

directing council



PAN AMERICAN
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XI Meeting

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Topic 29: INTERNATIONAL HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH YEAR

In accordance with Resolution 22 of the 24th Session of the WHO Executive Board, the Director-General has requested the WHO Regional Committees to discuss the holding of an International Health and Medical Research Year and submit any comments or suggestions they would wish to make.

The Director-General is to present a full report on this question to the 25th Session of the Executive Board and to the Thirteenth World Health Assembly. Since the report and further study of this project by the Board and the Assembly are to be based on the suggestions and proposals of Member Governments, the Director-General, in a communication dated 25 July 1959, invited them to submit not later than 15 October 1959 their comments and specific suggestions in respect of the goal, the program, the timing, and the financing of an International Health and Medical Research Year. With that communication, the Director-General transmitted all the documents related to the discussions which took place at the Twelfth Assembly and the 23rd and 24th Sessions of the Board. The list of the documents appears as Annex I. WHO has provided PASB with a limited number of copies of those documents for use during the Directing Council meeting.

The Director-General believes that the consideration of this topic by the Regional Committees will provide an opportunity for Member Governments to review the question and exchange views in respect of their attitude and intentions with regard to the proposal to hold an International Health and Medical Research Year. The discussion of this item will also help governments to formulate more precise and definite replies to the above-mentioned communication of the Director-General.

The following notes have been prepared in order that the Directing Council of PAHO, Regional Committee of WHO, may have at its disposal a working paper on the developments which have taken place.

1. Action of the 23rd Session of the WHO Executive Board

The Board incorporated into a single item, with the title "International Health and Medical Research Year", two proposals submitted for consideration:

a) Proposal by the Government of the United States of America for the consideration of designating an International Health and Medical Research Year or of adopting other means for intensifying international health cooperation against major killing and crippling diseases;

b) Resolution 1283 (XIII) of the General Assembly of the United Nations inviting WHO to consider the recommendation to organize (primarily on a national basis) an International Health and Medical Research Year, preferably in 1961, and to adopt methods for intensifying international cooperation in this field.

The Board adopted Resolution EB23.R72 requesting the Director-General to "circulate to Member States and Associate Members the proposal to observe an International Health and Medical Research Year, together with the documentation which was before the Board, to assist them in reaching a decision at the Twelfth World Health Assembly;" and to "continue to study this matter and to submit a comprehensive report on all aspects of the subject to the Twelfth World Health Assembly based on the documentation which was before the Board as well as discussions in the Board, and to include specific plans for the celebration of the International Health and Medical Research Year."

2. Action of the Twelfth World Health Assembly

As requested by the Executive Board, the Director-General further studied the subject and submitted to the Assembly a report containing a short history of the item, a summary of the discussion before the United Nations and a number of suggestions relating to the organization and holding of the International Health and Medical Research Year. A summary of the main points contained in his report follows:

a) The Objective. - The Director-General suggested that the objective of the Year should be to formulate, primarily on a national basis, the intensification of international cooperation in carefully selected aspects of health and of medical research.

b) The Program. - In the light of the objective of the Year, the program would have two distinct and equally important aspects, namely: the intensification of field activity in the control or eradication of specific diseases; and the intensification of research

related to WHO's expanded role in research and focused on activities that can profit by a coordinated international approach. The Director-General further suggested that the Year envisage the intensification of national efforts toward the eradication of malaria and smallpox; piped water supply; and research on cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and virus diseases.

c) The Timetable.- The Year should not necessarily be limited to a calendar year; a period of 18 months would seem preferable. A suggested timetable was based on the assumption that the Year would start with the opening of the World Health Assembly in 1961.

d) The Machinery.- In formulating suggestions on the machinery necessary to plan, prepare, and implement the program of the Year, as well as to evaluate the results achieved, the Director-General considered that the main work of the project would be the responsibility of national administrations. As to WHO, maximum use was to be made of existing resources and services of WHO Headquarters and Regional Offices.

Since the principle of this undertaking was to intensify national efforts and to mobilize local resources, it would be desirable for the governments to establish at the national level a special body, i.e., national committee for the International Health and Medical Research Year.

In view of the complexity and importance of the program, the Director-General suggested that the Assembly invite the Executive Board to establish a Consultative Committee of from five to seven members who would serve in their personal capacities. This Committee would advise the Director-General on the program and the management of the Year and the coordination of international and national action.

e) The Financing.- The report of the Director-General stated that, in addition to expenditure by individual States and by other participating organizations, the approximate expenditure to be incurred by WHO for the period 1959-63 would amount to \$606,000, which should be appropriated within the regular budget of the Organization. This estimate covered additional requirements relating to a temporary unit at WHO Headquarters, the temporary additional staff for inter-regional and regional activities, increased public information activities, and the publication of the final report. If assistance was requested from the Organization by governments in intensifying country projects, the necessary provision to render such assistance would be included in the annual proposed program and budget estimates, under the funds concerned, in accordance with the normal procedure.

The subject was discussed at length by the Committee on Program and Budget. During the discussions the following three proposals were considered:

Draft resolution proposed by the USA.- The underlying idea in this resolution was that the International Health and Medical Research Year should be made the occasion for the holding of a national health assembly in every country of the world, preceded in larger countries by local assemblies. These assemblies would present an opportunity for each nation to re-examine its own particular health needs, resources, and opportunities. The results of that assessment would then be applied in the development of national health goals and of programs for their attainment.

The resolution endorsed the suggestions made by the Director-General in respect of the preparation, arrangements and financing of the Year, and of the WHO assistance, if requested, to national projects.

Draft resolution proposed by the USSR.- This proposal envisaged the Year as an over-all national and international undertaking covering a vast field of health subjects, including work on the eradication of smallpox, cholera and poliomyelitis; intensification of the campaign against malaria, cancer, tuberculosis, leprosy, cardiovascular diseases; improvement of provision of drinking water; study of questions of training and research; curative importance of atomic energy; expansion and coordination of research on the prevention and treatment of the diseases referred to above; measures for health education of the public and assistance to the economically under-developed countries, including apparatus, medicaments, specialist literature and specialist staff.

Draft resolution submitted by Pakistan.- The operative part of this proposed resolution reads as follows:

- "1. EXPRESSES its deep appreciation and satisfaction at learning of the interest displayed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in international health matters including medical research;
2. APPRECIATES fully the value and importance of an International Health and Medical Research Year;
3. EXPRESSES, however, the view that, owing to the existing heavy commitment of national and international effort in the field of health and medical research, the holding of an International Health and Medical Research Year should be postponed for the present;

4. REQUESTS the Director-General to transmit the views expressed in this resolution to the Economic and Social Council at its twenty-eighth session and to the General Assembly of the United Nations at its fourteenth session."

The resolution was approved by the Committee on Program and Budget by 36 votes to 14, with 6 abstentions.

At its tenth plenary meeting, the Assembly approved the resolution adopted by the Committee on Program and Budget with the following amendment proposed by the delegations of Norway and Yugoslavia, which became paragraph 4 of the resolution as adopted by the Assembly:

"DECIDES to reconsider this item at the Thirteenth World Health Assembly and requests the Director-General and the Executive Board to continue to study the subject and to present a full report to the Thirteenth World Health Assembly."

The joint amendment was adopted by 39 votes to 26, with 3 abstentions. The amended resolution was adopted by 39 votes to 20, with 11 abstentions.

3. Action of the 24th Session of the Executive Board

In his report, the Director-General asked for some guidance on the nature of the report the Board would like to receive from him at its 25th Session for the further study of the subject, as requested in the Health Assembly's resolution.

Resolution EB24.R22 adopted by the Board requested the Director-General:

"to obtain the suggestions of Member States and Associate Members on the question;

"to ask the Regional Committees to discuss it at their next sessions and submit any comments or suggestions they would wish to make;

"to supply to the governments and Regional Committees the necessary documentation on the debates which took place at the Twelfth World Health Assembly and at the 23rd and 24th Sessions of the Executive Board."

"To submit to the Executive Board at its 25th Session a report on the replies he has obtained and on the suggestions he would recommend the Board to elaborate for the Thirteenth World Health Assembly related to the subject of an International Health and Medical Research Year, including its goals, program, timetable and material resources."

4. Action of Inter-Parliamentary Council.-

The possible organization of an International Health and Medical Research Year was considered by this body at its eighty-fourth session (30 March-5 April 1959), on its own initiative. The Council expressed its full support for the proposal and called on Member Groups of the Union to invite their governments to take all appropriate measures for the organization of the Year.

5. Action of the 43rd Conference of the International Labor Organization

This Conference adopted a resolution which, with regard to the International Health and Medical Research Year, contains the following operative paragraphs:

"1. Fully appreciates the initiative of the United Nations concerning the possibility of holding an International Health and Medical Research Year with the aim of securing active international cooperation and exchange of knowledge and experience in the fight against the widespread diseases which still constitute a grave danger to the health and well-being of the population;

"4. Invites the Governing Body, within the framework of the agreements between the WHO and the ILO, to take whatever steps may be required, if necessary using the good offices of the Joint ILO-WHO Committee on Occupational Health, to ensure that in the event of the holding of the International Health and Medical Research Year, programs designed to protect the life and health of workers shall be developed to the maximum extent practicable."

6. Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (July 1959)

The Council considered the subject very briefly and, in view of WHO's decision to consult Member Governments and to review the proposal at its Thirteenth Assembly, it took note of the resolutions adopted by the WHO governing bodies and transmitted them to the General Assembly of the United Nations without comment. The Director-General has informed the Council that, should the next World Health Assembly decide to hold an International Health and Medical Research Year, it could not begin before 1962.

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH YEAR

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

EB23/57	Resolution 1283 (XIII) of the General Assembly of the United Nations
EB23/WP/5	Working paper presented by the Director-General to the twenty-third session of the Executive Board
EB23/Min/10 Rev. 1 EB23/Min/17 Rev. 1 EB23/Min/18 Rev. 1	Minutes of the Executive Board meetings held 27, 31 January and 2 February 1959
EB23.R72	Resolution of the Executive Board adopted 2 February 1959
A12/P.B/7 A12/P.B/7 Add. 1	Documents presented by the Director-General to the Twelfth World Health Assembly on the International Health and Medical Research Year
A12/P.B/Min/9 and Corr. 1 A12/P.B/Min 10	Minutes of the Committee on Programme and Budget held 22 and 23 May 1959
A12/VR/10 and Corr. 1	Minutes of the Tenth Plenary Meeting held 26 May 1959
WHA12.28	Resolution of the Twelfth World Health Assembly adopted 26 May 1959
EB24/20	Report presented by the Director-General to the twenty-fourth session of the Executive Board
EB24/Min/3	Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 2 June 1959
EB24.R22	Resolution of the Executive Board adopted on 2 June 1959