

Regional Committee for Europe
Sixty-first session

EUR/RC61/Inf.Doc./12

Baku, Azerbaijan, 12–15 September 2011

8 September 2011

112496

Provisional agenda item: 6(h)

UNEDITED ENGLISH ONLY

Consolidation of WHO/Europe's environment and health programmes

After 20 years of generous support, and owing to changed priorities, the Government of Italy will cease support for the Rome Office of the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH) at the end of 2011. Therefore the Regional Office has begun the process of closing the Rome Office and has started negotiations with the German Government to explore possible expansion of the environment and health programmes in the Bonn Office. This therefore provides a unique opportunity to consolidate the work in the area of environment and health while maintaining a strong policy and managerial basis at the Regional Office, in line with the recommendations of the GDO review group. The consolidation process is expected to be complete by January 2012;

Strengthening of the environment and health programmes in Copenhagen and the expansion of the ECEH Bonn office are being implemented in order to ensure the continuing implementation of the mandates given to WHO by its governing bodies and in line with the strategy on geographically dispersed offices (GDO).

This paper informs the Regional Committee of the consolidated WHO/Europe's Environment and Health programmes and of the relevant actions taken regarding closure of the office in Rome and scaling up of the office in Bonn.

Introduction

1. On 26 March 2007, the Regional Office and the Government of Italy had signed an agreement extending the original 1990 agreement to 31 December 2016. That 2007 agreement required ratification by the Italian Parliament in order to take effect; however, to date no such ratification had been obtained.
2. After 20 years of generous support, and owing to changed priorities, the Government of Italy will cease support for the Rome Office of the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH) at the end of 2011. Therefore the Regional Office has begun the process of closing the Rome Office and has started negotiations with the German Government to explore possible expansion of the environment and health programmes in the Bonn Office. This therefore provides a unique opportunity to consolidate the work in the area of environment and health while maintaining a strong policy and managerial basis at the Regional Office, in line with the recommendations of the GDO review group. The consolidation process is expected to be complete by January 2012.
3. The Standing Committee of the Regional Committee has been informed of those developments at its third session. All Member States were informed at the regional coordination meetings during the 64th World Health Assembly in Geneva, in May 2011.

Consolidation of the environment and health programmes

- 4) Since February 2010, an extensive process to evaluate and strengthen the capacity of the entire Regional Office has taken place. This involved the Head Office in Copenhagen, its Geographically Dispersed Offices (GDO), Country Offices and all technical areas of work, including the environment and health programmes.
- 5) The current organizational set up of WHO/Europe environment and health programmes (EURO/EH) within the Division of Communicable Diseases, Health Security and Environment (DCE) has been serving well the implementation of the mandates of the Regional Office in this area of work.
- 6) During that period, the important developments specifically addressing environment and health included the Fifth Ministerial Conference in Parma in March 2010, endorsement of its conclusions by the 60th Regional Committee in Moscow in September 2010 and the establishment of the renewed European Environment and Health Process. WHO/Europe serves as the Secretariat for the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board, which met in Paris in March 2011, and will be followed by the first meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force in Slovenia in October 2011.
- 7) Building up on the office-wide reorganization started last year, on the 6- and 12-month peer reviews and fully taking into account the set direction of the European Environment and Health Process, a plan for consolidation and for ensuring business continuity of the work in environment and health was developed.

8) The objectives of the consolidation embraces four areas:

1. **Strategic:** to fulfil all governing bodies' decisions and all ministerial conference commitments related to environment and health¹; to effectively support the Regional Office's new corporate priorities; to ensure knowledge, leadership, guidance and support the Member States; to enhance synergies with relevant international bodies of the European Union and the United Nations, and other relevant partners.
2. **Technical:** to build on the current and well acknowledged technical expertise in WHO/ECEH; to ensure targeted technical capacity covering diverse environment and health risks and exposure patterns, skills and expertise to operate in multi-sectoral policy domains; to respond rapidly and efficiently to emerging challenges and emergencies; and to develop new technical areas in line with the new strategy and the potential for new partnerships.
3. **Managerial:** to optimize the overall management of EURO/EH activities through consolidation of existing technical areas, while creating a coherent managerial entity within DCE and ensuring leadership, coordination and visibility for each of the technical areas.
4. **Financial:** to benefit from the economy of scale resulting from the consolidation of the two offices in one and to ensure sustainable long-term voluntary funding for core staff and operations. The latter is based on the proposed new and long term partnership agreement with Germany. However, while this funding will continue securing a significant portion of total core resources needed in the area of environment and health, the availability of other funding and strong resource mobilization capacities remain essential for the implementation of the EHO/Euro's tasks. With ECEH being fully sustained through voluntary contributions, core funding will be utilized for securing and sustaining the strategic and leadership functions in environment and health that will be located in Copenhagen.

New organizational arrangements of Environment and Health (EURO/EH) in the European Region

9) The work on environment and health will continue to be located within DCE. This will ensure that ECEH in Bonn will continue to be a fully integrated unit of WHO/Europe with a strong overall strategic and policy guidance from the Regional Office in Copenhagen and a focus of ECEH on technical work and evidence development. Geographic location of functions and programmes in the consolidated configuration will also provide strong operational links with other key areas of work in WHO/Europe including the non-communicable diseases, communicable diseases, alert and response and IHR and other.

¹) the Resolution of the 60th Regional Committee EUR/RC60/R7, September 2010; the Declarations of Ministerial Conferences on Environment and Health, including the declaration of 2010 Parma Conference; the Regional Director's priorities; the Health 2020 policy framework; the GDO strategy; the Medium Term Strategic plan 2008-2013; the WHO Programme Budgets 2010-11 and 2012-13, ; the health in all policies approaches, the WHO/Europe disease prevention and control programmes, especially the action plan for non-communicable diseases (NCD Action Plan)

- 10) Instead of 7 programmes spread across four duty stations, the new organizational structure of this area of work will consist of the Coordinator, Environment and Health in Copenhagen (CEH), the office of the Head of the ECEH Bonn Office and 6 programmes:
 - a. European Environment and Health Governance and Multi-sectoral Partnerships (EHG) in Copenhagen;
 - b. Food Safety (FOS) in Copenhagen;
 - c. Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Green Health Services (CGS) in ECEH/Bonn;
 - d. Management of Natural Resources – Water and Sanitation (WSN) in ECEH/Bonn;
 - e. Environment and Health Intelligence and Forecasting (EHI) in ECEH/Bonn;
 - f. Environmental Exposures and Risks (EER) in ECEH/Bonn.
- 11) Programme on Violence and Injury Prevention (VIP) will move to DNP Division in Copenhagen.
- 12) Work in technical areas such as Transport and Health, Occupational Health and Safety will become part of the portfolio of one or more of the newly established programmes, and their functions that are in line with the mandate of WHO/Europe will be fully maintained.
- 13) The new human resources plan for environment and health programmes includes a total of 44 positions, of which 33 will be located in Bonn (plus 2 positions in the UNEP project office in Athens) and 9 positions in Copenhagen. Up to now, ECEH/Bonn had a total of 13 positions. Re-profiling of the staff functions is aligned with the current strategic direction of WHO/Europe. Majority of the new positions in ECEH/Bonn will be filled through change of duty station or reassignment of WHO staff employed in the ECEH office in Rome. Maximum effort is being made to address the situation of the general service staff in the Rome office in order to enable employment opportunities of the 17 general service staff whose positions had to be abolished due to the closure of the Rome office.
- 14) Implementation of the new human resources plan is expected to be completed in early 2012. With a total of 33 positions, WHO will be the fifth largest, out of fifteen UN agencies in Bonn.

Expansion of the ECEH in Bonn

- 15) The Bonn Office has been established in 2001 through a series of legal documents including the Agreement between WHO/Europe and the Federal Republic of Germany concerning the Establishment of the European Centre for Environment and Health – Bonn Office, the agreement concerning the Occupancy and Use of Premises of ECEH Bonn Office and the exchange of letters from paragraph 11. At that time, the German Government has committed itself to provide EUR1.034m annually for ten years from the entry into force of the agreement with WHO/Europe. The agreement entered into force on 9 April 2005 and, as officially communicated by the German

Federal ministry of Environment, the funding commitment lasts through the end of 2014. Up to 2004, ECEH was supported through a voluntary contribution from the Federal Ministry of Environment in the amount of EUR1.034 million per year. The agreement also provided for a one-time contribution of EUR500,000 towards the one-off removal and integration costs of the WHO staff in Bonn and the rights of use and occupancy of appropriate office premises in the UN campus in Bonn.

- 16) The new negotiations between WHO/Europe and the German Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety extended over several months in 2011. WHO/Europe submitted an official proposal for the amendment of the agreement from 2001. The German Federal Minister of Environment responded in July 2011, stating that the Federal Ministry of Environment welcomes the WHO proposal and is ready to make an even greater contribution to further development of WHO's Environment and Health Process and is ready to increase the current annual contribution to WHO/Europe from EUR1.034m to EUR3.434m, starting from 1 January 2012. The agreement will be formalized through a renewed Exchange of Letters amending the Exchange of Letters between the WHO/Europe Regional Director and the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Denmark from 8 March 2001.
- 17) The new commitment of the German Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety will be for a minimum period of ten years. Over this period, the voluntary contribution to WHO/Europe will amount to EUR34.340m (\$49m at 08/2011 UN official exchange rate). Of this amount, up to 20% will benefit the Regional Office for core functions in Strategic Objectives 12 and 13 through the Programme Support Cost and Post Occupancy Charge paid on the salaries in ECEH/Bonn covered by the German contribution.
- 18) The Rome office will close its operations on 31 December 2011 while the Bonn office will be fully operational on 1st January 2012.