

REGIONAL COMMITTEE

WP/RC7/6
6 September 1956

Seventh Session
Manila
7-13 September 1956

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ACCOMMODATION FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC
REGIONAL OFFICE

(Report by the Regional Director)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Regional Director reported to the Regional Committee at its sixth session on the progress which had been made in obtaining suitable permanent accommodation for the Western Pacific Regional Office. At that session, the Regional Committee adopted the following resolution:

"The Regional Committee,

Having studied the report of the Regional Director (WP/RC6/18) on office accommodation;

Appreciating the action which has been taken by the Philippine Government to provide a new office for the Regional Office;

Recognizing the operational difficulties of having the office away from Manila;

Realizing that the need for better accommodation is of great urgency;

Expresses the hope that a suitable site will be provided centrally; and

REQUESTS the Regional Director to continue negotiations with the Host Government and keep the Member States informed of the progress made."

2. DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE YEAR

In accordance with the request of the Regional Committee, the Regional Director continued negotiations with the Host Government during the past year. At the request of the Regional Director, the Assistant Director-General of the Department of Administration and Finance, came to Manila to assist in finalizing the negotiations on 27 and 28 August. At that time an aide-memoire was prepared setting forth the historical development of the matter, and reiterating the terms which could be expected to be satisfactory to WHO. A copy of that aide-memoire is attached as Annex I.

On 30 August, the Cabinet of the Government of the Philippines decided to provide a site for the building at the corner of Isaac Peral and Taft Avenue, and to contribute as an outright donation ₱500 000 for the construction of the building and fixtures, on the understanding that WHO will contribute a like amount, to make up the estimated total cost of ₱1 000 000. The details of the Government's offer were made known in a letter from the Secretary of Health, dated 4 September 1956. Copies of the letters are attached as Annex II.

3. ACTION REMAINING TO BE TAKEN

The final decision regarding the proposal of the Government of the Philippines rests with the World Health Assembly. The proposal will also need to be considered and commented upon by the Executive Board. It is therefore suggested that the Regional Committee may wish to request the Director-General to present the matter to the Executive Board at its nineteenth session, which will meet in January, 1957. The recommendation of the Executive Board could then be considered by the Tenth World Health Assembly in May, 1957. Should the Committee wish to take that action, it may wish to consider the adoption of a resolution along the following lines:

The Regional Committee,

Having considered the proposal of the Government of the Philippines for providing accommodation for the Western Pacific Regional Office as reported by the Regional Director (Document WP/RC7/6),

1. EXPRESSES to the Government of the Philippines its appreciation for this generous offer;
2. REQUESTS the Regional Director to ask the Director-General to report the proposal to the Executive Board at its nineteenth session and to the Tenth World Health Assembly, in order that the final decision on the proposal may be taken.

AIDE-MEMOIRE

SUBJECT: REGIONAL OFFICE, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, MANILA - LONG-TERM AND ADEQUATE PROVISION FOR REGIONAL OFFICE BUILDING

The Regional Office of the World Health Organization for the Western Pacific Region was established in Manila in September, 1951. The decision to establish a regional office for the Region, in which the Philippines is a member, was approved by the World Health Organization Executive Board on the recommendation of the Regional Committee following the invitation submitted by the Government of the Philippines.

The last meeting of the Regional Committee, held in September, 1955 at Singapore, included an item on its agenda which was entitled "Accommodation for the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific". The document which was considered by that meeting was numbered WP/RC6/18 (a copy of which is attached). This document drew the attention of the Governments assembled to the original invitation issued by the Government of the Philippines, in which the World Health Organization was invited to establish its regional office permanently in Manila and the Organization was assured that suitable office accommodation would be provided at the expense of the Government.

In August, 1954, the Regional Director, Dr. Fang, acting pursuant to instructions from the Director-General of the World Health Organization, presented a proposal to the Government of the Philippines (which is outlined in the attached document), consisting of the following provisions:

- "(a) a gift of unencumbered land to WHO by the Government;
- (b) an outright gift of about 50% of the cost of the building and fixtures;
- (c) the building costs to be financed by an interest-free loan granted by the Government on the remaining 50% to be repaid by WHO over 30 years;
- (d) the title to the land and the building to be in the name of WHO with the Organization maintaining and servicing the building".

The next meeting of the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific is to be opened on 7 September 1956 at Manila. The same agenda is to be considered again and it would, indeed, be useful if concrete proposals could be presented by the Government of the Philippines for the consideration of the Regional Committee so that it could make recommendations with regard to permanent arrangements; those recommended arrangements could subsequently be considered by the World Health Organization Executive Board when it meets in Geneva in January 1957 and ultimately by the World Health Assembly, in May of that same year. The final decision regarding the acceptance or

rejection of any proposal made by the Government of the Philippines will, of course, rest with the World Health Assembly, in which all Member Governments are represented (there are eighty-eight Member States).

It was because of the urgency of submitting more information to the next Regional Committee Meeting that the Director-General of the World Health Organization made a special effort to arrange for Mr. Milton P. Siegel, Assistant Director-General, to visit Manila for two days, August 27-28, so as to discuss this entire subject with the appropriate government authorities in Manila.

These discussions referred to the background information described above. At the same time, the Assistant Director-General invited the attention of the government authorities to the arrangements which the World Health Organization has made with regard to some of its other regional offices in other places. In the Region for Africa, the Regional Office is located at Brazzaville and the government authorities there have provided, without any cost whatever to the Organization, a completely new building designed by the Organization, with all modern conveniences including air-conditioning. Occupancy of this building took place in August, 1956. With regard to the Regional Office for Europe, the Government of Denmark is now constructing in Copenhagen a new office building in accordance with WHO specifications, which will be made available to the Organization without any charge whatever. Occupancy of that building is expected in March, 1957.

With these two precedents already established and with comparable negotiations under way with regard to the other regional offices, the Director-General of the World Health Organization is reluctant to agree to recommend the acceptance of any proposal by the Government of the Philippines which is not comparable to the arrangements made in the two cases cited. Nevertheless, recognizing the general economic position of the Philippine Government, the Director-General would be willing to recommend that the next World Health Assembly accept a different proposal, providing it is along the lines enumerated in the attached document, namely, a gift of land, a gift to cover 50% of the cost of the building, and an interest-free loan to be repaid over a period of years for the remaining 50% of the cost of the building. Furthermore, the title to the building will have to be vested clearly in the World Health Organization.

While the building is to be primarily for the permanent accommodation of the World Health Organization Regional Office, it is important to take cognizance of the fact that by agreement with the other international organizations, including the United Nations itself and the other Specialized Agencies, some space provision will be made for such organizations as are planning to have staff working in Manila. Thus, while this is mainly a building for the World Health Organization, it will also include accommodation for the staff of the other international organizations and will, undoubtedly, serve to give recognition to Manila as being an international centre for this part of the world.

27 August 1956

COPY

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Office of the Secretary
Manila

September 4, 1956

Dr. I. C. Fang
Regional Director
WHO Regional Office for the
Western Pacific
25th Street, Port Area
Manila

Dear Dr. Fang:

In connection with the matter regarding the headquarters for the WHO Regional Office, I am forwarding herewith the duplicate of a letter, dated August 29, 1956 from the Office of the President, addressed to this Office, which contains the decision taken by the Cabinet.

Yours sincerely,

signed: PAULINO J. GARCIA, M.D.
Secretary of Health

cc. The Honorable
The Secretary of Foreign Affairs
Manila

Manila, August 29, 1956

The Secretary of Health
M a n i l a

S i r :

I have the honor to advise you that the Cabinet at its meeting this morning, acting on the proposal from the World Health Organization for the construction of a regional office building in Manila, the details of which were fully explained by both you and the Vice-President during the meeting, decided as follows:

1. The Philippine Government to provide for the site of the WHO building in Manila. Chosen by the Cabinet for this purpose (unencumbered land) is the area at the corner of Isaac Peral and Taft Avenue, Ermita, Manila, formerly belonging to the University of the Philippines.

2. The Philippine Government to contribute as outright donation ₱500,00 for the construction of said building and for fixtures, provided that the WHO shall contribute a like amount in dollars so as to raise the amount to a total of ₱1 million.

3. The Philippine Government to transfer title to the site (as indicated in No. 1 above) to the WHO for this particular purpose subject to the condition that said lot and the building and fixtures, as well as all other improvements thereon, shall not be encumbered by the WHO in any form or manner, and shall, upon the dissolution of the WHO or the termination of its activities, revert to the Philippine Government.

I am returning herewith papers which you brought to the Cabinet meeting bearing on the subject.

Respectfully,

By authority of the President:

FORTUNATO DE LEON
Executive Secretary