



REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

EM/RC29/10
August 1979

Twenty-ninth Session
Agenda item 12

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT ON THE TRANSFER OF THE WHO REGIONAL OFFICE
FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

1. As will be recalled, Sub-Committee A of the Regional Committee met in special session in Geneva on 12 May 1979 and passed the following resolution:

"The Sub-Committee,

Considering that the majority of Members of Sub-Committee A of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean wish the Regional Office to be transferred from Alexandria, Arab Republic of Egypt, to another State in the Region,

RECOMMENDS the transfer of the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean from Alexandria, Arab Republic of Egypt, to another State in the Region;

REQUESTS the Regional Director to report to the next session of the Regional Committee on the steps taken to implement this resolution."

2. Subsequent to the above meeting, the question of the transfer of the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean was taken up by the Thirty-second World Health Assembly as a supplementary item on its Agenda. After debate, Committee B of the World Health Assembly reached the following consensus which was adopted by the Assembly on 25 May 1979:

"The Thirty-second World Health Assembly, considering that the majority of members of the Eastern Mediterranean Region wished the Regional Office to be transferred from Alexandria, Arab Republic of Egypt, to another State in the Region, and considering that it was necessary to study the effects of the implementation of such a decision by the World Health Assembly, decided to request the Executive Board at its forthcoming session to undertake such a study, taking necessary steps for its implementation and report its findings to the Thirty-third World Health Assembly".

3. Meeting immediately after the World Health Assembly, the Executive Board held preliminary discussions about the study to be undertaken and decided to establish a restricted Working Group to study all aspects of the matter and report to the Sixty-fifth Session of the Board in Geneva in January 1980 in order to enable the Board to submit its findings to the Thirty-third World Health Assembly. The full text of the Executive Board's decision is reproduced below:

"The Executive Board, acting at the request of the Thirty-second World Health Assembly, examined the report of Sub-Committee A of the special session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, which had expressed the wish that the Regional Office be transferred from Alexandria, Arab Republic of Egypt, to another State in the Region, and decided to establish a restricted working group consisting of Dr R. Alvarez-Gutierrez, Dr A. Fakhro, Dr H.J.H. Hiddlestone, Dr T. Mork, Dr D.B. Sebina, and Dr Shwe Tin to study all aspects of the matter and report to the Sixty-fifth Session of the Board in January 1980 in order to enable the Board to submit its findings to the Thirty-third World Health Assembly. It was understood that if any member of the working group was unable to attend, his successor or the alternate member of the Board designated by the government concerned, in accordance with Rule 2 of the Rules of Procedure, would participate in the work of the Working Group".

4. The Working Group established by the Executive Board met briefly on 29 May 1979, together with Dr H. Mahler, Director-General and Dr A.H. Taba, Regional Director. Dr D.B. Sebina was elected Chairman of the Working Group. Discussions were held regarding the study to be conducted, the background information which would be required and the visits the Working Group would undertake together with members of the WHO Secretariat.

5. The Central Office in Geneva and the Regional Office jointly prepared a number of background papers for the Working Group outlining constitutional, legal, operational, financial and technical aspects of the matter.

6. The Working Group met for its second working session on 24 and 25 July 1979 together with Dr Mahler and Dr Taba. The discussions related to the question of removal of the Regional Office from Alexandria, the required consultations with the United Nations as well as the existing Host Agreement between Egypt and WHO. The Working Group further reviewed the questions

relating to the choice of a new location for the Regional Office in case the transfer is eventually decided. It was decided to send the background paper prepared jointly by the Central Office and the Regional Office concerning the facilities which would have to be provided at the new location to all governments which had offered to host the Regional Office and to request these governments to submit detailed information on the questions raised in the document.

It was also decided to seek specific information from these governments about the length of time needed for making a suitable office building available, about the contribution potential host governments were willing to make towards the extra cost engendered should the Regional Office be transferred to their country and about the governments' willingness to conclude a Host Agreement affording the Organization, the representatives of its Members, its experts and officials the privileges, immunities and facilities necessary for the functioning of the Regional Office. In accordance with the decision taken by the Working Group, letters have been despatched to all potential host governments requesting this detailed information by 31 August 1979.

7. The Governments which have sent formal invitations to host the Regional Office (listed in date order) are:

Syrian Arab Republic

Kuwait

Iraq

Lebanon

Pakistan

Jordan

Iran

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

Bahrain (oral invitation received, formal invitation understood to have been despatched to the Regional Office)

8. The Working Group will meet in Alexandria for its next working session on 26/27 September. Immediately after the two-day meeting, the Working Group will divide into three sub-groups of two members, each sub-group to visit one country, being accompanied by a member of the WHO Secretariat.

The order in which the countries will be visited was decided by drawing lots with the following results: Pakistan, Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq and Kuwait.

The first countries to be visited are therefore Pakistan, Jordan and Lebanon. Further visits to potential host countries are tentatively scheduled during the first two weeks of December.