

WHA57.13 Genomics and world health

The Fifty-seventh World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on genomics and world health;¹

Acknowledging the remarkable progress in genomics research and the fact that many Member States are not well prepared for this new approach to medical research and practice;

Wishing to promote the potential benefits of the genomics revolution for the health of populations in developed and developing countries alike;

Aware that genomics raises concerns about safety and has complicated and new ethical, legal, social and economic implications;

Reaffirming that advances in genomics must be considered in the context of their value added in the practice and delivery of health care;

Recognizing the urgent need for research into, and applications of, genomics in order to promote benefits that accrue to human beings;

Recognizing that genomics has a significant contribution to make in the area of public health;

Convinced that it is time for governments, the scientific community, civil society, the private sector and the international community to pledge their commitment to ensuring that the advances of genomics are equitably shared by all,

1. TAKES NOTE of the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee on Health Research on genomics and world health;²
2. ADOPTS, for the purposes of the present resolution and all subsequent activities of WHO, the following definition of genomics: genomics is the study of genes and their functions, and related techniques;
3. URGES Member States to consider adopting the said recommendations and to mobilize all concerned scientific, social, political and economic parties in order:
 - (1) to frame national genomic policies and strategies, and to set up mechanisms for assessing relevant technologies, cost-effectiveness, ethical review structures, legal, social and economic implications, regulatory systems particularly with regard to safety, and the need for public awareness;
 - (2) to strengthen existing, or establish new, centres and institutions engaged in genomics research with a view to strengthening national capacity and accelerating the ethical application of the advances in genomics relevant to countries' health problems;

¹ Document A57/16.

² *Genomics and world health: report of the Advisory Committee on Health Research*. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2002.

4. CALLS UPON Member States to facilitate greater collaboration among the private sector, the scientific community, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders in particular within the United Nations system, and engagement in dialogue in order to find creative and equitable ways of mobilizing more resources for genomics research targeted at the health needs of developing countries and building capacity in such areas as bioethics and bioinformatics;

5. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to provide support to Member States for framing national policies and strategies and strengthening capacity so that they can benefit from the advances in genomics relevant to their health problems and regulatory systems, particularly with regard to safety and the need for public awareness;

(2) to promote WHO's role in collaboration with relevant United Nations bodies in convening regional and international forums and fostering partnerships among the main stakeholders in order to mobilize resources, contribute to building capacity, and find innovative solutions to issues associated with advances in genomics research;

(3) to facilitate exchange between developed and developing countries in the use and application of genomic technologies in order to tackle both local and region-specific problems through, for example, training and technical support activities.

(Eighth plenary meeting, 22 May 2004 –
Committee A, second report)