



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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Collaboration within the United Nations system and with other intergovernmental organizations

Report by the Secretariat

1. This additional document outlines WHO's collaboration in the follow-up of international conferences, the new framework for cooperation between WHO and the European Commission, and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

World Social Summit for Social Development and Beyond: Achieving social development for all in a globalized world

2. As a direct outcome of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly (Geneva, June 2000), WHO is the lead agency for several collaborative activities. To that end, WHO:

- will mobilize commercial enterprises, especially in the pharmaceutical sector, to invest in research aimed at providing affordable remedies for diseases that particularly afflict people in developing countries;
- will collaborate with UNCTAD and WTO in order to help strengthen capacities of developing countries, especially the least developed, to analyse the consequences of agreements on trade in health services for health equity and the ability to meet the health needs of people living in poverty;
- together with other international organizations will monitor and analyse the therapeutic and public health implications of relevant international agreements, including those on trade, so that governments can develop appropriate policies and regulatory measures; and
- is working with other agencies in the United Nations to integrate health into their policies and programmes, recognizing that beneficial influences on health are often found outside the health sector. Such cooperation may build on initiatives in one or more of the following areas: employment, education, macroeconomic policy, environment, transport, nutrition, food security, housing, developing equitable health financing systems, trade in health goods and services.

Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the 21st century

3. This special session of the United Nations General Assembly (New York, June 2000) reinforced the five strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action in the field of health

- to increase women's access throughout the life cycle to information and care
- to strengthen preventive programmes that promote women's health
- to undertake gender-sensitive approaches in addressing sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health
- to promote research and to disseminate information on women's health
- to increase resources and to monitor follow-up

These objectives continue to be at the core of WHO's work in implementing and promoting programmes related to gender, women and health, in collaboration with relevant intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations.

4. WHO is strengthening and expanding its partnerships in advocating the importance of women's health and gender mainstreaming, *inter alia*, in the areas of maternal mortality, education for men in order to promote the practice of safe sex, and gender aspects of diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS. The Organization will also actively promote the involvement of women in health-sector reform.

EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN WHO AND THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

5. The Director-General and the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection signed an agreement between WHO and the Commission (14 December 2000) to strengthen and intensify their cooperation in the field of health.

6. The agreed priorities are:

- the development of health indicators, and the collection and dissemination of data on health status and health policies and systems
- the linking of communicable disease surveillance with health monitoring networks
- the development of methodologies and standards for analysis and reporting, and the provision of advice on and plans for responses to, in particular, malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, emerging diseases and threats from antimicrobial resistance
- the development of sound policies and systems for sustainable health development, including poverty alleviation, the tackling of prioritized health scourges and threats, and the combining of efforts to assist developing countries and those in transition

- drawing up of criteria and guidelines on safety and health protection against physical, chemical and biological agents
- health research and technological development, and
- reduction of tobacco consumption.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON CHEMICAL SAFETY

7. WHO provides the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety. The Forum acts as a non-institutional arrangement for representatives from governments and nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations for the promotion of chemical risk assessment and the environmentally sound management of chemicals. Its Third Session (Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, October 2000) was attended by 83 governments, 12 nongovernmental organizations and 10 intergovernmental organizations, including WHO.

8. The principal output from the Forum was the Bahia Declaration on Chemical Safety with its Priorities for Action beyond 2000.¹ The goals specified therein bear directly on the work of WHO and the ILO/UNEP/WHO International Programme on Chemical Safety.

9. Among the priorities for action, the Forum called upon the International Programme on Chemical Safety to ensure availability by 2004, of recommendations for the common principles of and harmonized approaches to risk assessment with specific toxicological endpoints. The Forum considered that, to protect the health of workers, special attention should be paid to occupational health and safety concerns caused by chemicals, and, to protect the health of the general public, chemical safety issues regarding susceptible groups (e.g. persons of fertile age, pregnant women, and foetuses, children, the sick and the elderly) need to be clearly dealt with in the assessment and management of risks. As existing test methods and data are largely relevant to temperate climatic regions, the Forum recommended cooperation with developing countries and countries with economies in transition to ensure that all relevant data, including those on exposure, required for assessing human and environmental risks are collected and assessed.

10. The Forum also called for the elimination of barriers to exchange of information on the sound management of chemicals in order to enhance communication among stakeholders at national, subregional, regional and international levels. The target of 2002 was set for the establishment or strengthening of poison centres in at least 100 countries and the development of national systems for the collection of harmonized human toxicology data. Also of relevance to the work of WHO were agreements: (1) to implement systems aimed at preventing major industrial accidents and systems for emergency preparedness and response, including those on the part of the health sector, by 2002; (ii) to prepare a report on the problem of acutely toxic pesticides and severely hazardous pesticide formulations, recommending sound management options, by 2003; (iii) to have an operational information exchange network on capacity building by 2003; and (iv) to establish in most countries integrated and ecologically sound pest and vector management strategies by 2004.

11. WHO aims to work actively with its partner organizations in the Interorganization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals towards the achievement of these objectives.

¹ See <http://www.who.int/ifcs/index.html>