



*directing council*

PAN AMERICAN  
SANITARY  
ORGANIZATION

X Meeting

*regional committee*

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION

IX Meeting



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Topic 36: METHOD OF APPOINTING REGIONAL DIRECTORS OF THE WHO

Background

At the Nineteenth Session of the WHO Executive Board, the Government of New Zealand made the suggestion that the present method of appointing Regional Directors be altered in such a way that the Executive Board would first consider the possible candidates and, having nominated one, would refer his name to the Regional Committee for confirmation. The text of this proposal is attached as Annex I.

The Executive Board, in Resolution EB19.R61 (Annex II), decided that this matter should be considered further at its Twentieth Session, at which time a representative of the New Zealand Government would be invited to explain the proposal; and decided also that, after a further study had been carried out, this proposal should be considered again by the Executive Board at its Twenty-first Session, taking into account any comments expressed by the Regional committees. The record of the discussion on this matter at the Nineteenth and Twentieth Sessions of the Board will be found in Annexes III and IV, respectively.

In accordance with the third operative paragraph of Resolution EB19.R61, the Director-General of WHO is requesting the Regional Committees to express their comments on this matter, for consideration by the WHO Executive Board at its Twenty-first Session.

Note by the Director

In transmitting this question for consideration by the Directing Council of PASO, Regional Committee of the WHO, the Director considers it his duty to call attention to the special situation that exists in the Americas.

Article 4 of the Agreement between the World Health Organization and the Pan American Sanitary Organization, signed 24 May 1949, provides that the Regional Director of WHO for the Americas shall be appointed in accordance

with the provisions of Articles 49 and 52 of the WHO Constitution. Article 49 of the WHO Constitution stipulates that "Regional Committees shall adopt their own rules of procedure," and Article 52 states that "the head of the Regional Office shall be the Regional Director appointed by the Board in agreement with the Regional Committee."

Furthermore, Article 4-E of the Constitution of PASO provides that the Pan American Sanitary Conference "shall elect the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau by a two-thirds vote of the countries represented and with the right to vote." Article 53 of the Rules of Procedure of the Pan American Sanitary Conference, as adopted by the XIV Conference, provides: "In accordance with Article 4-E of the Constitution of the Pan American Sanitary Organization, the Conference shall elect the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau by a two-thirds vote of the Members present and voting. Acting as Regional Committee of the World Health Organization, and in conformity with Articles 49 and 52 of the Constitution of the World Health Organization, the Conference shall submit the name of the person so elected to the Executive Board of WHO for appointment as Regional Director."

In view of the above statutory provisions, it seems clear that any change in procedures for the appointment of the Regional Director of WHO for the Americas would imply renegotiation of the Agreement between PASO and WHO and the alteration of the Constitution of PASO.

Annexes:

- I. Method of Appointing Regional Directors, Proposal by the Government of New Zealand (Annex 22 to Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org. N° 76, pp. 143-144).
- II. Resolution EB19.R61 (19th Session of the WHO Executive Board), Method of Appointing Regional Directors.
- III. Minutes of the Twentieth Meeting, Nineteenth Session of the WHO Executive Board (WHO Doc. EB19/Min/20, Rev. 1, pp. 466-471).
- IV. Provisional Minutes of the Second Meeting, Twentieth Session of the WHO Executive Board (WHO Doc. EB20/Min/2, pp. 20-25).

METHOD OF APPOINTING REGIONAL DIRECTORS

Proposal by the Government of New Zealand

(Annex 22 to Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org. 76, pp. 113-114)

Letter, dated 21 November 1956, from the  
Ministry of External Affairs of New Zealand

The Acting Minister of External Affairs has the honour to refer to the Circular Letter CL. 30.1956 of 1 October 1956 in which the Director-General of the World Health Organization informed Members and Associate Members of the arrangements being made for drawing up the provisional agenda for the nineteenth session of the Executive Board.

The Acting Minister has the honour to inform the Director-General that the New Zealand Government wishes, in accordance with Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure, to propose the following item: "Method of Appointing Regional Directors." An explanatory memorandum is enclosed.

Memorandum: Method of Appointing Regional Directors

It is suggested that the Executive Board consider altering the method by which regional directors are appointed.

Article 52 (of the Constitution) reads:

"The head of the Regional Office shall be the Regional Director appointed by the Board in agreement with the Regional Committee."

In the past the method of appointment has been that the regional committee has considered the applicants and has submitted one name to the Executive Board which has then appointed the committee's nominee. At its second, third, seventh and eighth sessions the Board formally appointed the Directors of the South-East Asia, Eastern Mediterranean, American, and Western Pacific Regions respectively after receiving one nomination from the committee in each case.

Although it is not suggested that these appointments have afforded any ground for dissatisfaction, it seems in principle to be undesirable that the Board's deliberations should take place on the basis of a single nomination. It is therefore submitted that the method of appointment should be reconsidered, in order to ensure that the Board may play an effective part in the selection of the most suitable nominee.

The Board at its second session considered the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules and adopted the following statement of policy:<sup>1/</sup>

1. Staff Regulations and Staff Rules apply to the entire Organization.
2. The rule concerning criteria of selection, particularly individual competence and geographical representation, is applicable to the entire Organization. Therefore it is clear that all vacancies in regional offices (except such lower grades as may be exempted from geographical representation) are to be filled only after consideration of all applicants.

Rule lll of the Staff Rules reads:<sup>2/</sup>

- lll. Staff members of the World Health Organization are appointed by the Director-General.

Article 31 provides that the Director-General of the Organization is appointed by the Health Assembly on the nomination of the Board...

Article 52 provides that the Regional Director is appointed by the Board in agreement with the regional committee.

It would seem that there is a clear distinction between the methods of appointment, and it was intended that the Board should play an active part in appointing the regional director while at the same time obtaining the agreement of the committee concerned. The initiative should, however, rest with the Board.

It is suggested that a more satisfactory method of appointing a regional director would be for the Executive Board to receive the names of all the applicants and to afford the Director-General an opportunity of making a recommendation to the Board and of setting out the reasons for such recommendation. Each regional director is a staff member of the Organization and should be someone who has the confidence of the Director-General. It would be in keeping with the spirit of Rule lll of the Staff Rules, and would not conflict with the Constitution, if the Director-General were able to make a recommendation to the Board in this

<sup>1/</sup> Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org. 14, 25

<sup>2/</sup> The substance of this provision is now contained in Section 4.1 of the Staff Regulations and it therefore no longer appears in the Staff Rules - Ed.

respect. After the Board had nominated someone as Regional Director the name of the nominee would be referred to the regional committee for confirmation as provided for in Article 52, the Committee having the right to make further representation to the Board if it wished.

It is considered that the Executive Board, which is assisted by the advice of the Director-General, is more competent to make a wise choice than is a regional committee. A regional committee frequently contains a number of representatives who may not have attended a regional meeting before and who have only a slight knowledge of the Organization. Most of the representatives may know little or nothing of the qualifications of the various applicants, and will have little opportunity of obtaining sufficient information on which to base a sound judgement. Frequently also they will have no one at hand to advise them in the same way that the Executive Board may receive helpful advice from the Director-General.

It is recommended therefore that the Executive Board should consider this matter with a view to the adoption of a different procedure for the appointment of regional directors.

RESOLUTION EB19.R61  
(19th Session of the WHO Executive Board)

METHOD OF APPOINTING REGIONAL DIRECTORS

The Executive Board,

Having considered the communication from the Government of New Zealand relating to the method of appointing regional directors;<sup>1</sup>

Considering that while the practice heretofore followed has been satisfactory it would be useful to study the method and procedures relating to this; due account being taken of the relevant provisions of the Constitution;

1. DECIDES that this item be placed on the agenda of the Executive Board at its twentieth session;
2. SUGGESTS that the Director-General invite, under Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board, the Government of New Zealand to be present at that time to explain further their proposal; and
3. DECIDES that after a further study has been carried out this proposal should be considered again by the Executive Board at its twenty-first session, taking into account any comments which should be invited from regional committees.

(Twentieth and Twenty-first Meetings,  
28 January 1957  
EB19/Min/20 and EB19/Min/21)

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<sup>1</sup> Document EB19/34

Minutes of the Twentieth Meeting,  
Nineteenth Session of the WHO Executive Board  
(WHO Doc. EB19/Min/20, Rev. 1, pp. 466-471)

METHOD OF APPOINTING REGIONAL DIRECTORS (PROPOSAL MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW ZEALAND): Item 1 of the Supplementary Agenda (Document EB19/34.1/)

The CHAIRMAN opened the discussion on the proposal by the Government of New Zealand to modify the existing procedure for appointing regional directors.

Dr. RAE said that in the absence of an explanation by a representative of the New Zealand Government, it was difficult to understand the reasons for proposing modifications in a procedure which, apparently, had so far operated satisfactorily. He found the assertion in the penultimate paragraph of the New Zealand Government's proposal, to the effect that most representatives in regional committees might know little or nothing of the qualifications of the various applicants and would have little opportunity of obtaining sufficient information on which to base a sound judgement, unconvincing. Surely that consideration would be even more applicable to members of the Board.

He suggested that the proposal might be referred to the next Health Assembly so as to enable a representative of the New Zealand Government to explain the reasons behind it.

Dr. CLARK agreed with the preceding speaker that it was not clear what advantage the proposed method would have over the existing one or why the Board would be more competent to select the candidates than members of regional committees, who were far more likely to have personal knowledge of them and were, therefore, better qualified to decide on their relative merits. Moreover, he doubted whether the proposed procedure would result in the Board's assuming a more active role in the selection, because instead of acting on the nomination of the regional committee, it would probably, in effect, act on the recommendation of the Director-General. He noted that the New Zealand Government proposed that the Board's nomination be referred to the regional committee, which would have an opportunity of making representations, but surely there was little possibility of the latter feeling able to reject a nomination and put forward another candidature.

With those considerations in mind, he doubted whether the proposal was in conformity with the policy of regionalization and thought the existing system should be maintained unless more convincing reasons were adduced to justify a change.

Mr. SAITA, alternate to Dr. Azuma, said that he had been requested to convey to the Board the views of Professor Pesonen, who, unfortunately, had been obliged to leave before the end of the session. Professor Pesonen attached great importance to the appointment of regional directors, who discharged most important functions, and agreed in principle with the New Zealand Government that the present procedure was not altogether satisfactory and that it would be preferable for the Board to have a wider choice of candidates. Nevertheless, he did not think that the suggested procedure was entirely acceptable and believed that regional committees should submit a list of candidates in relative order of merit to the Board for final decision in consultation with the Director-General.

He believed that Professor Pesonen's views deserved careful consideration, but also agreed with Dr. Rae's suggestion that the proposal might be transmitted to the Assembly, where the New Zealand Government would have the opportunity of speaking on it.

Professor PARISOT also agreed with the proposal to refer the matter to the Health Assembly, where the New Zealand delegation would have an opportunity of expressing its views. He felt that in certain respects the existing procedure could be improved. It was in his opinion desirable, in the selection of candidates, for those concerned - whether members of the Executive Board or of the Regional Committee - to have the possibility of studying in advance all necessary documentation on their qualifications, records and published work. In view of the fact that Regional Directors had to work in close contact with the Director-General it would be desirable to hear his views concerning the candidates. It would also be advantageous for the Regional Committee and the Board to see the candidates and have the possibility of talking with and putting questions to them.

Dr. SIRI agreed with Dr. Rae and Dr. Clark that it was unnecessary to change a procedure which had so far given good results, though he was not opposed to any innovations which might help to secure the best qualified people for the posts of regional directors.

In conclusion, he urged that the Board bear in mind the special situation of the Regional Committee for the Americas, since PASB's Director was appointed according to a long-established procedure by the Pan American Sanitary Conference.



Dr. BAQUERIZO AMADOR said that with the development of regionalization there was perhaps a case for somewhat altering the present procedure. For example, perhaps a short slate of three candidates might be selected and a more detailed curriculum vitae given.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL, referring to Dr. Rae's suggestion, pointed out that regional directors were appointed by a procedure which concerned only the Board and the regional committees and one which required no reference to the Health Assembly. He also assured Dr. Siri that Article 4 of the Agreement between WHO and PASO covered the case of the Regional Director for the Americas. In the past no difficulties had been encountered, but in the future it might at some stage be decided that there was room for some modification. In the meantime, as the matter was not an urgent one, the New Zealand Government might be asked to furnish an explanation of the reason for its proposal and members be given more time for reflection.

Dr. RAE said that as there was no urgency, the simplest procedure might be to ask the New Zealand Government for an oral exposition of its proposal at the twentieth session of the Board.

Dr. PURI thought it unwise to deprive the regional committees of their initiative in the matter but agreed with the New Zealand Government that it was desirable to choose from a considerable number of candidates, examining carefully their qualifications and past records, although he would not favour their being interviewed either by the regional committees or the Board itself. He wondered whether it would be possible for the Director-General also to be given an opportunity of suggesting candidates for consideration by the regional committees.

Dr. EL-CHATTI observed that the procedure followed in the past had been satisfactory. He agreed with Dr. Rae that it was desirable to have a further explanation from the New Zealand Government, but before reaching any decision the Board must also ascertain the views of the regional committees.

Dr. SUAREZ observed that the appointment of regional directors was purely a matter for the Board and the regional committees and it might be harmful to introduce any changes.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL observed that if the Board so desired, he could write to the New Zealand Government explaining why consideration of its proposal had been postponed to the Board's twentieth session and

suggesting, in accordance with Rule 3 of the Board's Rules of Procedure, that a representative of that government be present during the discussion. Subsequently, the regional committees could also be asked for their views.

Dr. SIRI emphasized the importance of obtaining the views of the regional committees.

The CHAIRMAN explained that that could not be done until September, when the regional committees met. It would then be possible for the Board to examine the matter at its twenty-first session in the light of all the comments received.

Dr. CLARK agreed with Dr. El-Chatti on the need to obtain the views of regional committees before taking a decision.

Dr. SUAREZ and Dr. PURI also agreed with that point of view.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Rapporteurs be requested to prepare a draft resolution stating that the Board would seek to obtain a further explanation from a representative of the New Zealand Government of its proposal at the twentieth session, and that it requested regional committees to comment on the proposal at their next session in September 1957 so as to enable the Board to take a decision at its twenty-first session.

Decision: It was so agreed (see minutes of the twenty-first meeting, section 4).

Provisional Minutes of the Second Meeting,  
Twentieth Session of the WHO Executive Board  
(WHO Doc. EB20/Min/2, pp. 20-25)

METHOD OF APPOINTING REGIONAL DIRECTORS: Item 16 of the Agenda (Official Records No. 46, page 159: Official Records No. 76, Resolution EB19.R61 and Annex 22)

The CHAIRMAN introduced the relevant documentation. He recalled that Annex 22 of Official Records No. 76 contained a proposal by the Government of New Zealand on the method of appointing regional directors and accordingly invited the representative of the Government of New Zealand to make a statement to the Board.

Dr. MACLEAN expressed appreciation of the opportunity of further explaining his Government's views. He re-emphasized that the New Zealand Government had made its proposal impartially and objectively and without in any way intending to imply criticism of the regional directors appointed to date. Indeed, his Government had the greatest confidence in the Regional Director for the Western Pacific and had heartily supported his reappointment a few years previously. His Government interpreted the provisions of Article 52 of the Constitution, which laid down that the head of the regional office should be the regional director appointed by the Board in agreement with the regional committee, to indicate that that appointment should be made by the Board as the executive organ of the Health Assembly. Clearly, then, it would be in accordance with the Constitution either for the Board to select the regional director and for the regional committee to confirm that appointment, or vice versa. It would, however, be generally agreed that selection constituted the more important phase of that procedure, and his Government would therefore submit that the selection should be made by the Executive Board in the first place.

Regionalization presented many advantages but also certain risks, and if regionalization were to function to its best advantage it was essential that a regional director should be a man of great ability and strong personality. In a region such as the Western Pacific, where conditions were perhaps unique, communications were necessarily a limiting factor; it would consequently be difficult for a representative of New Zealand, for instance, to be fully informed of the suitability and qualifications of the various applicants before attending a meeting of the regional committee. It would accordingly appear that conditions were more favourable for a wise choice if that choice rested with the Executive Board, which would have the benefit of the advice of the Director-General and could have full information at its disposal on the various applicants. He did not think that any objection that such a procedure might place too great power in the hands of the Director-General was valid since the full

powers of decision would rest with the Board itself. The present method of appointment of regional directors, while it complied with Article 52, did not in his Government's opinion, give full effect to the intentions motivating that article when originally drafted. Naturally, the regional committees would still have every opportunity of expressing their views in the matter and he did not believe that the method supported by his Government would prove any more cumbersome or time-consuming than that followed at present.

Dr. JAFAR said he would be interested to know, since Dr. Maclean had given the assurance that his Government's proposal had not been based on any criticism of the regional directors appointed hitherto, what had in fact stimulated that government to submit a proposal to revise the existing procedure. Furthermore, since such existing procedure provided for all aspects of the consultation desired by the New Zealand Government, he could not see where the advantage lay of adopting a new procedure under which the Executive Board would be performing the same function at an earlier rather than a later stage.

Dr. MACLEAN emphasized that his Government's proposal had not implied any dissatisfaction but had been made on the grounds that the existing method could, under certain circumstances, lead to difficulties. His Government had, he believed, been stimulated to make such a proposal as a result of the discussions which had taken place at the time of the study of regionalization carried out in the Western Pacific Region, and which had pointed to the possible advantages and disadvantages of regionalization.

While no doubt the Executive Board had an opportunity of expressing its views under the present procedure, he would suggest that that was more of a token opportunity since he was sure that it would be most unusual for an objection to be raised by the confirming authority on a selection already made. Accordingly, greater safeguards existed where the selection was made in the first place by the Board.

Professor PESONEN considered the New Zealand proposal most important and worthy of serious consideration. It was clearly in the interest of the Organization to have the best qualified personnel available and, while it was fortunate that no dissatisfaction had at any time been expressed in respect of the regional directors hitherto appointed, it was desirable for the situation to be improved as far as possible. It should be borne in mind that the applicants for posts in the Organization had increased in a degree commensurate with the expansion of the Organization's activities throughout the world.

He would agree with the view expressed by the representative of the Government of New Zealand that the part played by the Executive Board in appointing regional directors was at present purely formal; moreover, the Director-General did not play any direct role in that important task.

That was not, in his view, an ideal situation, as the Executive Board and Director-General were mainly responsible for the Organization's work throughout the year. Furthermore, as regional directors were required to maintain close contact with the Director-General it was obviously desirable that the latter should have an opportunity of giving his opinion in the matter. He would, however, differ from the New Zealand Government in regard to the details of the proposed procedure. In the New Zealand proposal the Executive Board played a leading part whereas the regional committee merely confirmed its selection, although it would of course have the right to make any representations it saw fit. He would think that the regional committees should have more authority as they too would be required to work in very close collaboration with the regional directors.

He would accordingly, in order to give the regional committees full responsibility and to meet the views expressed by the New Zealand Government, suggest an alternative procedure. He proposed that the Director-General should request Member States to suggest applicants for the post of regional director, giving all the necessary particulars and qualifications; those names would be put before the regional committee concerned, which would then submit the three applicants of its choice to the Executive Board which, after hearing the views of the Director-General, would select one. That method would provide for the active participation of all concerned and would not call for any amendments to the relevant Article of the Constitution.

Dr. TOGBA failed to see any advantage in changing the present system. As the regional directors had to work in extremely close contact with the governments in the regions, it was important that they should be recommended by the Member States concerned. Although the Director-General and the Executive Board clearly had the full responsibility for the Organization's work on a world-wide basis, it was essential that governments should have as many opportunities for participating in the functioning of the Organization as possible. The existing system had proved entirely satisfactory so far and there accordingly seemed to be no reason to change that procedure; in the African Region, for example, it had proved altogether successful. He called attention to possible unfortunate repercussions on cooperation with governments if the selection of regional directors had not originally been made by the countries primarily concerned.

The CHAIRMAN drew particular attention to the third operative paragraph of resolution EB19.R61, which stated that the proposal should be considered again by the Executive Board at its twenty-first session, taking into account any comments which should be invited from regional committees. He presumed that the proposal of the New Zealand Government, together with the statement made by its Representative at the present meeting, in accordance with the second operative paragraph of that same resolution, would be placed before the regional committees that year and

that the matter would then be reconsidered at the Board's following session. In the circumstances, a prolonged discussion seemed unnecessary at the present stage.

Dr. SIRI said that while no doubt particular reasons had motivated the proposal made by the New Zealand Government, he did not believe that those reasons obtained in other regions. Where the Region of the Americas was concerned, for example, there did not appear to be any grounds to support a revision of the existing procedure, which was considered completely satisfactory.

Dr. METCALFE did not consider that it should be taken for granted that a regional director should necessarily be recruited from the particular region which he would be serving; indeed, the most qualified person should be appointed regardless of the part of the world from which he came.

The CHAIRMAN regarded the discussion as concluded at the present stage, on the understanding that the matter would be considered again at the twenty-first session of the Executive Board.

He thanked the representative of the Government of New Zealand for having participated in the discussion.