



# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

FIFTY-SEVENTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY  
Provisional agenda item 21

A57/32  
1 April 2004

---

## Policy for relations with nongovernmental organizations

### Note by the Director-General

1. At its 113th session, and in accordance with the request of the Health Assembly in its decision WHA56(10), the Executive Board reconsidered a proposal for a policy for relations with nongovernmental organizations.<sup>1</sup> The Board requested the Director-General to hold additional consultations to enable Member States to discuss the matter further, and to report to the Fifty-seventh World Health Assembly on the outcome of those consultations.

2. Accordingly, the Director-General invited all Member States to participate in consultations held in Geneva. Three consultations took place over the course of three days in February 2004. The resulting text of the draft resolution and policy reflects the consensus achieved on a number of suggested amendments. As discussions were not completed on all proposals, some bracketed text remains in paragraph 5 of the draft resolution and in paragraphs 9, 14, 17 and 18 of the draft policy.

### ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

3. The Health Assembly is invited to consider the draft resolution set out below and the draft policy contained in the Annex.

The Fifty-seventh World Health Assembly,

Having considered the policy for relations between the World Health Organization and nongovernmental organizations,

Emphasizing the important role that the Principles Governing Relations between the World Health Organization and Nongovernmental Organizations have played since its adoption;

Recognizing the importance of civil society and its contributions to public health, and the growth in the numbers and influence of nongovernmental organizations active in health at global, regional and national levels;

---

<sup>1</sup> See document EB113/2004/REC/2, summary record of the tenth meeting, section 5.

Recognizing that, in accordance with Article 2 of the Constitution, one of the main functions of the World Health Organization is to act as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work and that, in accordance with Article 71, the Organization may make suitable arrangements for consultation and cooperation with nongovernmental organizations in carrying out its international health work;

Noting that the existing Principles Governing Relations between the World Health Organization and Nongovernmental Organizations adopted by the Fortieth World Health Assembly in 1987 (resolution WHA40.25) have been reviewed;

Noting the need to improve existing collaboration and dialogue with nongovernmental organizations, and to encourage new cooperative activities with such bodies,

1. DECIDES to adopt the policy for relations between the World Health Organization and nongovernmental organizations annexed hereto, which replaces the current Principles Governing Relations between the World Health Organization and Nongovernmental Organizations;

2. DECIDES that, as a transitional measure, all nongovernmental organizations in official relations with WHO as of the date of this resolution will be advised of the new policy and invited to submit an application for accreditation, and that, pending receipt of the duly completed application for accreditation and decision by the Executive Board on the application, they will be deemed to be accredited to WHO governing bodies;

3. REQUESTS the Director-General to establish suitable measures to implement the policy, including guidelines on the accreditation of, and collaboration with, nongovernmental organizations, which include clear and specific guidelines on avoiding conflict of interest and submit those measures and guidelines to the Executive Board for approval at its 115th session;

4. REQUESTS the Director-General to review mechanisms to enhance representation and substantive participation of nongovernmental organizations from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, so that WHO can benefit from the specific technical expertise and perspectives that these entities can bring.

[5. REQUESTS the Director-General to institute [an external, independent review of] mechanisms to safeguard WHO's integrity and independence, including the WHO Guidelines for Interactions with Commercial Enterprises.<sup>1</sup>]

---

<sup>1</sup> Document EB107/20.

## ANNEX

**POLICY FOR RELATIONS BETWEEN THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
AND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS****INTRODUCTION**

1. Article 2 of the Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) states that one of the Organization's main functions is to act as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work. In support of this function, and in accordance with Article 71 of the Constitution, WHO may, on matters within its competence, make suitable arrangements for consultation and cooperation with nongovernmental organizations. In addition, Article 18(*h*) makes a similar reference in authorizing the Health Assembly to invite nongovernmental organizations to participate in its meetings or in those of committees and conferences convened under its authority.
2. WHO should, in relation to nongovernmental organizations, where appropriate, act in conformity with any relevant resolutions of the General Assembly or Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.
3. The objectives of relations between WHO and nongovernmental organizations are to strengthen mutually beneficial relations at global, regional and national levels in ways that improve health outcomes, strengthen health actions and place health issues on the development agenda. The policy for achieving these objectives comprises two elements: accreditation and collaboration.
4. An organization that is not established by a governmental entity or intergovernmental agreement shall be considered a nongovernmental organization, including organizations that accept members designated by governmental authorities, provided that such membership does not interfere with the free expression of views of the organization.<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this policy, nongovernmental organizations include a wide range of organizations, such as groups that represent consumers and patients, associations with humanitarian, developmental, scientific and/or professional goals and not-for-profit organizations that represent or are closely linked with commercial interests.

**ACCREDITATION POLICY**

5. To be eligible for accreditation to the Health Assembly, Executive Board and committees and conferences convened under their authority, a nongovernmental organization shall:
  - (a) have aims and purposes consistent with WHO's Constitution and in conformity with the policies of the Organization as well as resolutions and decisions adopted by the Executive Board and the World Health Assembly;
  - (b) demonstrate competence in a field of activity related to the work of WHO;
  - (c) have membership and/or activities that are international in scope;

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council, resolution 1996/31, "Consultative relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations", paragraph 12.

- (d) be non-profit in nature;
- (e) have an established structure, a constitutive act, and accountability mechanisms;
- (f) for a membership organization, have the authority to speak for its members and have a representative structure;
- (g) have existed formally for at least three years as of date of receipt of the application by WHO;
- (h) disclose information on its objectives, structure, membership of executive body, field of activities and source of financing, and, where applicable, its status with other entities of the United Nations system;
- (i) agree to provide WHO regularly with updated information as well as to inform WHO of any changes with respect to criteria (a)-(h) as soon as they take place.

6. Completed applications should reach WHO headquarters by the beginning of June in order to be considered by the Executive Board in January of the following year. Applications should be transmitted to Member States by the Secretariat two months in advance of the session at which they will be considered. A re-application from a nongovernmental organization shall not be considered until two years have elapsed since the Board's decision on the original application.

7. Once a nongovernmental organization is accredited, information gathered on its objectives, structure, membership of executive body, field of activities and source of funding, including updated information, shall be made publicly available. A report on accredited nongovernmental organizations shall be submitted every two years to the Executive Board.

8. Regional committees may invite representatives of accredited nongovernmental organizations to participate in their meetings, consistent with arrangements set out in this policy.

9. Regional committees shall be responsible for decisions regarding the accreditation to them of [national or regional] nongovernmental organizations [having membership and/or activities that are ~~national or~~ regional in scope, [in accordance with Article 71 of the WHO Constitution and] [consistent] with arrangements set out in this policy].

10. For a nongovernmental organization, accreditation shall confer the following privileges:

- (a) to appoint a representative to participate, without a right of vote, in Executive Board sessions and Health Assemblies, and in committees and conferences convened under their authority;
- (b) to make a statement of an expository nature at such meetings on agenda items of relevance to the nongovernmental organization, at the invitation of the Chairman; and
- (c) to submit written statements pertaining to such meetings, the nature and scope of distribution of which shall be determined by the Director-General.

11. For a nongovernmental organization, accreditation shall confer the following responsibilities:
  - (a) it shall follow the rules of procedure of the Executive Board and Health Assembly as they apply to nongovernmental organizations;
  - (b) it shall utilize available opportunities to disseminate information on WHO policies and programmes.
12. The Executive Board shall be responsible for deciding on the accreditation of a nongovernmental organization and its discontinuation or suspension. The Executive Board shall be advised by its Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations, composed of five members, which shall meet during the Board's January session. The Standing Committee shall make recommendations on matters relevant to paragraphs 5, 6, 7 and 13 of this policy.
13. Decisions on discontinuation or suspension of accreditation shall take into consideration whether the nongovernmental organization has fulfilled the criteria listed in paragraph 5(a)-(i) above and a written response from the nongovernmental organization concerned to the recommendation of the Standing Committee. The non-provision of information for the biennial report shall be grounds for a decision that the nongovernmental organization has not fulfilled the criteria. The accreditation of a nongovernmental organization shall also be suspended or discontinued if the Executive Board determines that the organization has, either directly or through its affiliates or representatives acting on its behalf, clearly abused its status by engaging in a pattern of acts that are not consistent with the Constitution or the policies of the Organization and resolutions and decisions of the Executive Board and the Health Assembly.

## COLLABORATION POLICY

14. The objectives of this policy are to encourage and facilitate cooperative activities with nongovernmental organizations and to establish coherent methods of work between WHO and nongovernmental organizations[, be they national, regional or international in scope [in accordance with Article 71 of the Constitution.]]*OR*-[In the case of national nongovernmental organizations, collaboration shall be conducted only with the consent of the Government concerned. ]*OR*[<sup>1</sup>]  
Collaboration with WHO shall not depend on a nongovernmental organization being accredited to WHO governing bodies.
15. Collaboration between nongovernmental organizations and WHO shall be guided by the following principles:
  - (a) collaboration shall advance the objectives of WHO and be in conformity with the policies of the Organization as well as resolutions and decisions adopted by the Executive Board and the Health Assembly;
  - (b) collaboration shall be with a nongovernmental organization that has a demonstrated competence in a field of activity related to the work of WHO;

---

<sup>1</sup> Before collaboration is established between WHO and a national nongovernmental organization, appropriate measures will be taken to consult the Government concerned in accordance with Article 71 of the WHO Constitution.

(c) collaboration shall be based on adequate knowledge of relevant characteristics of the nongovernmental organization such as its objectives, structure, membership of executive body, field of activities and source of financing, so as to enable the Director-General or officials designated by the Director-General to assess the suitability of collaboration;

(d) collaboration shall not compromise the independence and objectivity of WHO and shall be designed to avoid any conflicts of interests.

16. The Director-General shall keep under review collaboration arrangements with nongovernmental organizations to ensure that such collaboration continues to be guided by the principles set out in paragraph 15. If it is determined that collaboration with the nongovernmental organizations is no longer in accordance with those principles, measures shall be taken to suspend or discontinue collaboration arrangements, as appropriate.

17. [The Director-General shall also suspend or discontinue collaboration if a nongovernmental organization either directly or through its affiliates or representatives acting on its behalf clearly abuses its status by engaging in a pattern of acts that are not consistent with the Constitution or the policies of the Organization, and resolutions and decisions of the Executive Board and the Health Assembly.]

18. [The Director-General shall ~~periodically~~-OR-[biennially] keep the Executive Board informed on the implementation of this collaboration policy.] [The Executive Board may request the Director-General to report, as appropriate, on the implementation of this collaboration policy.]-OR- [The Director-General shall provide the Executive Board biennially with a summary report on the general outlines of the implementation of this collaboration policy.]

= = =