

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
Regional Office
for the Eastern Mediterranean
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE
Bureau régional de la Méditerranée orientale



مُنظَرَةُ الصِّحَّةِ الْعَالَمِيَّةِ
المكتب الإقليمي
لشرق البحر المتوسط

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Agenda item 12

**RELATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
AT REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS**

**RELATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)
AT REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS**

As requested in resolutions EB75.R.13 and WHA38.31, the Director-General presented to the Executive Board in January 1986 the review (document EB/77/NGO/WP/1) of the current guidelines for WHO/NGO relations as outlined in the Working Principles Governing the Admission of Non-governmental Organizations into official relations with WHO.

At the Seventy-seventh Session of the Executive Board in January 1986, the Executive Board Standing Committee on Non-governmental Organizations examined this review which also proposed a draft of a revised, expanded version of the Working Principles, in order to bring them more into line with the new directions of WHO/NGO collaboration foreseen in resolution WHA38.31, and also to ensure their effectiveness as a working tool. The revised Working Principles can be found in Annex I of this document.

The main differences between this new version and that appearing in the Basic Documents (Thirty-sixth edition, 1986) attached as Annex II are: the addition of an introduction (section 1); a section describing the various stages in development of relations with NGOs (section 2); references to various types of NGOs with which WHO would wish to collaborate in the implementation of Health for All strategies (sections 3.4-3.6); general principles to clarify the relationships with regional and national NGOs (section 5), and the addition of a section on the responsibilities of NGOs following that related to privileges of NGOs (sections 6 and 7 respectively).

The Executive Board subsequently decided to endorse the revised Working Principles Governing Relations with NGOs, with the exception of those referred to in section 5. 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 NGOs. The results of the Regional Committee discussions would be conveyed 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 at the global level and report back to the Board at its Seventy-ninth Session on the experience gained. At that Session the Board would finalize its recommendations on the Working Principles relating to global, regional and national non-governmental organizations and submit them to the Fortieth World Health Assembly in May 1987.

The views of the Regional Committee are sought regarding mechanisms within the framework of section 5 of the revised Working Principles which would ensure an increasing role for NGOs in regional and national efforts for implementing the Health for All strategies.

The Regional Committee may therefore wish to consider the following issues:

WORKING RELATIONS

1. What mechanisms would (i) Member States of the regions and (ii) regional offices consider are needed at regional level to ensure structured working relations with NGOs?

1.1. Section 5 of the revised Working Principles permits a working arrangement to be made with regional or national NGOs by establishing a structured workplan of collaborative activities, to be carried out over a specific period, agreed upon by WHO and the NGO concerned, and in consultation with the Member State concerned in the case of a national NGO. Such an ad hoc arrangement would remain in force only as long as there was need for collaboration.

1.2. Such a working arrangement, referred to as "working relations", would normally be established by the Regional Director concerned in consultation with the Director-General, as indicated in section 5 of the revised Working Principles.

Consideration might also be given to the following points:

1.3. What mechanism would be required for periodic reporting by the Regional Director to the Regional Committee, and by the latter to the Executive Board, with regard to the establishment of such working relations?

1.4. In the light of the Regional Committee discussions, amendments to section 5 of the Working Principles may be required, and the Regional Committee's suggestions for such changes would be communicated to Headquarters. For example, it may not be necessary to distinguish between working relations (in 5.2) and informal working relations (in 5.3), since working relations are by definition always of an informal nature.

FORMAL RELATIONS

2. Do (i) Member States of the regions and (ii) regional offices consider that some type of formal (de jure) relationship, similar to "official relations" at Headquarters level, would be required for regional/national NGOs, in addition to the provision for working relations?

2.1. Such a formal relationship would entail the creation by the Regional Office concerned of a special list of Regional/national NGOs which would have a de jure relationship with that Office. This would also provide a framework for formal "recognition" of NGOs and would give them certain privileges and responsibilities.

Consideration might also be given to the following points:

2.2. As in the case of working relations, what mechanisms would the Regional Committee consider necessary to ensure consultation by the Regional Director with the Member State concerned and with the Director-General prior to consideration of an application for formal relations?

2.3. Would the responsibility for granting such formal relations and periodic review of such relations rest with the Regional Committee?

2.4. What mechanism would be required to ensure periodic reporting from the Regional Committee to the Executive Board in the case of NGOs applying for or already having formal relations with the Regional Office?

2.5. If it is considered useful to make provision for a formal de jure type of relationship, the Regional Committee would need to consider whether the text of the revised Working Principles, suitably adapted to reflect the

possibility for such formal relations, would serve as adequate guidelines for such formal relations at regional level.

Based on the above information the following suggestions are offered for the Regional Committee's consideration:

- (a) As a first step, a working arrangement (working relations) might be developed by the Regional Office for a trial period of, say, two years with a few selected Regional or national NGOs, where closer collaboration by means of a workplan with a specified time-frame would contribute to more efficient operations.
- (b) This trial experience might then be reviewed by the Regional Director and reported to the Regional Committee in order to assess (i) whether "working relations" provided an adequate mechanism for the Regional Office's collaboration with Regional/national NGOs, or (ii) whether it would be useful to proceed to the second step of establishing guiding principles and a mechanism for granting "formal relations" to Regional and/or national NGOs.

Annex I

RELATIONS WITH NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Working Principles¹

(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.

¹ 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.

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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:

- (1) 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;

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(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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RELATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Working Principles Governing the Admission of Non-governmental Organizations into Official Relations with WHO^{1, 2}

1. *Criteria to be fulfilled before a non-governmental organization becomes eligible to be considered for relationship with the World Health Organization under Article 71 of the Constitution*

The World Health Organization should, in relation to non-governmental organizations, act in conformity with any relevant resolutions of the General Assembly or Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and the following criteria should be met before an organization can be regarded as eligible to be considered for relationship :

- (i) The organization shall be concerned with matters falling within the competence of the World Health Organization.
- (ii) The aims and purposes of the organization shall be in conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of the Constitution of the World Health Organization.
- (iii) The organization shall be of recognized standing and shall represent a substantial proportion of the persons organized for the purpose of participating in the particular field of interest in which it operates. To meet this requirement, a group of organizations may form a joint committee or other body authorized to act for the group as a whole.
- (iv) The organization shall have a directing body and authority to speak for its members through its authorized representatives; evidence of this authority shall be presented if requested.
- (v) The organization shall normally be international in its structure and scope, with members who exercise voting rights in relation to its policies or action.

Annex II

¹ Text adopted by the First World Health Assembly (*Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org.*, 13, 96, 326) and amended by the Third, Eleventh and Twenty-first World Health Assemblies (resolutions WHA3.113, WHA11.14 and WHA21.28).

² The text of these Working Principles is currently under review (see resolution WHA38.31, decision EB77(8), and document EB77/38, Annex).

(vi) Save in exceptional cases, a national organization which is affiliated to an international non-governmental organization covering the same subject on an international basis shall present its views through its government or through the international non-governmental organization to which it is affiliated. A national organization, however, may be included in the list¹ after consultation with, and with the consent of, the Member State concerned, if the activities of the organization are not covered by any international organization or if it offers experience upon which the World Health Organization wishes to draw.

2. Procedure for admitting organizations into relationship with WHO

(i) The Board's Standing Committee on Non-governmental Organizations, composed of five members, shall consider information submitted by non-governmental organizations, voluntarily or by invitation, and shall make recommendations to the Board; it may invite any such organization to speak before it in connexion with the organization's application. Bearing in mind the desirability of ensuring valuable contributions to the work of the World Health Organization in terms both of quality and quantity, the committee may recommend postponement of consideration or rejection of an application.

(ii) In accordance with the provisions of Article 71 of the Constitution, the government concerned shall be consulted with regard to possible approval of any national organization.

(iii) The Board, after considering the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Non-governmental Organizations, shall decide whether an organization is to be admitted into relation with WHO.

(iv) 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 relation and this list and any amendments thereto shall be circulated to the Members of the World Health Organization.

(v) This list shall also be circulated to the chairmen of expert committees, who may make recommendations or suggestions for using the services of any organization where this seems desirable.

¹ See para. 2 (iv).

(vi) The Board, through its Standing Committee on Non-governmental Organizations, shall review the list every three years¹ and shall determine the desirability of maintaining relations with the organizations on the list.

3. Privileges conferred by relationship with the World Health Organization

(i) The right to appoint a representative to participate, without right of vote, in its 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 non-governmental organization is particularly interested, such an organization, on the invitation of the chairman of the meeting or on his 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 the World Health Organization may establish.

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

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.

¹ The Executive Board decided at its sixty-first session (resolution EB61.R38) that: "the review of nongovernmental organizations should be spread over the three-year period, one-third of the organizations being reviewed each year".

Principles to Govern Relations between WHO and Regional and National Non-governmental Organizations¹

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,² 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.

¹ Text adopted by the Third World Health Assembly (resolution WHA3.114). See also p. 71, footnote 2.

² See p. 72, para. 1 (vi).

Thirty-third Session

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Agenda item 12

"RELATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
AT REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS"

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The views of the Regional Committee are sought regarding mechanisms within the framework of section 5 of the revised Working Principles which would ensure an increasing role for NGOs in the regional and national efforts for implementing the Health for All strategies.

The following suggestions are offered for the Regional Committee's consideration:

- (a) As a first step, a working arrangement (working relations) might be developed by the Regional Office for a trial period of about two years with a few selected regional or national NGOs, where closer collaboration by means of a workplan with a specified time-frame would contribute to more efficient operations.
- (b) This trial experience might then be reviewed by the Regional Director and reported to the Regional Committee in order to assess (i) whether "working relations" provided an adequate mechanism for the Regional Office collaboration with regional/national NGOs, or (ii) whether it would be useful to proceed to the second step of establishing guiding principles and a mechanism for granting "formal relations" to regional and/or national NGOs.