

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATIONREGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEANREGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEANSixth Session

Agenda item 9

ORGANISATION MONDIALE
DE LA SANTÉBUREAU RÉGIONAL DE LA
MÉDITERRANÉE ORIENTALEEM/RC6/5
9 July 1956

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

DRUG ADDICTION

1. Introduction

During the course of the Fifth Session of the Regional Committee of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, Sub-Committee A requested the Regional Director to "include the problem of drug addiction and its control among the activities of the Eastern Mediterranean Region.¹ Accordingly the Regional Director has made a study of the ways in which the Regional Office could provide advice and assistance to countries on problems concerning addiction-producing drugs.

The system of international narcotics control is concerned partly with technical matters and partly with administrative. It is proposed briefly to outline the administrative system of international narcotics control and then to discuss the technical aspects in so far as they concern the Regional Office.

2. International Control of Addiction-producing Drugs

2.1. Responsibility for control of the use of narcotics and addiction producing drugs is shared by a number of international bodies which combine to operate a system of international narcotics control. About 90 States participate in the international control of narcotic drugs by being signatories of at least one of the eight multilateral narcotics control treaties in force. The basic aim of international as well as national narcotics control is to prevent misuse of the narcotics drugs, i.e. for encouraging and gratifying addiction and the consequent damage to public health and society.

¹ RC54/EM/R.15

Here it must be emphasized that international narcotics control requires governments to exercise surveillance over the production and distribution of narcotic drugs, to take measures to combat illicit traffic, to maintain the necessary administrative machinery and to report to international bodies on their actions. The international bodies themselves have no supra-national character and normally cannot adopt decisions which would be binding upon governments without their consent.

However, they may make recommendations to governments and criticise their actions.

The international bodies concerned with the control of narcotics are the following:

- (i) The Commission on Narcotic Drugs of the ECOSOC, with the Division of Narcotic Drugs as its secretariat.
- (ii) The Permanent Central Opium Board.
- (iii) The Drug Supervisory Body.
- (iv) The World Health Organization and its Expert Committee on Drugs Liable to Produce Addiction.

2.2. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs. This Commission is one of the Commissions of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. It is composed of fifteen governments chosen by ECOSOC because they are either producers of opium or extensive manufacturers of narcotic drugs or are primary targets of the international illicit traffic. The Commission is the general policy-making organ of international narcotics control. It annually reviews the situation in all countries by examining the reports of governments, including the annual reports on the working of narcotics control in individual countries, reports of cases of illicit traffic and laws enacted to implement the narcotics treaties. The Commission also receives reports and exchanges information with the International Criminal Police Commission (Interpol). The Commission on Narcotic Drugs exercises its influence largely by its power to appeal to international public opinion.

The Commission at its recent meeting adopted an important resolution calling for the use of Technical Assistance funds, especially by FAO and WHO, to aid countries in the control of the production and use of narcotic drugs and specifically

recommended that ECOSOC adopt a resolution calling for authorization for the Secretary-General to establish a special technical assistance programme for Iran, financed from the normal technical assistance funds. This programme is to be concerned chiefly with the introduction of new crops to replace opium poppy and for treatment of addicts.

The resolution and recommendation are set out in full in Annex I. The Regional Director will report at the Regional Committee on the action taken by ECOSOC.

2.3. The Permanent Central Opium Board and Drug Supervisory Body. The functions of these two bodies are closely inter-related. The eight members of the Opium Board are appointed by the Economic and Social Council as independent experts who must not receive nor follow government instructions. The Board examines the statistical returns of governments to see whether the estimates of drug requirements have been exceeded and whether governments comply with their international obligations in respect of the control of movement of drugs. In general it is responsible for keeping continuous watch on the course of international trade in narcotic substances. This Board has semi-judicial functions in that it may consult with and make recommendations to any government and in serious cases it is empowered to recommend to governments to cease exporting narcotics to a defaulting country.

The Drug Supervisory Body is composed of four experts, two appointed by the World Health Organization, one by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and one by the Permanent Central Opium Board. The Supervisory Body annually reviews advance estimates of narcotic requirements furnished by all governments and can request explanations, and, with the consent of the government concerned, amend the requirements.

2.4. World Health Organization. The World Health Organization is concerned with the technical and health aspects of drug addiction. It has a dual task - on the one hand it has the statutory obligation of evaluating the dangerous properties of new drugs with a view to determining whether they should be placed under international control. This function is carried out by the Expert Committee on Drugs Liable to Produce Addiction reporting to the Executive Board. On the other hand the Organization has the wider and more general function of advising governments, on request, regarding all health aspects of drug addiction including the factors, especially mental health factors, leading to the spread of drug addiction, general public health methods of prevention of drug addiction and medical measures for the care of existing addicts.

3. Etiology of Addiction

Before considering the role of the Regional Office in combatting the use of addiction producing drugs it may be useful to consider, very briefly, the reasons persons resort to these drugs. These can be classified in four main groups:

3.1. Custom and Tradition - Custom and tradition determine, to a considerable extent, not only the use of drugs by large groups of the population in certain countries but also the choice of the particular drug used. In some areas custom leads to "mass" addiction by large segments of the population.

3.2. Material or Psychological Dissatisfaction - In areas where custom does not play a dominating role individual emotional factors become increasingly important in the use of addiction-producing drugs. It is probable that psychological tensions *such as low tolerance of frustration and poor social adaptation* are more important than material reasons, but the latter may play a part in bringing about the social acceptance of mass addiction mentioned in para. 3.1.

3.3. Unskilful Use by Physicians - This is a factor which cannot be ignored by the Organization, but it is related to individual and not "mass" addiction, and mainly involves the "white" drugs and new synthetic substances. Its importance increases as the "mass" addictions are brought under control but it is entirely preventable.

3.4. Deliberate Perversion - Reports from some areas indicate that deliberate perversion, in the interests of drug-traffickers, is not uncommon, and is often practiced on adolescent population. This too, is of much greater importance in areas where "mass" addiction has been brought under control.

It must also be realized that there are groups at special risk owing to their ready access to drugs, such as physicians, nurses, veterinarians, pharmacists, etc.

4. Role of the Regional Office

From the above it can be seen that the role of the Regional Office in dealing with addiction producing drugs is confined to the broad public health aspects of addiction including study of the basic causes, public health methods of prevention, and the care of addicts. Administrative measures concerning drug addiction are the responsibility of the United Nations bodies enumerated above and technical information on addiction-producing properties of individual drugs are primarily

the concern of the WHO Expert Committee. However, it is quite clear that a WHO regional office must consider the problems of addiction in specific relation to the drugs which appear to be of importance in the region, and that it can draw the attention, through proper channels, of the appropriate bodies concerned, to any specific local problems.

The major addiction-producing drugs of public health concern in the Eastern Mediterranean Region are hashish and opium. The so-called "white" drugs of addiction are of less concern at the present time. In addition, attention has been drawn recently to the habit of chewing "kat" by certain communities mainly bordering the Red Sea. This plant, also known as Abyssinian tea, contains the following alkaloids:

1. Cathine
2. Cathedine
3. Cathenine

which are related to ephedrine. It has undesirable physiological effects and moreover, its popularity is spreading so rapidly that landowners are cultivating "kat" instead of food subsistence or cash crops. Further scientific study of the "kat" chewing is obviously necessary.

Taking the above points into consideration it is believed that the activities of the regional office should follow these main forms:

4.1. Stimulation of research concerning all drug addiction problems within the region, *especially long-term research & follow-up of treated cases and relapses and* including study of possible new drugs causing addiction.

4.2. Advice to governments on measures to reduce the incidence of addiction by education including health education in schools, and publicity through the press, radio, films, etc. of both the general public and groups at special risk including physicians, nurses and pharmacists.

4.3. Advice on methods of treatment and provision of treatment facilities for existing addicts, *and laws concerning treatment of addicts.*

4.4. In cooperation with social welfare agencies, advice on rehabilitation, after-care and supervision of treated addicts.

4.5. Assist in the exchange of technical information concerning all problems of drug addiction.

5. Education and Mental Hygiene

In considering the above possible activities of the Regional Office in the light of the "aetiology" set out in para. 3 above, it is considered that the Regional Office can achieve best results by concentrating on the provision of aid in the fields of education and mental hygiene. That education is not the sole need, is shown by the fact that the groups at special risk are just those groups which might be expected to have greatest knowledge of the dangers of addiction. Nevertheless, education must remain the principal weapon in the fight against addiction. Its chief aim is to make the public aware of the potential harm of these drugs and to create an informed body opinion which will not tolerate their use. Perversion cannot flourish in such an atmosphere. This teaching must permeate the schools and educational institutions of a country as well as family circles. Press, radio, etc. may play a part in the campaign of enlightenment but are subsidiary to organized education directed in the first instance to the youth of the country. *It must however be realized that no ready-made systems of education exist and suitable techniques must be worked out to suit the needs and customs of each individual country*

But mental hygiene both personal and communal is of equal importance in the long-term fight. The researches of Bowlby and others have demonstrated the life-long sense of insecurity that can be induced in individuals by deprivation of mother-love and family security, especially during the first years of life, and in the later formative years tradition may prescribe customs that are inimical to healthy mental development and produce deep dissatisfaction and severe stress. Combating such practices is of course a long-term affair.

6. Cooperation with other Agencies

Finally in its activities in assisting governments in the field of control of drug addiction, the Regional Office has the duty of collaborating with all other bodies and institutions in the region concerned with this field, especially the Permanent Anti-Narcotics Bureau of the League of Arab States with whose parent body the Regional Office has official relations.

In connection with this Bureau the first session of the Arab Conference on Narcotics was held at the Secretariat General of the Arab States League in Cairo from 18-23 February 1956, under the chairmanship of Lewa Abdel Aziz Safat (Egypt).

The Conference was attended by the following States:

Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan,
Syria and Yemen

The work of the Conference was in the main concerned with legal and administrative action to combat the use of narcotic drugs and to prevent smuggling from country to country.

The Agenda contained the following items of particular interest to health administrators:

Item 4 - "Assigning one Department or Administration in every country to be in charge of the combating of narcotics and to control the proceedings to be taken for the combating with a view to directing the responsible officials to the proper lines of action";

Item 8 - "Control of pharmacies and drug stores by Inspectors of Pharmacy Departments to prevent issue of narcotics without a proper medical prescription as it is the case in Egypt";

Item 12- "The problem of the synthetic drugs";

Item 13- " "Kat" plant".

In respect of the above items the Conference took the following action:

Item 4 - "The Conference recommends that only one office in every Government be charged with exchange of information relative to the combating of narcotics.

Item 8 - "The Conference appointed a Subsidiary Committee to study this item and, after discussing its report adopted the following recommendation. - The Conference recommends:

(a) Member States to exchange, one with another, their existing Laws containing lists of narcotic drugs with a view to unifying them, according to international laws and conventions, in respect of control of pharmacies, drug stores and importers.

(b) Member States to strengthen control on importation and exportation of narcotic drugs as well as issue of narcotics for licit use.

(c) Member States to consider the possibility of applying the system in force in Egypt and Syria, pertaining to issuing permit tickets to doctors for the needs of their clinics and hospitals or for their patients suffering from incurable diseases.

(d) Member States to raise penalties to be more deterrent if they have not already done so.

(e) Member States to reconsider the list of synthetic drugs and, if any not included in the list of narcotics, to issue necessary arretes to have them subjected to the laws with a view to tightening control in accordance with the desire of the international organizations".

Item 12 - Recommendations of the Conference on this item are covered by the recommendations under item 8.

Item 13 - "The Conference recommends to adjourn further discussion about "Kat" plant until scientific researches to determine whether or not "Kat" is narcotic, will be completed and at the same time recommends Yemen Delegation to supply useful samples of "Kat" plants to the Permanent Anti-Narcotic Bureau for the purpose of completing the said scientific researches".

The Conference agreed to hold its next session at Khartoum during the month of February 1957.

In addition, close cooperation and collaboration should be established with other national or inter-governmental groups concerned with research on addiction-producing drugs or promotion of improved mental health and social welfare conditions, etc. etc. Through its regular programme and by its association with the United Nations Expanded Programme for Technical Assistance, the Regional Organization is already playing a part in helping to abolish many of the unsatisfactory living conditions which are conducive to the consumption of addiction-producing drugs.

ANNEX I

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC
DRUGS TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL *

The Commission addressed the following resolutions to the Council:

I. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR NARCOTICS CONTROL

"The Commission on Narcotic Drugs,

(a) Considering that the United Nations exercises certain responsibilities of supervision over the application of the multilateral conventions dealing with narcotic drugs, and that the World Health Organization also has important responsibilities under these conventions,

(b) Recognizing that technical assistance, by the exchange of technical knowledge between countries, provides a useful means of increasing the effectiveness of the provisions of these conventions for limiting the use of narcotic drugs to medical and scientific purposes, and for combating the illicit traffic,

(c) Recalling Economic and Social Council Resolution 548 E(XVIII) recommending that the technical assistance services of the United Nations and the specialized agencies give due consideration to any requests which the countries concerned may make for assistance in developing appropriate administrative or social measures for the gradual suppression of the habit of coca chewing or for other remedial measures,

(d) Recalling that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs has recommended to governments that, with respect to important seizures of opium made in the illicit traffic, the reports which they are obligated to make under Article 23 of the 1931 Convention for Limiting the Manufacture and Regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs should include determinations of the origin of the opium ascertained by physical and chemical methods, and has invited them to consider setting up their own facilities for making such determinations in conjunction with the United Nations Narcotics Laboratory.

* From Economic and Social Council Document E/2891, 8.6.56, Annex A)

(e) Taking account of the arrangements previously established by the General Assembly concerning the programmes of technical assistance and the advisory services of the United Nations in its resolutions 200 (III) ("Technical Assistance for Economic Development"), 246 (III) ("International Facilities for the Promotion of Training in Public Administration"), and 418 (V) ("Advisory Social Welfare Services"), as amended by subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly.¹

(f) Considering that the specialized agencies, particularly the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization, within their competence and by virtue of their regular programmes of technical assistance, are able to render important services to their members in this field, and that certain other organizations are also so equipped,

1. Invites governments to consider the possibility of applying under existing arrangements concerned with technical assistance for the following forms of assistance in the field of narcotics control:

- (i) Advisory services of experts;
- (ii) Fellowships and scholarships;
- (iii) Seminars;
- (iv) Laboratory services in connexion with the determination of the origin of narcotics found in the illicit traffic, by physical and chemical means;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council and to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at subsequent sessions concerning the extent to which he has been able to meet requests for technical assistance in narcotics control under existing resolutions;

3. Requests the Economic and Social Council to examine ways and means of achieving the objectives of this resolution in the light of the report of the eleventh session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and of the Secretary-General's report referred to in the previous paragraph;

¹ Amending resolutions: 304(IV) ("Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance for Economic Development of Under-developed Countries"), 305 (IV) ("Technical Assistance for Economic Development under General Assembly resolutions 200 (III)", 246 (III) and 418 (V)"), 519 (VI) ("Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance for the Economic Development of Under-developed Countries"), 723 (VIII) ("Technical assistance in Public Administration"), and 931 (IX) ("Programmes of Technical Assistance").

4. Recommends that the specialized agencies continue to develop their technical assistance activities with a view to aiding Member States in the field of narcotics control;

5. Expresses the hope that non-governmental organizations, including foundations and universities, will support technical assistance for narcotics control according to their fields of interest; and requests the Secretary-General to investigate the possibilities of such support and to report thereon to the Commission and the Council."

The Commission decided to recommend the Council to adopt the following resolution:

II. SPECIAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR IRAN

"The Economic and Social Council,

Recommends to the General Assembly for adoption the following resolution:

"The General Assembly

"(a) Considering that Iran is an important opium producing country, and, in order to assure the execution of the law banning cultivation of the opium poppy, requires increased technical assistance in enabling her cultivators to introduce other agricultural crops to replace opium poppy plantation, and also in respect of the treatment of addicts,

"(b) Recognizing that the success of Iran in these fields cannot be accomplished without international co-operation,

"(c) Recognizing that technical assistance is a useful means for assuring the execution of the recent Iranian Law mentioned above,

"(d) Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 548 E (XVIII) recommending that the technical assistance services of the United Nations and the specialized agencies give due consideration to any request which the countries concerned may make for assistance in developing their administrative or social measures,

"(e) Considering that the specialized agencies, particularly the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization by virtue of their regular programmes of technical assistance, are able to render valuable services in these fields,

"1. Decides to establish a special programme of technical assistance for Iran to be known as special advisory aid to Iran to assure the execution of the law banning cultivation of the opium poppy,

"2. Authorizes the Secretary-General:

"(a) To earmark a special fund for aid to Iran from the regular programme of technical assistance;

"(b) Such fund should be available for aid to Iran for a period of five years;

"(c) The kind of services to be rendered shall be determined by the Government of Iran and should be principally for introducing new crops to replace opium poppy and treatment of addicts;

"(d) The amount of assistance shall be decided by the Secretary-General with due regard to the requests of Iran;

"(e) The experts should be selected by the Secretary-General on the basis of proposals received from the Government of Iran;

"3. Requests the Secretary-General to report regularly to the Economic and Social Council and to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the measures which he takes in compliance with the terms of this resolution;

"4. Recommends that the specialized agencies continue their technical assistance activities to Iran;

"5. Expresses the hope that Iran will succeed in accomplishing the task which she has undertaken."

WORLD HEALTH
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BUREAU RÉGIONAL DE LA
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REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
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Corrigenda

Page 4

Para. 3.2. Line 3:

After "psychological tensions" add :

"such as low tolerance of frustration and poor social adaptation"

Page 5

Para. 4.1. Line 2:

After "within the region", add :

"especially long-term research and follow-up of treated cases
and relapses and"

Para. 4.3. Line 2:

After "existing addicts" add :

"and laws concerning treatment of addicts"

Page 6

Para. 5 Line 14:

After "youth of the country" add :

"It must however be realized that no ready-made systems of
education exist and suitable techniques must be worked out to
suit the needs and customs of each individual country."

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ORGANISATION MONDIALE
DE LA SANTÉBUREAU RÉGIONAL DE LA
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3 September 1956

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DRUG ADDICTION

Subsequent to the issue of document EM/RC6/5, the resolutions on "Technical Assistance for Narcotics Control" and "Technical Assistance to Iran", as recommended by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs¹, have been adopted unanimously by the Economic and Social Council. The final wording of these resolutions is given below.

" Technical Assistance for Narcotics Control"" The Economic and Social Council,

Having considered the resolution on technical assistance for narcotics control addressed to it by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs,

Considering that it is important to take all possible steps to limit narcotic drugs to medical and scientific use and to combat illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and drug addiction, and that these are among the principal aims of the multilateral conventions dealing with narcotic drugs,

Recognizing that technical assistance, by the imparting of technical knowledge and skills, and by facilitating the exchange of technical knowledge between countries, can help Governments to increase the effectiveness of their efforts to achieve these aims,

Recalling its resolution 548 E (XVIII) of 12 July 1954 recommending that the technical assistance services of the United Nations and the specialized agencies give due consideration to any requests which the countries concerned may make for assistance in developing appropriate administrative, social or other remedial measures for the gradual suppression of the habit of coca chewing,

Recalling that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs has recommended to Governments that, with respect to important seizures of opium made in the illicit traffic, the reports which they are obligated to make under article 23

of the 1931 Convention for Limiting the Manufacture and Regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs should include determinations of the origin of the opium ascertained by physical and chemical methods, and has invited them to consider setting up their own facilities for making such determinations in conjunction with the United Nations Narcotics Laboratory.

Taking account of the arrangements previously established by the General Assembly concerning the regular programmes and the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance,

Considering that the specialized agencies, particularly the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, within their competence and by virtue of their programmes of technical assistance, are able to render important services to their members in this field, and that certain other organizations are also so equipped,

1. Invites Governments to consider the possibility of applying, under existing arrangements concerned with technical assistance, for the following forms of assistance in the field of narcotics control, including the development of substitute crops:

- (a) Advisory services of experts;
- (b) fellowships and scholarships;
- (c) seminars;

2. Recommends that the United Nations and the specialized agencies give due consideration to any requests which the countries concerned may make for technical assistance in developing appropriate administrative, social or economic measures in order to deal effectively with the problems posed by the illicit production of narcotic drugs, the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs, and drug addiction;

3. Requests the Secretary-General, after consultation with the specialized agencies concerned, to report to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its twelfth session and to the Council at its twenty-fourth session concerning the extent to which it has been possible to meet requests for technical assistance in narcotics control under existing resolutions;

4. Expresses the hope that non-governmental organizations, including foundations and universities, will also give assistance for narcotics control in their fields of interest, and requests the Secretary-General to investigate the possibilities of such assistance and to report to the Commission and the Council any offer of assistance which may be received. "

" Technical Assistance to Iran"

"The Economic and Social Council

Considering that Iran is an important opium producing country, and, in order to ensure the execution of the law banning cultivation of the opium poppy, requires increased technical assistance in enabling its cultivators to introduce other agricultural crops to replace opium poppy plantation, and also in respect of the treatment of addicts,

Recognizing that the success of Iran in these fields cannot be accomplished without international co-operation,

Recognizing that technical assistance is a useful means of ensuring the execution of the recent Iranian law mentioned above,

Recalling its resolution 548 E (XVIII) of 12 July 1954 recommending that the technical assistance services of the United Nations and the specialized agencies give due consideration to any request which the countries concerned may make for assistance in developing their administrative or social measures,

Considering that the specialized agencies, particularly the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, by virtue of their programmes of technical assistance, are able to render valuable services in these fields,

1. Expresses the hope that Iran will succeed in accomplishing the task which it has undertaken;

2. Recommends to the Government of Iran to submit to the technical assistance authorities concerned, in addition to any requests for technical assistance for other purposes, requests for such technical assistance as it may consider necessary to assist it in the successful and speedy achievement of the aims it has undertaken in banning the cultivation of the opium poppy;

3. Draws the attention of the technical assistance authorities of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies to the importance, in relation

to the economic and social development of Iran, of the successful and speedy achievement of these aims, and to the particular importance in this connexion of the fulfilment of its programme in its early stages;

4. Invites these authorities to give due consideration to any requests, in addition to requests for technical assistance for other purposes, which the Government of Iran may make for technical assistance in accordance with paragraph 2 of this resolution;

5. Requests the Secretary-General to include in the report to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and to the Council to be furnished in accordance with paragraph 3 of resolution D¹, information as to the extent to which it has been possible to meet the requests of the Government of Iran for technical assistance ".

¹

Resolution on "Technical Assistance for Narcotics Control"