

ELEVENTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

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12 June 1958

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

PROVISIONAL MINUTES OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING

Leamington Hotel, Minneapolis
Thursday, 12 June 1958, at 9:30 a.m.

CHAIRMAN: Professor N. N. PESONEN (Finland)

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Note: Corrections to these provisional minutes should reach the Chief, Official Records Section, World Health Organization, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, by 31 July 1958.

1. ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL announced that he had received a formal letter from the Government of the USSR offering the World Health Organization 1 000 tons of DDT for the Malaria Eradication Special Account and 25 000 000 doses of dried smallpox vaccine.

The CHAIRMAN expressed his satisfaction and pleasure, on behalf of the whole Committee, at the generous offer of the Government of the USSR.

2. ADOPTION OF THE FIFTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMME AND BUDGET
(Document All/R&B/43)

Dr IBRAHIM (Iraq), Rapporteur, read aloud the draft fifth report of the Committee (document All/R&B/43).

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should take the report section by section.

It was so agreed.

1. Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy

Dr METCALFE (Australia) proposed that the word "harmful" should be deleted from operative paragraph 1 of the resolution on the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

It was so agreed.

Decision: Section 1 of the fifth report as amended was approved unanimously.

2. Sports Medicine

Decision: Section 2 of the fifth report was approved unanimously.

3. Future Organizational Study by the Executive Board

Decision: Section 3 of the report was approved unanimously.

4. Special Fund for Improving National Health Services

Decision: Section 4 of the report was approved unanimously.

The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to approve the draft fifth report as a whole.

Decision: The fifth report, as amended, was approved unanimously.

3. ERADICATION OF SMALLPOX (Item proposed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (continued): Item 6.9 of the agenda (Documents All/P&B/1 Rev.1, All/P&B/17, All/P&B/18, All/P&B/40, All/P&B/41, All/P&B/42, All/P&B/WP/12)).

The Chairman invited the delegate of Ireland to introduce the amendment submitted by the delegations of Ireland and New Zealand to the draft resolution of the Government of the USSR (All/P&B/WP/12).

Mr BRADY (Ireland) said that his delegation and the delegation of New Zealand had felt that it would be desirable to outline the procedure for the further consideration of the very interesting item under discussion. The question of the control and eradication of smallpox was undoubtedly very important and all delegations were agreed that any intensification of measures to that effect was a most desirable objective. However, the programme set forth in the USSR draft resolution (All/P&B/Rev. presented a number of difficulties. Although a number of preventive procedures had been available for a considerable time, more time still would have to elapse before an ideal position was reached in regard to eradication. Operative paragraph 1 of the USSR draft resolution covered a great many aspects of smallpox control and eradication and it would seem desirable for the Director-General to be given an opportunity to study the proposal in greater detail, particularly as it would

involve financial and administrative problems.

The delegations of Ireland and New Zealand, therefore, proposed that the introduction to operative paragraph 1, i.e.

"1. REQUESTS the Director-General to carry out in 1958 preparatory work, which shall include:", should be deleted and replaced by:

"1. REQUESTS the Director-General to study and report to the Executive Board at its twenty-third session on the financial, administrative and technical implications of a programme having as its objective the eradication of smallpox, the study to include the various problems involved in carrying out the following activities."

The procedure indicated in the proposed amendment was the general routine in WHO affairs. Rule 13 of the Rules of Procedure required the Director-General to report on the technical, administrative and financial implications of all agenda items submitted to the Health Assembly. He was sure that the effect of the amendment would not be to delay action on the problem of the eradication of smallpox in any way.

Dr SAUTER (Switzerland) said that he had not wished to speak on the question of the eradication of smallpox before hearing the views of the representatives of countries in which smallpox was still endemic. He wished now, however, to comment briefly on the position in his own country, where the problem of smallpox had been replaced by the problem of smallpox vaccination. In the last 30 years, two cases of smallpox had been imported into Switzerland. Both cases had been cured and there had been no secondary cases. On the other hand, in the same 30 years there had been 30 deaths from post-vaccinal encephalitis. It was understandable, therefore, that the authorities should be finding it increasingly difficult to impose compulsory vaccination.

Physicians were fully aware of the danger presented by constantly increasing air traffic, but at the same time they realized that they were exposing their patients to a greater risk through vaccination. It was thus becoming more and more difficult to maintain the immunization of the population at a satisfactory level and the Swiss delegation wished, therefore, to give its wholehearted support to any effort to eradicate smallpox in the countries in which it was still endemic.

Dr I. VAN KHAI (Viet Nam) withdrew the part of his delegation's proposal (All/P&B/41) relating to paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 of the Soviet Union draft resolution.

Dr KIVITS (Belgium) said he supported the revised proposal of the delegation of Viet Nam and the amendments proposed by the delegations of Canada and Ireland and New Zealand.

Sir Arcot MUDALIAR (India) said he greatly appreciated the Soviet Union authorities' bringing the question of smallpox eradication to the forefront at the current World Health Assembly and offering so large an amount of smallpox vaccine to WHO for use in countries where it was needed. Since in India smallpox was endemic and there were occasional smallpox epidemics there, and since the disease was often imported from India into other countries, he was particularly glad that a world-wide smallpox eradication campaign had been proposed. That proposal was a milestone in world health work. He hoped that smallpox eradication work would proceed as quickly as the work on the problem of malaria eradication. The Indian authorities did much to combat smallpox; environmental sanitation was a useful means of reducing the incidence of the disease, but it was not, of course, sufficient in itself.

He was glad that provision had been made for appointing a WHO expert on smallpox endemicity for the South-East Asian Region. There had been compulsory vaccination in his country for a long time. Research was being conducted there into questions relating to the potency of vaccine, in particular the question of whether vaccine strains became less potent over the years. The Indian authorities would like WHO to provide answers to the questions of why smallpox epidemics varied in intensity, why during some smallpox epidemics there was a larger percentage of haemorrhagic cases than in other epidemics and why in some there was a larger percentage of confluent cases than in others. The Indian authorities were also confronted with the problem of the disease being spread by pilgrims who journeyed to Mecca and other centres. Whatever methods were chosen, the proposed eradication of smallpox throughout the world should be completed as quickly as possible. He hoped that a time-limit would be set for its completion, because otherwise the necessary steps might not be taken as expeditiously as was desirable.

He therefore supported the general principles of the Soviet Union draft resolution. He thought that some of the amendments proposed to it were quite acceptable.

Dr AL-WAHBI (Iraq) said he entirely agreed with the general principles of the Soviet Union draft resolution.

He suggested that, since a large number of amendments had been proposed, the business of the meeting would be expedited if the Committee set up a working party composed of a member of each of the delegations which had proposed an amendment and one or two other delegations, which the Chairman might name, to draft a new resolution combining the various texts under discussion.

Dr BERNARD (France) said he had no objection to any of the amendments under discussion. He would suggest the deletion of the word "complete" from the wording proposed by the Belgian delegation for the second paragraph of the preamble, since it added nothing of substance to the text.

Dr KIVITS said he agreed that that change was desirable.

Dr SALADRIGAS y ZAYAS (Cuba) said that there had been no smallpox epidemic in his country since the beginning of the current century. In 1906, and again in 1913, there had been one or two cases of the disease imported into Cuba, but it had not spread on either of those occasions since the whole population had been vaccinated. In the previous century, smallpox had been a terrible scourge in Cuba. Soon after the beginning of the current century, when the Republic was established, a law had been passed making it compulsory for everyone to be vaccinated. That law was still in force. The very accurate statistics kept by the authorities showed that there had been only two or three cases of encephalitis due to smallpox vaccination in Cuba. The Cuban authorities considered that the danger of smallpox infection was far more serious than the danger of possible complications due to smallpox vaccination and that, for that reason, smallpox vaccination should remain compulsory for everyone. For several years, under the aegis of the director-general for public health, there had been a committee concerned solely with intensive progressive revaccination of the population. Cuba was manufacturing vaccine with scientific and economic help from PASB; it was making great progress in the manufacture of dried vaccine. It could place at the disposal of WHO two million doses of smallpox vaccine for use in any country where there was a shortage of vaccine. Cuba being a small country, they could not offer more.

He welcomed the proposal that smallpox be eradicated throughout the world. He supported all the amendments which had been proposed.

Dr SULIANTI (Indonesia) said she warmly supported the principle of the Soviet Union proposal that there should be a world-wide campaign to eradicate smallpox. At one time her country had been almost free of smallpox, but during the last world war smallpox vaccination there had been interrupted, and, because of that, there were at present a number of endemic foci of the disease in Indonesia. She supported the proposal made jointly by the delegates of Ireland and New Zealand, since its adoption would ensure that before the proposed campaign was started there would be available sufficient data for determining how the campaign could best be organized, where the most suitable stable vaccine could be obtained for it and what would be the most economical way of conducting the campaign. If WHO, after those data had been obtained, agreed that the campaign should be started, the Indonesian authorities would gladly take part in it and do all they could to ensure its success in the territory for which they were responsible.

Professor ZHDANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) supported the Iraqi delegate's suggestion. He believed the working party could complete quickly the task which it would be given, because most of the proposals for amendment were very constructive and positive.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the working party should be composed of members of the delegations of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Belgium, Viet Nam, Canada, Ireland and New Zealand.

Professor ZHDANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) suggested that a member of the Indian delegation be appointed to the working party.

Dr GOOSSENS (Belgium) suggested that a member of the French delegation be included amongst the members of the working party.

Decision: The Committee set up a working party composed of members of the delegations of Belgium, Canada, France, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Viet Nam, requesting it to submit a single text combining the Soviet Union draft resolution and the amendments proposed to it.

The meeting was suspended at 10.30 and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL announced that the Cuban delegation had made a formal offer to supply two million doses of smallpox vaccine annually for the world-wide eradication campaign.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking on behalf of all the members of the Committee, thanked the Cuban delegation for their valuable offer.

Sir Arcot MUDALIAR (India), Chairman of the Working Party, reported that the working party had considered the various amendments and had reached unanimous agreement on the following draft resolution:

The Eleventh World Health Assembly,

Noting that smallpox still remains a very widespread and dangerous infectious disease and that in many regions of the world there exist endemic foci of this disease constituting a permanent threat of its propagation and consequently menacing the life and health of the population;

Having regard to the economic aspect of the question, which shows that the funds devoted to vaccination against smallpox throughout the world exceed those necessary for the eradication of smallpox in its endemic foci and consequently the destruction of the sources from which the infection arises and spreads, and clearly indicates that the eradication of smallpox might in future make vaccination and all expenditures involved in its application redundant;

Taking into account the level of development reached by medical science and the health services in the control of infectious diseases, and in particular of smallpox, and the manifest tendency of the morbidity of smallpox to diminish in recent years;

Having regard to the decisions and pertinent practical measures adopted by WHO for the control and intensification of antismallpox programmes, in particular resolutions WHA3.18, EB11.R58, WHA6.18, EB12.R13, EB13.R3, WHA7.5, WHA8.38, WHA9.49; and

Considering it opportune to raise the problem of the world-wide eradication of smallpox in the near future;

1. REQUESTS the Director-General to study and report to the Executive Board at its twenty-third session on the financial, administrative and technical implications of a programme having as its objective the eradication of smallpox, the study to include the various problems involved in carrying out the following activities:
 - (a) investigation of the means of ensuring the world-wide eradication of smallpox, taking into account the fact that smallpox persists in certain areas despite repeated vaccination campaigns;
 - (b) encouragement of the preparation during 1958-1960 of the necessary amount of smallpox vaccine in national laboratories and institutes;
 - (c) training of vaccinators among the local population in countries in which mass immunization campaigns will be conducted;
 - (d) the pooling of experience and the formulation of recommendations for the production of a sufficient amount of thermostable smallpox vaccine suitable for prolonged storage and use in tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world; and
 - (e) study of the measures to be taken in order to avoid complications which might result from smallpox vaccination;
2. RECOMMENDS to Member States
 - (a) that during 1959-1960 the population be vaccinated in countries in which the principal endemic foci of smallpox exist; and
 - (b) that during 1961-1962 additional vaccination of the population should be carried out in foci where the disease persists, that subsequently revaccinations be given to the extent it becomes necessary in accordance with the experience acquired in each country;
3. RECOMMENDS that all countries in which smallpox vaccination is compulsory continue to give smallpox vaccinations during the eradication of this disease throughout the world;
4. CALLS UPON medical scientists and scientific institutions active in the field of microbiology and epidemiology to stimulate their efforts towards improving the quality and technology of the production of satisfactory smallpox vaccine resistant to the influence of temperature; and
5. REQUESTS the Director-General to report to the Twelfth World Health Assembly on the progress made and the results obtained.

Sir Samuel MANUWA (Federation of Nigeria) said that his was one of the countries in which smallpox was endemic and from time to time epidemic. The disease, particularly in its endemic form, might perhaps be regarded as a reflection on the efficiency of the health service of the country. He wished, however, to add his assurance to that already given by other speakers from the African Region that there was by no means any complacency about the problems presented by smallpox. Nigeria was already producing vaccine for its own use and for its neighbours. The average annual production during the past few years had been twelve million doses and more than fifteen million doses had been produced during the past year. Dried vaccine was also produced in accordance with the method approved by WHO. The dried vaccine retained its potency at ordinary room temperature for over a year and it had been found particularly useful in the dry, hot conditions of the northern part of Nigeria. The aim was to vaccinate a specific proportion of the population each year, but the achievement often fell short of the aim. The French delegate had mentioned the difficulties encountered in Africa, where there was not only a question of procuring the vaccine but also of locating and reaching the people to be vaccinated. He was glad to note that the draft resolution proposed by the working party took some of those difficulties into account. He supported the draft resolution and expressed his delegation's appreciation to the USSR for its initiative in raising the question. He hoped that the question of smallpox control would be placed on the agenda of the Regional Committee for Africa, so that problems such as the co-ordination of vaccination campaigns across the frontiers of neighbouring territories could be considered. It might also be advisable to organize an inter-territorial conference, as had been done in the case of yaws, and the Committee could consider the desirability of appointing an adviser on smallpox for the Regional Office.

Mr PYMAN (Australia) referred to the statement in the second paragraph of the preamble to the draft resolution that the "funds devoted to vaccination against smallpox throughout the world exceed those necessary for the eradication of smallpox in its endemic foci". He was not sure that there was sufficient evidence to support a statement in those terms and he suggested that the words "funds devoted to vaccination against smallpox" should be replaced by "funds devoted to the control of and vaccination against smallpox".

Sir Arcot MUDALIAR (India), chairman of the working party, accepted that amendment.

Dr ALLARIA (Argentina) said that it might have been useful to have referred in paragraph 3 of the operative part of the draft resolution to the advantages of an active campaign to educate the public.

Dr Karefa SMART (Sierra Leone) remarked that smallpox eradication was a world-wide problem and suggested that the recommendations in paragraph 2 of the draft resolution should not be restricted to Member States.

Dr Le VAN KHAI (Viet Nam) pointed out that, in the French text, the recommendation was not restricted to Member States. It had been his understanding in the working party that the recommendation was to be addressed to all governments.

Sir Arcot MUDALIAR (India), chairman of the working party, accepted the proposal to amend the introduction to paragraph 2 of the operative part of the draft resolution to read, "Recommends to all governments".

Decision: The draft resolution, as amended, was approved unanimously.

The CHAIRMAN thanked the working party and its chairman for their valuable work. He proposed that the resolution just approved should be added as part 5 to the fifth report of the Committee on Programme and Budget (All/P&B/43) which had been adopted earlier in the meeting.

It was so agreed.

4. CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

The CHAIRMAN thanked all members of the Committee for their help and co-operation at all times. There had been many important items on the Committee's agenda, most of which had required very careful consideration. He referred in particular to the valuable report on the world health situation, which had been submitted for the first time to the World Health Assembly. The remarkable spirit of harmony which had prevailed in the discussions had made his task a pleasant one. He also wished to thank the Director-General and his staff for their co-operation.

Sir Arcot MUDALIAR (India) said that he was sure he was voicing the unanimous feelings of the delegates in conveying their gratitude and appreciation to the Chairman for the great patience and wisdom with which he had conducted the debates.

The CHAIRMAN announced that the business of the Committee was completed.

The meeting rose at 12 noon.