



# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

FIFTY-SIXTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY  
Provisional agenda item 17.2

A56/37  
10 March 2003

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## Reassignment of Cyprus from the Eastern Mediterranean Region to the European Region

### Report by the Secretariat

1. In June 2001, the Government of Cyprus informed the Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean and the Regional Director for Europe of its wish to be reassigned from the Eastern Mediterranean Region to the European Region. Thereafter, the Government decided to defer that action. In March 2002, the Government of Cyprus renewed its request for reassignment.
2. In May 1996, the Forty-ninth World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA49.6 which requires that any request by a Member State for reassignment from one region to another should be examined by the regional committees concerned, and that their views should be conveyed to the Health Assembly for its consideration before it acts upon such a request.
3. In compliance with resolution WHA49.6, the request from Cyprus was brought to the attention of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean at its forty-ninth session and the Regional Committee for Europe at its fifty-second session. Their views are reproduced in Annexes 1 and 2, respectively, to this report.

### ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

4. It should be noted that the Health Assembly has until now acceded to requests from Member States to be reassigned from one region to another. If the Health Assembly is minded to accede to the request of Cyprus, it may wish to consider adopting the following draft resolution:

The Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the request from the Government of Cyprus for the inclusion of that country in the European Region,

RESOLVES that Cyprus shall form part of the European Region.

ANNEX 1

**EXTRACT OF THE REPORT OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR  
THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, FORTY-NINTH SESSION  
(CAIRO, 30 SEPTEMBER – 3 OCTOBER 2002)<sup>1</sup>**

**7.2 Reassignment of Cyprus from the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region to the WHO European Region**

*Agenda item 18, Document EM/RC49/INF.DOC.10*

The Chairman presented this item, referring to the fact that the Government of Cyprus had informed the Regional Office in June 2001 of its intention to request the Health Assembly to agree to its reassignment from the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region to the WHO European Region. Accordingly the Regional Committee had been informed of this intention, but it did not discuss the matter in the Forty-eighth Session because Cyprus had decided to defer that action. In March 2002, the Government of Cyprus had renewed its request, hoping for the matter to be discussed in the Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly.

The Member States in the Eastern Mediterranean Region had met during the Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly in May 2002, in response to the Government of Cyprus's request, and had unanimously agreed to the reassignment of Cyprus from the Eastern Mediterranean Region to the European Region. Consequently, and assuming the approval of the European Region of that proposal, the Forty-ninth Session of the Regional Committee was invited to consider that item of the agenda to record its approval in its proceedings, and refer it to the Health Assembly for consideration at its Fifty-sixth Session.

Discussions

The Representative of Cyprus read out a message from the Minister of Health in which he expressed his appreciation to the Member States of the Region for unanimously agreeing to the reassignment. Cooperation and collaboration with countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region had been very successful over the past 40 years; such cooperation would continue to be constructive.

H.E. the Minister of Health of Saudi Arabia asked for clarification on the process of reassigning a Member State from one Region to another.

The Regional Director explained that in the past Member States had been reassigned among regions by the Health Assembly, but after concern was raised about "sudden" reassignments, a decision was taken to consult the regional committees of the WHO regions to which and from which a country was to be reassigned. The decision to seek reassignment was the right of Member States. He emphasized the importance of cooperation among countries, which was not limited by WHO region of assignment.

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<sup>1</sup> Document EM/RC49/17-E.

H.E. the Minister of Health of Saudi Arabia called on WHO to reconsider the distribution of Regions so that it would become more logical, aimed only at serving the interests of health.

The Chairman wished Cyprus success, expressed the hope that it would remain a bridge between the two regions, and looked forward to continued cooperation.

ANNEX 2

**EXTRACTS OF THE REPORT OF THE FIFTY-SECOND SESSION  
OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE  
(COPENHAGEN, 16-19 SEPTEMBER 2002)<sup>1</sup>**

**Cyprus's application for reassignment from the Eastern Mediterranean to the European Region of WHO**

*(EUR/RC52/Inf.Doc./5)*

The Executive President explained that World Health Assembly resolution WHA49.6 required that the regional committees concerned presented their views on any Member State's request for reassignment. Accordingly, the views of the Regional Committee for Europe would be conveyed through the Director-General to the World Health Assembly for its consideration. If there were no uniformity of view, the section of the report of the session containing the different views expressed would be conveyed.

The representative of Denmark, speaking on behalf of the 15 EU member countries, supported the request of Cyprus for a number of reasons. The request concerned the transfer (not the admission) of a Member State, and Cyprus had links with Europe and significant changes were under way in the EU. That support was based on the understanding that no financial disadvantage to the European Region would result, and that a positive response to the reassignment would emerge from the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (although no formal expression of views had yet taken place). The representatives of Estonia, Lithuania and Malta also supported the request.

The representative of Turkey objected to the request on several grounds: that no uniformity of view could be established within the Regional Committee, that no political authority was competent to speak for the whole population of Cyprus, and that acceding to the request would interfere with the negotiations under way between the two communities in Cyprus and could create difficulties in implementing the technical activities of WHO in the European Region. She requested that discussion of the issue be postponed until those negotiations were complete and that her statement be reproduced verbatim in the report of the session of the Committee. The statement is reproduced in Annex 6.

The representatives of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan endorsed the request for postponement, and the latter requested that the Regional Office prepare a paper for discussion by the Regional Committee, spelling out the financial and legal considerations of including Cyprus in the Region. The representative of Turkey endorsed the request and asked that the views of the Regional Committee not be transmitted until after the Committee's discussion of the paper.

The representative of Switzerland suggested that the Member States in the European Region consider such a paper at their meeting before the next World Health Assembly. The representative of Turkey endorsed the idea of a discussion before the World Health Assembly. The Regional Director expressed his willingness to carry out the instructions of the Regional Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> Document EUR/RC52/REC/1.

Speaking on behalf of the EU countries, the representative of Denmark requested a postponement of discussion of the item, to allow for consultations. The Regional Committee agreed to resume discussion of the item on the following day.

When the discussion resumed, the representative of Denmark – speaking on behalf of the 15 EU member countries and the candidate countries of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia – proposed that the views expressed by representatives during the fifty-second session of the Regional Committee on the reassignment of Cyprus to the European Region should be promptly conveyed to the WHO Director-General for the forthcoming World Health Assembly in May 2003, as required by World Health Assembly resolution WHA49.6, and to the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean for information. No need was seen for reconsideration at any special meeting of the Regional Committee prior to the Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly. The question would be discussed and decided in the Assembly by all WHO Member States, including all Member States in the European Region. In a spirit of good will, a request could be accepted from this Regional Committee to the Regional Director to prepare – prior to the Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly – a report for European Member States on the financial aspects of the reassignment. The representatives of European Member States could take such a report into account when preparing for the discussion and decision by the Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly. The representatives of Iceland, San Marino and Switzerland endorsed the proposal.

The representative of Turkey asked the Regional Director to confirm his statement that the funds allocated for Cyprus, which she believed to be about US \$375 000, had been or would be transferred to the budget of the European Regional Office. Her inquiries of WHO headquarters and the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean on the issue indicated that no transfer had yet been made and that this could be difficult to decide. She requested that her question and the Regional Director's response be recorded verbatim (see Annex 6). The Regional Director replied that he had made no public statement on that topic; it would be covered in the paper to be prepared.

The Regional Committee agreed that the views of its members on the reassignment of Cyprus would be conveyed to the Director-General and the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, and that a paper would be prepared on the financial aspects for Member States in the European Region before the Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly.

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### *Annex 6*

## **STATEMENTS BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY**

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**Fourth meeting, Tuesday 17 September 2002, p.m.**

**Cyprus's application for reassignment from the Eastern Mediterranean to the European Region of WHO (agenda item 10)**

**Mrs Fügen OK (Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Denmark)**

Thank you. Mr President, we have explained our objections to the inclusion of this item on the agenda. Now, we are discussing item 10 relating to the agenda. I listened carefully to the statement of the European Union's representative. It is true, it is only a question of transferring somebody from one

region to another. But what are you transferring? You are transferring a member of the Mediterranean Region to the European Region where there is no uniformity of opinion. And you are pre-empting a lot of issues: you are pre-empting the solution of the problem on Cyprus and you are pre-empting the possibility of reaching uniformity in this Committee on this issue. So I think the European Union's statement is openly a declaration of the reality, which is that it is a transference from a committee where there was peaceful, uniform working and operation of activities. But it is being transferred to another committee where there is no uniformity of opinion or views and there is no unanimous – there will not be unanimous – action in this Committee because of this problem. So this is to make clear what the European Union's declaration means for us.

Now, secondly I want to touch the statement made by the Executive President that this is an automatic issue. It is not automatic. There are some people who are very familiar with UN tactics and UN rules of policy and procedure; particularly the European Union and European diplomats know this very well, and I am sure the Regional Director is very experienced in doing this. So it is not automatic. There are many ways of dealing with these issues, it is very politicized, it depends on the goodwill of the person who is at the head of the organization.

Now with these remarks, since we have come to the agenda, I would like to explain why we objected to this issue. The Republic of Cyprus, dating back to the 1960s, was established in the 1960s, ceased to exist as such after its constitution had been unilaterally abrogated in 1963 and when the Turkish Cypriot side was ejected by force from the partnership republic. For the past 36 years, there has been no single political authority in Cyprus which is competent to represent jointly the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots and legitimately empowered to act on behalf of the whole island. The jurisdiction of the Greek Cypriot administration only covers the area of the island under Greek Cypriot control in the south of Cyprus. The Turkish Cypriot people are represented by the government of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which exercises sole jurisdiction and political authority on its territory. Moreover, Turkey does not recognize the Greek Cypriot administration, which since 1963 represented exclusively the Greek Cypriots and their interests. The request of the Greek Cypriot administration to be transferred from the Eastern Mediterranean Region to the European Region of the World Health Organization should be assessed in this reality. We believe that non-recognition of the said administration by Turkey, besides its adverse political implications, would also create political and technical problems and difficulties in the work to be carried out in the European Region. This would inevitably have a negative impact over the smooth and harmonious functioning in the Region, as well as the spirit of cooperation among the Member States.

On the other hand, at a time when direct talks are being held between the two sides in Cyprus, we believe that it is particularly important that they are conducted in an atmosphere far from third parties' interference. We expect the third parties to refrain from taking any action which could harm the ongoing talks and treat the two sides equally. This will indeed constitute the most substantive contribution to the process.

Mr President, for the above arguments, Turkey opposes the transfer from the Eastern Mediterranean group to the European group of the Greek Cypriot administration at this particular time and requests the postponement of this issue to a later date, when this political problem is resolved between the two communities and states existing on Cyprus. I request that my statement be recorded verbatim in the records of this meeting. Thank you very much.

**Fifth meeting, Wednesday 18 September 2002, a.m.****Cyprus's application for reassignment from the Eastern Mediterranean to the European Region of WHO (agenda item 10)****Mrs Fügen OK (Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Denmark)**

Thank you Mr President. I am posing a very technical question and I would like this question and the answer from the Secretariat to be recorded verbatim. And my question is, yesterday we all heard the Regional Director saying that the funds that are necessary for the transfer of this member to the European Region, which I understand is about US \$375 000, he said this will be transferred from the EMRO Region to the EURO Region, has been transferred or will be transferred. Now I have enquired from the Geneva Office, from the headquarters, and from members of EMRO that this transfer has not been made, and cannot be made, and EMRO has not decided anything like this in their meetings. And it is very difficult for them therefore to decide such a transfer. Now this is my question and I would like a very clear answer from the Secretariat on this, again to be recorded verbatim for the World Health Assembly. Thank you very much.

**Dr Marc DANZON (WHO Regional Director for Europe)**

Madam Ambassador, I don't remember having said anything publicly on this issue, and it is here that I make the official declaration, so ... . Perhaps you heard it, but as you are requesting a paper of us, that will be included in the paper, of course.

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