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Address of Professor Hashim Al-Witry, the Iraqi Delegate

The national health problems of Iraq are varied and important. The endemic diseases are the major cause of ill health and high mortality in the country. The available statistics do not reflect the real state of affairs as a big number of population in the small districts and among the tribesmen do not consult doctors for their ill health or when they become sick. The same thing holds true as regards notification of births and deaths amongst infants. Tuberculosis, malaria, bilharzia, ankylostoma and faulty sanitation are the major problems.

Tuberculosis is a prevalent disease and a little over 3000 cases are notified every year, but the victims of the disease are much more than that and may be estimated as 25,000 every year. The available means of combating the disease at present are three dispensaries (out-patients) in the big cities and seven hospitals accommodating 582 beds in which tuberculous patients are admitted in addition to other infectious diseases. A hospital for tuberculous patients is now being built near Baghdad by the Anti-tuberculous Society. Besides that about 200 beds are used by Iraqi patients in the Sanitoria of Lebanon every year. Thus a wide scheme is needed for the control of tuberculosis in this country.

Another major problem is malaria which is very widely spread in Iraq. It is responsible for more illness than any other single disease in the country. It accounts directly or indirectly for about 50,000 deaths every year, besides the incapacity and ill health it is producing. About half a million attendances with this disease are registered in the records of the health institutions in Iraq. At present there is a department for the investigation and control of malaria, but such a great problem cannot be dealt with without a big scheme, for the development of which the help of the World Health Organization is greatly needed.

Bilharziasis is another common disease, and the incidence is about 25% of the population in middle and southern Iraq, reaching in certain places 80% or over. The vector is *Bullinus truncatus* and only *Schistosoma haematobium* is present. The disease is spreading with spread of irrigation.

Ankylostomiasis is another prevalent disease, its incidence in the middle and southern parts of Iraq ranges from 25% to 75% of the population. In the admissions into the Hospital at Baghdad 36.9% of patients complaining of various conditions had ankylostoma duodenale.

Another major problem is the high mortality of infants and children in Iraq. The children mortality in ratio to births is 90 per 1000, and in ratio to population is 7 per 1000, in the cities where doctors are present (the population of these cities is about one third of the population of Iraq). The situation is worse in other parts of the country. Amongst 1000 pregnancies in Baghdad, 671 children were living (the condition of children was followed up to the age of four years).

The institutes that deal with infant and maternity welfare are: The Motherhood and Child Welfare Institutes in Baghdad and Kirkuk, certain departments of the Government hospitals, the Children Hospital, the Infant Welfare Society (8 centres) and the Red Crescent Society (9 centres).

Bejel was already discussed in the previous meeting at Rome.

Tables have been arranged showing the prevalence of the above-mentioned conditions.

The requirements of assistance from the World Health Organization for the years 1949 and 1950 are:

Malaria: (a) Operational demonstration team for 1949
(b) Fellowship medical officer to specialize in malariology, one for 1949 and one for 1950.

Venereal Diseases: demonstration team to work in a part of the country.

Tuberculosis: (a) Expert advice for the survey examination and advice in Iraq, one for 1949.

(b) Fellowship for medical officer, anti-tuberculous study, one for 1949 and one for 1950

(c) Mass examination X-ray apparatus, one for 1949

Maternal and Child Welfare: expert advice, one for 1949.

Public Health Administration: one fellowship for 1949 and one for 1950.

Environmental Sanitation: one adviser especially for the problems of endemic diseases, e.g., Bilharzia and Ankylostoma.

Health Education: documents and educational films, pamphlets, posters, etc., for public health.