



EUROPE

Regional Committee for Europe Fifty-second session

Copenhagen, 16–19 September 2002

Provisional agenda item 5

EUR/RC52/3 Add.1
15 September 2002
23457
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

NINTH STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE – REPORT OF THE SIXTH SESSION

This document contains the report of the sixth and final session of the ninth Standing Committee of the Regional Committee, held in Copenhagen on Sunday 15 September 2002. It should be read in conjunction with the consolidated report of the SCRC (document EUR/RC52/3).

Introduction

1. The sixth and final session of the ninth Standing Committee of the Regional Committee (SCRC) was held at the Regional Office in Copenhagen on Sunday 15 September 2002, on the day before the opening of the fifty-second session of the Regional Committee (RC52). On behalf of the SCRC, the Chairman extended best wishes to the Vice-Chairman for a speedy recovery from the accident he had had in the course of carrying out his duties. The Regional Director introduced Dr Gudjón Magnússon, Acting Director, Reducing Disease Burden.

Adoption of the provisional agenda and the provisional programme

2. The provisional agenda and provisional programme were adopted without amendment.

Adoption of the draft report of the fourth session held in Geneva, 12 May 2002; the annual report of the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC); the report of the external evaluators on the health care reform programme; and the consolidated SCRC report to RC52

3. One member expressed the wish that the consolidated report of the SCRC should be supplemented by references to interregional cooperation, joint activities and fund-raising with intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, and the need to speed up the designation of WHO collaborating centres in central Asian countries. None the less, the SCRC adopted without amendment the draft report of its fourth session and its consolidated report to RC52.

4. When considering the annual report of the EEHC, one member of the SCRC called for the accompanying draft resolution (document EUR/RC52/Conf.Doc./12) to make reference to the following:

- the joint WHO/United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE) meeting held in Moscow in June 2002;
- the importance of all countries ratifying the Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes; and
- the need for countries to be urged to implement national environmental health action plans (NEHAPs).

5. With regard to the substance of the report of the external evaluators on the Regional Office's health care reform programmes, the SCRC noted that the area of work evaluated was a difficult one to delimit: connected issues included not only poverty and bioethics, but also how the Regional Office related to and worked with countries. More specifically, the SCRC noted that the evaluators' report made no mention of the networks of countries formed to tackle health care reform (MIDNET, CARNET and EASTNET). With regard to the process followed in making the evaluation, the SCRC felt that the methodology used to assess the work of the Regional Office had not been made explicit, and there had not been enough time for the SCRC to comment in detail on the paper before it was submitted to the Regional Committee.

6. Under those circumstances, and in view of the variety of opinions expressed, the SCRC took note of the external evaluators' report and the comments of the Regional Director attached to it. Given the complexity of the subject, the SCRC recommended that the Regional Committee should refer the matter back to it for further work, in the light of the discussion at RC52. In the meantime, the Regional Committee might wish to focus its attention on the four recommendations in the report specifically addressed to it.

Membership of various committees

7. The SCRC reached agreement by consensus on the candidates that it would recommend for membership of the Executive Board, the SCRC, the EEHC and the Policy and Coordination Committee of the Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction.

Terms of reference of the evaluation on membership of the Executive Board: report of the SCRC subgroup

8. As recommended by the SCRC at its ad hoc session in Geneva on 13 and 14 June 2002, a subgroup of the SCRC had met on 5 September 2002, and the draft terms of reference drawn up by it had then been circulated to members of the SCRC and to selected Member States for comment. At its sixth session, the SCRC endorsed the terms of reference for the evaluation, amended in the light of the comments received (Annex 1). It also suggested that the Regional Committee might wish to entrust the task of evaluation to the SCRC itself. The newly constituted tenth SCRC could then decide how best to take the matter forward, in the light of discussions at RC52.

Other matters

First draft SCRC plan of work 2002–2003

9. The SCRC decided to defer consideration of its plan of work 2002–2003 until the first session of the tenth SCRC, to be held on Thursday 19 September 2002, following the closure of RC52.

Consideration of draft resolutions for submission to RC52

10. The SCRC endorsed draft resolutions on certification of the European Region of WHO as a territory free from indigenous wild poliovirus (document EUR/RC52/Conf.Doc./11), the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (EUR/RC52/Conf.Doc./12) and recommendations of the FAO/WHO Pan-European Conference on Food Safety and Quality, 25–28 February 2002 (EUR/RC52/Conf.Doc./13).

Annex 1

**TERMS OF REFERENCE
OF THE EVALUATION ON MEMBERSHIP
OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

***Principles and practices applied for selection of Executive Board Members in the
WHO Regional Committee for Europe since the early 1990s***

1. For more than 10 years, mainly due to a substantial increase in the number of Member States in the Region, issues related to membership of the WHO Executive Board (EB) have been discussed at length in the European Region. As part of the response to the increasing number of Member States, the Regional Committee decided to establish a Standing Committee of the Regional Committee (SCRC) in 1993.
2. More recently, the Regional Committee at its forty-seventh session in 1997 (RC47) asked the SCRC to look into the principles of distribution of European seats on the EB, also including the “gentlemen’s agreement” on semi-permanent membership of the EB, and to report its recommendations to RC48 in 1998.
3. During the discussions at RC48, there was general agreement on the need to change the EB selection criteria so that to ensure the region and its policies are strongly represented in the EB discussions but, because of the complexity of the subject, the SCRC was requested to continue its work and to report back to RC49 in 1999.
4. An ad hoc meeting of the SCRC was held on 15 and 16 July 1999 to discuss the issue of semi-permanent membership of the EB. The report of that ad hoc session was duly presented to RC49, which adopted the SCRC’s recommendations to apply an interim arrangement for the three current semi-permanent members of the EB and to introduce a new system in 2003, whereby agreement on candidates would be guided by objective criteria relative to geographical distribution and other elements, in line with the principles of solidarity and transparency underlying the HEALTH21 policy framework.
5. Subsequently, the SCRC set up a subgroup in 2000 to review the criteria for membership of the EB. The SCRC presented the work of its subgroup to RC51 in 2001 but noted that it was as yet unable to make any firm recommendation on the questions of semi-permanent membership and geographical grouping. RC51 agreed that further consultations should take place with WHO’s European Member States on criteria for membership of the EB, and more specifically on the issues of geographical grouping and semi-permanent membership, and requested the SCRC to continue its work and to report back to RC52 in 2002.
6. In early 2002, all European Member States were informally consulted to seek their views on the nomination/election of European Members of the EB, in order to promote consensus-building.
7. These consultations took the form of an open ad hoc session of the SCRC, to which all European Member States were invited, in Geneva on 13 and 14 June 2002. In line with the agreement reached by consensus at that session, the SCRC decided to reconstitute its subgroup on membership of the EB, with the sole task of clarifying the terms of reference for the evaluation. The terms of reference should be presented by the SCRC to RC52 in September 2002, and the results of the evaluation to RC53 in 2003.
8. The subgroup accordingly met on 5 September 2002 and agreed on the following terms of reference, which are submitted to the SCRC for endorsement:

- *To develop working methods and measurable criteria for making an effective evaluation of the present informal and voluntary arrangements for the European Region's selection of its members on the EB;*
- *To collect and analyse information on and experience of EB membership practices in the European Region since the early 1990s;*
- *To compare the selection practices in the European Region with those followed in other WHO regions;*
- *To prepare and submit to RC53 a final report with summary conclusions.*