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METHODOLOGY OF TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS AT FUTURE SESSIONS
OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

INDEX

Background

In view of the critical study now under way to examine the structures of the World Health Organization in the light of its functions, and of the recent trend in decentralization to the WHO regions, it would seem appropriate that the Regional Committee should also review its methods of work. In that connexion the Consultative Group on Programme Development at its meeting in April 1981 was presented with the report of the a subgroup of the Committee (ICP/GPD 009) which had met on 8 December 1980 to review the implications for the latter's work of resolutions WHA33.17, Study of WHO's structures in the light of its functions, and WHA33.19, Periodicity of Health Assemblies (Document EUR/RC31/3, Annex 3). In addition, the Committee at its thirtieth session requested specifically that the methodology for holding the technical discussions be reviewed, and the present paper has been prepared in response to that request.

At its twenty-fifth session, the Committee agreed that the technical discussions should not be discontinued (EUR/RC25/4). However, at the thirtieth session, the question arose as to how these discussions should be organized and at what intervals they should be held, thereby ensuring that the Members of the Committee and the Regional Office still derived optimal benefit from them. In particular:

- (a) It was noted that in future the programme budget would be discussed only every two years, and that resolution EUR/RC30/R7 had recommended that the sessions when this took place should be held at the regional headquarters in Copenhagen.
- (b) With a view to developing a more regular system for reviewing certain items, growing interest was expressed in using the opportunity presented by sessions held away from the regional headquarters to allow participants to visit health institutions in the host country.

Present procedure

In past years, one day during each session has been devoted to the subject chosen for the technical discussions. Visits to health institutions have been arranged on the same day, and occasionally there have been opportunities to visit health institutions elsewhere in the host country, during the week following the closure of the session. At the twenty-ninth session in Helsinki the visits were concentrated on health institutes directly related to the theme of the discussions.

Proposals for the future

As requested by the thirtieth session of the Committee, the following proposals are submitted for consideration by the thirty-first session.

Alternative 1. In line with the biennial budgeting cycle, it is suggested that the technical discussions could be held every second year only, when the programme budget is discussed and when the session is held at the regional headquarters (resolution EUR/RC30/R7). The selection of subjects for the discussions could be made by the Committee in the years when there is no programme budget review, thereby eliminating the need to place this item on the agenda in the other years. This arrangement would also still allow time for adequate preparation of the discussions and consultation with Member States and/or national experts as required. In the alternate years, when sessions are held in countries at the invitation of Member States, the day could be devoted to a series of technical visits to health institutions in the host country, according to a programme arranged in consultation between the host government and the Regional Office.

Alternative 2. Should it be considered necessary to continue to have discussions on a technical subject on a yearly basis, the present system could be retained.

It might be useful if the visits arranged in the host country were limited to the topic of the discussions, and sufficient time allowed for their preparation.

Duration of the technical discussions

The subgroup of the Committee which examined the implications of resolutions WHA33.17 and WHA33.19 made a proposal that the discussions be limited to the Friday afternoon, thus leaving the morning of Friday for completion of the agenda items. This would of course imply that the report on the session would need to be prepared during the night of Friday to have it ready for consideration on Saturday morning.

The Committee might wish to leave this decision to the discretion of the Regional Director who would need to keep in mind (a) the particular requirements posed by the subject selected for the discussions and (b) the time required to deal adequately with all matters/items on the Committee's agenda.

Comment. The Committee may wish to take into consideration the fact that in future the technical discussions at the World Health Assembly may also take place only every two years; if so, it seems likely that the technical discussions of the two bodies would be held on alternative years, according to alternative 1 above.

Attached as Annex I is the list of subjects previously selected for the Committee's technical discussions, and Annex II gives proposals for the timetable of the Regional Committee.

Annex I

TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS AT THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

List of subjects

<u>Session</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Resolution</u>
Third Session	September 1953	<u>Education and training programme</u> for medical and health personnel in Europe	---
Fourth Session	September 1954	<u>Education and training programme</u> for medical and health personnel in Europe (contd)	---
Fifth Session	September 1955	Changes in health services necessitated by the <u>aging</u> of populations	---
Sixth Session	September 1956	Prevention of <u>Accidents in the Home</u>	EUR/RC5/R7
Seventh Session	September 1957	Integration of <u>preventive, social and curative medicine</u> in health services	EUR/RC6/R11
Eighth Session	September 1958	<u>Collaboration between scientific, administrative and educational bodies</u> in improving health services	EUR/RC7/R16
Ninth Session	September 1959	<u>Mental Health</u> - its place in the public health programme	EUR/RC8/R11
Tenth Session	August 1960	<u>Public health organization</u> as a scientific discipline	EUR/RC9/R9 Rev.1
Eleventh Session	September 1961	<u>Cancer</u> as a public health problem	EUR/RC10/R5
Twelfth Session	September 1962	Specialization and <u>postgraduate training of doctors</u> with reference to public health requirements	EUR/RC11/R11
Thirteenth Session	September 1963	The organization of <u>resuscitation and casualty services</u>	EUR/RC11/R11
Fourteenth Session	September 1964	<u>Diagnosis of presymptomatic disease</u> by organized screening procedures	EUR/RC12/R9
Fifteenth Session	September 1965	The organization and functioning of <u>poisons information centres</u>	EUR/RC13/R2
Sixteenth Session	September 1966	Causes and prevention of <u>perinatal mortality</u>	EUR/RC14/R6
Seventeenth Session	September 1967	The pattern of <u>active immunization against communicable diseases</u> in Europe	EUR/RC15/R9
Eighteenth Session	September 1968	Current trends in <u>undergraduate medical education</u>	EUR/RC16/R8
Nineteenth Session	September 1969	<u>Road traffic accidents</u> as a public health problem	EUR/RC17/R10
Twentieth Session	September 1970	The public health aspects of <u>rehabilitation</u>	EUR/RC18/R12
Twenty-first Session	September 1971	The prevention and control of <u>drug addiction</u>	EUR/RC19/R12
Twenty-second Session	September 1972	The public health aspects of <u>organ transplantation</u>	EUR/RC20/R16
Twenty-third Session	September 1973	<u>Environmental factors</u> in the etiology of <u>chronic and degenerative diseases</u>	EUR/RC21/R17
Twenty-fourth Session	September 1974	The <u>health protection of the elderly</u>	EUR/RC22/R14
Twenty-fifth Session	September 1975	The place of <u>occupational health</u> in public health services	EUR/RC23/R6
Twenty-sixth Session	September 1976	The <u>role of nursing staff</u> in the health field in the nineteen-eighties	EUR/RC24/R8

Twenty-seventh Session	September 1977	<u>Information systems</u> in health services	EUR/RC25/R9
Twenty-eighth Session	September 1978	The investigation and control of <u>rheumatic diseases</u>	EUR/RC26/R8
Twenty-ninth Session	September 1979	<u>Continuing education of health personnel</u> and its evaluation	EUR/RC27/R8
Thirtieth Session	September 1980	The problems of <u>medical technology</u>	EUR/RC28/R8
Thirty-first Session	September 1981	Medical and social problems of <u>disabled persons</u>	EUR/RC30/R6
Thirty-second Session	September 1982	The <u>planning</u> and <u>management</u> of <u>health services</u>	EUR/RC30/R6

Annex II

TIMETABLE FOR SESSIONS OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

In Copenhagen (even years)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
a.m.		Working session	Working session	Working session	Working session	Approval of report
p.m.	Opening and working session	Working session	Working session	Working session	Technical discussions	

Elsewhere (odd years)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
a.m.		Opening and working session	Working session	Working session	Technical visits	Approval of report
p.m.	Inaugural ceremony		Working session	Working session		