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DE LA SANTÉSECOND WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLYA2/VR/7 ✓
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ENGLISH

SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

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Provisional Verbatim Record

PRESIDENT: Dr. Karl EVANG (Norway)

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DISCUSSION OF THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
AND THE REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD (continuation)

The PRESIDENT: The meeting is called to order. The agenda for this afternoon is, first, the end of the general debate. If we have time after that, we will consider the nominations of the Nominations Committee for the Vice-Chairmen of the main committees; and document A2/58, procedure for examination of the Programme and Budget for 1950.

We have made very satisfactory progress and if we finish early enough this afternoon, there will be convened a quarter of an hour after the adjournment of the plenary session, meetings of the Committee on Programme and the Committee on Administration and Finance.

We shall therefore continue the general debate and I call upon the representative of the United States of America. The succeeding speaker will be the representative of El Salvador.

X Mr. SCHEELE (United States of America): I am pleased to find on my arrival in Rome that the general discussion of the reports of the Director-General and the Executive Board is still under way. I apologise to the Assembly for my delay in arriving, but it was unavoidable.

I wish to express my great pleasure at being here and having the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the many distinguished delegates who have played such an important role, not only in the development of the World Health Organization, but in public health progress in their many nations. And I might add that I am very happy to be back with many of my old friends with whom I have worked for many years.

As you are aware, the United States has taken an active part in the development of the World Health Organization as a permanent source of good in the world community. The United States looks forward to the progressive growth and development of the World Health Organization through the years ahead. We are proud of the role that the United States has played, is playing and expects to play in the whole movement for social and economic advancement of which the World Health Organization is such an important part. We appreciate the tributes that previous speakers have paid to the participation of the United States in this movement. Through UNRRA, the

International Children's Emergency Fund, the Institute of Inter-American Affairs, the Economic Co-operation Administration, and through special rehabilitation programmes in areas of pressing need, the United States has proved its determination to help in the great task of world-wide social and economic development. Some of our great private organizations, also, are contributing extensively to this task.

We call attention to this aid and assistance which has come from our hearts as well as from our substance, to demonstrate that there is no basis for any charge that the United States has failed people in need anywhere. As the President of the United States stated in his inaugural message in January of this year, the United States intends to continue to contribute to the work for the benefit and improvement of mankind, especially in under-developed areas. We look to the World Health Organization as one means of accomplishing this great objective, by pooling the medical and health resources of all the world for the benefit of each and everyone of us.

In view of the record of the United States, we are disturbed that a question has been raised before this Assembly concerning the motives of our country. I wish to assure this Assembly that the motives of the United States in its programmes of aid and participation in international activities are identical with the principles of the Constitution of the World Health Organization. When matters of misunderstanding, criticism or disagreement arise, as they are bound to from time to time in any great Assembly, the answers can be derived only from the desire for frank discussion. This must be based on the assumption that we all seek the best means of steadily advancing the high objectives that we share together.

I agree fully with the delegate from Czechoslovakia that the World Health Organization and this Assembly should not become an arena for political discussion or activity. It has been said that the refusal of export licences for certain apparatus has jeopardised human life. I wish to deny this charge on behalf of the Government of the United States. A specific piece of

equipment has been mentioned. It was implied that this equipment is necessary in the production of penicillin. This is not the case. The highest grade crystalline penicillin can be produced and is being produced commercially today in the United States without this equipment. A specific charge has been made, therefore, which cannot be substantiated.

The statement has also been made that the United States has refused to help children suffering from malnutrition caused by the war. I do not understand this statement in view of the large role the United States has played through UNRRA in the past and at this very moment through the International Children's Emergency Fund and much private effort. Through these agencies the American people have rendered great assistance in the nourishment of children of many countries, including that of the delegate making this charge.

Of course, it is unlikely that any nation is entirely satisfied with the programme of the World Health Organization at this early stage. We expect this Assembly and each succeeding Assembly to improve its administrative structure, to simplify its operations and to recommend more useful programmes. However, we believe that all criticisms should be constructive and lead to the improvement of this young organization.

We hope to see the World Health Organization increase its activities in the field of technical assistance. We hope that it can help all nations to find the most effective ways of accomplishing their tasks in public health. We, on our part, look to the World Health Organization for help and advice in finding these ways. The United States is particularly impressed with the need for decentralization, through which the usefulness of the Organization would be increased and its work brought closer to the Member States and their peoples.

The United States will continue to play an active role in the World Health Organization, helping the Organization to build a better, healthier world. We will continue to do this in the belief that we are helping to build permanent peace and happiness by advancing the ideals stated in the Preamble of the Constitution of the World Health Organization.

The PRESIDENT: The representative of El Salvador has not yet arrived. May I call upon the representative of Poland. The last speaker will be the representative of the Dominican Republic.

✕ Dr. Irene DOMANSKA (Poland) (Interpretation from the French): There is no doubt that at the present time numerous health problems call for international solution.

Disease knows no frontiers and nobody can deny that the level of health of the world can be raised through the collaboration of the various peoples, and that quicker and more effective action can be taken against disease.

After the First World War, a medical section was set up within the League of Nations to deal with national health problems. Unfortunately it was unable to bring its programme to fruition.

After the Second World War, the Social and Economic Council of the United Nations suggested to the Secretary-General of that organization on 15 February 1946, that an International Health Conference should be convened. The conference was held in New York during the month of June 1946. Last year, the first statutory conference of WHO took place, and a programme was drawn up.

According to the Constitution, WHO is a specialized agency the purpose of which is "the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health" (Chapter I Article 1). Article 2 states that WHO should do all in its power to attain this end.

Representatives of the USSR, the Ukraine, Byelorussia and the popular democratic countries stressed at the First Health Assembly in Geneva the urgency of eradicating immediately the consequences of the last war and of the Hitlerite occupation in Europe, as well as remedying the ill effects which some centuries of neglect and delay had produced on the health of colonial peoples. Three years after the first New York Conference, and one year after WHO has functioned as an organization one might very well ask what has been accomplished up to now,

For carrying out the practical work of WHO, the Constitution makes provision for the creation of offices and regional committees in various parts of the world. Up to now, a Regional Office has been instituted for India and neighbouring countries, and another for Egypt and the Near East.

There is no doubt that to remedy the results of the war and occupation in Europe, from the health point of view, also required the creation of an office for Europe. But the setting up of an independent office met with the opposition of the American delegation. After a rather heated discussion, a limited solution was found by setting up within the administration of WHO a temporary office called "the Special Office for Europe". This office was to provide emergency help and to act with speed.

Today we are in a position to state that the Office has not met these requirements and has not even been able to draw up a constructive programme.

During the first session of the Health Assembly, the drawing up of the programme gave rise to serious differences in the interpretation of the tasks and aims of WHO, especially between delegates of the USSR, Byelorussia, the Ukraine and the popular democratic countries on the one hand, and certain delegates of various countries, on the other.

Delegates of the popular democratic countries, of the Soviet Union, the Ukraine and Byelorussia were of the opinion that health problems cannot be examined without taking into account the social and economic conditions of a given country.

The programme drawn up by the First Health Assembly finally resulted in a compromise and took into account a large part of the wishes of the above-mentioned countries.

However, discussions in themselves, as well as the composition of the Executive Board and in particular of the administrative services, put the execution of the programme in doubt, even though it had been unanimously accepted. These fears were substantiated in practice. At the time of the First Health Assembly, several speakers had demonstrated that the health services of certain countries belonging to WHO would not be in a position to carry out the programme recommended by WHO for the following reasons:

- (1) Owing to the shortage of expert personnel or because of the low level attained by the latter, particularly in those countries which, during the Hitlerite occupation, had been cut off from the rest of the world and thus had been unable to take advantage of the latest achievements of science.

(2) Owing to the shortage of certain means of prophylaxis and relief, as well as medical equipment, either because those countries were not yet in a position to produce those things for themselves or because the means and methods of production of certain drugs possessing an enormous therapeutic value have been kept secret.

(3) Owing to the fact that the purchase or importation of certain therapeutic products, prophylactics, or medical equipment was often impossible because of the shortage of foreign exchange or, which was more frequently the case, because of the political discrimination in trade relations which certain countries are applying towards other countries and in particular, towards the popular democracies.

It is for that reason that the representatives of the popular democracies demanded at the First Health Assembly, as well as at every session of the Executive Board, that WHO should take steps to remove the difficulties mentioned.

The problem was to be solved:

(1) Through the granting of fellowships; (2) by the setting up of a special office of supply to facilitate the purchase by Member countries of certain products and technical equipment that they required for the realization of the programme laid down by WHO.

The scheme of fellowships and the bureau of supplies have not given the results expected from them.

In the preamble to the WHO Constitution we read: "the achievement of any State in the promotion and protection of health is of value to all. Unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of disease, especially communicable disease, is a common danger."

But what do these ideas look like when put into practice? We have taken the liberty of quoting a few examples from a country like the United States.

The scientific institution which used to have the greatest authority in the United States and the widest scientific influence was the National Academy of Science.

During the First World War, a national scientific council was created called the National Research Council. During the Second World War this institution turned itself in October 1940, into the National Defence Research Committee and in 1941, into the office of Scientific Research and Development. At the end of the war the bureaux of the OSRD were taken over by the Army. The reports of this institution comprise some 90 volumes.

Amongst other things the results of the labours of the Committee of Medical Research can be found there. The Committee of Medical Research has been unable to publish several results of its labours, or rather it has published them in an inadequate manner or after very great delay. The reasons for this procedure are due to the continuation of wartime policy into the present day.

This way of treating science, from whose benefits the whole world should profit, had a terrific repercussion amongst American scientists and politicians. The struggle for liberty in science has been centred around Senator Kilgore, aided by such scientists as Einstein, Urey, Fermi and politicians like Wallace, Ickes and Vannevar Busch.

Unfortunately the idea that the free exchange of information and publications should be limited, an idea adopted by the armed forces and industrial concerns, has triumphed.

The scientific and popular American press often comments on the great constructive results of the biological weapon research centre at Camp Detrich.

As is already known, there were 5,000 specialists working at this centre on medical subjects, including that which should on the most elementary humanitarian grounds be available to the public without reserve.

Meanwhile, all discoveries have been exploited in the first place by the chemical industry, whose representative G.W. Merck (The Director of the Merck concern) was the scientific adviser of the American Government.

In this way such discoveries, instead of being available for peace and the well-being of humanity, have become the privilege of commerce.

Is it perhaps only a coincidence that streptomycin, to the production of which so much work and energy have been devoted at Camp Detrich, has been almost entirely the monopoly of the firm of Merck, especially when production first began ?

The methods of production of chemical medicaments whose value in the opinion of specialists is outside the medical field and within the domain of world economy (for example in regard to the disinfection of territories where there is sleeping sickness) and even demographic

problems should not be kept secret, for the modern production of these medicaments depends to a great extent on technological solutions which are at least as important as the methods of production. Unfortunately, the technological details are not divulged either by publication or other direct means. The Pharmaco-chemical American factories allow probationers and scholarship-holders to visit the scientific research and control laboratories, but never give indications of the production of medicaments.

It is unnecessary to insist on the significance and humanitarian value of a drug such as streptomycin which, for the first time in history, has made it possible to combat certain diseases, for example tubercular meningitis, which was formerly incurable. The production of this drug is always insufficient to cover not only general medical needs but even special cases of pediatry, in the struggle against tuberculosis in children. In spite of this fact nothing has been done to start production of this drug outside the United States, and it is perhaps better to say no more on this subject.

The efforts of Poland, through the intermediary of WHO, to start the training of specialists in American centres have been without result owing to lack of co-operation at these centres.

Penicillin became from the first moment an irreplaceable drug, a unique weapon in the struggle against several contagious and infectious diseases, amongst others venereal afflictions, which have great social significance and epidemiological potentialities.

A short time after the war five dreadfully devastated countries amongst them Poland, should have received in their UNRRA equipment a complete industrial plant necessary for the production of penicillin and were also due to receive full directions concerning the methods of production.

The delivery of this equipment went on for a year and a half. At the end of this time an incomplete equipment had been sent and the reason given for this was that the methods of the production of penicillin had been changed and that supplementary directions would follow later. Unfortunately, no strains in sufficient quantities were ever received, nor appropriate equipment, nor any details concerning the production of crystallized penicillin, and this in spite of repeated efforts on our part to obtain them, either directly or through the intermediary of WHO.

Publications dealing with the chemistry of penicillin are very incomplete. Down to the beginning of 1941 there were only a few rare general reports on the work carried out in that year by 41 scientific and industrial research institutes.

In 1946 it was decided to bring out a monograph on the chemistry of penicillin to include all the chemical research work completed since 1941. This monograph actually appeared two years later, in January 1949, when a good deal of the information had become out of date and presented little interest. A very important study on the precipitation of penicillin, which was ready for publication on December 6, only appeared in 1948. The technical methods of penicillin crystallization have not yet been published.

The drafting committees for the monograph on the chemistry of penicillin define penicillin, on page VII of the preface, as a war weapon.

Information so far published on the chemical properties and constitution of the new auremycin antibiotic is extremely scarce. The same may be said of chloremycin. Nevertheless, these antibiotics play a very important part in dealing with Rickettsia and certain viruses.

This is also true of biochemical research by atomic isotopes. For some years past very active research has been pursued into the assimilation of CO_2 by plants by means of carbon C_{14} isotopes. The research cycle carried out by Calvin and Banson was only published in a very fragmentary way in spite of the very great importance of these investigations.

The major portion of the work on stable and radioactive isotopes is inspired by the United States Atomic Commission and is carried out for that commission.

The Director of the Metallurgical Laboratory of Chicago University, Farrington Daniels, defined the position very well when he said that hundreds of scientific workers had been arduously toiling for a number of years without any possibility of publishing the results of their labours either in reviews or in the form of a monograph.

In view of the political atmosphere of the United States, American scientists are afraid to accept research students from the popular democratic countries, seeing that their consent to accept such candidates might be regarded as an anti-American activity. When they are admitted these foreign workers encounter serious difficulties in the way of obtaining information in general and the latest information in particular.

WHO is powerless in face of these facts, and the sending of such students under these conditions very often becomes valueless.

In the United States the most recent successes in the field of public health which we owe to the latest advances of science have become articles of commerce which are accessible only to the wealthy, who have ample funds at their disposal. These powerful weapons against disease do not serve humanity, but on the contrary are employed by capitalists and imperialists against humanity since they are used for war preparation.

Of 60 States which ratified the Constitution of WHO, the United States alone made reservations not provided for in the Constitution and limited their contribution in the common effort.

This was an infringement of the Constitution and explains why the United Nations, through Mr. Trygve Lie, the Secretary-General, felt obliged to submit the decision to accept the United States as a Member of WHO to the First Assembly of the Organization.

At that Assembly all the representatives expressed their surprise and regret at the decision of the United States. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the need for international collaboration in so important a field as the preservation of health, the United States was unanimously admitted as a Member of the Organization, while the earnest wish was expressed that that country should remove its restrictions.

Unfortunately the United States delegates have not altered their attitude up to the present, and therefore have perpetuated a privileged position which does not allow WHO to function effectively.

In speaking of the activities of WHO, we cannot pass over in silence the goodwill and the efforts which the Soviet Union has made towards the easy functioning of the labours of the Interim Commission and of the First Assembly, as well as the efforts the USSR has made to create in WHO the best international atmosphere and the best conditions for development.

Unfortunately, owing to the unfair and misplaced policy pursued by the majority of the Board, as well as by the Secretariat and the administration, the Soviet Union, Byelorussia and the Ukraine have left WHO, declaring that collaboration with it had become useless since the Organization had not sustained its role nor accomplished its task.

This decision by the Soviet Union must be considered a great loss to our Organization.

WHO, like many other international organizations, has become a battle-ground for two points of view, two camps. One is the peace camp, representing the interests of humanity, which demands that the attainments of medical science should serve the whole human race. This camp is represented by the Soviet Union and by the popular democracies. The other, the capitalist camp, represents the interests of a small number of people, who treat science as a source of gain, and as a weapon of war. The activities and the behaviour of the majority of the members of the Board, as well as of the administration, proves that WHO leans rather towards the capitalist and imperialist camp. Its activities are limited for the most part to fine declarations having no real value. All this makes the continued collaboration of certain countries with WHO doubtful and shorn of interest.

Present-day politics require a fundamental change. The collaboration of several States will be decided, not by declarations or resolutions, not by fine speeches and long discussions, not by theoretical and imaginary programmes and promises, but by hard facts and a concrete contribution towards the work of peace and world progress in accordance with the terms of the Constitution, which states, in its Preamble:

"The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security, and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States".

X Dr. THOMEN (Dominican Republic): In the name of the Dominican delegation, first of all I must express to the Government of Italy gratitude for the warm hospitality tendered to us. The facilities offered for the holding of this Assembly and the many social functions included in the programme will make our task both easy and pleasant.

I also want to give due credit to my respected colleagues, Dr. Stampar and Dr. Evang, for the most able way in which they conducted, and are conducting, respectively, the debates of the First and Second World Health Assemblies.

Finally, a word of recognition should be said for the silent but efficient work being performed by the Director-General and the Secretariat.

It has been the cause of particular satisfaction to our country that the agreement has already been signed whereby the Pan American Sanitary Bureau becomes the Regional Office of the World Health Organization. In this manner, we earnestly hope that the benefits of co-ordinated work may be extended most effectively in our hemisphere. This will undoubtedly result in the improvement of the health of our peoples and of those people with whom they come in contact.

Studying the proposed programme of action for the year 1950 presented for the consideration of this Assembly, we notice that due attention has been given to the principal health problems. This is not the appropriate moment to discuss the details of this important project, since we shall have the opportunity to present our points of view during the various discussions in the committee meetings. However, I think it proper again to call attention to the fact that the problems vary in importance according to the conditions of the various geographical zones. While in some regions very advanced plans will be advisable, in others it will be necessary to concentrate particularly on basic sanitary problems.

Since, in the Dominican Republic, the Health Department has been organized within the modern concepts of public health, we carry out a complete programme of modern public health activities within our organization. However, the problems of environmental sanitation, control of malaria and tuberculosis, maternal and child health, and other problems, which to us are fundamental, receive preferential attention.

It is our hope that in the deliberations of this Assembly, a programme of action may be perfected which, in turn, may enable our organization to carry out more effective and useful work during 1950 and the ensuing years for the benefit of the health of humanity, which will lead to greater understanding among the peoples.

The PRESIDENT: That has brought us to the end of the general discussion, and I should like to thank all the delegates who have taken part. We all realize that this part of the Assembly is a very important one indeed. Although this is not a political organization in the sense that political decisions are made or

should be made here, we nevertheless represent governments. Therefore, it is of the greatest importance for the Assembly and for the Secretariat to learn, through such a general debate, what the governments think of WHO and its work - what they approve of and what they have to criticise - and this is the main purpose of the general debate.

Some delegates have also taken the occasion to present what might be called reports on the achievements in improving the health of the populations of their countries. Very interesting as this may be, I venture to submit that the general debate is not exactly the place for that, and I would like, in this connexion, to draw the attention of delegates to Article 61 of the Constitution, reading, "Each Member shall report annually to the Organization on the action taken and progress achieved in improving the health of its people".

During this general discussion a great many problems have been touched upon. In the opinion of some delegates, some of these questions seem to be difficult, controversial. I am quite sure that these and several other questions will be discussed thoroughly in one or more of the main committees as they get under way.

It is, of course, understood that, by this discussion, we have not approved the reports of the Director-General and of the Executive Board. What we have done is to discuss them and we now refer them back to the main committees for further study and report back to the Assembly.

2. SECOND REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON CREDENTIALS

The PRESIDENT: I have pleasure in calling upon the Chairman of the Committee on Credentials.

Professor CANAPERIA (Italy), Chairman of the Committee on Credentials: The Committee on Credentials met yesterday and I will ask the Rapporteur, the delegate of Pakistan, to read the report.

Mr. FAZI (Pakistan), Rapporteur of the Committee on Credentials: This is the second report of the Committee on Credentials. The Committee met on 15 June 1949, at the Palazzo Venezia, Rome. Professor Canaperia took the chair. The representatives of the following countries were present: Egypt, France, Italy, Pakistan,

Philippines, Portugal, Union of South Africa, Uruguay and Venezuela. The committee accepted the credentials of the delegations of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Monaco as entitling the members to take part in the work of the Assembly as delegates, and proposes to the Assembly that the validity of these credentials should be recognized.

The PRESIDENT: Are there any observations?

✓ | In the absence of any opposition, the second report of the Committee on Credentials is accepted.

3. NOMINATIONS BY THE COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS FOR THE THREE VICE-CHAIRMEN OF THE MAIN COMMITTEES

The PRESIDENT: The Committee on Nominations has nominated the three vice-chairmen for the main committees. This needs no action on the part of the Assembly: we take note of the matter here in the plenary session. I shall read the names to you: Dr. Domanska (Poland), Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Programme; Dr. Davis (New Zealand), Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Matters, and Dr. Thomen (Dominican Republic), Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Administration and Finance.

✓ 4. PROCEDURE FOR EXAMINATION OF THE PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR 1950 (A2/58)

1 | The PRESIDENT: Are there any observations on document A2/58?

In the absence of observations or opposition, the resolution proposed by the Executive Board is adopted.

We shall now adjourn this meeting. The Committee on Programme will meet at 4.45 p.m. in Sala del Mappamondo, the Committee on Administration and Finance will meet at 4.45 p.m. in Sala delle Vittorie.

The meeting is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.