

directing council



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HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

XXVII Meeting

regional committee

WORLD
HEALTH
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XXXII Meeting



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PROPOSED FIVE-YEAR PLAN AND RESOURCES FOR THE PROGRAM ON EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS AND ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH
OF DISASTERS

Resolution X of the XXIV Meeting of the Directing Council (1976) and Resolution XXXVI of the XXVI Meeting of the Directing Council (1979) established and decided to strengthen, respectively, PAHO's cooperation in the area of emergency preparedness and disasters. This document has two parts: Part I contains a brief background and progress report on the actions taken by PAHO; Part II includes a plan of work of PAHO's cooperation in the field of emergency preparedness and its proposed role in the aftermath of disasters (this part was prepared by the Secretariat with the support of the Canadian Delegation to the 84th Meeting of the Executive Committee).

The Directing Council is invited to consider this document in order to guide the work of the Secretariat in this area.

PART I

Background

In October 1976 the Directing Council of PAHO requested that the Director set up "a disaster unit with instructions to define the policy of the Organization, to formulate a plan of action for the various types of disasters, to make an inventory of the human and other resources available, to train the necessary personnel, to prepare and disseminate the appropriate guidelines and manuals, and to promote operational research to meet the needs of the countries in disaster situations, and to ensure that this unit establish effective coordination with the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator, the International Red Cross, and other national and international bodies providing disaster assistance."*

In Resolution CD24.10 (1976) the XXIV Meeting of the Directing Council,

"Considering that most of the assistance agencies are not properly equipped to provide help in the health field in carrying out their reconstruction, rehabilitation and planning tasks; and being anxious that the international assistance given to countries affected by natural disasters should be better coordinated, rational and more effective," resolved

.....
"To request the Director to set up a natural disaster relief voluntary fund which can be used promptly and readily by the disaster unit."

At its XXVI Meeting in 1979, the Directing Council reviewed the progress report of the program and, considering "that the ministries of health should play a leading role, within the civil defense system, in emergency preparedness and relief activities related to health," resolved "to request the Director to concentrate the Organization's efforts on the training of health officials in charge of emergency preparedness and the coordination of relief efforts in Member Countries, including in actual emergencies whenever possible."**

In its XXVI Meeting in 1979 the Directing Council, "Being convinced that the Organization's most valuable contribution in the aftermath of a disaster may consist of the speedy provision of technical cooperation," resolved:

* Resolution CD24.10 (annexed)

** Resolution CD26.36 (annexed)

- "To urge Member Governments and funding agencies to contribute to the Natural Disaster Relief Voluntary Fund (PD) and to facilitate the Organization's technical cooperation in the immediate aftermath of a disaster by agreements signed prior to the emergency.
- "To request the Director to maintain direct contact with all funding agencies and institutions in order to channel relief assistance towards areas of need in the health sector.
- "To invite the Director to strengthen the Organization's cooperation in the assessment of emergency needs, preparation of damage estimates and rehabilitation projects in the aftermath of a disaster."

As a frame of reference, it should be noted that the U.N. General Assembly in its XXVI Session (1971) adopted Resolution 2816 (Annex IV) creating the United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDRO), with instructions, among others:

- "To mobilize, direct and co-ordinate the relief activities of the various organizations of the United Nations system in response to a request for disaster assistance from a stricken State.
- "To assist the Government of the stricken country to assess its relief and other needs and to evaluate the priority of those needs, to disseminate that information to prospective donors and others concerned, and to serve as a clearing-house for assistance extended or planned by all sources of external aid."

Progress Report

As a follow up to the activities carried out during the period 1977-1979, as indicated in Document CD26/11, additional activities were completed in 1979-1980, as listed below:

- Organization of a Caribbean regional workshop for nurses on the Role of the Nurse in Disaster Preparedness and Relief, held in Barbados, 12-16 May 1980;
- Organization of a Seminar on Disaster Relief Management directed to high level health officials from the Caribbean held in Rose Hall, Jamaica, 1-6 June 1980;

- Co-sponsoring of the Caribbean Disaster Preparedness Projects Conference organized by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. In this meeting, held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 19-23 May 1980, officials from various countries and agencies identified 55 possible projects, including a comprehensive health preparedness 5-year program to be considered by potential funding agencies. Copies of this document will be circulated to interested Member Countries in the near future;
- Holding of a 3-day workshop for PAHO senior staff members stationed in the Caribbean and a 2-day workshop for PAHO senior staff members stationed in countries of Areas IV and VI;
- Preparation of technical documents, such as:
 - Guide to Evaluation and Control of Vectors, Rodents and Pest Insecticides after Natural Disaster (English);
 - Emergency Environmental Health Management Following Natural Disasters (English and Spanish);
 - Manual on Management of Medical Supplies During Disasters (English);
- Preparation of a disaster simulation exercise for training disaster relief coordinators in the Caribbean;
- Preparation of eight series of slides for teaching purposes (available in English and in preparation in Spanish);
- Support of short study travels (fellowships) for experts;
- Promotion and funding of research projects:
 - study of health problems caused by hurricane David in Dominica (US\$10,000 grant to the University of the West Indies);
 - morbidity-mortality survey following the 1979 earthquake in Tumaco, Colombia (US\$10,000 grant to the Ministry of Health, Bogotá, Colombia).

PART II

The Secretariat, with the support of the Canadian Delegation to the 84th Meeting of the Executive Committee, has prepared the following medium-term plan of work for the program on emergency preparedness and the outline of PAHO's technical cooperation role in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.

A. PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN OF WORK

In compliance with Resolution CD24.10 and Document CD26/11, the objectives of the Program remain:

- To promote the establishment of a permanent focal point for disaster relief coordination;
- To develop a comprehensive technical program on emergency preparedness in the health sector, with emphasis on disaster-prone countries;
- To encourage the Ministries of Health of Member Countries to play the leading role in emergency planning and disaster relief coordination in the health sector;
- To maintain the closest cooperation with the Emergency Relief Operation in WHO, UNDR0 and the League of Red Cross Societies at the international level, and OAS and CARICOM at the regional level.

In a broader perspective, emergency preparedness is an integral part of the primary health care concept. Emergency preparedness focuses more specifically on the appropriate delivery of those essential services when they are most acutely needed, that is, during emergency situations.

The experience of the first three years of implementation of the program (1977-1980) pointed to the need to adjust our approach and strategy towards:

Increased Emphasis on Technological Disasters

It is proposed to increasingly strengthen our technical ability to assist Member Countries plan and prepare for technological disasters, such as major fires, massive sudden environmental contaminations, and explosions. Although the main emphasis of the program will remain on

natural disasters (earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, etc.), it is felt that brutal catastrophic changes in the environment and other man-made disasters present a rising threat to public health. Pre-disaster planning and the provision of technical support must be considered by the Organization and its Member Countries.

Integration of Disaster Preparedness into other Training Activities of the Organization

Regional seminars on the general topic of emergency preparedness have played a useful role in the promotional phase of the Program. However, they have probably reached the point of diminishing return.

It is therefore proposed to progressively orient training activities towards:

- technical support and funding of seminars of multidisciplinary groups and workshops organized at country level by the Ministry of Health, as part of an ongoing or proposed national emergency preparedness program in the health sector;
- integration of emergency preparedness in the agendas of seminars/courses/workshops organized by other PAHO technical divisions or programs. For instance, through the preparation of a module on hospital disaster planning for the management courses on health services, the organization of a session on rehabilitation of water and sanitation systems following natural disasters during a regional meeting of sanitary engineers or the inclusion of emergency immunizations in EPI workshops, etc. Consideration must be given to allow sufficient time at such meetings to make technical presentations meaningful;
- organization of briefing short courses and refresher courses for disaster relief coordinators. These courses, delivered in English and Spanish alternatively, will transfer recent knowledge to designated national health relief coordinators.

Increasing Support of Operational Research

As underlined by Resolution CD24.10, operational research on actual disaster relief operations needs to be promoted. Scientific evaluation of relief activities and epidemiological surveys on the immediate needs and problems of disasters will be actively promoted by the Organization. Procedures for disaster-related research grants will be reviewed in the light of the special nature and urgency of these research projects. Mechanisms will also be developed to feed back this information so that national plans can be modified.

Manuals and Training Aids

In further compliance with Resolution CD24.10, the publication and dissemination of manuals and guidelines will receive our continued attention. Consideration will also be given to the distribution of précis of existing manuals to inform Member Countries of potential sources of useful information for emergency planning.

B. PAHO'S COOPERATION IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF DISASTERS

PAHO's primary role consists of coordinating the provision of technical cooperation and field expertise in natural disasters and other emergency situations, rather than the donation of relief supplies. Governments, specialized relief organizations and bilateral agencies are often better equipped to respond to this latter role, with the technical and coordinating guidance of PAHO.

PAHO Emergency Team

The experience of hurricanes David and Allen in the Caribbean indicates the need for provision of the required cooperation in the form of an organized multidisciplinary, self-sufficient PAHO team supported, where necessary, by national technical advisers and a roster of technical consultants, instead of ad hoc visits of experts in an unorderly manner.

The team may offer, on request, technical cooperation in some of the following areas of expertise:

- acting as a clearinghouse for and expeditor of technical assistance;
- assessment of health needs and determination of priorities;
- formulation of emergency projects and coordination with prospective sources of assistance;
- surveillance of communicable disease and outbreak prevention;
- inventory and distribution of relief supplies;
- survey of water supply systems and other sanitary services;
- survey of damages to existing health facilities;
- health management in evacuation centers or refugee camps, etc.

In times of major national disasters of the magnitude of the earthquakes in Peru (1970), Nicaragua (1972), Guatemala (1976) or the hurricanes in Honduras (1974) and Dominican Republic/Dominica (1979), the benefit for the countries of the immediate visit of a team of PAHO experts or consultants with prior experience in disaster relief management and familiarity with the local conditions will, by far, exceed the possible logistic problems.

The role and reporting channels of the team would not significantly differ from those presently in effect. The team would assist national health and civil defense (emergency) authorities to assess the needs and establish priorities and will provide the specialized technical cooperation normally requested by authorities from PAHO or other technical sources.

Actual composition of the team will depend on the following factors:

- Estimated magnitude of the disaster compared to the human and material resources of the affected country;
- Importance, qualification and disaster experience of the PAHO staff in duty in the country at the time of the disaster;
- Availability of the appropriate experts (staff members or consultants from countries exposed to similar risks) for temporary assignment to the disaster area. To overcome delays incurred in the past due to the need for a government's approval of the temporary release of PAHO staff members assigned to a country program in order to assist a disaster-stricken area, new procedures and agreements will need to be developed.

The team, under direct supervision of the Country Representative or his delegate, may, when considered convenient, be placed at the operational disposal of UNDRRO.

Mobilization of the team will be limited to large scale disasters in countries which have formally approved such a visit prior to the disaster. Disasters often cause disruption of telecommunications and interruption of normal channels of consultation between the Organization and the stricken country. Since not every country may need or wish the visit of a PAHO team in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, it is suggested that the Member Countries formally indicate to the Organization, in advance, their policy in this matter.

Although PAHO has privileged access to information sources at the U.N. and bilateral level, accurate disaster related data are usually scarce and late. The decision on the mobilization of a small team is likely to be made with uncertainty, with the resulting possibility of unnecessary mobilization of staff members. It is considered that the potential benefit of early arrival of a competent team when actually needed will offset possible unnecessary travel expenditures.

Securing transportation to and within the disaster-affected area caused serious delays in past operations. It is suggested that bilateral agencies might enhance the impact of their assistance by the provision of the necessary transportation and telecommunication facilities to a regional/subregional team, if and when requested by the Organization.

Increasing the participation of selected consultants from disaster-prone countries in a regional team would contribute to the development of the national expertise.

Operational Decentralization

Access to information and speed are the essence of proper disaster relief management. Although the Pan American Health Organization has, as mentioned before, very early access to reasonably accurate data on the genuine needs for health assistance, the speed of the Organization to act upon the data at international level requires further improvement. In order to ensure immediate action, management principles require that appropriate authority be delegated to the level within WHO where the information on the disaster, the technical knowledge of the health problems and their solutions, as well as the operational capacity are concentrated.

In consequence, it is considered in the interest of the Member Countries and in the spirit of WHO's decentralization policy that this operational responsibility for a) issuing WHO comments on required medical supplies; b) endorsing requests or, when appropriate, making appeals to other agencies; c) furnishing assistance to the health sector; and d) liaising on technical matters with UNDRO, other UN agencies, the International Red Cross and other agencies active in disasters, be delegated by WHO to this Region.

Coordination with UNDRO

Resolution 2816 establishing UNDRO clearly assigned overall responsibility and authority to UNDRO for disaster relief activities of the UN system.

At country level, the UNDP Resident Representative is acting as UNDRO coordinator in case of disaster.

This results in several advantages to the Organization and to the affected country:

- i) Promotion of a multidisciplinary approach to assessment of needs within the UN family;

- ii) Increased probability of support to health areas of greatest need. More precisely, the technical specifications on water supply equipment prepared by the sanitary engineer made it possible for UNDRO and donor agencies to direct resources to this area;
- iii) Improved information on health-related problems, relief efforts, and outstanding requirements through the disaster "Situation Reports" telexed periodically by UNDRO to the international community.

Similar operational arrangements with UNDRO can be recommended in future disasters.

Coordination with Other Agencies

At International Level

As instructed by Resolution CD26.36, the Organization is maintaining "direct contact with all funding agencies and institutions," especially UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, League of Red Cross Societies, International Committee of Red Cross, and bilateral agencies.

The mutual confidence based on the competent advice provided by the Organization on genuine requirements for emergency assistance in the health field are among the main assets of the Organization in its efforts to direct external resources to the most critical areas of need.

At National, Subregional and Regional Levels

The role and legal responsibilities of the civil defense organization or emergency committee are important. Closer contact and direct technical cooperation of the Organization with the health component of these institutions should be considered in consultation with the Ministry of Health.

The coordination of the Bureau with the OAS, CARICOM, and other subregional organizations will be maintained and strengthened.

According to a memorandum of understanding (Annex V) between UNDRO and WHO, UNDRO refers to WHO for advice on the health aspects of all disasters. Similar arrangements seem to be desirable between PAHO and regional institutions.

Procurement or Donation of Supplies

The Organization is not particularly equipped to procure and ship large amounts of medical supplies at short notice. Delays of up to one week or more should be expected due to the low volume of medical supplies routinely ordered by PAHO (in consequence, its low priority with manufacturers). The lack of its own stock and transport facilities (contrary to the situation of major bilateral donors) are also contributing factors to delays.

The role of the Organization could be limited to local purchase of general supplies and the coordination of international procurement of specialized public health items.

Funding of Country Relief Activities

Funds available from international agencies and bilateral sources for relief assistance to disaster stricken countries are limited. These funds are often committed in the earlier post impact period before health authorities are in a position to quantitatively estimate their needs.

As implied by Resolution CD26.36, the expertise of the Organization, its familiarity with the health conditions, and its lack of operational involvement are most useful in the preparation of damage estimates and rehabilitation projects. Following the review of the projects by national authorities, their early submission to potential donors will enable donors to assess the need for resources for essential rehabilitation health needs.

Funding of PAHO Relief Activities

The Natural Disaster Relief Voluntary Fund (PD) was established and funded at the level of US\$100,000 by transfer from savings.*

The Executive Committee in Resolution II of its 77th Meeting requested the Director to approach Member Governments and private agencies with the objective of obtaining voluntary contributions for the Natural Disaster Relief Voluntary Fund (PD).

Formal requests or informal contacts with other agencies and governments did not meet with great success. Funding organizations expressed some reservations about contributing to a regional fund prior to a natural disaster.

*Resolution CE77.R2 (annexed)

The lack of contributions to the PD Fund limited the Organization's capability to assist the disaster-affected countries "promptly and readily" as instructed in Resolution X of the XXIV Meeting of the Directing Council.

Cost of technical cooperation in emergency situations (e.g., assessment of needs, epidemiological surveillance) is usually absorbed within regional or country projects. Modest budgetary provisions have been made for similar activities in the emergency preparedness projects submitted to or approved by funding agencies. In regard to donations of supplies, currently resources have to come, in the first place, from savings or reallocation of country program funds. Only modest contributions are possible from the PD Fund (\$49,996.97 on 1 July 1980).

Alternate sources of funding (e.g., approved transfer from savings at the closure of each biennial budget) need to be explored.

Annexes



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ANNEX I

RESOLUTION X

Emergency Assistance to Countries of the Americas

The Directing Council,

Bearing in mind the assistance given by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau on the occasion of the earthquake that occurred in Guatemala on 4 February 1976, the provisions of Resolution XXX approved by the XVIII Pan American Sanitary Conference in connection with the earthquake in Peru in 1970, and the recommendations concerning natural disasters contained in the Ten-Year Health Plan for the Americas;

Being convinced that similar emergency situations are bound to occur in the disaster-prone parts of the Region and are likely to affect countries that do not as yet possess comprehensive emergency relief plans or that need technical assistance in order to update and apply them;

Considering that most of the assistance agencies are not properly equipped to provide help in the health field in carrying out their reconstruction, rehabilitation and planning tasks; and

Being anxious that the international assistance given to countries affected by natural disasters should be better coordinated, rational and more effective,

Resolves:

1. To thank the Director and the Secretariat, and particularly the personnel assigned to Guatemala, for the assistance given to that country in connection with the earthquake of 4 February 1976.

2. To request the Member Governments to develop plans and, where necessary, enact legislation, set standards, and take preventive or palliative measures against natural disasters and disseminate such measures throughout the sectors concerned, coordinating their action with that taken by the corresponding services of PASB.

3. To request the Director to set up within the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, after first compiling and analyzing the appropriate data and information, a disaster unit with instructions to define the policy of the Organization, to formulate a plan of action for the various types of disasters, to make an inventory of the human and other resources available, to train the necessary personnel, to prepare and disseminate appropriate

guidelines and manuals, to promote operations research to meet the needs of the countries in disaster situations, and to ensure that this unit establish effective coordination with the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator, the International Red Cross, and other national and international bodies providing disaster assistance.

4. To request the Director to set up a natural disaster relief voluntary fund which can be used promptly and readily by the disaster unit.

*(Approved at the tenth plenary session,
1 October 1976)*



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ANNEX II

RESOLUTION XXXVI

**Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief
Coordination Program in the Americas**

The Directing Council,

Bearing in mind Resolution X of the XXIV Meeting of the Directing Council on emergency assistance to countries of the Americas, and Resolution XXII of the 82nd Meeting of the Executive Committee on emergency preparedness and disaster relief coordination program in the Americas;

Having examined the document presented by the Director on the disaster preparedness program in the Americas (Document CD26/11);

Considering that emergency situations caused by natural or man-made disasters are bound to affect the health status of the countries of the Region, and that the ministries of health should play a leading role, within the civil defense system, in emergency preparedness and relief activities related to health; and

Convinced that the most valuable contribution of the Organization in the wake of a disaster may be the speedy provision of technical cooperation,

Resolves:

1. To thank and commend the Director for the development of the Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief Coordination Program and for the technical cooperation and assistance provided to Member Countries during emergency situations since its inception.

2. To urge Member Governments to establish a high-level multisectoral group to coordinate all relief measures and an ongoing program to update emergency plans, train health personnel, and promote research and case studies to improve disaster management.

3. To urge Member Governments and funding agencies to contribute to the Natural Disaster Relief Voluntary Fund (PD) and to facilitate the Organization's technical cooperation immediately following a disaster on the basis of agreements signed prior to the emergency.

4. To request the Director to maintain direct contact with all funding agencies and institutions in order to channel relief assistance towards areas of need in the health sector.

5. To invite the Director to increase the cooperation of the Organization in assessing emergency needs, preparation of damage estimates, and rehabilitation projects following a disaster.

6. To request the Director to center the efforts of the Organization on the training of health officials in charge of emergency preparedness and the coordination of relief efforts in Member Countries, including in actual emergencies whenever possible.

*(Approved at the sixteenth plenary session,
4 October 1979)*

Resolution II, 77th Meeting of the Executive Committee:

RESOLUTION II

**ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATURAL DISASTER
RELIEF VOLUNTARY FUND**

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,

Bearing in mind the recommendation concerning natural disasters contained in the Ten-Year Health Plan for the Americas; and

Considering Resolution X adopted by the Directing Council at its XXIV Meeting, and in particular operative paragraph 4 which requests the Director to set up a natural disaster relief voluntary fund which can be used promptly and readily by the Disaster Unit,

RESOLVES:

1. To request the Director to contact Member Governments and appropriate private agencies for the purpose of obtaining voluntary contributions for the natural disaster relief voluntary fund.
2. To authorize the Director to transfer from savings into the voluntary fund a sum not to exceed US\$100,000 for initial capitalization, in order to make the voluntary fund promptly available for use in disaster relief, and to further authorize the Director to utilize this initial capital for normal program purposes as the voluntary fund is replenished by contributions.

Resolution 2816, XXVI Session of the UN General Assembly

2816 (XXVI). Assistance in cases of natural disaster and other disaster situations

The General Assembly,

Bearing in mind that throughout history natural disasters and emergency situations have inflicted heavy loss of life and property, affecting every people and every country,

Aware of and concerned about the suffering caused by natural disasters and the serious economic and social consequences for all, especially the developing countries,

Also aware of the varying needs of nations experiencing such disorders, which present new challenges for international co-operation,

Concerned about the ability of the international community to come to the aid of countries in a disaster situation,

Recalling its resolutions 2034 (XX) of 7 December 1965, 2435 (XXIII) of 19 December 1968, 2608 (XXIV) of 16 December 1969 and 2717 (XXV) of 15 December 1970, and Economic and Social Council resolutions 1533 (XLIX) of 23 July 1970 and 1546 (XLIX) of 30 July 1970 on assistance in cases of natural disaster,

Expressing appreciation of the Secretary-General's comprehensive report²¹ and of its perceptive examination of all aspects of the question, and taking note of the relevant passage in his statement to the Economic and Social Council on 5 July 1971,²²

Taking note of Economic and Social Council resolution 1612 (LI) of 23 July 1971 on assistance in cases of natural disaster and other emergency situations,

Noting the study, annexed to the Secretary-General's report, on the legal status of disaster relief units made available through the United Nations,²³

Mindful of the need to strengthen and make more effective the collective efforts of the international community, and particularly the United Nations system, in the field of international disaster assistance,

Bearing in mind that assistance provided at the request of the stricken countries, without prejudice to their individual country programmes under the United Nations Development Programme, can be an effective contribution to the rehabilitation and development of the stricken areas,

Bearing in mind also that the possible response of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and other credit organizations and development agencies to a request from the Governments concerned for complementary assistance to the stricken areas, without prejudice to the assistance provided by those organizations for the normal development programmes of the stricken countries, can be an important element in the reconstruction and development of those areas,

Noting the competence of the United Nations and its related agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme to render assistance in cases of natural disaster and other disaster situations,

Noting further the key role which the resident representatives of the United Nations Development Programme could play at the country level,

Recognizing the vital role in international relief played by the International Red Cross and other voluntary societies,

Recognizing further the necessity to ensure prompt, effective and efficient response to a Government's need for assistance, at the time of a natural disaster or other disaster situation, that will bring to bear the resources of the United Nations system, prospective donor countries and voluntary agencies,

1. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General to appoint a Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, who will report directly to him and who will be authorized, on his behalf:

(a) To establish and maintain the closest co-operation with all organizations concerned and to make all feasible advance arrangements with them for the purpose of ensuring the most effective assistance;

(b) To mobilize, direct and co-ordinate the relief activities of the various organizations of the United Nations system in response to a request for disaster assistance from a stricken State;

(c) To co-ordinate United Nations assistance with assistance given by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, in particular by the International Red Cross;

(d) To receive, on behalf of the Secretary-General, contributions offered to him for disaster relief assistance to be carried out by the United Nations, its agencies and programmes for particular emergency situations;

²¹ E/4994.

²² See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifty-first Session, 1773rd meeting.*

²³ E/4994, annex III.

(e) To assist the Government of the stricken country to assess its relief and other needs and to evaluate the priority of those needs, to disseminate that information to prospective donors and others concerned, and to serve as a clearing-house for assistance extended or planned by all sources of external aid;

(f) To promote the study, prevention, control and prediction of natural disasters, including the collection and dissemination of information concerning technological developments;

(g) To assist in providing advice to Governments on pre-disaster planning in association with relevant voluntary organizations, particularly with the League of Red Cross Societies, and to draw upon United Nations resources available for such purposes;

(h) To acquire and disseminate information relevant to planning and co-ordinating disaster relief, including the improvement and establishment of stockpiles in disaster-prone areas, and to prepare suggestions to ensure the most effective use of available resources;

(i) To phase out relief operations under his aegis as the stricken country moves into the stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction, but to continue to interest himself, within the framework of his responsibilities for relief, in the activities of the United Nations agencies concerned with rehabilitation and reconstruction;

(j) To prepare an annual report for the Secretary-General, to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly;

2. *Recommends* that the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator should be appointed by the Secretary-General normally for a term of five years and at a level comparable to that of an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations;

3. *Endorses* the Secretary-General's proposals for an adequate permanent office in the United Nations which shall be the focal point in the United Nations system for disaster relief matters;

4. *Recommends* that that office should be headed by the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and located in Geneva, be a distinct element within the United Nations Secretariat and be augmented as necessary by short-term secondment of personnel for individual emergencies;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to prepare for the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-third session, taking into account any relevant suggestions and the experience gained by the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, a report on any further steps which may be required to enable the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator adequately to perform the functions entrusted to him under the present resolution;

6. *Further endorses* the plan for a roster of volunteers, to be drawn from experienced staff members of the United Nations system and interested non-governmental organizations, who could be made available at very short notice;

7. *Recommends* that the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator should maintain contact with the Governments of States Members of the United Nations or members of specialized agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency concerning available aid in emergency situations, such as food supplies, medicines, personnel, transportation and communications, as well as advice to countries in pre-disaster planning and preparedness;

8. *Invites* potential recipient Governments:

(a) To establish disaster contingency plans with appropriate assistance from the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator;

(b) To appoint a single national disaster relief co-ordinator to facilitate the receipt of international aid in times of emergency;

(c) To establish stockpiles of emergency supplies, such as tents, blankets, medicines and non-perishable food-stuffs;

(d) To make necessary arrangements for the training of administrative and relief personnel;

(e) To consider appropriate legislative or other measures to facilitate the receipt of aid, including over-flight and landing rights and necessary privileges and immunities for relief units;

(f) To improve national disaster warning systems;

9. *Invites* potential donor Governments:

(a) To respond promptly to any call by the Secretary-General or, on his behalf, by the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator;

(b) To consider and to continue offering on a wider basis emergency assistance in disaster situations;

(c) To inform the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator in advance about the facilities and services they might be in a position to provide immediately, including where possible relief units, logistical support and means of effective communication;

10. *Decides* to authorize the Secretary-General to draw on the Working Capital Fund in the amount of \$200,000 for emergency assistance in any one year, with a normal ceiling of \$20,000 per country in the case of any one disaster;

11. *Further invites* all organizations of the United Nations system and all other organizations involved to co-operate with the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator.

2018th plenary meeting,
14 December 1971.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION AND
THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR

WHEREAS the World Health Organization (hereinafter referred to as WHO) by Articles 2 and 28 of its Constitution is empowered to furnish, within the limits of its resources, appropriate technical cooperation and necessary aid in cases of epidemics and emergencies, and assist in measures of prevention and mitigation of hazards in disasters; and

WHEREAS the General Assembly of the United Nations, by Resolution 2816 (XXVI), endorsed the Secretary-General's proposals for the establishment of an adequate permanent office in the United Nations (hereinafter referred to as UNDRO) to be the focal point in the UN system for disaster relief matters, and which would be headed by a Disaster Relief Coordinator; and

WHEREAS by paragraph 3 of Article IV of the Agreement between the United Nations and WHO, WHO affirmed its intention of cooperating in measures necessary to make coordination of the activities of the specialized agencies and those of the United Nations fully effective; and

WHEREAS since 1948 WHO has been rendering assistance to victims of disasters and epidemics, and since the establishment of UNDRO in 1972, WHO and UNDRO have been collaborating closely and effectively in matters of common concern;

NOW

THEREFORE the Director-General of WHO and the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator have agreed to the following arrangements:

1. General responsibilities of UNDRO and WHO

- (i) It is the responsibility of UNDRO to coordinate disaster emergency assistance, as well as to promote disaster preparedness and disaster prevention; UNDRO'S role within the terms of the General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) is that of an overall coordinator of all disaster-related assistance.

- (ii) WHO is the focal point for all health problems and will continue to exercise its operational prerogatives and responsibilities for all emergency and preventive health assistance.
- (iii) UNDRO will continue to coordinate WHO's assistance with other emergency assistance which may be given by other donor agencies or organizations. UNDRO is also responsible for providing information to the international community on the emergency situation as a whole, and its responsibilities remain whether the disaster be sudden, such as an earthquake, or slow in developing, such as a drought.

2. Disaster-related activities in respect of which WHO and UNDRO will cooperate

- (i) UNDRO works in three main fields of activities, namely disaster relief coordination, predisaster planning, and prevention of disasters.
- (ii) WHO works in these aspects of any disasters that may be due to natural or man-made causes or epidemics.
- (iii) In the field of disaster prevention and preparedness, WHO and UNDRO will cooperate in activities in their respective spheres, including the dissemination of information on scientific and technological developments.
- (iv) UNDRO's activities in the mobilization, direction and coordination of relief assistance will continue until relief operations are phased out and the stricken state moves into the stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction. WHO's work includes rehabilitation and restoration to normal of the health services.
- (v) WHO will inform UNDRO of its activities in this area, taking into account General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) paragraph 1 (i).

3. Requests for disaster relief assistance

- (i) The Government of a disaster-stricken state makes a request to UNDRO for disaster relief when it needs international assistance. Such a request will be regarded as having been addressed to the United Nations system in general. When any request for

disaster relief assistance is made to UNDRO, the latter will promptly inform WHO, which will consider the medical or health assistance required. UNDRO and WHO will then consult each other on the action to be taken;

- (ii) When in case of an epidemic a Government requests health assistance from WHO, normal WHO procedures will then operate. WHO will keep UNDRO informed of such requests and of the action taken or proposed.
- (iii) When disaster relief assistance is being considered or provided by WHO, UNDRO will inform WHO of any contributions made to it, or known to have been made bilaterally to the disaster-stricken State by donors, which are liable to satisfy or modify the request for health assistance made by the disaster-stricken State.

4. Joint action in the field

- (i) WHO is represented in most countries by a WHO Programme Coordinator. UNDRO is represented by the UNDP Resident Representative. There will be cooperation between the representatives of WHO and UNDRO.
- (ii) UNDRO has arranged for the establishment in developing countries of standing United Nations Disaster Teams. These teams operate under the responsibility of the UNDP Resident Representative. Representatives of other UN agencies, as well as other interested parties present in these countries, including diplomatic missions, take part in the work of the teams. WHO field officers will collaborate with the UN Disaster Teams. The WHO member will be responsible for the assessment of the health and medical requirements in any emergency situation.
- (iii) UNDRO normally sends a representative or representatives from its headquarters to disaster areas for on-the-spot assessments and to advise the Government of the disaster-stricken State. For all health problems and whenever practicable, representatives from WHO headquarters or already in the field will join these missions at short notice. UNDRO may, if necessary, meet the costs of travel and subsistence allowance of a WHO headquarters officer, as well as those of its own. The need for such joint missions will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

5. Communications

WHO and UNDRO recognize that the rapid exchange of information on matters of mutual interest is of paramount importance. To this end WHO and UNDRO will keep each other fully informed of any action they are taking and will, in particular, send each other copies of relevant cables and other communications.

6. Financial arrangements

- (i) As has been the practice, when donated funds are transferred from one agency to the other for the implementation of some action related to a disaster emergency, reciprocally no "overhead cost levy" or other fee will be charged. Interest on funds held by either party pending actual disbursement will be credited to the Trust Fund set up for the particular operation for which the funds are destined in accordance with the Financial Regulations, Rules or practices of the party concerned. Final accounting of such transactions will be rendered in due course. Any unspent balance will be returned to the donating agency. Narrative reports of action taken and results achieved by WHO or UNDRO in using funds originally contributed to the other party will, whenever practicable, be furnished so that they may be communicated to donors.

- (ii) In every emergency operation receiving financial support from UNDRO, all information relevant to procurement, despatch, receipt, and final disposition of those relief supplies procured by WHO will be made available to UNDRO as soon as practicable for the purpose of informing donors and satisfying UNDRO's internal audit requirements.

7. Airfreight or relief supplies

WHO has gained a certain expertise in procuring and shipping medical supplies at special rates. UNDRO will, if necessary, reinforce this by seeking from air carriers on behalf of WHO free airfreight or concessional terms for emergency relief supplies. This service will extend to disaster relief situations in which UNDRO has not itself received a request from the stricken state. UNDRO and WHO will cooperate in matters of emergency supplies.

8. Review of collaboration

The Director-General of WHO and the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator, or their representatives, will meet from time to time in order to review and evaluate their collaboration in disaster-related matters, and to consider any improvements therein which may be suggested from experience.

9. Entry into force, amendment and duration

This Memorandum of Understanding will enter into force upon its signature by the Director-General of WHO and the UN Disaster Relief Coordinator, and may be amended by mutual agreement. It will remain in force until such time as it is terminated by mutual agreement or by one agency giving the other three months' written notice of termination.

Under-Secretary General
Disaster Relief Coordinator

Director-General
World Health Organization

Geneva, 9 March 1979