



World Health Organization
Organisation mondiale de la Santé

EXECUTIVE BOARD
Special Group for the Review
of the Constitution of WHO

EB/Constitution/4/5
15 May 1997

Review of the Constitution of the World Health Organization

Report of the fourth meeting of the Executive Board special group

10 May 1997

The Executive Board special group for the review of the Constitution met on 10 May 1997 for the purpose of examining the questions relating to WHO regional arrangements that had been identified at its previous meeting. Participants included delegates from Member States, which had all been invited by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

The group examined in detail three of the items on its agenda. Remaining items would be dealt with at its fifth and sixth meetings, scheduled in July and October 1997.

1. The Executive Board special group for the review of the Constitution met on 10 May 1997 to examine items concerning WHO regional arrangements within the framework of the Constitution. In compliance with resolution EB99.R24, all Member States were invited to participate in the meeting by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board. The list of participants is contained in Annex 1.
2. The third meeting of the special group (3 and 4 April 1997) had identified nine points relating to regional arrangements to be examined during its fourth, fifth and sixth meetings (see agenda, Annex 2). The fourth meeting concentrated on those points for which documentation was available, namely subitems 2.3, 2.4 and 2.7, although views were also expressed on some of the other subitems.

Subitem 2.2. Current practice in headquarters and regions for: budget drafting; priority-setting and implementation; personnel appointments; programme implementation; and impact of extrabudgetary funds on regional budgets and priorities

3. The Regional Directors briefly informed the group of the links between national, regional and global priorities within the programme budgeting process at regional level. They said national health plans and the actions of other donors need to be taken into account when allocating funds to countries. Sometimes WHO's priorities are well endowed so regular budget funds are allocated to other areas of need. The matter would be fully debated at the fifth meeting, with the participation of Member States.

Subitem 2.3. Regular budget allocations to regions (Document EB/Constitution/4/2)

4. A number of participants pointed out that there were imbalances among regions in the current distribution of regular budget resources to countries. They felt that resources should be distributed in an equitable manner, commensurate with the tasks to be undertaken, and directed especially to those countries that were not meeting the health-for-all targets. Some participants considered that allocations should be related to regional contributions, whereas others rejected that suggestion.

5. It was suggested that allocations to regions had to be made according to clearly defined criteria. Current criteria needed to be reassessed, taking into account countries' changing health needs and absorptive capacity, as well as the historical basis for resource distribution. The outcome should be objective, consistent, yet flexible criteria, or rather, guidelines. It was mentioned that factors to be taken into account should include health needs, population, percentage of GDP devoted to health, specific health indicators, and number of countries. The financial implications of the application of different criteria should be provided to the special group.

6. Some participants said that the guidelines should be monitored once they were in operation to ensure that funds were being spent at country level, were being used efficiently, and that the cost of their administration was kept to a minimum. It was agreed by the special group that at its fifth meeting technical staff would present an overview of the subject of a health development index. Key points on this were the choice and weighting of indicators. That meeting would also examine the possibility of creating a task force to draw up a formula for allocation of regular budget funds to the regions.

7. It was also important to know at what level funds were expended, as allocations might be held at one level and spent at another. A breakdown of where funds were allocated and where they were spent would be provided for the next meeting.

Subitem 2.4. Current status of relationship between WHO and PAHO (Document EB/Constitution/4/3)

8. Many participants, especially those from the Region of the Americas, stressed the success of WHO/PAHO in meeting health needs. This gave rise to the suggestion that WHO/PAHO might serve as a model that could to some extent be replicated in other regions. However, WHO and PAHO had separate budgets. PAHO was financed by the countries of the Region, the largest contributor covering some 60% of its budget. The same contributor assured around 25% of the WHO budget. It was suggested that the level of funding might be partly responsible for the success of WHO/PAHO, and might limit the potential applicability of the WHO/PAHO model in other regions.

9. A number of speakers said that, from the point of view of transparency of accounting, clearly there could be no valid comparison between the Americas and other WHO regions unless the PAHO budget was taken into

account along with the AMRO budget. Information on the PAHO budget, being in the public domain, was readily available on request. WHO documentation should therefore include information from PAHO in order to present a comprehensive financial picture of AMRO/PAHO, comparable to information from other regions.

10. It was observed that integration between the two organizations had not proceeded to the extent that WHO and PAHO constituted a single entity. Nevertheless, it was underlined that WHO and PAHO were to a large extent functionally integrated. From a legal point of view, although it appeared that the drafters of the Constitution envisaged an eventual legal integration of the two organizations, another view was expressed that integration did not necessarily mean assimilation. In any event, it was observed that the current relationship between WHO and PAHO was not incompatible with the precise terms of Article 54 of the Constitution. It was agreed that these issues should be kept under consideration in preparing the special group's final report to the Board.

Subitem 2.6. Representation of regions in the Executive Board and other bodies

11. It was suggested that the document being prepared for discussion at the next meeting should cover the evolution of the present pattern of representation on the Board. The questions of representation on the Executive Board of members of the United Nations Security Council in a semipermanent manner was raised. The appropriateness of selecting countries deprived by the Health Assembly of their right of vote to designate a member of the Executive Board was also mentioned. The document should also propose a suitable formula for calculation of the number of seats on the Board to be allocated to each region.

12. Some participants thought that the size of the Board and distribution of seats were satisfactory, while others felt that there were cases of under- or over-representation.

Subitem 2.7. Term of office of Regional Directors; qualifications and method of selection (Document EB/Constitution/4/4)

13. Most participants favoured a five-year term office for Regional Directors, renewable once, with several indicating that such new conditions should not be applicable to the present incumbents. That would bring the term of office and renewability of contract of the Regional Directors into line with that of the Director-General.

14. Some participants expressed support for the criteria adopted by the Regional Committee for Europe, with some modifications.

15. Some participants mentioned the need for transparency in the selection process, which should be based on merit only. It was suggested that the Board could contribute to transparency and equity in the regional selection process by setting criteria for selection and examining the qualifications of candidates, for which purpose adequate information should be provided. In this respect, it was suggested that candidates should submit written statements on their vision of the priorities for the region over the next five years and the objectives they wished to achieve. It was also mentioned that the regional committees could propose two or three candidates, leaving the choice to the Board. Some others said that the views of the Director-General should also be taken into account, and the selection process should be more democratic and less bureaucratic.

16. On the other hand, there was also support for the current method of selection. Several participants stressed the importance of decentralizing authority to the regions and of enabling Member States, through the regional committees, to select the Regional Director with whom they would have to work. They said it was more suitable for the Regional Directors to be selected by Member States than by members of the Board, who acted in a

personal capacity. Others recognized the need for unity in the Organization and therefore the Board's role in the selection and appointment of Regional Directors.

CONCLUSION

17. The meeting noted that documents were being prepared on the remaining items. It was agreed by the special group that these issues should be brought to the attention of the regional committees in order that their views could be provided to the Executive Board in January 1998.

ANNEX 1

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Special Group for the Review
of the Constitution of WHO

Fourth meeting
10 or 12 May 1997

EB/Constitution/4/1
14 April 1997

Provisional agenda¹

1. Adoption of the agenda

Document EB/Constitution/4/1

2. Review of items concerning WHO regional arrangements within the framework of the Constitution

The third meeting of the special group for the review of the Constitution (3 and 4 April 1997) agreed that the following points should be examined prior to submission of its report on recommendations for action to the 101st session of the Executive Board (January 1998), as requested in resolution EB99.R24. The third meeting also established a provisional programme of work for 1997: a fourth meeting at the time of the Fiftieth World Health Assembly, a fifth meeting tentatively scheduled for 9-11 July and a sixth meeting in October.

2.1 Status and progress of relevant reform in regional offices and at headquarters with reference to the 47 recommendations made by the Executive Board Working Group on the WHO Response to Global Change²

2.2 Current practice in headquarters and regional offices for: budget drafting; priority-setting and implementation; personnel appointments; programme implementation; and impact of extra-budgetary funds on regional budgets and priorities³

2.3 Regular budget allocations to regions⁴

Document EB/Constitution/4/2

2.4 Current status of relationship between AMRO and PAHO⁴

Document EB/Constitution/4/3

¹ Report of the third meeting will be available during the Fiftieth World Health Assembly.

² Document PPE95.4 will be available. An update will be prepared for the fifth meeting (planned for July 1997).

³ Documentation will be prepared for the fifth meeting (planned for July 1997).

⁴ Documentation will be available during the Fiftieth World Health Assembly.

- 2.5 Criteria for determining regions, assignment of Member States to regions and location of regional offices¹
- 2.6 Representation of regions in the Executive Board and other bodies²
- 2.7 Term of office of Regional Directors; qualifications and method of selection³

Document EB/Constitution/4/4

- 2.8 Mission and functions of regional committees; frequency of regional committee meetings²
- 2.9 Relationship between regional and country offices and impact of this linkage on the work of the Organization²

3. Conclusions

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¹ Documentation will be prepared for the sixth meeting (planned for October 1997).

² Documentation will be prepared for the fifth meeting (planned for July 1997).

³ Documentation will be available during the Fiftieth World Health Assembly.



World Health Organization
Organisation mondiale de la Santé

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Special Group for the Review
of the Constitution of WHO

Fourth meeting
10 May 1997

EB/Constitution/4/DIV/1
9 May 1997

List of members and other participants

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