



The Voice of OECD Business

July 2009

2010 Meeting of OECD Health Ministers

Provisional BIAC input to the preparations for the Ministerial

Further to the oral input provided during the consultation with the OECD Health Committee in July and the written comments BIAC submitted on the various consultation topics, we are pleased to provide hereafter our provisional input to the preparations for the 2010 OECD Health Ministerial and respond to some of the issues raised in document DELSA/HEA(2009)5. We look forward to providing additional input as the preparations further develop.

I. Process issues

Consultation process

While no details are mentioned in the background document, BIAC hopes that, as is standard practice in other OECD Committees, the Health Ministerial will be preceded by a consultation to allow the business community to provide direct input to the Ministerial discussions. In order to make the consultation a success, we would like to draw the Committee's attention to the following issues:

- The consultation agenda should be developed in close cooperation with stakeholder participants.
- The timing should facilitate the active participation of as many Ministers as possible in the consultation.
- Background documents should be made available early in the process so that stakeholders can comment and prepare for the consultation accordingly.
- At the recent OECD Council Ministerial, in addition to the regular consultation, BIAC and TUAC had the opportunity to present their key messages directly to the Ministerial. This was highly appreciated. At last year's OECD Environment Ministerial, stakeholders participated directly in two entire sessions of the Ministerial. Such models were found to be very helpful and could be applied to other Ministerial

meetings as well. We encourage the OECD to explore whether such models could also apply for the Health Ministerial.

Background documentation

BIAC would appreciate the opportunity to be closely involved in the preparation of background documents for the Ministerial as they will provide essential input to the preparations, discussions and outcomes of the meeting. In addition to the regular consultations with the Health Committee, we would therefore welcome close cooperation with the OECD Secretariat to provide input to the papers as they are being developed. As BIAC operates by consensus, the development of BIAC comments and positions requires consultation with the wide range of our members. It is therefore important to us that we can review papers early in the process and that sufficient time is allowed to coordinate our comments and input.

High-level forum on the quality of care

BIAC would be pleased to be closely involved in the High-Level Forum on the Quality of Care, which is being planned back-to-back with the Health Ministerial. While technically not part of the Ministerial, the Forum will be of high level and will provide an excellent opportunity for further discussion on this important topic. It is BIAC's hope that business would be included in the preparations for the Forum and could nominate speakers to the various panels. We would appreciate the opportunity to provide input to the preparations for the Forum early in the process. The Seoul Ministerial on the Future of the Internet was a very good example of successful business-government cooperation and active business participation.

II. Themes

Long-term/short-term issues

BIAC has long supported a long-term strategy for health care issues, drawing on the expertise that exists in different parts of the OECD and focusing on areas where the Organization has a clear added value. At the same time, many of the problems health care systems are facing are currently further exacerbated by short term challenges caused by the economic crisis. Addressing the challenges of financial sustainability of health care systems needs to take into account the immediate impacts of the economic crisis as well as pressures due to demographic developments and general budget constraints. While the Ministerial should look at immediate problems and solutions, we recommend that the long-term perspective should remain the overarching focus.

It should be borne in mind that health outcomes and a focus on the impact of health care systems on the patient are an essential component of any discussion of the efficiency of a system and should be kept as a central part of the discussion. As prosperity is dependent on the health of its citizens, we need changes in our healthcare systems to maximize economic value and improve patient outcomes.

Topics

The world faces global health challenges, calling for additional efforts to address them. Worldwide, people regard good health as one of life's most important assets, but it is also essential to the health of a country's economy. Healthy individuals lead to a healthy society, which in turn leads to higher productivity and long-term growth. At the same time, rising costs of health care will inevitably increase taxes and social security premiums leading to additional burdens on productivity and the economy, with severe impacts especially in the lower socio-economic segment. The strength of the OECD lies in its reputation for rigorous economic analysis and policy recommendations. Finding innovative solutions to address these challenges and improving the quality, productivity, effectiveness of health care delivery without sacrificing health outcomes should be considered an overarching priority for the Ministerial.

While prevention is suggested as a separate theme for the Ministerial, we would suggest addressing prevention of both communicable and non-communicable diseases under the topic of efficiency of health systems. It should be borne in mind that prevention involves a wide range of approaches, including smoking cessation, healthy eating, physical activity, vaccination, screening tests, etc.

Under the overall theme of improving efficiency and finding innovative solutions to address health challenges, we would like to underline the importance of addressing the following issues:

- Ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of healthcare systems and containing the overall financial burden for employers, which is essential for job creation and economic prosperity;
- Promoting an innovation-friendly environment to improve the quality and efficiency of health care;
- Addressing health workforce issues, including education and training, as a key priority;
- Fostering good management methods and support innovative health delivery approaches by all actors to improve the health systems' performance as well as evaluation of the implementation of health care reforms;
- Encouraging competition among all public and private actors in the health sector to improve systems' performance;
- Promoting the use of ICT to increase the efficiency of health systems with innovative tools to help ensure the sustainability and scalability of health systems and to improve the quality of healthcare, while addressing societal challenges, such as the ageing population and rural populations;

Developing innovative business and reimbursement models to introduce financial accountability across the complete care cycle, and encourage best practice patient-focused processes; developing more consistent and reliable data on the availability and use of health ICT as well as on its benefits and impacts.

- Promoting health literacy and informed decision-making of health care consumers.

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- By taking a broad-based look at health, governments can educate their citizens on healthy, physically-active lifestyles, effective access to diagnostic tools, preventive treatments and medicines, health insurance premiums, etc. as a means of overall prevention.

In BIAC's view, the Ministerial will be an important opportunity to take stock of recent OECD work and set priorities for the Organization's work in the area of health care for the years to come. We would therefore appreciate the opportunity to be closely involved in the preparations for the Ministerial and stand ready to provide input both in formal consultation and in direct discussions with the Secretariat, as appropriate.