

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
Regional Office  
for the Eastern Mediterranean  
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE  
Bureau régional de la Méditerranée orientale



منظمة الصحة العالمية  
المكتب الإقليمي  
لشرق البحر المتوسط

REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE  
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

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OTHER BUSINESS

REGIONAL OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Since 1949, the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Region has been located at Alexandria, Egypt in the old Quarantine Authority building premises which was kindly made available by the Government of Egypt on a plot of land at Shareh Sultan Abdel Aziz.

The building was originally two stories high, but with the growth of the WHO programmes in the Region, it became necessary first to add two stories to the structure, and then to acquire an Annex for Library and Supply at some distance from the main office building. An absolute space limitation has now been reached, and it is structurally impossible to make sufficient additional space available in the main building for the future running of the Office. Furthermore, due to the age of the building, electrical wiring, computer data cabling, water supply and other systems can only be installed or repaired in a difficult, patchwork manner.

The location of the Regional Office in Alexandria has other drawbacks from the standpoint of travel and communications. Most air travel to and from Alexandria must pass via Cairo, with considerable inconvenience, loss of time and greater expense to both the Office and the Member States. The added cost of WHO of Cairo/Alexandria travel is estimated to exceed \$300 000 per year. The Alexandria location also means that the Regional Office does not have convenient access to Egyptian government agencies and to Embassies of other Member States which are located in the capital city of Cairo. Indeed, it has been necessary for the Regional Office to maintain a Liaison Office in Cairo.

Various alternatives have been discussed with officials of the Egyptian Government. One of these could be relocation of the Regional Office to Cairo, either to occupy already existing premises, if available, or to construct a new building on land area being developed near the city. In this latter connection the Government of Egypt has written to the Regional Director on 16 September 1986 offering the possibility, at no cost to WHO, of either of two pieces of land, each approximately 5 000 square meters in area, one lying south of the Cairo/Suez Road and the other located at Nasr City. The Government has invited inspection of the two sites.

The construction of a new Regional Office building would be at the expense of the Organization. The required building space for offices, conference rooms, library, cafeteria and other facilities would be on the order of 4 500 square meters, compared with the existing 3 787 square meters. The cost of basic construction and finishing of a low-cost modern, functional, modular design, for convenient and low-cost operation and maintenance would be on the order of \$1 750 000 - 2 500 000 at today's prices, depending on specific qualitative requirements to be analysed in detail.

The cost of construction of such a new Regional Office building is beyond the currently available financial resources of the Organization. WHO could not envisage providing such resources by reducing the health programme activities. To envisage such a construction, therefore, it is necessary to call upon the Member States to contribute towards the construction project. A reasonable level of financial commitment is a necessary pre-condition for contractual commitment and commencement of construction work. There are other aspects also to be studied, including the managerial and financial aspects of making the actual move to a new location, and the savings and recurring costs which operation at the new location would entail.

The purpose of this paper is to inform the Regional Committee of the actual situation, obtain a preliminary reaction to the matter, and present a possible solution for consideration. The Regional Committee may wish to express its appreciation to the Government of Egypt for its generous offer, and it may wish to request the Regional Director to continue to explore the various alternatives and implications, to follow up with the Egyptian Government to assess the real estate proposals mentioned above, and to report back to the Regional Consultative Committee and to the Regional Committee as a whole on these developments.