



EXECUTIVE BOARD

Forty-ninth Session

Provisional agenda item 4.2

REPORT OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT ON A
RATIONALIZATION OF THE PROCEEDINGS AND
DOCUMENTATION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

Report by the Director-General



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on a Rationalization of the Proceedings and Documentation of the World Health Assembly, received on 3 December 1970, was considered by the Executive Board at its forty-seventh and forty-eighth sessions and was also transmitted to the Twenty-fourth World Health Assembly for information. The report, together with the comments of the Director-General, was circulated in document EB47/10 Add.1 and Corr.1, which was subsequently annexed to documents A24/B/3 and EB48/11.

1.2 In resolution EB47.R43,¹ the Executive Board decided to continue the study of the subject at its forty-eighth session and, inter alia, requested the Director-General to implement meanwhile, within his authority, those recommendations which he considered feasible. At the forty-eighth session, the Board decided to consider the subject further at its forty-ninth session and in resolution EB48.R15,² requested the Director-General to submit to the Board the result of his further study of the recommendations contained in the report, and any other comments he might consider useful, taking into account the views expressed by the Board.

1.3 The Director-General endeavoured to carry out the Board's instructions and in this report (a) summarizes the results of the special studies undertaken on some recommendations,³ and (b) indicates the recommendations which, in the view of the Director-General, call specifically for the Board's decision. No reference is made to the recommendations already implemented or on which the Director-General has no other comments to make in addition to those presented in his previous report in document EB47/10 Add.1 and Corr.1.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIALLY STUDIED

2.1 Recommendation 1(d) - Statistics on documents

2.1.1 Further study of this recommendation led to the conclusion that, unless all the organizations of the United Nations system use the same definitions of pre-session, in-session and post-session documents, any comparison with the other organizations of the system would be misleading. A solution to the problem would therefore best be sought on an inter-agency basis.

¹ Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org., No. 189, p. 24.

² Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org., No. 195, p. 8.

³ Recommendations are identified by the same numbers as in document EB47/10 Add.1 and Corr.1.

2.2 Recommendation 7(a) - Place of the Health Assembly

2.2.1 The Director-General believes that the practice of the World Health Assembly to take at each session a formal decision as to the selection of the country or region in which the next annual session of the Assembly shall be held is, save exceptional circumstances, a purely routine matter on which little time is expended. However, the consideration of this matter each year in the Health Assembly could be further simplified through the adoption of a procedure whereby the item would not be referred to a Committee and no formal resolution adopted. The Health Assembly in a plenary meeting would endorse a statement by the President that in the absence of an invitation by a Member State, the subsequent session would be held in Switzerland, such statement being included in the verbatim record.

2.3 Recommendations 12 and 13 - Documentation

2.3.1 In connexion with these recommendations, the Director-General in his comments to the Executive Board proposed to review the whole question of documentation in the context of the analysis made by the Inspectors. To this end, a secretariat group was entrusted with the study of the Organization's position vis-à-vis each of the respective Joint Inspection Unit recommendations, including all other aspects of the World Health Assembly and Executive Board documentation that might crop up in the course of the examination of this subject.

2.3.2 The following problems were studied:

timely preparation and distribution of documents,
possible reduction in the number and volume of documents,
listing and identification of documents,
statistics on the production of documents, and
organizational arrangements: review and co-ordination machinery.

2.3.3 As a result of this study, certain changes are considered in the system of numbering of documents, the use of different colours, as well as in the system of documents lists. Internal measures for improved planning regarding the preparation and distribution of documents and for a possible reduction in their volume are also envisaged.

2.4 Recommendation 14 - Possibility of introducing a biennial budget cycle without constitutional reforms

2.4.1 This recommendation will be further studied, with a view to preparing proposals for consideration by the Executive Board at its fifty-first session in January 1973 and by the Twenty-sixth World Health Assembly.

2.5 Recommendation 15 - Possibility of holding biennial Health Assembly without affecting the existing constitutional requirements

2.5.1 This recommendation has been studied and the conclusion reached that no changes could be made in the present system of the holding of the annual Health Assemblies without amending those provisions of the Constitution dealing with the frequency of World Health Assemblies in such a manner as to delegate to the Health Assembly itself the power to determine the actual frequency of meetings of the Assembly. Members of the Board may recall that this matter was last considered by the Twenty-first World Health Assembly in the course of which proposals to amend the Constitution in the sense indicated by the Inspectors were withdrawn by their sponsors.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS REQUIRING SPECIFICALLY THE BOARD'S DECISION

3.1 There remain several recommendations which are either directly addressed to the Executive Board or on which, in the opinion of the Director-General, the Board's views are particularly required. As the Board is aware, the Director-General's comments on these recommendations are contained in his previous report, EB47/10 Add.1 and Corr.1. The Board will recall that some comments have also been made by certain members of the Board at the forty-eighth session which are summarized in document EB48/SR/3 Rev.1. The recommendations specifically requiring the Board's decision are:

Recommendations 2, 3 and 5 - Modification of the purpose of the general discussion, holding a debate on future programmes, and institution of a debate on the technical aspects of field operations;

Recommendations 6 and 7(f) - Treatment of administrative matters by the Health Assembly and reduction of the number of agenda items;

Recommendation 8 - Composition of delegations; and,

Recommendation 11(c) - Time limit for statements in the Main Committees.