronoun)</td>
<td>A representative may at any time move the closure of the debate on the item under discussion, whether or not any other representative has signified his wish to speak. (Rule 30)</td>
<td>A representative may at any time move the closure of the debate on the item under discussion, whether or not any other representative has signified <strong>her or his</strong> wish to speak. (Rule 30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2

Draft Decision:

Use of gender-specific language in the Rules of Procedure of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia: proposed amendments

The Seventy-sixth Session of the Regional Committee for South-East Asia, having considered the report in the working paper SEA/RC76/17, decided:

- to amend its Rules of Procedure in line with the examples set out in Annex 1 to document SEA/RC76/17, in order to replace or supplement gender-specific, gender-neutral and gender-sensitive language, as the case may be, so as to indicate both feminine and masculine forms.

The amendments shall come into effect immediately following the closing of the Seventy-sixth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia.