



Method of work of the Health Assembly

Report by the Director-General

Resolution WHA50.32 requested the Director-General, *inter alia*, to ensure that the documents related to the agendas of the Health Assembly and the Executive Board were distributed simultaneously and in good time in the six official languages and that the essential technical information of the Organization was disseminated in as many of the official languages as required to meet the needs and priorities of the regions and countries and to give all Member States the widest possible access to it.. This document reports on the implementation of this resolution. The Health Assembly is invited to note the report and to comment on it if it so wishes.

1. In adopting resolution WHA50.32, the Health Assembly reaffirmed the principle of equality among the official and the working languages of the Health Assembly and the Executive Board of the World Health Organization. It was understood that the Organization should implement the resolution within available resources.
2. Preparation of documentation for the 101st session of the Executive Board and for the Fifty-first World Health Assembly was the first experience in implementing the resolution. In practice, this required the setting of an upper limit for the total volume of documentation prepared for the Executive Board and the Health Assembly. Consequently, author units were requested to submit fewer and shorter documents so as not to exceed the set limit. Furthermore, with a view to making the best use of available resources, special efforts were made in order to spread the workload as evenly as possible during the presession period.
3. The Director-General is pleased to report that in almost all cases the different services involved in the preparation of documentation for the governing bodies managed to produce the required documents for simultaneous and timely distribution in the six official languages. Governing body documents for forthcoming sessions are available in all languages on the Internet.¹
4. In response to the Health Assembly's concern with equity of access to the information and documentation of the Organization in many languages, a major management study of the translation process at headquarters was

¹ Access via the WHO home page, <http://www.who.ch>

undertaken during the last quarter of 1997 by a recognized firm of consultants. Once the study's recommendations are implemented, considerable improvement is expected in the timeliness, quality and cost-effectiveness of the translation services.

5. WHO's programme of publications disseminates essential technical information to Member States in all the official languages. Headquarters publishes in Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, while the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has responsibility for the Arabic publishing programme. The decrease in resources available to the headquarters programme for 1996-1997 meant that the number of titles published in all five languages was reduced from 1994-1995 levels. However, an attempt was made to keep the numbers of titles produced in the same relative proportions as in the previous biennium.

MATTERS FOR THE PARTICULAR ATTENTION OF THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

6. The Health Assembly is invited to note the report and to comment on it if it so wishes.

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