



*executive committee of  
the directing council*

PAN AMERICAN  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION

*working party of  
the regional committee*

WORLD  
HEALTH  
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RELATIONS WITH NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AT THE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

In Decision No. 8 taken at its 77th session in January 1986, the Executive Board of WHO requested the Regional Committees of WHO to examine section 5 of the report on the Working Principles Governing the Admission of Nongovernmental Organizations into Official Relations with WHO, which bears on regional and national nongovernmental organizations. The results of the discussions in the Regional Committee will be presented to the Board at its 79th session in 1987 so as to complete the recommendations that the Board will make on the matter to the Fortieth World Health Assembly in May 1987.

RELATIONS WITH NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS  
AT THE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

The Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau submits for consideration by the 97th Meeting of the Executive Committee of PAHO Decision No. 8 of the 77th Session of the Executive Board of WHO, of January 1986, on Review of the Working Principles Governing the Admission of Nongovernmental Organizations into Official Relations with WHO. Decision No. 8 states the following:

8) Relations with nongovernmental organizations

The Executive Board, having considered the report of the Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations, decided to endorse the revised Working Principles Governing the Admission of Nongovernmental Organizations into Official Relations with WHO, annexed to the Standing Committee's report, with the exception of section 5. With regard to this section, concerning relations with nongovernmental organizations at regional and national levels, the Board requested the regional committees at their 1986 sessions to consider these general principles and, if required, to expand them into more detailed principles for establishing relations with regional and national nongovernmental organizations. The results of their discussions should then be reported back to the Board at its seventy-ninth session in January 1987. With reference to sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 of the revised Working Principles, the Board requested the Director-General to apply these principles on a trial basis and report back on the experience gained to the Board at its seventy-ninth session. At that session, the Board would finalize its recommendations on the Working Principles relating to global, regional and national nongovernmental organizations, and submit them to the Fortieth World Health Assembly in May 1987.

Copies of the new Working Principles in their entirety (Annex I) and of Section 5 of the Principles in force prior to the aforementioned decision of the Executive Board of WHO (Annex II) are appended so that the Executive Committee may submit any observations and comments it may have on that Section 5 to the XXII Pan American Sanitary Conference, XXXVIII Meeting of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas, for consideration.

It is also worth noting that in Resolution XX (Annex III) the XX Pan American Sanitary Conference adopted procedures for the establishment by PAHO of official relations with inter-American nongovernmental organizations. As an autonomous inter-American Agency, PAHO has experienced no difficulty in establishing relations with inter-American organizations, and it is not considered necessary at this time to make any changes in the rules established by the XX Pan American Sanitary Conference in 1978.

Annexes

## RELATIONS WITH NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Working Principles<sup>1</sup>

(As revised by the Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations)

1. Introduction

1.1 As stated in Article 2 of the Constitution, one of the main functions of the World Health Organization (WHO) is to act as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work. In support of this function, and in accordance with Article 71 of the Constitution, WHO may make suitable arrangements for consultation and cooperation with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in carrying out its international health work.

1.2 WHO should, in relation to NGOs, act in conformity with any relevant resolutions of the General Assembly or Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

1.3 The objectives of WHO's collaboration with NGOs are to promote the policies, strategies and programmes derived from the decisions of the Organization's governing bodies; to collaborate with various WHO programmes in jointly agreed activities to implement these strategies; and to play an appropriate role in ensuring the harmonizing of intersectoral interests among the various sectoral bodies concerned in a country, regional or global setting.

2. Types of relations at the global level

2.1 WHO recognizes only one category of formal relations, known as official relations, with NGOs which meet the criteria described in these Working Principles.

2.2 The establishment of relations with NGOs shall be an evolving process proceeding through a number of separate stages as described in the following paragraphs.

2.3 First contacts with an NGO in order to create mutual understanding and assist in developing mutual interests frequently take the form of exchanges of information and reciprocal participation in technical meetings. This type of informal contact may continue on an ad hoc basis, without time limit and without written agreement. However, the definition of the broad objectives of collaboration and the possibility of enlarging its scope to include specific joint activities in line with the particular expertise of the nongovernmental organization are also explored at this stage.

2.4 When a number of specific joint activities have been identified, collaboration may be taken a stage further by proceeding to a period (usually two years) of working relations entered into by an exchange of letters. Such letters set out the agreed basis for the collaboration, indicating details of the activities to be undertaken during the period, providing an estimate of the resources to be supplied by WHO and the NGO, and naming focal points in the NGO and in WHO (designated technical officer). A joint assessment of the outcome of the collaboration thus planned is undertaken at the end of the period of working relations by all parties concerned, including also consideration of the future relationship. This may result in the continuation of the working relations for a further period; in an application for admission into official relations with WHO from an international NGO, for examination by the Executive Board, should there be a number of activities which might form the basis of a long-term and closer relationship with WHO; or in a decision that there is no scope for further contacts in the foreseeable future. This arrangement for consultation and cooperation with NGOs at the global level is considered as informal.

<sup>1</sup> For easy comparison those sections which differ from the current Working Principles, or have been added, have been indicated by a line in the margin.

2.5 The Executive Board shall be responsible for deciding on the admission of NGOs into official relations with WHO.

3. Criteria for the admission of NGOs into official relations with WHO

3.1 The main area of competence of the NGO shall fall within the purview of WHO. Its aims and activities shall be in conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of WHO, shall centre on development work in health or health-related fields, and shall be free from concerns which are primarily of a commercial or profit-making nature. The major part of its activities shall be relevant to and have a bearing on the implementation of the health-for-all strategies as envisaged in the Global Strategy for Health for All by the year 2000 and the WHO General Programme of Work covering a Specific Period.

3.2 The NGO shall normally be international in its structure and/or scope, and shall represent a substantial proportion of the persons globally organized for the purpose of participating in the particular field of interest in which it operates. When there are several international NGOs with similar areas of interest, they may form a joint committee or other body authorized to act for the group as a whole.

3.3 The NGO shall have a constitution or similar basic document, an established headquarters, a directing or governing body, an administrative structure at various levels of action, and authority to speak for its members through its authorized representatives. Its members shall exercise voting rights in relation to its policies or action.

3.4 Thus, organizations eligible for admission into official relations with WHO include various types of international NGOs with a federated structure (made up of national or regional groups or having individual members derived from different countries), foundations that raise resources for health development activities in different parts of the world, and similar bodies promoting international health.

3.5 In exceptional cases a national organization, whether or not affiliated to an international NGO, may be considered for admission into official relations, in consultation with and subject to the recommendations of the WHO regional director and the Member State involved. Such a national organization (or a number of national organizations working under a federated (umbrella) structure) shall be eligible for admission provided that: the major part of its activities and resources are directed towards international health and related work; it has developed a programme of collaborative activities with WHO as indicated in paragraph 2.4; and its activities offer appropriate experience upon which WHO may wish to draw.

3.6 There shall normally have been at least two years of successfully completed working relations, as described in paragraph 2.4, prior to an application for admission into official relations.

4. Procedure for admitting NGOs into official relationship with WHO

4.1 Applications should normally reach WHO headquarters not later than the month of July in order to be considered by the Executive Board in January of the following year. They shall specify a structured framework for collaborative activities agreed upon by the organization and WHO. Applications from national organizations shall contain the endorsements of the WHO regional director and the Government of the Member State concerned. Applications should normally be transmitted to Board members by the Secretariat two months in advance of the session at which they will be considered.

4.2 During its January session, the Board's Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations, composed of five members, shall consider applications submitted by NGOs, voluntarily or by invitation, and shall make recommendations to the Board; it may invite any such organization to speak before it in connection with the organization's application. Should the applicant organization be considered not to meet the established criteria, and bearing in mind the desirability of ensuring a valuable continuing partnership based on defined objectives and evidenced by a record of successful past collaboration and a framework for future collaborative activities, the Standing Committee may recommend postponement of consideration or rejection of an application.

4.3 The Board, after considering the recommendations of the Standing Committee, shall decide whether an organization is to be admitted into official relations with WHO. A re-application from an NGO shall not normally be considered until two years have elapsed since the Board's decision on the original application.

4.4 The Director-General shall inform each organization of the Board's decision on its application. The Director-General shall maintain a list of the organizations admitted into official relations and this list and any amendments thereto shall be circulated to the Members of WHO.

4.5 The Board, through its Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations, shall review collaboration with each NGO every three years and shall determine the desirability of maintaining official relations. The Board's review of NGOs shall be spread over a three-year period, one-third being reviewed each year.

4.6 The Board may discontinue official relations if it considers that such relations are no longer appropriate or necessary in the light of changing programmes or other circumstances. Similarly, the Board may suspend or discontinue official relations if an organization no longer meets the criteria that applied at the time of the establishment of such relations, or fails to fulfil its part in the agreed programme of collaboration.

## 5. Relations at the regional and national levels

### 5.1 Regional or national NGOs affiliated to international NGOs in official relations with WHO

These NGOs are, by definition, in official relations with the WHO regional office(s). They shall develop and implement a programme of collaboration with the regional and national levels of WHO to ensure implementation of health-for-all strategies at the country level.

### 5.2 Regional and national NGOs for which there is no international NGO

The regional office concerned may establish working relations with these organizations, subject to consultation with the Member State(s) concerned and between the regional director and the Director-General of WHO. A programme of activities developed and implemented as described in paragraph 2.4 shall be essential.

### 5.3 Regional or national NGOs affiliated to international NGOs not in official relations with WHO

In order that WHO may promote and support the formation of strong international NGOs in the various technical fields, the regional office concerned may establish informal working relations with the above-mentioned regional or national organizations. Such informal working relations shall be based on a programme of activities developed and implemented as described in paragraph 2.4.

## 6. Privileges conferred on NGOs by relationship with WHO

### 6.1 The privileges conferred by official relationship shall include:

(i) The right to appoint a representative to participate, without right of vote, in WHO's meetings or in those of the committees and conferences convened under its authority, on the following conditions:

Whenever the Health Assembly, a committee or conference convened under its authority discusses an item in which a related NGO is particularly interested, that NGO, at the invitation of the chairman of the meeting or on his/her acceding to a request from the organization, shall be entitled to make a statement of an expository nature, and may, with the consent of the meeting, be invited by the chairman to make, in the course of the discussion of the item before the meeting, an additional statement for purposes of clarification;

(ii) Access to non-confidential documentation and such other documentation as the Director-General may see fit to make available through such special distribution facilities as WHO may establish;

(iii) The right to submit a memorandum to the Director-General, who would determine the nature and scope of the circulation.

6.2 In the event of a memorandum being submitted which the Director-General considers might be placed on the agenda of the Health Assembly, such memorandum will be placed before the Executive Board for possible inclusion in the agenda of the Assembly.

6.3 Privileges similar to those stated above shall normally be accorded to national/regional NGOs having working relations with WHO regional offices, in accordance with section 5.2, as determined by the regional directors in consultation with the regional committees.

6.4 A national organization which is affiliated to an international NGO covering the same subject on an international basis shall normally present its views through its government or through the international NGO to which it is affiliated, unless other arrangements are made in view of its particular relationship with WHO.

7. Responsibilities of NGOs in their relationship with WHO

7.1 NGOs shall be responsible for implementing the mutually agreed programme of collaboration and shall inform WHO as soon as possible if for any reason they are unable to fulfil their part of the agreement.

7.2 NGOs shall utilize the opportunities available to them through their normal work to disseminate information on WHO policies and programmes.

7.3 NGOs shall collaborate individually or collectively with WHO programmes to further health-for-all goals.

7.4 NGOs shall individually or collectively collaborate with the Member States where their activities are based in the implementation of the national/regional health-for-all strategies.

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**Principles to Govern Relations between WHO and Regional and National Non-governmental Organizations**

1. *Regional or national non-governmental organizations which are affiliated to international non-governmental organizations with which WHO is in official relations*

These are, by definition, in official relations with the regional organization under the terms of the resolution of the First World Health Assembly concerning relations with non-governmental organizations, and therefore no formal action by the regional committee is required

2. *Regional or national non-governmental organizations which are affiliated to international non-governmental organizations not in official relations with WHO*

In order that WHO may facilitate the formation of strong international non-governmental organizations in the various technical fields, arrangements with the above-mentioned regional or national organizations will be on the basis of informal working relations

3. *Regional and national organizations for which there is no international non-governmental organization*

These can be admitted into working relationship with the World Health Organization, subject to consultation between the Regional Director and the Director-General.

XX Pan American Sanitary Conference  
XXX Meeting of the WHO Regional Committee

**Resolution XX**

**Mechanisms for the Establishment of Official Relations between  
PAHO and Inter-American Nongovernmental Organizations**

*The XX Pan American Sanitary Conference,*

Recalling that the XIV Pan American Sanitary Conference adopted Resolution XXVIII setting forth the criteria that the Pan American Health Organization was to observe when establishing official relations with inter-American nongovernmental organizations,

Considering that it is necessary to establish procedures for applying the criteria set forth in the above-mentioned Resolution XXVIII,

Recognizing the need to establish the privileges that an official relationship with PAHO confers on nongovernmental organizations,

Having considered the proposed procedures and privileges contained in Document CE80/14 presented by the Director to the Executive Committee at its 80th Meeting, and

Having taken note of Resolution XX of the 80th Meeting of the Executive Committee,

*Resolves*

1 To adopt the following procedures for the establishment by the Pan American Health Organization of official relations with inter-American nongovernmental organizations

1 1 An inter American nongovernmental organization may, of its own accord or by invitation, request official recognition and the establishment of working relations in areas of mutual interest

1 2 To this end, the inter-American nongovernmental organization must submit with its application the following supporting documentation

1 2 1 Certified copies of its charter and by laws

1 2 2 Certified copies of the charters and by laws of its affiliates in the Hemisphere

1 2 3 An authenticated copy of the proceedings in which the governing body was elected and of the authorization of the assembly to establish relations with PAHO

1 2 4 A copy of the most recent periodic report on its activities

1 3 The letter of application will be circulated to all the Member Governments and their views obtained within a term of 60 days

1 4 The Executive Committee of PAHO will appoint a standing subcommittee composed of three members, one of whom will be rotated each year to ensure the continuity of the subcommittee's functions

1 4 1 The Director of PASB will forward to the standing subcommittee the applications for recognition and supporting documents received from inter American nongovernmental organizations



1 4 2 If the documentation received is not sufficiently complete or satisfactory, the Director will also inform the subcommittee of the steps that have been taken

1 4 3 The Committee will review and analyze the documentation presented in detail. If a question arises, it may request the appearance of an authorized representative of the inter-American nongovernmental organization to clarify any matters relating to the applications

1 5 When the applications received have been properly reviewed, the standing subcommittee will make its recommendations to the Executive Committee on the recognition and the establishment of official working relations with the applying inter-American nongovernmental organization

In certain cases, the standing subcommittee may recommend that consideration of an application be postponed and that the Director be requested to contact the applying organization in order to determine the areas of common interest and the mutual benefits that would accrue from cooperation between the two organizations

1 6 Once it has considered the standing subcommittee's recommendations, the Executive Committee will decide whether or not to authorize relations with a given organization

1 7 Every year the Chairman of the Executive Committee will convey the decisions taken to the Directing Council or the Pan American Sanitary Conference

1 8 The Director of PASB will inform each organization of the Executive Committee's decision on its application. If the decision is favorable, he will indicate the privileges conferred by the establishment of official relations

1 9 Every three years the Executive Committee, acting through the standing subcommittee, will review the list of inter-American nongovernmental organizations with which PAHO has official working relations and decide whether they should be continued or suspended

2 To establish that the status of official relations with PAHO shall confer on an inter-American nongovernmental organization the following privileges

2 1 The right to appoint an observer to participate, without the right to vote, in the regular meetings of the Governing Bodies of PAHO, and in conferences and seminars conducted under the authority of PAHO

When matters of particular interest to the organization are discussed at these meetings, its observer may, at the request of the Chairman of the meeting or in the Chairman's acceding to a request from it, make a statement presenting its views

2 2 Active participation in the Technical Discussions that take place in connection with the meetings of the Directing Council or the Conference

2 3 Access to nonconfidential documentation related to matters of interest to it

2 4 Collaboration, when requested by the Chairman of the Executive Committee, in the programming of joint activities in health matters of common interest

2 5 The right to submit a memorandum to the Director of PASB on programs going forward in areas of common interest, the Director will determine the nature and scope of its circulation. In the event of a memorandum being submitted which, in the view of the Director, should be placed on the agenda of the Directing Council, the memorandum will be put before the Executive Committee for possible inclusion on the agenda of the Council

*(Approved at the thirteenth plenary session,  
3 October 1978)*