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NINTH GENERAL PROGRAMME OF WORK

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CONTENTS

	Page
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. DELIBERATIONS OF THE FORTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE ON THE PROGRESS REPORT ON THE FORMULATION OF THE NINTH GENERAL PROGRAMME OF WORK	2
3. CURRENT STATUS OF PREPARATION OF THE NINTH GPW	2
4. PURPOSE OF WORKING PAPER	3

Annex - Policy and Programme Framework for the Ninth
General Programme of Work

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a constitutional requirement that the WHO Executive Board submits to the World Health Assembly, for its consideration and approval, a General Programme of Work (GPW), covering a specific period (Article 28(g)). The General Programme of Work establishes the overall direction of WHO's activities and determines the main objectives and approaches of the Organization's collaborative programmes during the period under consideration. It is built up through an assessment of country, regional and global health policies, and an evaluation of the preceding General Programmes of Work as well as of the implementation of the health-for-all strategies. The GPW represents the Organization's response to individual and collective needs of its Member States in strivings towards the attainment of health for all in fulfilling the Organization's constitutional objective of the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. The GPW is operationalized through biennial programme budgeting.

The Ninth GPW, which covers the period 1996-2001 (inclusive), is the last of the three General Programmes of Work that together are to ensure continuing support to the implementation of the global strategy for Health for All by the Year 2000, particularly its national components.

The initial progress in the formulation of the Ninth GPW was brought to the attention of the forty-fifth session of the Regional Committee in September 1992. The main events reported at that time were as follows:

Preparation of the Ninth GPW was initiated by WHO headquarters in June 1990, starting with the establishment of a small working group. In August 1990, a questionnaire was prepared and sent to all Regional Directors and Assistant Directors-General (ADG) to elicit their experiences with the Eighth GPW, and their views on the framework, content and programme outline of the Ninth GPW. The results of analysis of this questionnaire were used in the initial work on the preparation of the Ninth GPW.

In January 1991, the Director-General appointed a Task Force for the Ninth GPW under the chairmanship of an ADG to oversee its preparation. At the eighty-seventh session of the Executive Board in January 1991, the Director-General presented, in his address, the concept of a new paradigm for health which had been used as a principal basis for such preparation.

By July 1991, the draft annotated table of contents of the Ninth GPW was prepared and discussed by the Programme Committee of the Executive Board (PC/EB). Issues relating to the preparation of the Ninth GPW were also thoroughly reviewed and discussed at the meeting of Directors of Programme Management from the Regional Offices, held in WHO, Geneva, at the end of July 1991.

In December 1991, the Executive Board working papers on "A Paradigm for Health - A Framework for New Public Health Action" (document EB89/11) and "A Ninth General Programme of Work Covering a specific period (1996-2001)" (document EB89/12) were published and discussed extensively by the Executive Board at its eighty-ninth session in January 1992. Consequent on this,

the Board decided to establish a working group to pursue a study on WHO response to global changes, which was to contribute to the preparation of the Ninth GPW. While considering the recommendations of the above working group, the Programme Committee of the Executive Board, at its meeting in August 1992, also reviewed the draft policy and programme framework for the Ninth GPW (document EB/91/PC/WP2).

2. DELIBERATIONS OF THE FORTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE ON THE PROGRESS REPORT ON THE FORMULATION OF THE NINTH GENERAL PROGRAMME OF WORK

The Regional Committee noted that the Ninth General Programme of Work covering the specific period 1996-2001 was the last of the General Programmes of Work before reaching the target of HFA/2000. The four policy directions of the Ninth General Programme of Work include:

- integrating health and human development in public policies;
- promoting and protecting health;
- ensuring equitable access to quality health services, and
- preventing and controlling specific health problems.

In the discussions that followed, the Committee observed that the Ninth GPW was conceived more in general terms and that the countries, during implementation of the Ninth GPW, would be concentrating more on broad health programmes rather than on specific ones, which should provide some flexibility in programme development. Referring to the policy directions as contained in the document SEA/RC45/Inf.6, the Committee felt that it was also important to review the managerial system in order to further improve programme development and implementation. The classification of programmes in the Ninth GPW, the Committee noted, was expected to be much simpler and more flexible, as compared to that of the Seventh and Eighth GPWs. The reduction in the number of programmes and introduction of some more flexibility, it was felt, would promote expeditious programme management and delivery. Noting that there would be no need to prepare either the Regional Programme of Work or the Medium-term Programme, the Committee agreed that the Ninth GPW, while offering general guidelines and policy framework, would be an exercise to simplify programme management and should be adequate to meet the needs of the Member Countries.

The Committee wished to ensure that the Ninth GPW, when adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1994, could serve as good guidelines for the development of WHO collaborative programmes at the country level, in allowing flexibility and effectiveness of the general policy and programme framework and in the restructuring of the health systems based on flexible programme development and management.

The Committee requested the Regional Office to convey its comments and observations to WHO headquarters for consideration during all steps of preparation of the final document.

3. CURRENT STATUS OF PREPARATION OF THE NINTH GPW

As directed by the Regional Committee, the Regional Office conveyed the comments and observations of the Committee to WHO headquarters for its consideration prior to finalization of the Ninth General Programme of Work.

The ninety-first session of the Executive Board, held in January 1993, considered the document entitled "Policy and Programme Framework for the Ninth General Programme of Work" (EB91/20), which is attached as Annex to this working paper. This document embodied the totality of views expressed at all levels of the Organization on the content of the Ninth General Programme of Work. It contains three chapters. Chapter I is entitled "Health Picture", wherein is highlighted the problems that will determine the policy and framework for WHO action in the period 1996-2001. Chapter II is titled "Policy and Programme Framework". This section outlines the policy framework, comprising targets, an analysis of WHO's roles and functions, and the four policy directions. Chapter III deals with "General Principles for Programme Development, Implementation and Management". This chapter raises issues to be discussed and identifies certain decisions to be taken for implementing the policies and programmes of the Ninth General Programme of Work. This chapter also lays down the basis for the "Framework for A Classified List of WHO Programmes/Activities" for the Ninth GPW, as shown in Annex 2 of the attached document.

The Executive Board reviewed and discussed document EB91/20 and agreed on the policy and programme framework of the Ninth GPW. In April 1993, the regional and headquarters focal points for the Ninth GPW prepared a draft of the Ninth GPW, which is scheduled to be reviewed in July 1993 by the Programme Committee of the Executive Board.

Following this review, the draft Ninth GPW will be further refined and improved. It is expected that this draft document will be made available as an information document to the forty-sixth session of the Regional Committee for discussion and comments.

The draft document will be further revised in October 1993, taking into consideration the comments and suggestions made by the Regional Committees, and finalized by the Executive Board at its ninety-third session in January 1994. Finally, in May 1994, the Ninth GPW will be reviewed and approved by the World Health Assembly.

It should be noted that the preparation of the 1996-1997 Programme Budget, which is the first biennium of the Ninth GPW, is beginning during the second half of 1993, when the Ninth GPW document is still in the draft form. However, decisions on certain aspects of the Ninth GPW which are necessary for the preparation of the 1996-1997 Programme Budget, such as the classified list of programmes, will be taken by the Programme Committee of the Executive Board in July 1993 and incorporated in the Director-General's Procedural Guidance for the preparation of the 1996-1997 Programme Budget.

4. PURPOSE OF WORKING PAPER

This working paper is being submitted in order to apprise the Committee of the progress made in the formulation of the Ninth GPW since September 1992.

The Annex to this Working Paper (document EB91/20) will be the basis on which the draft Ninth GPW will be developed. As the document will be finalized during October 1993, any observations and guidance provided by the Regional Committee will be submitted to headquarters for necessary action.