

*directing council*



PAN AMERICAN  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION

XXIV Meeting

México, D.F.  
September-October 1976

*regional committee*

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION

XXVIII Meeting



INDEXED

Provisional Agenda Item 26

CD24/6 (Eng.)  
4 August 1976  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STUDY ON REDUCTION OF LENGTH OF MEETINGS OF THE DIRECTING COUNCIL

During the XXIII Meeting of the Directing Council several Representatives proposed that consideration be given to the possibility of reducing the duration of the meetings of the Directing Council. The Council appointed a Working Group to study the proposal, and in a report to the Council the Group outlined possible methods which it considered worthy of further investigation. (See Annex I.)

In accordance with the mandate of Resolution XVI subsequently approved by the Directing Council, the Director carried out a study and submitted to the consideration of the Executive Committee at its 76th Meeting in June 1976 a document (CE76/19)(Annex II) which, "in addition to complying with the terms of the resolution, analyzes it in the light of a constitutional and institutional interpretation of the Council's role in the context of the purpose of the Organization, its functional structure, its relations with WHO, the interdependent responsibilities of the Governing Bodies and of the Secretariat, and the precedents set by previous meetings."

After studying the report, the Executive Committee approved the following resolution:

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,

Having carefully studied Document CE76/19 based on the discussion of this topic and the report made by a working party to the Directing Council at its XXIII Meeting;

Recognizing that it is the responsibility of the Directing Council at each of its Meetings to determine its own program of work; and

Believing also that the agenda of Meetings of the Directing Council could be so arranged that the most fundamental policy items could be discussed during the first week of the Meeting,

RESOLVES:

1. To recommend that no changes be made in the Rules of Procedure of the Directing Council.
2. To suggest to the Directing Council that at its XXIV and subsequent Meetings it hold the debate on the most important policy issues during the first week of the Meeting.

Annexes

*directing council*



PAN AMERICAN  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION

XXIII Meeting

CD24/6 (Eng.)  
*regional committee* ANNEX I

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION



XXVII Meeting

Washington, D.C.  
September-October 1975

CD23/30 (Eng.)  
3 October 1975  
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP TO STUDY THE POSSIBILITY OF REDUCING THE LENGTH  
OF DIRECTING COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Working Group to study the possibility of reducing the length of Directing Council meetings met on 30 September and 1 October 1975, at 6:00 p.m.

The membership of the Group was as follows: Dr. Pedro R. Yañez (Argentina), Dr. Hermán Weinstok W. (Costa Rica), Dr. Lenín Sáenz J. (Costa Rica), Dr. José Otero M. (Cuba), Dr. S. Paul Ehrlich, Jr. (United States of America), and Dr. Rogelio Valladares (Venezuela). Dr. Hermán Weinstok W. was elected Chairman.

The Group considered and discussed the following points proposed by its members as a basis for reducing the length of the Council meetings:

1. Delegation of a greater degree of responsibility and more functions to the Executive Committee, particularly as regards the study of the budget, to enable each of the nine Members of the Executive Committee, with knowledge of the budgets of specific countries, to make a more concrete contribution with regard to those budgets.
2. The Executive Committee study some of the items normally submitted to the Council.
3. Limitation of the number of agenda items.
4. Establishment of two main committees working simultaneously, along the lines of the Pan American Sanitary Conference.
5. Holding the Technical Discussions on Saturday.
6. Holding the Technical Discussions at the same time as the sessions of the Council, in which case the countries would undertake to designate technical experts specifically to take part in them.
7. Working documents and comments on them to be very concise; presentations to be expanded at the specific request of the Delegates.

8. Establishment of working groups for the specific study of certain subjects with membership automatically provided by the countries in strictly alphabetical order.
9. The number of hours of sessions of the Council be not less than eight per day.
10. Sessions of the Council be programmed as follows:  
  
Thursday: Inauguration and procedural or statutory activities  
  
Friday: Technical Discussions  
  
Saturday and Sunday: Free  
  
Monday to Friday: Working sessions  
  
Saturday: Closure
11. The working documents be duly studied well in advance, to obviate unnecessary interventions.

The Group points out that although various possibilities were considered in regard to the Technical Discussions, it is aware that the Directing Council intends to examine the pertinent rules and take a decision on them.

After full discussion and lengthy examination of the suggestions made, the Group reached the conclusion that making specific recommendations would necessitate a thorough study of the way in which they would affect the constitutional and statutory provisions in force. In addition, the financial implications for PAHO of some of the measures proposed would need to be carefully studied.

The Group felt that in the short time available for studying the possible legal, statutory and financial implications of the measures proposed, it could not afford to make any recommendation at the moment, but that the Executive Committee would be in a position at its meeting in 1976 to look into these matters and propose solutions based on a working document prepared by the Director of the Bureau.

The Working Group therefore respectfully begs to submit the attached resolution to the Council for its consideration.

It would, nevertheless, like to acknowledge the excellent cooperation of the Chairman of the Executive Committee and those of its Members present in the Council, and to state that their contribution was most valuable in connection with the study and approval of the budget and helped to reduce very substantially the time ordinarily spent in such deliberations.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

(Submitted by the Working Group to study the possibility of reducing the length of Meetings of the Directing Council)

THE DIRECTING COUNCIL,

Having considered the report of the Working Group set up to study the possibility of reducing the length of meetings of the Directing Council; and

Bearing in mind the possible implications--constitutional, statutory, and financial--of the measures considered by the Working Group,

RESOLVES:

1. To request the Director to prepare a study of the constitutional, statutory, and financial implications of each of the measures suggested by the Working Group for shortening the number of days of Directing Council sessions and any others that are deemed appropriate, and to include the topic in the program of the 76th Meeting of the Executive Committee.
2. To instruct the Executive Committee to examine this matter and submit its final recommendations to the next meeting of the Directing Council.

*executive committee of  
the directing council*

PAN AMERICAN  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION



*working party of  
the regional committee*

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION



CD24/6 (Eng.)  
ANNEX II

76th Meeting  
Washington, D.C.  
June-July 1976

Provisional Agenda Item 22

CE76/19 (Eng.)  
14 May 1976  
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

REDUCTION OF LENGTH OF MEETINGS OF THE  
DIRECTING COUNCIL

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## REDUCTION OF LENGTH OF MEETINGS OF THE DIRECTING COUNCIL

### Introduction

During the XXIII Meeting of the Directing Council several Representatives proposed that consideration should be given to the possibility of reducing the duration of the meeting of the Directing Council, mentioning, amongst other things, the difficulties experienced by Ministers of Health in remaining absent from their countries for two weeks. A similar proposal had previously been made with respect to the Governing Bodies of the World Health Organization (WHO).

As a result of the discussion the Directing Council appointed a Working Group to study the matter, whose report was considered and led to the approval of Resolution XVI in which it was resolved:

1. To request the Director to prepare a study of the constitutional, statutory, and financial implications of each of the measures suggested by the Working Group and any others that are deemed appropriate for shortening the number of days of Directing Council sessions, and to include the topic in the program of the 76th Meeting of the Executive Committee.
2. To instruct the Executive Committee to examine this matter and submit its final recommendations to the next Meeting of the Directing Council.

Under the terms of this resolution the Director is submitting for consideration by the Executive Committee the present document which, in addition to complying with the terms of the resolution, analyzes it in the light of a constitutional and institutional interpretation of the Council's role in the context of the purpose of the Organization, its functional structure, its relations with WHO, the interdependent responsibilities of the Governing Bodies and of the Secretariat, and the precedents set by previous meetings.

### Constitutional and Institutional Interpretation of the Council's Role

All matters bearing on the Directing Council's role and responsibilities are to be examined in the context of the structure of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

By authority of the Conference, the Council is required to legislate, that is to say, to interpret the Constitution in relation to the problems submitted for its consideration and to formulate a policy defining the activities and functions of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB).



The Council also acts as a forum to which Member Governments can bring the results of their experience, and at which they can present their ideas and proposals for the achievement of the objectives of the Organization in the service of the health and well-being of all the countries of the Americas. As part of its legislative function, the Council also fosters the evaluation of programs seeking to achieve positive results that serve the common interests of the Hemisphere.

As a result of its status as Regional Committee of the World Health Organization for the Americas, the Council is also required to apply the Constitution, Rules of Procedure and policies of that body. It should be pointed out here--as it has a direct bearing on the object of Resolution XVI--that the Directing Council as such and as the Regional Committee of WHO considers at its annual meetings an agenda that affects both WHO and the decisions of the World Health Assembly. This presupposes the existence of a program that, even if it is functionally an integrated whole, consists of an extensive series of projects--currently 758 in number--to be financed from the regular budgets of both organizations as well as with funds from other United Nations agencies and from the Inter-American System. From this it is evident that the role of the Regional Committee for the Americas is much broader than that of other analogous organs of WHO.

The Directing Council operates with the valuable support of the Executive Committee, to which it delegates the examination of all matters of special importance and whose recommendations it considers prior to making decisions on them.

As a group, the four components of the functional structure of PAHO--the Conference, the Directing Council, the Executive Committee and the Secretariat, which is the Pan American Sanitary Bureau--are interdependent. Nevertheless--and this they have demonstrated over their long years of experience--the work of the latter two bodies is fundamentally dependent on that of the former two, whose essential role is to legislate, that is to say, to govern.

#### Constitutional and Procedural Provisions Bearing on Resolution XVI

Article 12.C of the PAHO Constitution states: "The provisional agenda of the Council shall be prepared by the Director of the Bureau and submitted to the Executive Committee for approval. The Council shall adopt its own agenda and, in so doing, may make such additions or modifications to the provisional agenda as it may wish, in accordance with its Rules of Procedure." Article 13 adds: "The Council shall elect its own officers and shall adopt its own Rules of Procedures."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> PAHO Basic Documents, Official Document 125, July 1973, pp. 13-14.

According to the above constitutional principle, each Council is empowered to determine its program of work, the final agenda for its meeting, and therefore the time it will devote to the exercise of its responsibilities. From this it follows that a Council has no authority to determine the duration of the meeting of another Council unless the Constitution is amended accordingly.

For its part, the Executive Committee is required to submit a provisional agenda to the Council and recommend to the latter how it considers that it can best perform its functions.

The Secretariat's role is to assist both Governing Bodies to exercise their responsibilities with maximum effectiveness--a role that includes proposing to them any course of action that it regards as vital to the achievement of the purposes of the Organization.

Resolution XVI defines the steps proposed by the Working Party for reducing the duration of the Council's meetings as suggestions only. Thus interpreted these steps are neither inconsistent with the Constitution nor with the Rules of Procedure, as indicated above.

#### Considerations Affecting Meetings of the Directing Council

A reduction in the duration of the annual meeting of the Directing Council must be compatible with its functions and responsibilities under the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure. In this connection it should be remembered that the number of Governments in PAHO and in WHO in the Americas has increased from 24 to 30 since 1961 and it is likely that other countries will join the Organization in the future. The duration of discussions and the scope and nature of the agenda are clearly related to the number of participating Members.

A study of agendas for meetings of the Directing Council over the past 10 years shows that their average duration was eight working days, including the Technical Discussions. The number of agenda items varied from 28 to 42, averaging 36 at each meeting. A review of these shows that 16% of them related to matters that must be considered by the Council by express provision of the Constitution; 16% arose out of its Rules of Procedure and 26% were directly connected with matters arising out of the policy, strategies and programs of the Organization. Subjects raised by the Conference, by previous Directing Councils and by the Executive Committee amounted to 25%, and those specifically bearing on the WHO program to 8%. The balance of 9% represents subjects raised by the governments, in the Technical Discussions, and other questions.

The length of meetings of the Council depends primarily on the scope and nature of the agenda, together with the prior study given to each of its items, the quality of their documentation and presentation, and the extent to which the countries are interested in participating in their discussion.

The importance of some items, by virtue of their nature and of their significance for the inhabitants of the Americas, generally gives rise--as an examination of previous meetings indicates--to prolonged discussion. Amongst these might be mentioned the program and budget of the Organization, the annual reports of the Director of the Bureau and of the Chairman of the Executive Committee, health sector problems and an analysis of their solutions, the formulation of policies, the Ten-Year Health Plan, the exchange of the experiences of governments in areas of common concern, and the participation of other international and non-governmental agencies and bodies.

The Director is in sympathy with the desires of Ministers and Representatives to devote the minimum time necessary to the discharge of the major constitutional responsibilities of the Directing Council. He believes that they will share his view that what is vital is to judiciously select agenda items consistent with the Organization's requirements and the dynamic and evolving role of health programs in the Americas. The duration of meetings should be the outcome of decisions on agenda items and of their exhaustive analysis rather than the point of departure for such decisions.

It is considered that the assignment of increased responsibilities and broader functions to the Executive Committee, especially with respect to the examination of the program and budget, will be of particular value for the purposes of the matter under discussion. A thorough examination of the budget by the Executive Committee, the records made of its observations, the participation of representatives of the Committee in meetings of the Council, the preparation of an ad hoc report on the program and budget and its various components--as is done in WHO--will significantly facilitate the work of the Council and will contribute to a reduction in the duration of its annual meetings.

#### Steps Proposed by the Working Group

The following are the steps proposed by the Working Group with a view to reducing the duration of meetings of the Directing Council, together with some observations:

1. Delegation of a larger measure of responsibility and of a wider range of functions to the Committee, particularly with respect to the examination of the budget, in such a manner that each of the nine members of the Executive Committee having a knowledge of the budget for a specific country can make a more positive contribution with respect to that budget

The new functions and responsibilities of the Committee, primarily its more active participation in the examination of the budget, together with the advice furnished and the contributions of its members at the Council, will represent very valuable assistance in the analysis of the budget that the Council is required to make, as was observed at the last meeting. As, however, under the Constitution it is the Council that is required to decide on the program and its financing, it is not easy to foresee how much time would be involved in the discussion of this topic of special importance to the work of the Organization.

2. Recommendation that the Executive Committee should examine some of the items normally presented to the Council

As a general rule the Committee examines all items submitted to the Council. This recommendation relates to the functions of the Executive Committee, to which reference has already been made. The studies, analyses and evaluations the Committee makes on policy, programs and other matters represent an important step in carrying out the responsibilities of the Council.

3. Limitation of agenda items

Arising out of this recommendation, the Director will present, for consideration by the Executive Committee, a provisional agenda for each meeting of the Council, which will include those items that, in his judgment, have a vital bearing on the realization of the objectives of the Organization. These items will be placed in such an order as to facilitate discussion. After reviewing this agenda, the Committee would forward it, with any amendments, to the Directing Council, which would be required to make a decision on it at its first meeting.

4. Formation of two main committees to work simultaneously, similar in structure to the Pan American Sanitary Conference

The simultaneous work of the two main committees would require a minimum participation of two representatives from each country, which has in fact been the case in recent meetings, with one or two exceptions, and, according to the meeting place selected, a determination would be made as to its cost.

5. Holding of the Technical Discussions on a Saturday

This proposal should be examined by the Executive Committee which, under the terms of Resolution XXVII (Study of the Technical Discussions) is charged with the continuing review of matters relating to it.

6. Holding of the Technical Discussions at the same time as the meetings of the Council, in which case the countries would undertake to nominate specific experts to participate in them

The same observations as those made with respect to 5 above apply here. In addition, it would seem to defeat the purpose of the Technical Discussions which are included specifically for the Delegates.

7. Working documents and observations on these should be very concise in form and their presentation should only be expanded at the specific request of Delegates

The Director proposes to accept this suggestion for the rationalization of documentation and for the maximum possible limitation of presentations by the Secretariat, subject to discussion of the items.

8. Automatic nomination, in the alphabetical order of countries, of the working parties required for the examination of specific agenda items

It is considered that, in practice, this suggestion would have only limited advantages. It is therefore recommended that the President should continue to nominate members to these groups in the light of the interest and participation of the countries in the item under discussion.

9. Recommendation that the daily schedule of meetings of the Council should not be less than eight hours in duration

No observations are being made on this proposal beyond bringing it to the attention of meetings of the committees of the Council, especially the General Committee, as indicated in Part VI, Articles 27 to 32, of the Rules of Procedure of the Directing Council.

10. The meetings of the Council should be scheduled as follows:

Thursday	- Inauguration and procedural matters
Friday	- Technical Discussions
Saturday and Sunday	- Free
Monday to Friday	- Working meetings
Saturday	- Closure

On the other hand, during the discussions at the last meeting, some participants suggested that the meeting should not exceed one week.

As has been indicated, it is considered that the duration of the meetings of the Directing Council should be determined in relation to its agenda. On this assumption, it is not easy to reach a decision on this and other plans. The primary objection is that Ministers or Representatives would travel at the end of the week to attend the working sessions only and would therefore not be present at the first part of the meeting in which the Council decides on its order of business, officers, the agenda and the Technical Discussions.

11. Recommendation that working documents should be properly studied ahead of time so as to avoid the unnecessary use of the floor at meetings

The Director will forward documentation at the earliest possible stage so that the countries may examine it and be in a position to participate in its discussion.

#### Other Proposals

In paragraph 1 of Resolution XVI, calling for other measures to rationalize the annual meetings of the Directing Council, the following suggestions are made:

1. The decision on certain items that do not involve changes in the program and budget and do not conflict with the provisions of the Rules of Procedure of the Directing Council should be made by the Executive Committee, which should report on it to the Council at its subsequent meeting. Mention is made, inter alia, of matters associated with buildings and installations, amendments to the Staff Rules, and the award of prizes.

2. Consideration should be given to the possibility of more effective and systematic organization of discussions. With this in mind it should be recalled that the Directing Council is empowered, under Article 39 of its Rules of Procedure to limit the time allowed to each speaker. Statements may not exceed 10 minutes and presentations of items on the agenda shall be similarly restricted. This measure is mentioned for the sake of completeness but is not recommended, since it would seem to defeat the purpose of full and complete discussion of the issues.

3. At its first meeting the General Committee, in addition to determining the order in which agenda items are to be discussed, should set the time it considers necessary for the discussion of each item. This exercise would permit a better distribution of the time available at each session and allow fuller discussion of those matters that the Council considers to be the most important. As in the case of No. 2 above, this measure is not recommended and for similar reasons.

#### Final Observations

The present document is the outcome of Resolution XVI, approved by the Directing Council at its XXIII Meeting, the purpose of which is to examine the extent to which it is possible to reduce the duration of meetings of this body. The Working Group appointed for this purpose suggested a series of measures, which have been examined by the Secretariat in the light of the experience of the Organization. Others are proposed with a view to the more effective rationalization of the annual process represented by the meeting of the Council, the Governing Body that facilitates the dialogue between the governments and reaches decisions having a major bearing on the health of the inhabitants of the Americas.

The Director has chosen to examine this question, whose importance he recognizes, in the context of the objectives of the Organization, the requirements of its Constitution, its relations with the World Health Organization, and the operational structure with which it is currently provided for the purpose of discharging its responsibilities. This examination shows that the heart of the matter under discussion is the responsibility that the Constitution of PAHO assigns to the Directing Council and that of WHO to the Regional Committee for the Americas, as the Governing Body which is to interpret the Constitution in each specific case and to legislate. Its annual meetings enable it to discharge the responsibilities it has, and which are vital to the progress of the Organization as a whole. The agenda submitted for its consideration should reflect both current and future problems. The duration of its meeting, therefore, should be a consequence of the formulation of the agenda and not its starting point.

In the preparation of the present document, account has also been taken of the experience of recent years arising out of the meetings of this Governing Body, the number and nature of its resolutions, and the fact that the number of Member Governments has increased from 24 to 30 between 1961 and the present.

Resolution XVI of the Council, together with the Working Party's recommendations, are praiseworthy as evidence of the desire of Ministers and Representatives to reconcile the sensitive responsibilities they have as members of their Governments with those they have as Governors of the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization. The examination of the present problem is a constructive step, representing an evaluation of this process and reflecting a desire to accelerate it. Some of the measures proposed are positive and their application, in the form indicated, will enable a reduction to be made in the duration of the meetings of the Council. On the other hand, it might be prudent to consider introducing any changes that might affect the discharge by the Directing Council of its responsibilities on an experimental basis before adopting a final decision on them.